

G NEW AGE GAMING G

S O U T H A F R I C A

SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN PC AND PLAYSTATION GAMING MAGAZINE

TOMB RAIDER THE LAST REVELATION

BUMPER
ISSUE

HOT & HUNGRY
FOR ADVENTURE

HOT REVIEWS

WWF ATTITUDE (PSX)
SLED STORM (PSX)
SHADOW COMPANY (PC)
DARKSTONE (PC)
DRAKAN (PC)
GP 500 (PC)

AGE
of
EMPIRES

THE AGE OF KINGS
ANCIENT REVIEW

DRAKAN
Order of the Flame

DRACONIAN REVIEW

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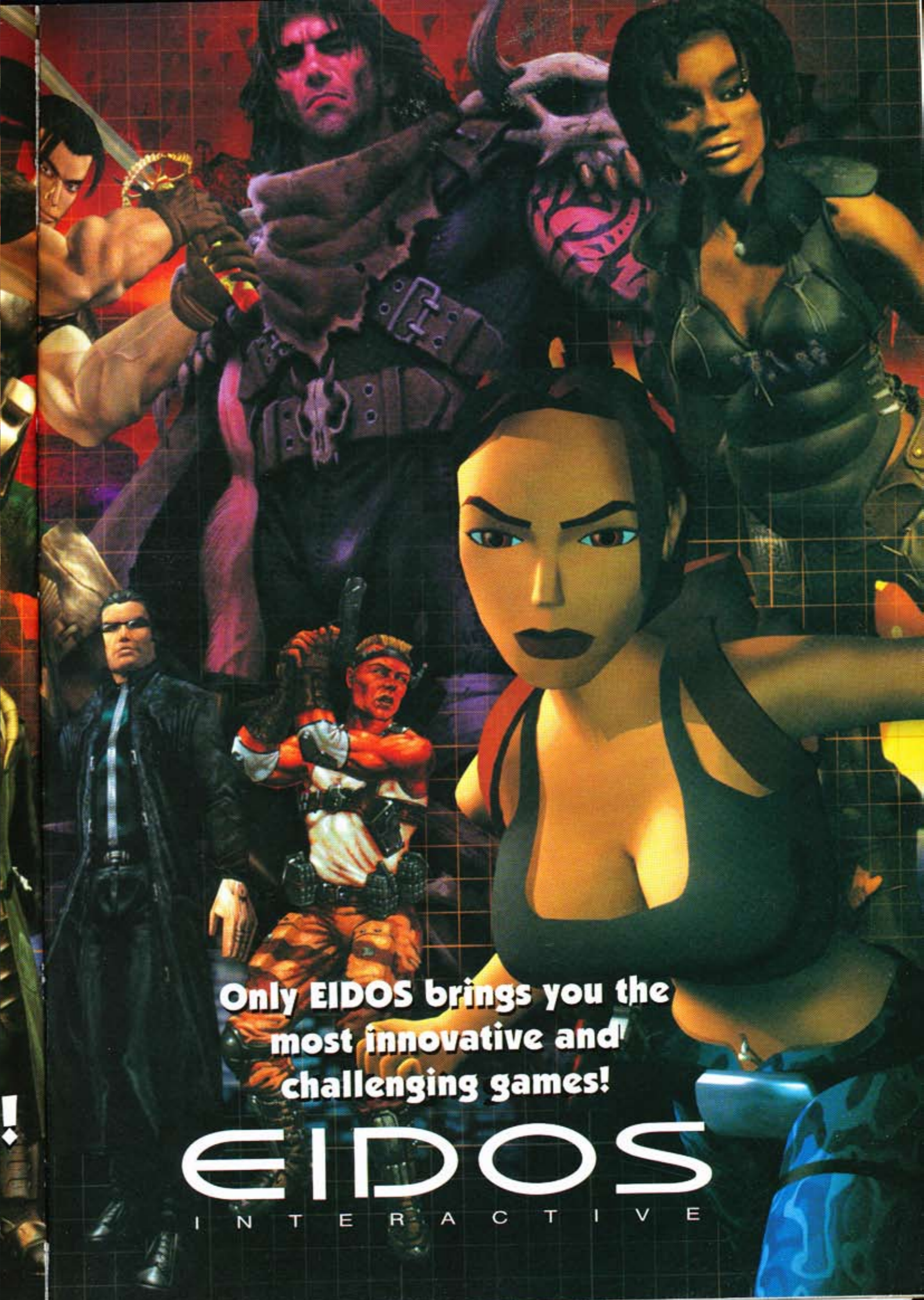
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ED's Note

MULTIPLAYER MURDER

The question on the floor this month is the nature of the multiplayer beast, what motivates him and why it is always more fun pulping a human head than a computer one...

If you take a step back and look at the whole thing with a fresh and critical pair of eyes you'll quickly realise that Multiplayer gaming has given us the perfect opportunity to kill our fellow man and get away with it. All those painful years of shaking fists or swearing in traffic, sighing too loudly in supermarket queues and staring in disbelief at incorrect invoices from plumbing companies have mentally prepared us for this unique opportunity to calm those throbbing veins. We've now found a safe, easy and even fun way to commit virtual murder, taking it out on those pixels has never been more satisfying. The question that must be raised here is why do we enjoy killing humans more than the artificial intelligence of a computer. Everyone says it's because there is no greater challenge than the human animal. The unpredictable playing style and downright dirty tactics used by man is light-years ahead of any programmed AI routines. This is a perfectly valid point and I would say makes up for about fifty percent of the reason, the other fifty percent is pure malicious intent and the spotlight of fame and glory. How often have you gloated and bragged to anyone who will hear about your last game, how you took out the opposition and made them pay for their sins? All that posturing and gleeful rubbing of hands will go unnoticed by your computer who doesn't really care if you win or lose. The reaction you get and looks of hatred on your friends faces is more than enough payment for playing a good game and it is this emotive reaction we crave that makes multiplayer gaming the best thing out there. In light of this there are some lovely single player games around that rely more on experience than pure killing which is why adventure games tend to live on fondly in memory long after the bright explosions and meaty thuds that pure action games deliver. However, here you are actually playing against a human, the human who designed those puzzles and created the world you play in, so beating an adventure is the same as beating the designer who put it together, very satisfying. I believe if you have no one to brag to or anyone's face to laugh in then the multiplayer game would be about half as popular as it is today. Admit it, there's nothing better than joining a Quake game on the Internet and having everyone there fear, and respect or resent your skills.

FOR THE SECOND TIME

The price increase seems to still be ruffling a few select feathers out there and the main bone of contention seems to be the fact that we haven't given you anything extra to justify the increase. Now I will attempt to make sense by drawing a parallel between the increasing cost of living and the negligible benefits you get from say a petrol price increase for example, so the price of eggs goes up, and do people ask well why should I pay more for the egg? They'll argue that no one has improved on its design or made it taste any better... The problem is prices go up and eggs will still taste and look the same - unfortunately you won't see any direct benefit right now but down the line you will.

Michael James, Editor

Well after much anticipation, we have a new addition to the NAG family. The Ed-in-Chief's baby girl finally arrived and at the worst possible time - during make-up week. While we were putting this issue to bed we had to try and ignore those strange smells emanating from Warren's office, turn a deaf ear to the screaming and above all try to get the new daddy to do some work for a change. We all chipped in and bought a few presents. We thought a Pentium chip shaped teething ring and an adorable furry mouse cover should keep the little one happy until she's ready to start writing reviews. Just remember to keep the child away from the keyboard - drool and electricity don't mix well under any circumstances.

We've got a really big Christmas issue planned for you guys and gals - remember to keep your fingers crossed and you might just get a second CD in your NAG bag, at no extra cost. The December issue will be bigger and like this month, crammed to the rafters with reviews, previews and other gaming news, just the way you like it. Make sure you're somewhere close to a CNA around the 12th of December because the December NAG is going to fly even though we've increased our print run again...

NEW AGE GAMING

SOUTH AFRICA'S OWN GAMING MAGAZINE
AN
UNREAL DESIGN FX
INITIATIVE

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EXCITING CONQUESTS IN AGE OF EMPIRES II: PG 44



AGE OF EMPIRES II

THE AGE OF KINGS

R.A.V.E.N. TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT WHAT PROMISES TO BE ONE OF THE BEST RTS GAMES OF THE YEAR! PG 44

Volume 2 **NEW AGE GAMING** Issue 8
SOUTH AFRICA

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PIXELISED HEROINE AND COMPUTER ICON LARA CROFT RETURNS IN TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION. CHECK OUT ALL THE ACTION, SUSPENSE, DRAMA AND CURVES IN OUR BUMPER PREVIEW ON PAGE 38, AND SEE WHAT THIS TITLE HAS IN STORE FOR YOU.

cover cd

DEMOS

- Delta Force 2
- Gorky 17
- Grand Theft Auto 2
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- Soul Reaver
- Tarzan
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- James USAF
- Rally Championship 99 (rev)
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- Quake3 Arena Theme
- nVidia Treemark Benchmark
- USS Dark

CREATIVE LABS

- 3D Blaster: GeForce Demo

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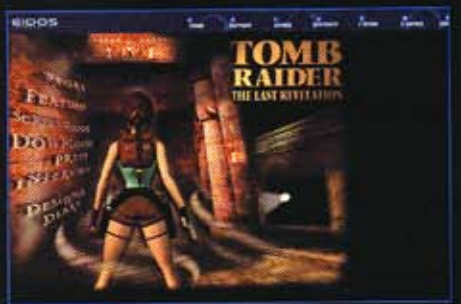
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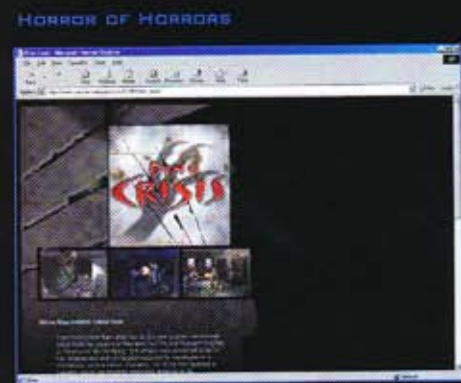
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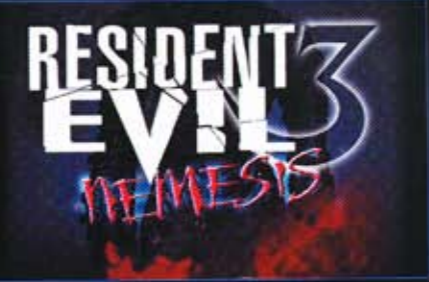
IN WITH THE NEW...
As you may have noticed, we've decided that the old Web page has become a little long in the tooth, so we're trying some new ideas. After all, a page like this deals with a very fickle environment that changes constantly, so we have to keep up the pace!



THE RETURN OF EIDOS
It was with great joy that we learned that software giants Eidos are making a very welcome return to our shores. Of course, we are all familiar with their stunning titles - just ask the Ed about Tomb Raider and watch his eyes glaze over! Eidos has one of the best distributor sites on the web, which makes a perfect springboard for finding out more about their titles. Surfing in to www.eidos.com will provide you with information on tons of current and upcoming games. In fact, it seems as though the Eidos site is little more than a backbone for several apparently independent sites dealing with their software titles. If it wasn't for the ever present Eidos frame at the top of all the pages, one would swear that the site was little more than a links page! What it is, in fact, is a huge resource for the perusal of Eidos' product range, checking out their corporate information, or making use of online help, to mention but a few options. One of the titles that can be visited from the Eidos site is Omikron: The Nomad Soul. This dark world game seems to be exactly what the psychiatrist ordered, and full information concerning it can be found here. Of course, we are all, the Ed in particular, waiting for the latest installment of Tomb Raider, entitled the Last Revelation. I have not yet shown this site to the Ed, as we need him to work and not sit and gawk at Lara Croft all day.



Another major distributor with a site worth looking at is Capcom, who are getting ready to release two major titles for the PlayStation. Both titles are set to take the market by storm. They are the two long awaited horror classics-in-the-making, Dino Crisis and Resident Evil 3: Nemesis. Of course, Capcom covers most available game platforms, so you may find yourself blundering through several titles that won't be available to you, but, then again, that's what back buttons are for. Unfortunately, the sites for these



two games, which can be linked to from the Capcom main page at www.capcom.com, are sort of sparse, giving only the barest of information about the games. However, just the right amount of information is included in these single bash scream sheets, and they will most certainly serve the surfer well.



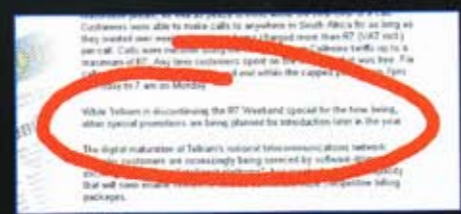
It is always really cool to find a web site that looks great, runs well, works, and is produced locally. For just such a site, take a turn through www.gamespace.co.za. This is one great looking site! Game Space is largely dedicated to LAN gaming - particularly clan competitions, and you will find huge amounts of information concerning local clans within its ether pages. As at matter of fact, a link to NDC's home page can be found via www.ndc.gamespace.co.za. And any clan who wants a site up on



the net can find free hosting through the thoughtful chaps behind the whole Game Space phenomenon. Most of the links and options available on the Game Space site are related to clan gaming, including battle report backs, training tips, servers and the like. Chat areas and notice boards are also provided, to get a handle on what the gamers out there, have to say. Game Space is largely devoted to Quake, of course, with that being probably the most popular multiplayer series ever. This site features extensive information on Quake 2, and downloads of the new Quake 3 test. However, just to show that they are not biased, a download of the new Unreal Tournament is also available from the site, as well as a link to download the absolutely essential DirectX 7.0. Another link directly from Game Space is to 'Suck It Down', which is apparently another site hosted free of charge by those saintly dudes at Game Space. This one deals mainly with games and, while it is rather opinionated, it is a worthwhile place to visit. The whole site is very impressive. It is a good solid place to surf through, full of excellent information - particularly where local, clan based gaming is concerned.

Of course, Capcom deals only with console games. Therefore, unless you own a PC and not a PlayStation, this information is pretty useless to you, isn't it? One can only hope that, with the advent of the new console systems coming onto the market, complete with their built in modems, we will be able to have an Internet infrastructure that supports browsing via game consoles. But that's something only time will tell.

THE PRICE OF SURFING
Speaking of Internet infrastructure, I am sure that those of you with e-mail will have, at one time or another received one of those little petitions about Telkom's 'Seven Rand Weekend' that proved so popular with net junkies. It seems that a great many people want this service back, and



they want it back now. So, being a sporting kind of chap, I decided to visit the Telkom web site, at www.telkom.co.za, to get their side of the story. Needless to say, they didn't say anything about restarting the 'Seven Rand Weekend' on the site. Rather, an offhand comment about 'future promotions' was made in a small article hidden away in their site's news desk section. Now, you have to ask yourself: wouldn't more people waste their time visiting the Telkom web site if the 'Seven Rand Weekend' was still in operation? I mean, honestly, who wants to visit such a boring site while wasting their hard-earned cash on overpriced telephone services?

20 YEARS OLD!
Okay, back to games. This year just so happens to be Pac-Man's 20th anniversary, and in celebration, Namco, the original creators of this arcade classic, have decided to release Pac-Man World, a fully 3D adventure game featuring that strange little ball who insists on eating other balls (you have to admit, it's a mind boggling concept). This game has a huge site dedicated to it, which can be found linking from www.namco.com. Be warned, however, that you had better have Macromedia Flash installed, or your visit will be short lived. Of course, a link to a Flash download site is thoughtfully provided, so you have no excuses. Full information on this exciting new title, including information on all the worlds that Pac-Man visits during his travels, is provided at this site. Until next month, surfs up!



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PIRACY BREAKTHROUGH

The last day of September 1999 saw a massive breakthrough in the fight against software piracy in South Africa. In a joint venture between the SAPS, attorney firm John &

Piracy

Kernick and ALSPA, pirate software with an estimated street value of R10 million was seized from an office in Booysens, Johannesburg. After an extensive surveillance operation, members of the SAPS Mobile Support Team of Johannesburg International Airport took action against the local distributor of these pirate software titles, seizing both PC and PSX titles. In addition to software titles, equipment and parts needed for the "chipping" of Sony PlayStation consoles (a process that allows PSX consoles to make use of pirate software) were also found on the premises. Spokesmen for the SAPS believe that an international crime syndicate may be involved with the distribution of this software in South Africa. It is believed that the software originated in the Far East, and was brought into the country via Australia. Needless to say, this type of large-scale pirate activity costs the electronic entertainment industry millions in lost revenue each year. Representatives of all organisations involved therefore describe the action taken as a huge success. The investigation continues, and although no arrests have been made, it is believed that the perpetrators will be apprehended shortly. This move marks a renewed effort by all involved, and regular, similar actions will be taken in the future, against both large and small-scale pirate operators. So next time you're thinking of making that illegal purchase be it at a flea market or even at your own school or college, watch out, you never know who might be watching you.

Do your part...

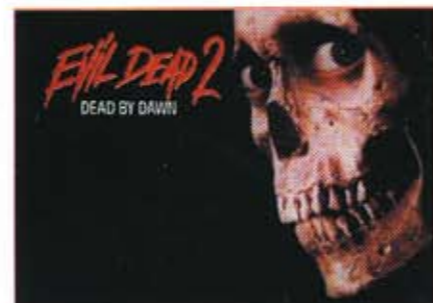
SaFact (South African Federation Against Copyright Theft) is in the forefront of the fight against piracy, but need your help to trace and, ultimately, convict pirates and in doing so protect legitimate traders from the blatant theft of intellectual properties and the bootlegging of products. If you have information of multimedia piracy please contact SaFact on (011) 886-3824 or fax (011) 886-3367. All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence and substantial rewards are offered for successful convictions. Now before you all rush off and start claiming your rewards and clogging up phone lines remember to try and have all your facts together, these people need specific details or you'll just be wasting their time.

...and we'll do ours

If you want to come clean, now is the time. Send all your pirate software to our postal address for our big Christmas bonfire, all you need to do is put those illegal products into an envelope and post them to us. Don't worry about anyone tracking you down, everything we get we'll treat with the strictest confidence, after all you are doing the right thing. We've received a few of these illicit packages already so thanks to all those people out there who have already sent us their illegal products.

EVIL DEAD IS COMING

Some of you might remember that old movie, Evil Dead from Renaissance Pictures starring the wild-eyed zombie basher Bruce Campbell. You don't? Well go look it up at www.imdb.com and then you'll know what we're talking about. In any case THQ (game developers) have acquired the world wide interactive rights to this infamous cult-horror series of movies for the next five years. Heavy Iron Studios will be helping THQ create this new horror experience on the PlayStation and PC. Heavy Iron Studios have been credited in the interactive and movie business with titles such as Parasite Eve and big Hollywood blockbusters including True Lies, Apollo 13 and Titanic. The first game will be called Evil Dead: Ashes 2 Ashes and for now it's going to be a single player 3D adventure. Gamers will control Ash, the humorous hero



from the movies, the game takes place ten years after the last movie as Ash returns to his cabin to battle the forces of evil. The question is, if you know that a bunch of evil monsters are living somewhere, just waiting for you to return, why go back? The game is still far from complete, but as always, is coming soon to scare the life out of you.

MIGHT AND MAGIC III

The 3DO Company has announced the release of Heroes of Might and Magic: Armageddon's Blade, an expansion pack for Heroes of Might and Magic III. The expansion pack will feature



6 new campaigns, 35 new stand-alone scenario maps and 10 new multiplayer maps. There will also be 2 new hero classes and 12 new creature and dragon types. The add-on also adds seven unique High Level Heroes complete with their own characteristics and abilities. To round off the add-on there will also be an advanced campaign and map editor and a new easy to use random map generator.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Raven Software have a new game on the drawing boards called Soldier of Fortune, where you'll play a deadly soldier of fortune who's only important mission parameter is to survive. In the game you'll have to take down terrorist organisations, sabotage installations, perform stealthy assassinations or just run in guns blazing. This world of mercenary combat is based on the popular magazine Soldier of



Fortune and is promising to deliver the most realistic, covert-operative first person shooter ever, spanning all five continents with a host of unique multiplayer options. The game will feature covert mercenary missions where you play a deadly soldier for hire who journeys across the globe in over 30 missions ranging from a speeding freight train based mission in Africa to Iraqi oil refineries and Russian chemical plants. To aid you in your mission you'll have access to a vicious range of offensive and defensive weaponry including a sniper rifle, white phosphorous grenades and you'll even get to try out a prototype microwave pulse gun. The game is based in reality so if you shoot someone in the leg he'll hit the ground clutching his wound, on the other hand shoot someone in the head and he'll drop dead. There will also be a host of multiplayer options including Assassin where you'll have to track down a predetermined player while someone else hunts you. The game will use an optimised Quake II engine with some of the most advanced 3D graphics to date.

SILVER BULLET

After a number of rumours and speculation on major game sites across the Internet and a few newsgroups, ASC Software has announced that their scary first person game Werewolf The Apocalypse: Head of Gaia is still under development but has slipped a few notches down the release schedule. Just to prove that everything is still well in the land of full moons and hairy backs ASC has updated their web site with new screenshots and character art. Apparently the werewolf is still alive and well and you can claw your way closer to this title under development at this address www.ascgames.com. They've got some really nasty looking images in there and the game looks like it's shaping up to be the thriller of the year.



MORE STEEL MONSTERS

Good news for those people in this country who ordered RollerCoaster Tycoon from overseas, there's an add-on pack coming, called 'Corkscrew Follies Expansion Pack' in the US and 'Added Attractions' in Europe. This game scored a massive 90% in our June edition this year and now promises to get even better. The original game gave players a plot of land on which to build the ultimate amusement park, everything had to be managed from employees wages right down to the number of hotdog stands in the park and how much people had to pay for a plate of chips. The best part of the game however was building your own Roller Coasters or steel monsters, depending on which part of the train tracks you grew up on. The add-on pack (priced lower) will include



historical rides like Virginia Reel and Side Friction Roller Coaster as well as a few modern rides. There will also be new scenery, including a jungle and Jurassic theme plus many other small additions that will allow budding amusement park tycoons to customise their creations and make them more varied and interesting. It should be available towards the end of November and an original copy of the first game will be required to play, so get out those credit cards and start spending your money online.

SCARY STEPHEN KING

Haven't you ever wondered why there is no F13 key on your keyboard? Well Blue Byte and



horror legend Stephen King are collaborating on a special Christmas project entitled Stephen King's F13. The title will explore the possibility of a user striking such a key with startling and perhaps even gruesome results. The legendary author will be overseeing the entire project that surprisingly won't rely on gory special effects to thrill players. The writer also stated that he always wanted to bring a 'horror that frightens' to computers screens around the world in the same successful way his books and movies have scared fans for years. If you're keen on more information and have the stomach for it, go and have a look at www.frightware.com

TAKE



- In Pad Mode:**
 ○ 4 Fire Buttons
 ○ 8-way D-Pad
 ○ 2 Triggers
- In Stick Mode:**
 ○ 6 Fire Buttons
 ○ Hat Switch
 ○ Slider Throttle

SP550 2-in-1

The Saitek SP550 Stick and Pad integration offers superb functionality that is ideal for the first-time gamer. This is the ideal combo for all types of games, use the pad on its own or combine the unit for a highly featured stick.

Saitek

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 Virtual Media Systems
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VOLUME 2

NEW AGE GAMING

ISSUE 8

VOLUME 2

NEW AGE GAMING

ISSUE 8

CONTROL



- Adjustable thumb angle ○
- Adjustable thumb length ○
- Adjustable hand size ○
- Left or right handed ○
- throttle control ○

CYBORG 2000

The Saitek Cyborg 2000 Stick gives you superb design, excellent ergonomics and complete functionality regardless of whether you are left or right handed. Four unique adjustments allow you to shape the stick to your exact needs - putting you in complete control.

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 Call (011) 768-6080 for info and support.

NEW AGE GAMING PRICE COMPARISON

Game Title	Available	Coverage	MSRP	Price
WWF Attitude (PSX)	R 349.99	R 349.00	None	None
Croc 2 (PSX)	R 149.99	R 149.00	R 399.00*	R 399.00
Sled Storm (PSX)	R 369.99	R 359.00	R 379.00	R 380.00
Castrol Super Bikes (PSX)	R 459.99	R 469.00	None	None
Amy Men 2 (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA
Darkstone (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA
Dungeon Keeper 2 (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.99	NA	NA
Tiberian Sun (PC)	R 299.99	R 299.00	NA	NA

*Includes Memory Card

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

NOVEMBER

- 01 - F-18 Super Hornet - INTERPLAY
- 01 - Gabriel Knight III - SIERRA
- 01 - Hype: The Time Quest - UBI SOFT
- 01 - Omikron: The Nomad Soul - EIDOS
- 01 - Pharaoh - SIERRA
- 01 - Rayman 2: Great Escape - UBI SOFT
- 01 - Seven Kingdoms II - UBI SOFT
- 01 - Sid Meier's Antietam! - EA
- 01 - Slave Zero - INFOGRAMES
- 02 - Delta Force 2 - EA
- 02 - NOX - EA
- 02 - Odium - MONOLITH
- 02 - Planescape: Torment - INTERPLAY
- 02 - Rollercoaster Tycoon Add-on - HASBRO
- 02 - Sim Theme Park World - EA
- 03 - Abomination - EIDOS
- 05 - Star Trek: Hidden Evil - ACTIVISION
- 09 - Battlezone 2 - ACTIVISION
- 09 - Earthworm Jim - INTERPLAY
- 09 - F/A-18: Jane's - EA
- 09 - Quake III: Arena - ACTIVISION
- 10 - Asheron's Call - MICROSOFT
- 15 - Age of Wonders - G.O.D.
- 15 - SWAT 3: Close Quarters Battle - SIERRA
- 15 - TRIBES Extreme - SIERRA
- 16 - Messiah - SHINY
- 16 - Renegade Racer - INTERPLAY
- 16 - Test Drive 6 - INFOGRAMES
- 17 - Official Formula Racing 99 - EIDOS
- 19 - Silent Hunter II - MINDSCAPE
- 22 - Half-Life: Opposing Force - SIERRA
- 22 - Indiana Jones - LUCASARTS
- 22 - Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation - EIDOS
- 24 - Crusaders of Might & Magic - 3DO
- 23 - Star Trek: Klingon Academy - INTERPLAY
- 24 - Diablo 2 - BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
- 30 - Unreal Tournament - GT INTERACTIVE
- 30 - Ultima: Ascension - ORIGIN

DECEMBER

- 01 - Daikatana - EIDOS INTERACTIVE
- 01 - Boarder Zone - INFOGRAMES
- 01 - Mission Impossible - INFOGRAMES
- 01 - Test Drive Rally - INFOGRAMES
- 01 - Urban Chaos - EIDOS INTERACTIVE
- 06 - Die Hard Trilogy 2 - FOX INTERACTIVE
- 29 - Hidden & Dangerous Add-on - TALON
- 10 - Metal Gear Solid - MICROSOFT

PSX RELEASE LIST

NOVEMBER

- 01 - Iron Soldier 3 - VATICAL
- 01 - Twisted Metal 4 - SCEA
- 02 - Army Men Air Attack - 3DO
- 02 - Ballistic - INFOGRAMES
- 02 - CyberTiger Woods Golf - EA
- 02 - Knockout Kings 2000 - EA
- 02 - V-Rally 2 - EA
- 02 - Spyro Ripto's Rage! - SCEA
- 02 - Supercross Circuit - SCEA
- 04 - LEGO Racers - LEGO MEDIA
- 04 - Monkey Magic - ELECTRO SOURCE
- 09 - Formula One 99 - ACTIVISION
- 09 - Downhill Challenge - ACTIVISION
- 09 - Ready 2 Rumble Boxing - MIDWAY
- 09 - Supercross 2000 - EA
- 09 - Test Drive 6 - INFOGRAMES
- 09 - Tomorrow Never Dies - EA
- 09 - Vigilante 8 Second Offense - ACTIVISION
- 09 - Wu Tang: Shaolin Style - ACTIVISION
- 10 - Resident Evil 3: Nemesis - CAPCOM
- 10 - Shadow Tower - AGETEC
- 11 - Worms Armageddon - HASBRO
- 12 - Q-Bert - HASBRO INTERACTIVE
- 15 - MACROSS VF-X 2 - BANDAI
- 15 - Roadsters - TITUS
- 16 - Medal of Honor - EA
- 16 - Missile Command - HASBRO
- 16 - Rainbow Six - SOUTHPPEAK
- 16 - Renegade Racer - INTERPLAY
- 16 - Toy Story 2 - ACTIVISION
- 16 - Warpath: Jurassic Park - EA
- 17 - Dune 2000 - EA
- 17 - Tomb Raider 4: Last Revelation - EIDOS
- 22 - Glover - HASBRO INTERACTIVE
- 23 - Mission Impossible - INFOGRAMES
- 23 - Smurfs - PLAYSTATION - INFOGRAMES
- 23 - Vandal Hearts 2 - KONAMI
- 29 - Carmageddon - INTERPLAY

DECEMBER

- 01 - All Star Tennis 99 - UBI SOFT
- 07 - Gran Turismo 2 - SCEA
- 07 - March Madness 2000 - EA
- 07 - South Park Rally - ACCLAIM
- 14 - Army Men Sarge's Heroes - 3DO
- 14 - Crusaders of Might & Magic - 3DO
- 14 - Fighting Force 2 - EIDOS
- 15 - Urban Chaos - EIDOS

In Passing...

MP3 FOR THE PLAYSTATION

If you have a PlayStation and want to listen to MP3 music tracks then you should soon be able to make use of the new PSX AMP/MP3 card. The card also supports skins, which can be stored to a memory card. Songs can also make use of the memory card and will be able to be shuffled or random played.

PSYCHIC POWERS

There's a new game on the way for PSX called Galerians and it's being compared to Resident Evil for its horror content and Final Fantasy VII for its lengthy playtime. The character you play has new-found psychic powers which he needs to learn to control and use. The game will urge the player to think before attacking.

ICEWIND DALE

New from Black Isle Studios and Interplay is Icewind Dale. The game is a hardware-accelerated version of the infinity engine, used for Baldur's Gate. Icewind Dale will use the Advanced Dungeons and Dragons rule set and features a number of improvements to the game engine. The game is set in the Spine of the World Mountains near Icewind Dale and will primarily be a dungeon crawl. Check out the web site at www.interplay.com/icewind

MORE X-BOX

Microsoft will soon be making some announcement about their rumoured game console. Apparently Microsoft has been in discussion with a number of US and Japanese game publishers regarding their secret game console. The console will more than likely be powered by a 500 MHz AMD or Intel processor and would use nVidia's recently launched GeForce graphics accelerator. Watch out Sony, Nintendo and Sega.

WE'LL SEE...

The latest release date for the much-troubled Daikatana is now pegged for December. The game has been plagued by more problems than is really fair for any development of this type and now stands at almost two years overdue. We're crossing our fingers and hoping it makes it this time or we'll just have to wait, again.

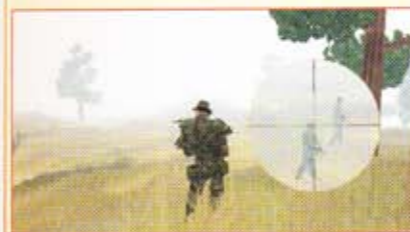
GAME LAUNCHER

Creative Labs has released an early beta version of their new utility called Game Launcher. The software, aimed at the more technically proficient user, will allow players to customise a number of properties for each different game he or she plays. This will allow you to select clock speeds, gamma settings and so on before a game is launched and once completed the utility will set everything back to normal. Go grab an undocumented copy at www.soundblaster.com/graphics/game-launcher/ but please be careful as they are still testing it.

Well that's all the major news this month, well most of it anyway. Until next month, when we'll see if any of this is true - **NAG**

DELTA FORCE 2

Delta Force 2 is on its way and lets the player become a member of the U.S. military's elite



anti-terrorist detachment, Delta Force. It's a first person action game but is based closer to reality than Quake Arena for example, where you play in real world locations and use real world weapons. The game has improved in almost every department with an enhanced graphics engine, new weapons, weather conditions and better control. The weather effects are also important and play a vital role in the game so you'll have to take night vision equipment along at night and consider the reduced visibility in fog. The game supports 3D acceleration but can't accelerate the voxel-based terrain in Delta Force 2, it can accelerate the polygon-based objects in the game, such as people, vehicles and buildings for better performance. One of the more unique features the game boasts is tall grass, useful for concealment and fun in multiplayer games.

PLAYSTATION 3

The second-generation PlayStation console hasn't even been taken out of its packaging yet and already unexpected news of the next console from Sony is breaking out everywhere. The report comes from a recent speech made by Sony PlayStation head Ken Kutaragi at the Microprocessor Forum in San Jose, California.

PlayStation 3

PlayStation's big chief said that more frequent upgrades are in the pipeline with the next version slated for release in three years time. Currently the latest Pentium III chip contains around 10 million transistors, the same count as Sony's Emotion engine. Both types of processor are constructed using 0.18-micron process. On-going developments are due to push this technology to 0.13-micron and beyond, opening up opportunities to build faster and better processors. Kutaragi claims that the next version of the Emotion chip, Emotion 2 would contain around 50 million transistors and then taking things even further along, its successor the Emotion Engine 3 should sport around half a billion transistors using a mind boggling 0.1-micron process. The PlayStation 3 should make an appearance somewhere in 2002 using the new Emotion Engine 2. This is a two-year gap as opposed to the five-year gap between the first PlayStation and the PlayStation2. Reading through all the information it becomes very clear that we're in for one hell of a ride over the next five years.

TOMB RAIDER REVEALED

In past Tomb Raider games the training levels have become something of a special bonus where we got to see inside Lara's home, her private race track and even a subterranean treasure room complete with giant aquarium. Now the highly anticipated training level has finally been unveiled - the new training level in Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation will follow a young Lara Croft in Anghor Wat, Cambodia. The training level is a miniature game level where the player will learn more about the sexy adventurer while learning all the available moves in the game and all this while they search for an artefact called the Iris. We'll get to see Lara's mentor Professor Werner Von Croy taking Lara through all the



moves and explaining what needs to be done. The final challenge is a race against Von Croy with a surprise ending.

DOLPHIN AND S3

The next generation Nintendo console, the Dolphin is going to be using S3's texture decompression algorithm (S3TC). Built right in to the graphics chip, S3's technology will enable Nintendo developers to compress their textures at one-sixth the normal rate. This process allows more data to be stored in textures and dramatically reduces load time, what all this means is that the game player will enjoy highly detailed textures in games, making things just that more realistic.

THAT'S IMPRESSIVE

IBM has achieved a remarkable milestone in hard drive technology with their Ultrastar 72ZX. The new drive runs at 10 000 RPM and can store a massive 73 gigabytes and is part of a family of server hard drives including the 10 000 RPM Ultrastar 36 LZX and the 7200 RPM Ultrastar 36LP which both store 36 gigabytes. The drive series also features a new technology called Active Damping, which protects against temperature and vibration. This obviously isn't intended for off the shelf home computers but will have important implications in the future as the size of hard drives go up and the pricing goes down. Let's hope this doesn't mean we'll see a Windows 2010 eight gigabyte standard installation. **Specifications for the 72ZX:**

- 10 000 RPM.
- 73.4 GB Storage.
- 2.99 ms average Latency.
- 5.3 ms average read seek time.
- 7.04 billion bits per square inch area density.
- 16 MB cache.
- 11 Platters with glass substrates.

JOYSTICKS AND GAME CONTROLLERS



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juSt cHARTs

With the festive season breathing down our necks, the activity on the charts, both locally and internationally, is heating up. A greater number of new titles enter the charts at this time, and even top titles get shunted down the ranks as the market gets inundated with new products. On the PC chart, Tiberian Sun has taken its expected position at the top this month, with System Shock 2 making a strong entry. Big names like Alien versus Predator and Star Wars Racer appear to be slipping under the onslaught of new titles, while potential winners like Hidden & Dangerous are not rocketing up the charts as expected. PlayStation titles are also doing a shimmy shuffle, with Croc 2 making a powerful entry in first position. Action adventure Syphon Filter and Silent Hill are showing a strong performance, while Driver and long standing Brian Lara Cricket take a dive.

Local PC Charts

Position	Name	Last Month	Total Months
1.	C&C2: Tiberian Sun	3	1
2.	System Shock 2	New	New
3.	Age of Empires: Gold Edition	2	3
4.	FA Premier League Stars	New	New
5.	Outcast	9	1
6.	Dungeon Keeper 2	6	2
7.	Alien versus Predator	5	2
8.	Half-Life	7	4
9.	Hidden & Dangerous	10	1
10.	Star Wars Racer	8	2

International PC Charts

Position	Name	Developer/Distributor
1.	Baldur's Gate	Bioware/Interplay
2.	Jagged Alliance 2	Sir-Tech/Talonssoft
3.	Alpha Centauri Firaxis	Electronic Arts
4.	Heroes of Might and Magic 3	New World/3DO
5.	C&C2: Tiberian Sun	Westwood/EA
6.	System Shock 2	Looking Glass/EA
7.	Half-Life	Valve/Sierra
8.	Might and Magic 7	New World/3DO
9.	Starcraft/ Add-on	Blizzard
10.	Darkstone	Delphine/EA

Local PlayStation Charts

Position	Name	Last Month	Total Months
1.	Croc 2	New	New
2.	Syphon Filter	4	1
3.	Silent Hill	6	1
4.	Driver	3	3
5.	Abe's Exodus	5	3
6.	Castrol Super Bikes	New	New
7.	Point Blank 2	New	New
8.	Brian Lara Cricket	1	8
9.	Tekken 3	7	1
10.	C&C: Retaliation	8	4

International PlayStation Charts

Position	Name	Developer/Distributor
1.	Final Fantasy 8	Square
2.	Star Ocean	Tri-Ace/Enix/Sony
3.	Metal Gear Solid	Konami
4.	Final Fantasy Anthology	Square
5.	Lunar	Sony
6.	Chocobo Racing	Sony
7.	Driver	Reflections/GI
8.	Ridge Racer Type 4	Sony
9.	Star Ocean	Tri-Ace/Enix/Sony
10.	Tiny Tank	Sony

DON'T GET CAUGHT SLAVING AWAY, ENTER THE CREW AND NAG PHAROAH COMPETITION, AS WE GIVE AWAY 10 COPIES OF THIS HIGHLY ANTICIPATED GAME FROM SIERRA STUDIOS, AND PREPARE FOR IMPERIAL SERVICE ON ROUTE TO BECOMING -

PHARAOH

COMPETITION

Send your answer of the question below on a postcard to the Nag Pharaoh Competition, PO Box 2749, Alberton, 14 or e-mail it to comp@nag.com and stand a chance to win your personal copy of Pharaoh.

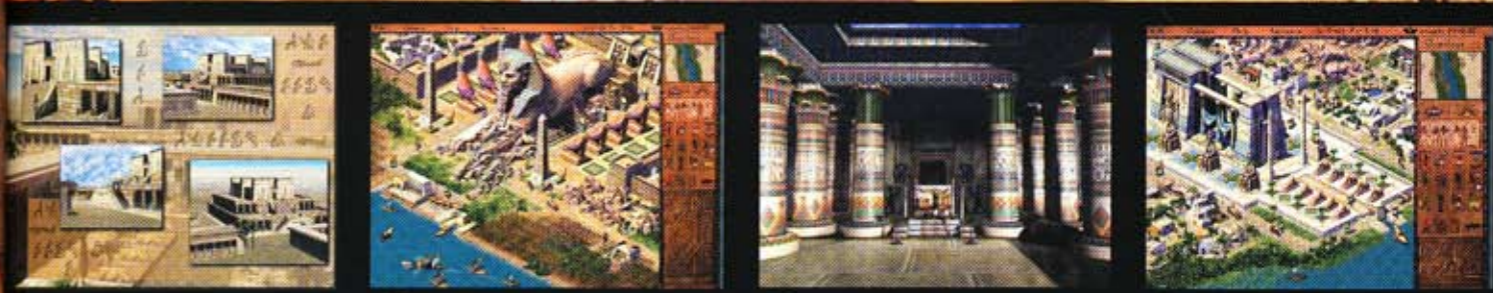
What biblical country did Pharaoh's control during their reign of power? (Answer: The Nile)

PHAROAH GIVEAWAY EXCLUSIVE TO NEW AGE GAMING

SIERRA STUDIOS

Impressions

CREW



- Experience ancient Egypt first-hand as you build legendary monuments like the Great Pyramids and a farm at the mercy of the Nile.
- Multiple scenarios and a full tutorial campaign provide a variety of assignments and challenges.
- Includes multiple difficulty settings and a City Construction Kit to let you build the perfect city at your own pace.
- Defend your roads and waterways from invaders by leading your Chariot Warriors into battle or sending your galleys to ram enemy ships.

PHARAOH

SIERRA STUDIOS

Impressions

CREW

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Fall of the BINARY BUCCANEERS

Hey, you. Yes, you, the little jerk sitting next to his CD writer, spinning off copy after copy of a game that you borrowed from someone else to distribute to all your snot nosed little twerp friends. You, the stupid little brainless moron who doesn't realise that every single disk your boot-leg special PC spits out is another disk not sold, and therefore a blow to the PC game industry in South Africa. You, the moron who complains about games being too expensive while you rob the distributors of their living through your actions. You are the type of guys who whine and bitch and moan about the fact that the gaming industry in this country is not all it should be, and yet you offer every Tom, Dick and Harry a copy of the latest game in the same breath. It doesn't say much for our education system!

Consider this a notification, a declaration of intent, if you will. The days of piracy are over. You may have seen (if you are intelligent enough to watch the news and actually find out what happens beyond the bounds of your monitor) that a recent bust took place in Johannesburg. This neat little haul took around 10 million bucks worth of illegal software (for both PC and PSX formats) off of the streets. These disks included titles that have not even been released in this country, and were destined for flea markets around South Africa, where they get sold for next to nothing to gamers who should bloody well know better.

We all bitch about the cost of software. It's expensive, damn right, but how the hell are companies supposed to drop prices if gamers don't come to the party. One particularly bright spark said to me "if, like, the companies drop their prices, then piracy will stop." What a load of horse shit! If the game prices come down, the little maggots who pirate them will have more money to buy blank disks and spread more of their cancerous activities around. Face it, because it's the truth. Why should you buy games, even at a cheaper price, when you can get them for next to nothing? There is a strange culture of piracy that has been bred in South Africa, largely due to international sanctions that had been imposed on us during the "old regime" of Apartheid. Those were the heady days, when we old gamers had to pirate virtually everything if we wanted to play anything at all. This is something that has been passed on

Ramjet leaps onto his soapbox once again, and has his say about the state of piracy in the South African Gaming Market, in a way that only he can!

Any comments, replies (or general slating) can be sent to rampage@mag.co.za

from generation to generation, and has now become firmly entrenched in our ways. It is this culture that we have to overcome. Why? Because if we carry on pirating products while we have a viable, legitimate market available to us, we will lose that market, and end up exactly where we

started, without a reliable source of games to supply the local market. And then, my friend, then you will hear whining.

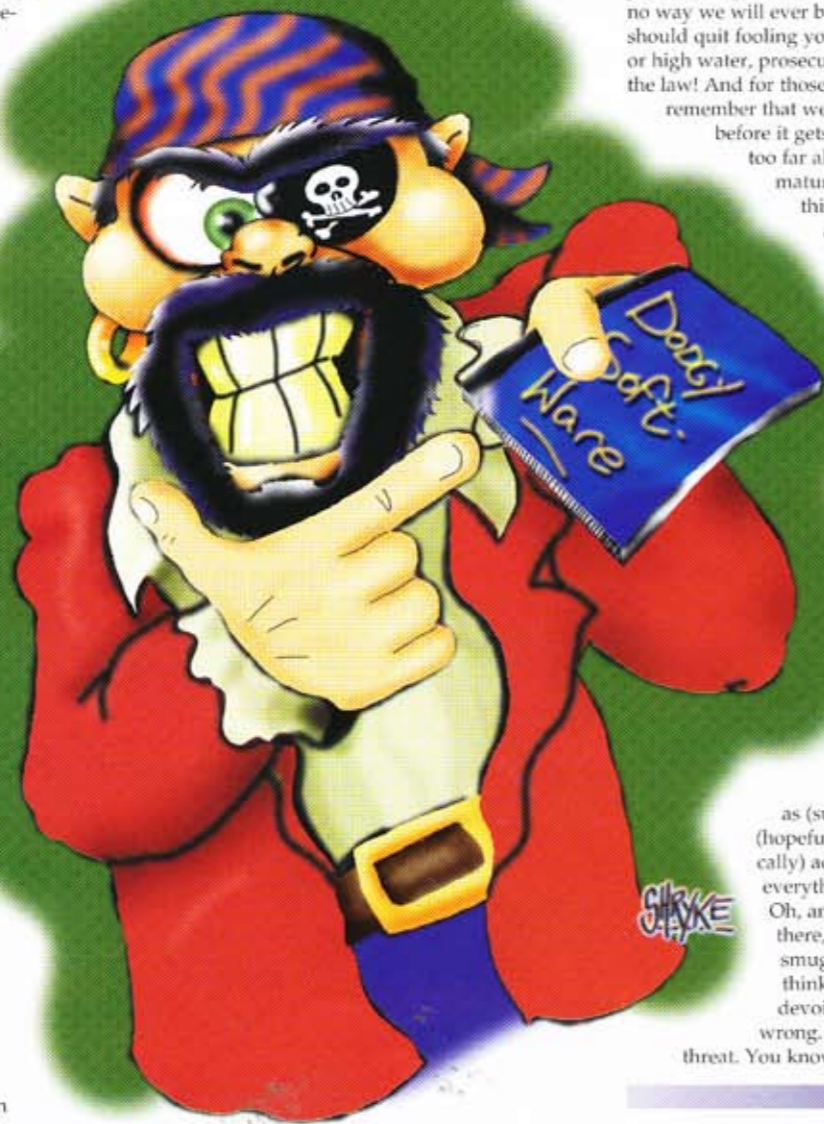
The whole problem with your small time pirate (never mind the big boys like the ones that went down in Booyens) is not that he's in it for the money. It's that he's too thick, stubborn or both, to realise that his actions harm the industry. Why the hell should he adhere to the laws and regulations regarding copyright when Daddy bought him a CD writer for his birthday? Why should he act responsibly and reasonably when he can make sub-

standard copies of games - who needs a manual anyway? Of course, the industry does fight back. Things like SafeDisk and misreported file sizes do make the lives of pirates a little more difficult than they'd like, but these deterrents are just that. Any resourceful pirate knows 22 ways to bypass copy protection before it even hits the market, so there's not much point, other than to keep the small time operators frustrated for short periods of time. Back to that declaration. We know that you're out there. We know what you're doing. We know that you think there is no way we will ever be able to find you, but you should quit fooling yourself. We will, come hell or high water, prosecute you to the full extent of the law! And for those of you that aren't pirates, remember that we have to put a stop to this before it gets too far - if it hasn't gone

too far already. And don't try ultimatums, because that's not how this works. It cannot ever be a matter of "if you drop prices, we'll stop pirating" or "if you stop pirating, we'll drop prices." That is just not the way the world works. That is the juvenile kind of approach that will get us nowhere. Everyone involved needs to work together. We need to realise that we need each other. Distributors need gamers, and vice versa, for the industry to be a success. And it is our responsibility, as much as it is the industry's, to stamp out the rot of piracy - as (supposedly) responsible (hopefully) law-abiding (theoretically) adults, it is our duty to do everything we can.

Oh, and by the way, you over there, the little pirate with the smug grin on your face: if you think these are hollow words devoid of any bite, you are wrong. These words are not a threat. You know the rest!

RAMJET



PREPARE FOR THE SECOND COMING

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CREW

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ENTERTAINMENT

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BACKCHAT

POSTAGE
LOCAL
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INTERNATIONAL
R40 00

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 Roy Anonymous who wins our letter of the month - keep the questions coming. Until next month...

Backchat
PO Box 2749
Alberton
1449

letters@nag.co.za

A truly great idea

I read your editorial some time ago (there are people who do) and found at least one idea of some practical use. I'm married and my significant other usually views computer gaming as a senseless waste of time. Your editorial woke me up to the importance of including her in my electronic pastime and, to this end, I recently purchased a copy of Grim Fandango, a truly excellent game, as recommended by your magazine. This has provided me with the proverbial foot in the door and I would like to sincerely thank you for your idea. Another great idea was fielded in the article, Multiplayer Mayhem, in your October issue. Set up a club! Why didn't someone think of that sooner? We have chess clubs where people regularly gather for an evening of, well, chess. There are Bridge clubs and Scrabble clubs and so many other clubs that I'm amazed that no one has approached their local recreation centre to provide a venue for a once-a-week evening involving multiplayer gaming. I love multiplayer gaming, but always have so many hassles getting a group of people together for a really good session of unmitigated cyber-violence. Wouldn't it be excellent if you could just pop all your gear into the boot of your car and drive to the club for your Thursday night session with the gang? You could probably buy an 8-port hub, 8 UTP cables and a bunch of extension plugs for less than 4 decent chess sets. You could run leagues, tournaments and ladders just the way Storm suggested. Of course there will have to be some sort of membership fee to take care of venue, club equipment, administration and even a club library with the latest in multiplayer titles. R20 a month sound OK? I'm keen and all of a sudden very excited about the idea. Are there any takers? Thanks for a great magazine and also (for a change) a hilarious cartoon.

Justus Ortlepp
Randburg

Well there is much good news in this area of gaming. New Age Gaming is an official member of the GLSA and is

dedicated to bringing competitive multiplayer gaming to the masses with our successful Worfaire multiplayer events. We'll be running many of these competitions in this country throughout next year, so keep a look out for more information. What we do need however is more casual LAN parties happening more often - smaller scale, but more frequent.

Low end system

What's the deal with the system requirements that you put in with each review of a game? I own a Pentium 233MMX with 64MB of RAM and a Voodoo2 graphics card. I bought World Cup Cricket 1999, in which your review reported its minimum requirements at a Pentium 166MMX with 32 MB of RAM. The first thing I always look at before buying a game is the system requirements, imagine my mood when I couldn't even play Cricket 99 decently. Even after I turned off the crowd, menu volume and sound and set the game to low detail and ran it at 640x480 I still got very sluggish performance. Now I ask you to please explain to us what is going on with the system specifications of games.

Eddie Taute
E-mail

The list of requirements are obtained from the developer sites or simply straight off the box. We cannot check every possible configuration but each game we review goes onto at least two different machines, a high-end machine and then a low-end machine. Low system requirements often raise the game's overall score slightly because we think it's a good thing if a game can run on almost any machine. There are two problems here, an optimistic requirement put there by the developers whose idea of minimum is barely adequate but will run at a push. The other problem is machine maintenance, when last did you update your drivers or defrag your hard drive? Do you

have enough disk space, did you check all the options when installing and are you using the correct display driver? Most of the time the problem lies with a sick machine and not an incorrectly specified game, but it is always a good policy to make sure you have more than is required in any case, just to be safe.

Ed

A bit of everything

I have been reading game review magazines for years but they have always been overseas magazines and it is nice to have a magazine concentrating on the local market (conventions, online gaming etc). I have a number of reasons for writing. Number One: I like the fact that there are some old gamers amongst the staff writers. I started playing games when I bought a ZX 48k Spectrum. So I for one appreciate the references to games like Elite (wire frame graphics and all) and my personal arcade favourite Xevious. Remember a game called Barbarian and the fuss it made (in England anyway) because you could cut off somebody's head? Number Two: Graphics are everything. I agree with what you say. We need more games that are innovative, have playability and are fun to play. Not games that look good because they are using the latest 3D engine, but play and feel exactly



THE INFAMOUS BARBARIAN...

like all the clones that came before it. Although I would rather be playing today's games because of the better graphics, they must above all else have playability and atmosphere (which is usually generated by a combination of story line, sound and graphics etc). Take Half-Life for example. The graphics are excellent, but I think Unreal and Mortyr look far better with their lighting effects and reflective surfaces. But Half-life was by far a much more enjoyable gaming experience because of the engrossing story line and gameplay which generated an atmosphere that draws you into the game and keeps you coming back for more. In Mortyr all you do is run from one level to the next, killing Nazi bad guys with a minimal plot connecting the levels together. Quake2 is another good example. Multiplayer is brilliant. The playability of the multiplayer game makes it fun to play, and this is what makes it so good, not the graphics alone. In gaming terms it is an old game but how many people are still playing it multiplayer? Graphics do go a long way in making games more appealing but without the playability and atmosphere (story line etc) that the game generates, all you really have is

pretty pictures to look at. So although I do have one of the latest 3D cards, I would rather play Starcraft or Baldurs Gate, which do not use 3D acceleration but offer plenty of gameplay.

Emeric
E-mail

Number One: All of us at the office have been playing games since games were invented, although AtariBaby somehow manages to go back even further. So what you're getting in NAG is a very considered opinion on any type of game simply because we've played almost every game out there by now, even those first very violent games. Number Two: Since bringing up the whole gameplay versus graphics question I have received many letters from many different people all playing different games and the common consensus seems to be that they would all drop graphics for gameplay in an instant. Thought provoking discussions similar to this one have now become commonplace in the office when rating any new game, the bottom line is this - spectacular graphics will impress initially but after that there needs to be a good game underneath or the score will suffer.

Ed

Bite your tongue

I recently bought myself the game Aliens versus Predator but there's something really wrong with it. I want someone to confirm if it's a pirate copy so I can report my problem. I have, after all, paid the bucks and now I suspect it was for a fake copy. The reason for my thinking is as follows: There is no set-up or installation feature or file on the CD (I had to manually copy all the files to my hard drive. Then I had to go to all the file properties and unmark the read-only box before the game would work properly. There is no read me file on the CD, and I didn't get a manual. There is no introduction. There are no movies. (I made sure that movie option was marked yes in the options menu and I have seen the game before, there should definitely be full motion videos, but I have none). There isn't a DirectX file, folder or installation on the CD. There is no CD music. The whole thing comes on a single CD. The game often bombs me back to the desktop and there is something very wrong with the sound. Now for the big question, there are existing user profiles in the game. Who created those? I would like to know if you think there is something wrong.

D C Grobbelaar
E-mail

You're not seriously asking if this is a pirate copy are you? I believe the first problem you listed should have pointed your thinking in the right direction. I don't even want to ask how much you



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BACKCHAT

paid for it. Of course it's an illegal copy, but you knew that anyway when you bought it from that suspicious looking vendor, didn't you ask about the box and manual or do you usually buy butter in a big blob in a plastic bag marked butta? Really. You know what you should do is go back to where you bought that game and demand your money back and see what happens. Remember that pirate games might be cheap but that's what you're getting - cheap substandard rubbish. Ed

In the bag

I always read your magazine when I have money to buy it. I enjoy reading it, but only one thing bothers me. What I don't like is the way you write your little welcome at

the top of the page on Backchat. You wrote, "Thank you to everyone who wrote in this month, unfortunately we cannot reply to all of the letters". I understand that you can't reply to all of the letters, but that sounds like you're not interested in other people's letters, and I don't think you read them, I think that you just draw them like a competition draw and reply to the first 10-20 letters.

**Thapelo Dibakwane
Driekop**

Right I hope this proves your little conspiracy theory wrong, or you're just very lucky to be in that exclusive batch of 'drawn' letters. You are incorrect with your assumptions. We read everything we get because reading is quick and easy but replying takes time.

when adding all the times together it can take around three hours to reply to all the letters on these two pages alone (including hacking and chopping your efforts). So, if you multiply this average with the amount of mail we get everyday then replying to all the letters would be a whole full time job on its own! The important thing to remember is that we thrive on mail from our readers, it inspires us to keep doing what we do and to keep improving, writing that letter to us does more good than you can ever imagine. Ed

Reader bashing

I am writing about all those letters in your August issue. Now at first I had a good laugh, but then things started getting serious. I'll start with that guy who said there were too many ads and thinks that just any old South African that wants to can write reviews for NAG (what the hell was that freak smoking). Ok so I am not a PSX fan but there are PC gamers out there that also have PSX consoles (believe it or not). And as for that guy who said the paper must be less glossy and more environmental, he should go back to the jungle because I live for those glossy pages. How old is he anyway, classics, I mean give me a break. Last and certainly not least, I almost cried when that one guy was offended by the name. I don't know what to say about him. So all you people out there I hope that that was just a bad patch in your lives and I expect to see some sane letters next month.

**Christopher Mills
Cape Town**

Everyone is entitled to their opinion, but we won't be dropping advertising, changing the paper or our name much the same as we won't be reviewing movies, discussing health issues or testing cars. Ed

A good point

I'm a new NAG reader. The September issue is only the second issue I have purchased, but I have to say that I'm really impressed by the standard of your magazine. I read the winning letter by Anton Fortein and I just want to add that I totally agree with him, but the thing I wanted to talk about is the question you asked. Maybe you didn't really expect an answer, but I think there are readers who do (that's if you're going to publish my letter). I'd like to give my opinion and please correct me if I may say something that is not true or totally inappropriate. You asked why the programmers don't remove the cheats before releasing the final code. Well, I think it's because it's too much work. I'm a computer programmer still in

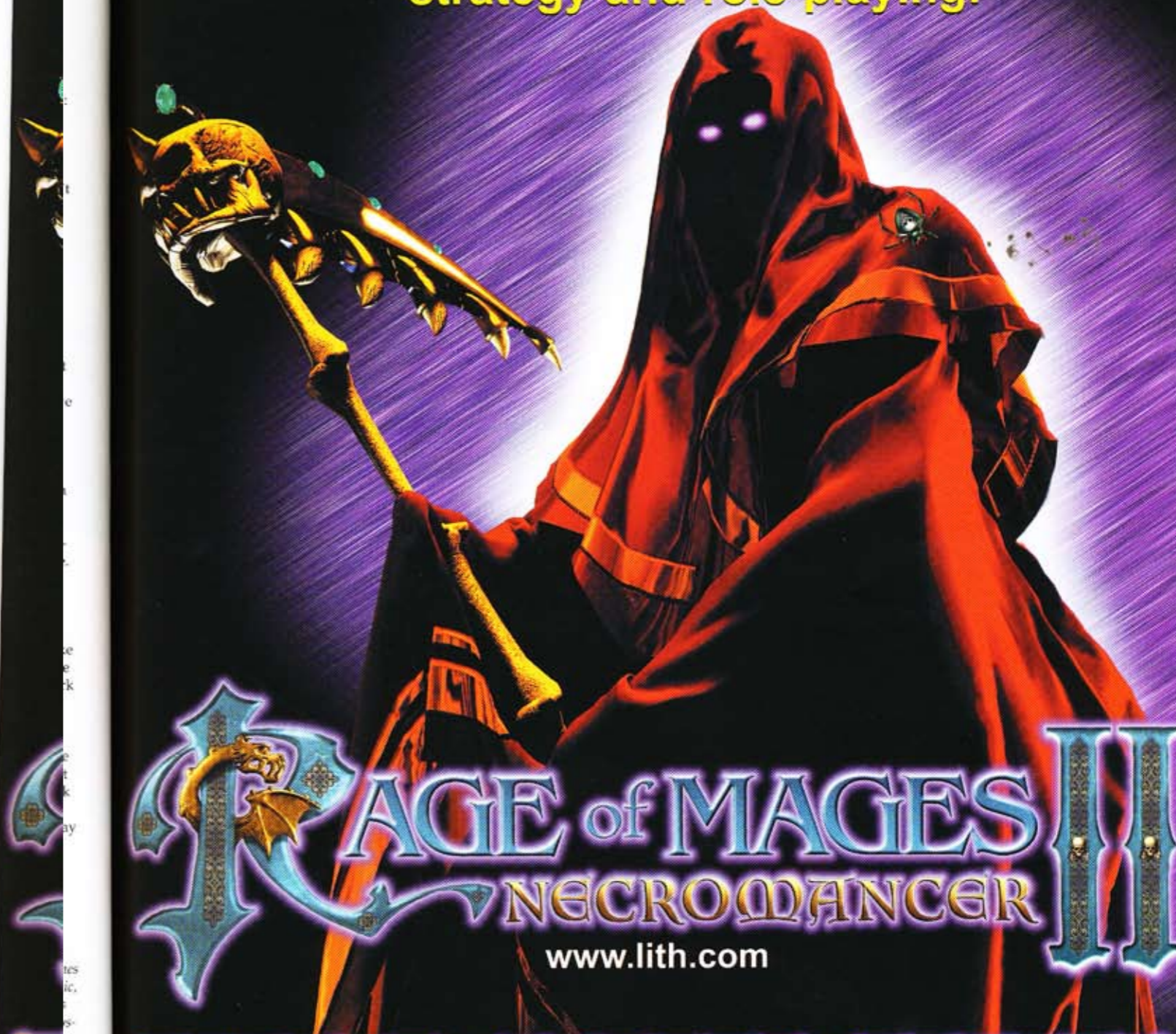
training and I have to say that some of the programs we write are huge. With huge I mean lots and lots of codes. Just to give you an idea, we wrote a program the other day that consisted of a main program (59 lines), that displayed only a menu and then called the sub program associated with the user's choice. Then for each of the menu options a sub program was called that performed a specific single task. There are 4 sub programs with the following amount of code: 335 lines, 47 lines, 217 lines, and 337 lines. A total of 995 lines of codes. The size of the program is only 39,581 bytes, with the code only not the executable files. I don't even know how big a game like Quake is but if a simple program like this, that doesn't even contain any graphics, sound, animation or anything like that, contains that much code, I don't even want to know how much coding goes into a computer game. Lets say its about 30 000 lines of code we're dealing with here. Now in the past I've done things that were wrong in my programs and had to remove them. Let me tell you, it's a nightmare! Not only do you have to go through all the code to make sure you take out everything, but you also have to jump around between files to make sure you don't take out too much! I cant remember how long it took me to fix my program, but it took quite a long time. That was a program of only 995 lines. How long do you think it will take them to take out all the cheats in a game of 30 000 lines. Not only that, but what if they take out something they shouldn't have and the game doesn't want to work correctly anymore. Then they'll have to do it all over again. Frankly, I think that they leave it in, not to give us the chance to use them and zip through a game, but because it's simply too much work and too big a risk to take it out. I don't know whether or not I'm way off the line here, but that's my opinion.

**Bruce
Secunda**

At last a reasonable explanation, we think. I do think that your 30 000 lines of code for Quake is a touch optimistic, but that's not really the point now is it? Could the solution behind the mystery be pure laziness? Could it be that because most new game releases are so late all the time that the big shots at these development companies just decide to leave all the cheats in the game because taking them out would take another year of delays or create other problems? Ed

Please send all question and opinion related questions to
Backchat
Please send all your technical questions to
Backchat Technical

Burnt out on the standard RPG? Fire up this innovative fusion of action, strategy and role-playing!



Last month we looked at the history and origin of pinball games and saw how they evolved from being games of chance into actual games of skill. Through the ages, pinball has developed a great cult following with many players and collectors devoting their entire lives and channelling considerable resources into restoring and rebuilding old machines. In today's modern age, we as pure electronic gamers sometimes overlook the pioneering spirit of the developers and designers that created and perfected these pinball games as we know them today.

Before we continue our time journey to pinball gaming as we know it today, I would like to touch on something that I mentioned in last month's issue, 'The outlawing of pinball games'. As I explained last month most of the early pinball machines had very little ball control which led anti-gambling circle lobbies to have them outlawed as games of chance. This did happen early 1942. One of the darkest days in pinball history came about on January 21st 1942. Pinball was banned in New York City and to celebrate the ban, the Mayor, Harry Guard smashed a number of machines in front of a very supportive crowd. The ban lasted until 1976. Free games, or replays continue to be illegal in New York City to this day, but similarly in South Africa, this law is not enforced. There is one small difference though, in the US the government and the police had the ability to distinguish between gambling machines, i.e. games of chance, and a pinball game, which is a game of skill. With the recent gambling laws being drawn up in South Africa, there was a move to relax laws pertaining to Pinball. But anyway... that's enough of the legal stuff, let's get back to the gaming bit.

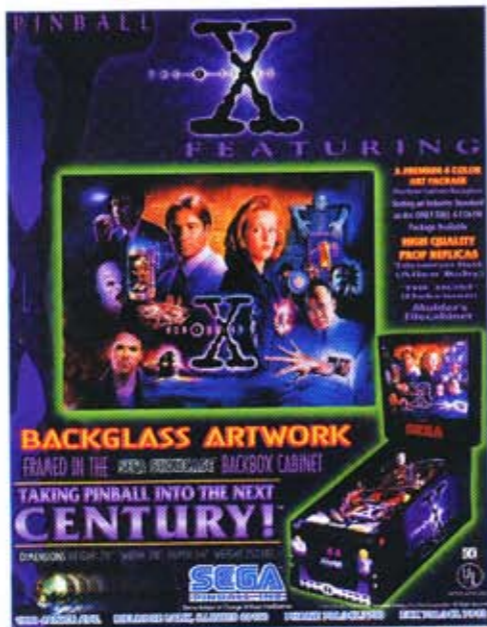
THEY COME AND GO
In the last issue we left the pinball scene when games started changing from electronic mechanical to solid state or non-relay-operated games. The first widely available solid-state game was called 'Spirit of 76' and was produced by a company called Micro. Today these are very scarce, mainly due to the fact that there were only about 200 made. After Micro released their game, Bally another big manufacturer was hot on their heels with 'Freedom'. This time Bally opted for 'new' electronic technology! Soon after Williams hopped on the bandwagon and in 1976 they released the worlds first talking pinball in the form of 'Gorgar'. In the early 80's a lot of new technology came about, the most noticeable being 'Magna Save' from Williams, where the player had the use of magnets to try and save the ball from draining. The next major revolution only came in 1991 when Data East started using Dot Matrix displays in their game 'Checkpoint'. Since 1992 all pinball games have been released with Dot Matrix displays. In the early years there were quite a few manufacturers. About 12 to be exact! In the early 80's most of the older companies folded, as they couldn't keep up with the new technological developments that the newcomers threw at them. Of all the early manufacturers Williams have been around the longest and are probably the most

successful. The main reason being that Williams purchased all the other competitors like Bally and Midway. The other major contribution to Williams's success was the fact that they man-

after video and computer games have died a long and slow death, and if one looks at what lies ahead in 2000 they might just be right. In the past games like The Addams Family and

Twilight Zone reached cult status all around the world and both have been voted the best pinball games ever made. Williams, the makers of both of the above pins have just released their pinball 2000 series and if you look at what it offers, it's amazing! As Frank Williams, director of Williams put it at this years Pinball Show in Chicago 'For the first time in history, a fully interactive video monitor

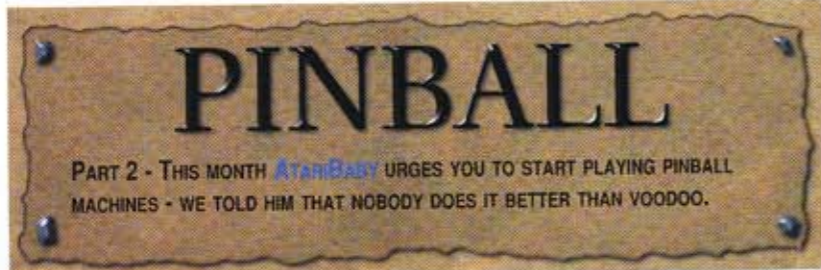
has been seamlessly integrated with traditional play field action. Virtual images are projected onto the play field, allowing the ball to interact with video targets as well as traditional 3-D targets. Images on the video screen can be moved and transformed in respect to the play field architecture, creating a universe under glass'. I happened to get my hands on the latest Star Wars pinball some time ago and it's probably the best thing since sliced cheese. It appeared to be hologram driven. That's the only way I can describe it. You can't even see the monitor. The sound was not too shabby either with impressive DCS



industry. Well maybe that's not quite true, the bottom line is that Data East was bought out by Sega, and is today known as Sega Pinball Inc. Even though they have real good titles to play with like the internationally acclaimed X-Files, Sega still have to prove themselves in the world of pinball.

SO WHERE ARE WE TODAY?
Pinball has come a long way, especially in the last 6 years or so when it comes to the technical bits and sheer complexity. For those who still don't grasp it check out

the following URL:
www.pinball.wms.com/games/starwars/p2k.html
So what is the future of pinball? Most pinball players would say that pinball will survive long



aged to secure the licenses to major movies and produced machines that incorporated elements from these Hollywood blockbusters. Companies like Gottlieb and Data East were left in the cold and were left scampering around for the remaining crumbs. Gottlieb were the first to go under and in early 1994 Gottlieb and Co called it a day. Most operators today won't touch a Gottlieb due to its 'rare' spares and difficult electronic operation! The truth is if you know what you're doing Gottlieb machines are by far the most reliable of all the machines ever built. Data East was another big name pin manufacturer that eventually decided to leave the

stereo all around that will make any home entertainment system look a little silly! There are some that will argue that one can get more detailed games from playing pinball on computers. I must say that the realism on some of these games is very good as they emulate the ball motion perfectly and have all the sound effects to go with it! But believe me there is still nothing like the real McCoy pinball machine, with bells and whistles and the true knocking sound of coils as you slap the ball around the play field. If you want to read up more about pinball you might want to check out the Williams homepage. They have tons of info and lots to say about their new Pinball 2000. They can be found at <http://www.wms.com> So by the looks of it Pinball will be around for another couple of centuries or so and it might just become so attractive that one-day all you Voodoo 2 addicts might get hooked as well. That's it for this month. Be sure not to miss next months issue as we will be uncovering one of the greatest attempts to relive 80's gaming ever. Until such time grab a pinball (if you can find one) and get playing!

ATARI BABY

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As the 'Reconstructive Age' begins technology is re-invented and televised sports become profitable mediums, you take on the enviable task of becoming a ruthless hover board racer with a reputation that will scare even the most ardent of bungee jumpers.

Criterion Studios has looked into their crystal ball (not the same model as NAG's) and given their own impression of what extreme sports will bring us, the adoring public. In most of today's game releases we become more and more overwhelmed by the improvements made in the graphical sec-

If your interests lie within the boundaries of extreme sports such as skateboarding and rollerblading then Trickstyle from Acclaim is your cup of tea. Imagine no wheels, no friction, no mercy style racing that includes all the tricks, stunts and passion of hardcore hover board racing. Trickstyle propels you into the future of extreme sports as you attempt to be immortalised as the king of the 'Urban Surfers'



tor of development, Trickstyle plans to do the same. An enhanced graphics engine features stunning high-resolution graphics and enormous racing courses that gives the game a true sense of scale.

From the heights of building to the depths of tunnels, you are immersed in a game that will test every ounce of your skill on your hover board. Acclaim is also touting their superior physics engine that accompanies the graphics, and from my first impressions they have every right to be proud thus far. The hover board glides along impressively but at the same time every obstacle dares you to defy gravity, all the while making it difficult to keep safely implanted on the board. Trickstyle has nine completely different characters, each with fluid and realistic animations and their own surfing style. Over four hundred stunt variations can be performed from combining the forty-featured stunts, which will help you gain that slight advantage needed to stand highest upon the podi-

Trickstyle

um. Without mastering these stunts you are but an average mortal racer who will always be at the back end of the pack, but if your temperament is one of overcoming fear and utilising the tricks then fame is but a hop away.



Criterion have created futuristic renditions of cities such as Tokyo and London as your racing grounds, each with unique challenges and famous landmarks. Obstacles such as pedestrians and traffic will be thrown at you in bustling Manhattan. Other in-game tests give you opportunities to upgrade boards, learn new skills and open up shortcuts if completed successfully. Acclaim and Criterion Studios have impressed me thus far with what it's attempting to do. Not many companies are trying to change the perception of differing genres that are so scarce nowadays because of the gaming public's critical values. The success of a title lies in your hands but to settle Acclaim's nerves I

feel that they have diverted any chance of failure by entrenching the most important feature into Trickstyle - addictive gameplay. Check out the review in the December issue of NAG just to squash any doubts. - NAG

You are Maya, a junk scavenger, surviving on refuse dumped from above. Yours is a world of layers, in which continents orbit at different elevations around the planet. Those at the top, the Chosen, consume massive amounts of energy and dump their waste down, onto the layers below. Now they have begun a descent to the Core, a living computer,

Septerra Core



in their search for the Gift of the Creator, fabled to bestow great power. At first you stand in the way of the Chosen, fighting to slow their march to the Core, and protecting your homeland. But it is you who will ultimately discover Septerra's

true nature, as you journey out of the familiar surroundings of your home country, and come face to face with the Legacy... Monolith Productions have realised the high level of interest in Manga and have modelled the game engine and characters on these Japanese comic animations. Added to this is a highly developed story line and characters offering fifteen chapters of gameplay. In addition to the main character, players may choose from eight companions, each with a unique background story, motivation and skill set. A high quality production, including 640x480 graphics, 16-bit colour, completely recorded dialogue and fully animated movie sequences are fundamental for the success of Septerra Core. The hundreds of locations for players to operate within creates a large world that is Manga based in look and appearance. The clock-based combat has all the strategy of turn based combat, keeping with the successful techniques used in the Final Fantasy series. Whether it will be as towering a success is still up for speculation until the review code arrives, but all the fundamental features are in place and Septerra Core will surely make every attempt. - NAG

Tonic Trouble

Tonic Trouble is a cartoon based platform adventure, which is developed by the same company that produced the wonderful Rayman series. Strangely enough Tonic has remarkable similarities to Rayman utilising the humour and gameplay to attract its audience. This may not be everybody's cup of tea but my first look certainly had me in stitches a few times. The story is a little childish but is aimed at those gamers and younger players that are looking to not only be challenged by a platform game but to have to think a little and laugh a bit as well. The main character named Ed (yep, they abducted our own) has been sentenced to repair all the damage he caused after throwing a highly toxic canister out of his space ship, which subsequently poisoned the earth. Your quest is to steal back the canister from the evil Grogh and develop an antidote to repair the earth. The games graphics are quite effective at representing the cartoon based world of Tonic Trouble and with the humorous script, you could find Daddy trying to finish a few levels of his own. - NAG



A few years back we were inundated with commerce titles hell bent on dominating each other's business prowess. Titles such as 'Theme Park' and 'Railroad Tycoon' were raving successes due to the gamers need to test his ability to create a successful

The Corporate Machine

empire in the business world. Now Ubisoft have gone back to the roots of these titles and added a touch of 'Civilization', and are busy developing a global business game that pits you against businesses such as Mitrosoft and Cola Cola (where is that proofreader?). Your objective's range from market share domination to slandering your competitors all over the tabloids. We have a very early beta but some of the businesses you can choose from are vehicle, aircraft and computer manufacturing. A simple interface is used to manipulate the gameplay but it is most effective at firmly entrenching the old school values of gaming back into the consumer market. The gaming public are crying out for those titles that may not have all the eye candy looks of the action genre but keep you riveted to the screen for months on end - perhaps this is it, we'll keep you posted. - NAG



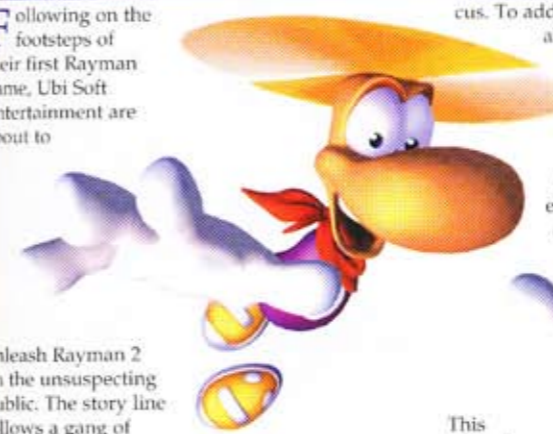
Indiana Jones once again enters the PC arena, complete with battered fedora and trusty bull-whip, in this upcoming LucasArts title. As Indy, the player of this 3D adventure game travels to exotic locales (from the ruins of Ancient Babylon to the mysterious Tian Shan Mountain region in Kazakstan, the ruins of ancient Nubia and beyond) in a quest to foil Russian scientists from discovering the Infernal Machine - a device capable of opening a gateway to an alternate dimension called the Aetherium. Staying one step ahead of the Russians will involve players in a gripping story, challenging puzzles and intense combat. The game's settings, which range from temples, tombs, dungeons, vast deserts and jungle valleys, are huge and encourage thorough exploration, puzzle solving and intense combat. The game's unique geographical locations also serve as settings for several special action sequences that range from guiding a raft through an exciting descent of white-water rapids, a spectacular off-road Jeep chase through the jungle to an exhilarating rollercoaster-like mine car ride. Just as players would expect, Indy has the ability to crawl, run, leap, swim, swing and climb through the game. And of course, he has his trusty whip, a complement of

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine



weapons (automatic pistols, rifles, a bazooka, hand grenades and satchel charges) and useful collected objects to defeat the game's battalions of communist agents, soldiers and other-worldly adversaries. In addition, each machine part Indy finds confers a certain magical power necessary to help him complete subsequent chapters. This game puts the player directly into the middle of the action, in the true spirit of Indiana Jones. - NAG

Following on the footsteps of their first Rayman game, Ubi Soft Entertainment are about to



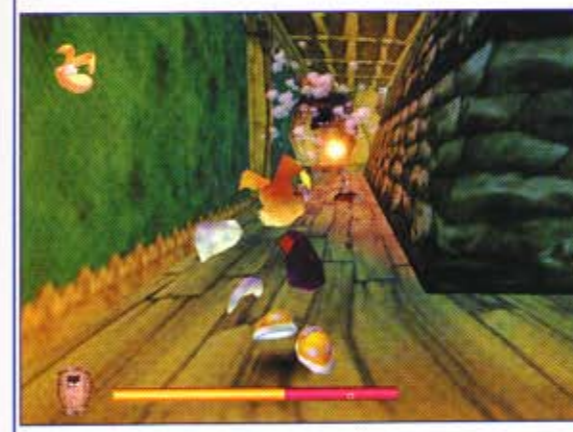
unleash Rayman 2 on the unsuspecting public. The story line follows a gang of unscrupulous space pirates who land on Rayman's world with evil plans involving capturing and taking over the population in order to sell them to a galactic circus.

To add to Rayman's troubles all the magical energy of the world has been spread to the far four corners, leaving Rayman without his magical powers. The game begins with Rayman escaping and setting about on a quest to rescue his friends and defeat the pirates. Rayman 2 is a 3D-action adventure, unlike its predecessor, which was a flat 2D-platform game.

Rayman 2

opers commented that the biggest difference between the first game and the second has to be the way Rayman 2 concentrates more on the story and characters involvement in the game world. So far things are looking good to go on this one and we should be seeing it sometime in December. The final game is making some big promises and here are a few - New moves including swimming, loop the loop, sliding, helicopter hair and swinging under horizontal sur-

This sequel is the result of a two-year development process with over a hundred individuals contributing to the final product. The game promises a unique blend of fast-paced action coupled with dazzling visuals and solid gameplay. Older players might find this new 3D approach a little foreign, especially if they played the original game to death, but thanks to some serious play-testing and focus groups the developers have fine tuned the control system and game engine to the point of perfection. When asked the devel-



faces, more than 40 hours of gameplay, unique gameplay environments and, as the marketing person said, much more. - NAG



Ask any South African flight simulator enthusiast to name a civilian flight simulator and undoubtedly they will mention Microsoft's Flight Simulator series. However any flight simulator specialist will tell you that in recent years the Flight Unlimited series has always been a contender in the market and has always given Microsoft FS a huge slap when it comes to graphics and terrain detail. Well Looking Glass Studios is about to release their latest incarnation of the Flight Unlimited series... Flight Unlimited III

Flight Unlimited II modeled only the San Francisco Bay area but it did it in such stunning detail and beautiful graphics that nobody really complained. This time around FU III models the entire Seattle area in Washington State on the West Coast of the USA. Even better is the fact that if you have the FU II CD you can load them as well so that the simulation actually gives you the opportunity to fly around in Seattle and San Francisco. Now sure this is nowhere near the amount of cities and airports that Microsoft's FS series offers but that also doesn't offer the graphical detail. In Seattle you can even buzz Bill Gate's house (...pity this isn't a combat simulation with huge bombs) and fly over Microsoft's head office. Flight Unlimited I had stellar graphics for its time and the graphics in Flight Unlimited II were the best in the civilian flight simulator genre, bar none. Well the graphics in FU III (sounds better than FU II doesn't it?) won't disappoint you either and they put the competition to shame. Seeing raindrops splashing on your cockpit's windscreen and seeing the huge lightning bolts in the middle of a thunderstorm will give you a real appreciation of why civilian pilots are not supposed to fly in

FLIGHT Unlimited III

such weather. The planes are also beautifully modeled both inside and out. I must say that the cockpits are nowhere near as well done as those in Fly! But they are more than adequate.

Speaking of planes, FU III offers a very nice selection of planes that you can fly around in. Looking Glass has offered a varied selection in order to give you a taste of everything from a WWI triplane to a modern jet plane. The planes which you can fly in this game are the following: the Beechjet 400A, the Muskrat seaplane, the Lake Renegade 270 Seaplane, the Cessna 172 Trainer, the Piper Arrow,

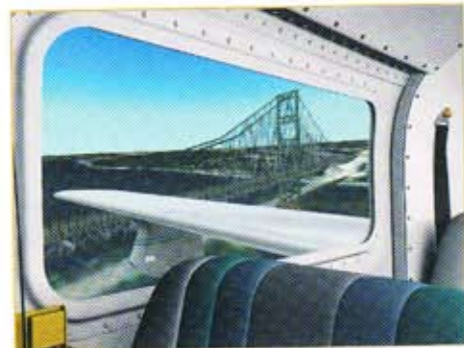
the Mooney TLS Bravo, the Windhawk Twin, the Stemme S10-VI Motorglider and the Fokker triplane. Of course there is a huge selection of other virtual planes filling the sky from the magnificent Boeing 747 to the ultra-modern F22 Raptor. Fill the sky they will and not only will you see them but also hear them. Yes the ATC in FU III is marvelous and it really gives you that feeling of being there when you communicate with the tower or other planes. The game also offers 24 excellent missions and 10 'adventures', which are really almost like scripted missions. Unfortunately the beta that I was given to preview did not include the manual and you'll have to wait for the review for a take on this aspect. A wonderful addition is the inclusion of the Flight Unlimited World Editing Tool or FLED. This is a drag and drop world editor that allows

you to choose any object and drop in anywhere into the game world. You can even download modified scenery etc and trade over the Net. The flight modeling seems pretty good although not the best there is on the market. The planes seemed too difficult to stall and spin and it seemed to me that the flight model had been dumped down a little. We'll have to see in the final release version. Otherwise the interface menu and most other aspects of the title seemed pretty much the same as FU II and those who loved that game will feel instantly at home in this one. My only gripes were that even on my PIII 450 the frame rate seemed to drop quite a lot around the airports and cities and one sometimes had a stuttering effect. In conclusion I must say that although FU III looks like a worthy acquisition it does seem to be more of a fully priced add-on than a fully-fledged sequel. Look out for the review of the final version soon.

REAPER



SEE IF YOU CAN FIND A FEW COWS TO SHOOT



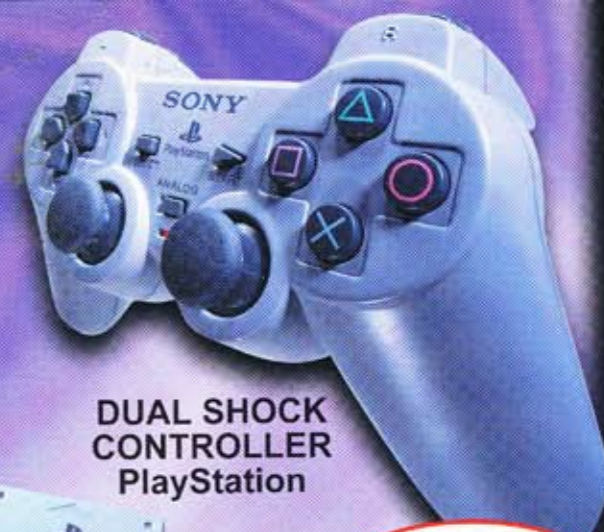
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PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
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Ultima

ASCENSION

The legendary Ultima series has been running longer than many care to remember and is synonymous with Lord British. A lot of users who were not into the Ultima series, like the many Wing

In the words of the Ultima creators... 'Prepare to embark on an adventure beyond imagination with the return of the best selling role-playing series of all time. In the 9th and final chapter in the 20-year legacy you return to Britannia for your last epic quest. As the heroic Avatar, only you can save Lord British and his people from the evil Guardian who has devastated the landscape and tainted the eight sacred virtues. Valiant combat, magical prowess and knowledge of the eight virtues are your weapons against evil in Ultima IX: Ascension, the most epic role-playing game ever created for the PC.' It appears Richard Garriott has been well focused on this title and has spent a lot of time ensuring it is perfect. There are some areas of the game that will surprise many fans and first on the list are the graphical details and some of the interesting locations of the world. At present the views and camera modes within the game are yet to be finalised but it does appear that the view will be free roaming with the dominant



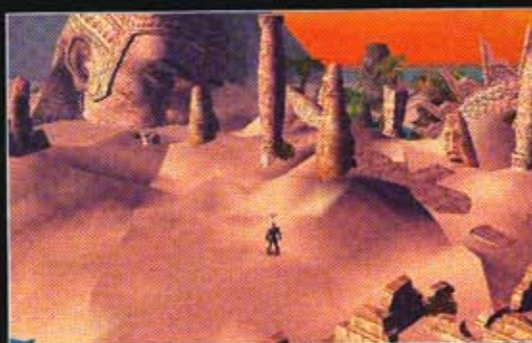
NOW YOU KNOW WHY THEY PUT UP THOSE SIGNS THAT SAY, 'DON'T FEED THE ANIMALS!'

view as a third person over the shoulder. Some clever coding means that the camera will move relative to your head so if you look left the camera view will slant in that direction. This appears to give the game lots of scope and flexibility to viewing the game world, which is very detailed and polished. The locales in the game include Valoria - a lava tomb nestled in a jungle, Trinsic - a half-submerged Arabian city a la Venice, and the Avatar's house on Earth. The use of light, shade and colour, with an impressive palette, bring the game to life and each world has a very different look. The game's story is being kept relatively secret even at this late stage, but it centres on the restoration of Britannia. The eight cities representing the eight virtues have been warped by mysterious pillars, which have appeared near cities and are exuding evil vibrations. These evil vibes have

twisted each city's virtues. Britain, once the model of compassion, has turned into the seat of hatefulness. Your goal is to restore the eight virtues in these cities. There will be around five less-important quests and roughly 20 minor quests to round out the game's journey. The interface, the nub of any good game has changed quite a bit over the game's long and varied development cycle. At present they are putting the final touches on so that the player will be able to customise the interface so that it will support

Commander fans, should go back and have another look at the game for it has changed a lot and the latest version, due for release, is now looking absolutely fabulous. Derek dela Fuente

keyboard, mouse, and game-pad. The inventory will be a backpack with slots for any items you encounter. If you can pick it up, you can store it. The entire item, no matter how small or large, takes up one slot and there are no restrictions on their weight to what the player can carry. The



function keys will be used as your hotkeys for items, weapons, or spells. One overriding factor was that the game had to please all the avid Ultima fans whilst also being able to entice new users and those not familiar with the Ultima world, look and traits. It appears it is a hard job creating a new and intuitive feel to entice the new users whilst keeping

GENRE: ROLE PLAYING ADVENTURE (PC)
DEVELOPER: ORIGIN
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
SUPPLIER: ELECTRONIC ARTS AFRICA TELE (011) 803-1212 EXPECTED RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 99
INTERNET: HTTP://WWW.EA.COM

The Avatar, while seemingly the prototypical Aryan hero, is a being whose age and limitations do not adhere to those of the typical human. His suspended or accelerated ageing, his ability to slip from earth to explore other worlds, and his role as hero and saviour of Britannia make him a creature not altogether human, but perhaps super-human. The Avatar first journeyed from earth and discovered the world of Britannia as a teenager or very young man; he was referred to as 'the Stranger'. Once in Britannia, he was enthralled with the opportunity to fight evil, to kill all adversaries. He simply enjoyed fighting and didn't trouble himself with the subtleties of good and evil, for he simply believed that he fought for good and believed in a simplistic scheme of rather clear-cut options. As a result of his valour and energy, he was eventually dubbed

THE AVATAR

CHARACTER PROFILE



'Avatar' and this special honour conferred and charged upon him a sacred responsibility to uphold the best interests of Britannia, to aid its benevolent ruler, Lord British, and to fight evil. As the Avatar returns to Britannia for the ninth time, he finds it in a state of abject emergency, but this time he approaches his task, not as a boy, but as a mature man aware of the more subtle issues facing him and Britannia. For one, the Avatar feels a sense of sorrow and frustration that, in spite of the fact that he repeatedly returns to this land to slay literal and figurative dragons, the people of Britannia, and especially Lord British, are vulnerable and helpless in the face of threats. Therefore, the Avatar wishes to teach the people of Britannia to sustain a system for perpetual good, one in which they can prosper and quickly weed out destructive forces.

the long time users happy but this is one area the team believe they have succeeded in. You won't have to know the history of Ultima to play this game (a beautiful tapestry of history will fill you in on the details), but you will be rewarded for past experiences. Many cities from past Ultimas are revisited, and many old friends and foes make their reappearance. The Compatriots are back (Lolo, Shamino, and others) and so is Blackthorn. There are over 200 non-player characters in the game so far, and that number could grow to 250 before the game is finished, which should be late 1999. Of those, some 50 will be characters you might have seen in your past adventures as the Avatar. One area in Ascension where you will notice a change is the music and sound effects. Commissioned professionals in Los Angeles have been given the task to come up with scores of music for the game and each city has a theme, as does each major character and boss. Music will also be dynamic and change to reflect events. Via a US source I was able to find out

that the music will be varied and includes soft and melodic tracks for the city of Moonlight, while the other was a Middle Eastern-inspired theme for the Arabian-styled city Trinsic. Songs are also being composed and played whilst in battle against skeletons. The 3D engine, a focus point of the game, is another area where no information is being let out but just looking at the screens will give some idea as to the sophistication on offer. The game will offer a stronger and deeper story line with less puzzles and more interaction, but still staying to the true roots of the Ultima series. The essence as always will be on the story line and character virtues which are still the main focus of the game, so you will still be able to relive the epic saga through seamlessly integrated combat, adventure, and puzzle-solving and be immersed into the world of

Blackthorn is the venomous, goaded lackey for the Guardian. He was originally a citizen of Britannia who was justly punished by Lord British, but, like a petulant child, feels wronged. As a result, he has set out to thwart Lord British by whatever means necessary. The Guardian recognised him as an easy convert to his ends and brought Blackthorn into his supposed confidence so as to use him as his right hand goon. It has been easy for the Guardian

BLACKTHORN

CHARACTER PROFILE



accept punishment from Lord British reveals his pathetic, myopic sense of entitlement. He is completely confident that he will crush Lord British, help the Guardian defeat the Avatar, and toy for eternity with his own world. Blackthorn is a classic narcissist. He exhibits a grandiose sense of self-importance, exaggerates his achievements, feels entitled to special treatment, is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success and power, thinks himself brilliant though reality would indicate otherwise, lacks empathy for others, and is highly envious of what others have. Ironically, this overblown display of ego is actually a disguise for deep self-loathing.

Lord British is the older male who rules Britannia and functions as a sort of icon. He achieved this position by forging one United Kingdom from many fractured city-states, cares deeply about this land and people, but is currently overwhelmed by the problems at hand. Unlike the Avatar, he has made Britannia his permanent home and is not split between worlds. Unfortunately, though, and in spite of his good intentions, his rule has been passive, and he repeatedly relies on the Avatar, whom he personally knighted, to rid the land of evil. Like a loving but preoccupied father, he loves those in his care but can't keep up with their activities and problems, and they cease to rely on him. The evil present in his land is unlike anything

He is prudent, orderly, and does not give in to reckless abandon. He finds discord crushing, has difficulty expressing anger, can be inflexible, self-absorbed, and needs the love of his people. He has difficulty discarding those who are worthless. He believes in goodness, is the embodiment of goodness, and this has paralysed him, as he cannot arouse within himself a sense of righteous indignation or passion to act violently against those who are bad. This is his central weakness. Interestingly, these very peace-loving qualities are what drew him to the Stranger in the early days. While the aggressive, violent side of Lord British's nature lies dormant, he found himself fascinated by the Stranger. The Stranger was emboldened by the challenge of fighting evil,

LORD BRITISH

CHARACTER PROFILE



he has ever seen or expected to see, and he simply does not know how to handle it. His reaction, or non-reaction, has become a kind of paralysis. In the first moments of 'Ascension,' Lord British expresses his profound concern for Britannia. He has become aware of the fact that strange columns have sprouted from the ground and are pulling the moons out of orbit as well as throwing them on a collision course. This will surely spell protracted misery and eventual Armageddon for Britannia. Lord British's companions are his usual body of wise advisors to whom he has historically delegated tasks, are dead or nowhere to be found. Even his faithful Avatar seems to be taking his sweet time in arriving. Still, Lord British, though sorely tested, believes that good must triumph over evil. Lord British wishes for peace and unity.

excited by it, and enjoyed it with boyish fervour. Lord British lacked this combativeness, but sensed that he needed it. For this reason he drew the Stranger into his circle and knighted him Avatar. The Avatar encourages Lord British to take action for the sake of his people. Finally, Lord British overcomes his paralysis and unleashes righteous anger. His impotence as a ruler falls away and he is able to fight Blackthorn valiantly, killing him. His sense of power unleashed at long last, Lord British once again has faith in himself and will be able to protect Britannia should troubles arise in the future. The Avatar's purpose is finished, Lord British can discharge him to his final sacrifice: the Avatar is dispatched in the name of righteousness, kills the Guardian in the process, and both the Avatar and Britannia ascend.

Ultima first hit our monitors in the early 80's and has gone on to become one of the biggest selling RPG's of its kind. Richard Garriot has always been the front man and inspiration to the game bringing in new personnel on a regular basis. The ninth title in the Ultima series, the last version being the online version which you not only have to pay to join and buy the full priced game but pay for local calls! Ultima Ascension offers interaction at its very best and real world involvement that many are saying is unsurpassed.

THE GAMES APPEAL

The basic game idea is that you must lead the Avatar down the paths that follow eight virtues and turn the avatar into a good guy. There are eight major cities each based on the eight virtues, which include Valouria, a place of fighters and with plenty of valour. Yew, a locale in the woods. Minoc, where craftsmen work hard, a city boasting the virtue sacrifices. Scarabrae, where rangers and philosophers live. Magincia, a town full of proud people. Britain,

the home of the bards who are full of compassion. Moonglow, where magic and

the truth reign and finally Trinsic, a place of honour. The powerful being known as the Guardian (from Ultima 7 & 8) established himself in Britannia while you, the Avatar, were trapped on a world called Pagan (the setting of Ultima 8). There are 8 dark columns throughout the land of Britannia, presumably created by the Guardian, which are causing destruction and manipulating the citizens towards a non-virtuous mindset. Your job of course will be to set things right. Ultima: Ascension will be the last Ultima to feature the Avatar and will tie up a lot of loose ends from the entire Ultima series of games. If you're a veteran of the series you'll recognise a lot of familiar characters, places, and items from previous games. The game will come on multiple CD's with a long and detailed, impressive loader.

FACT FILE

Interact with the 200 plus intriguing characters that live in the world of Britannia. All with full speech recorded by professional actors and scripted by a professional screen-writer.

Experience the richest fantasy environment ever created. With day and night cycles, weather effects, real-life physics and the ability to manipulate every item in the world, you'll forget it's only a game.

Engage over 60 unique creatures and monsters using the most innovative combat system ever created.

Conjure 45 incredible spells using circles of magic, alchemy, and rituals. Uphold the eight sacred virtues (Honesty, Justice, Humility, Sacrifice, Valour, Compassion, Honour, and Spirituality), as you become a legend.

Designed by the Ultima creator Richard Garriot (Lord British).

Britannia like never before. The further you progress in the game the more moves you will be able to make and so keep tabs on the interface and the many menu bars that will aid you in your progress. To those that worry about complex story lines, fear not for a long narrative will explain to the user what is required in the smallest of details. Although the plot sort of kicks off from the last title you do not have to have played it to enjoy this experience. An RPG with strong adventure roots!

Team quotes: "The story ending will be stunning... you should have a sense that the major characters have come to fruition or actualised, the plot arc should be resolved, and the questions answered. Currently the world has over 175 NPC's who all have unique conversations. We are still adding more people

to the world, and may have as many as 200-250. This does include guards, although unlike older Ultimas, most of the guards are not generic, all saying the same thing. The cities will be full of people, some with more than others."



A majority of narrative cinematics has been developed as pre-rendered flics. There are some moments within gameplay where control is taken from the player and a linear sequence of events plays out (therefore both techniques are used). Several points led us in the direction of using pre-rendered flics

While the UA game-engine is incredibly versatile, coding sufficient tools to choreograph a complex narrative scene was low in priority for our programming team. These tools are readily available in off-the-shelf animation software like Lightwave and 3DSMax.

While our in-game characters are beautiful to look at, they can't convey the extremely subtle emotional subtext that we wanted in our flics - a squirt of suspicion, a start of surprise, etc.

While the world is rendered beautifully and the artwork beyond par, off-the-shelf software provides us with a broad range of control for lighting and special effects.



Regarding the weather conditions - Ultima: Ascension does support rain and fog to varying degrees. The wind also changes with weather. Sunny days have a light breeze; stormy weather has a

heavy wind that kicks up. The sky will smoothly transition from daylight to storm conditions. There is lightning, both in terms of a sky image and in terms of the light source flashing the world. Currently the sky smoothly transitions from day to sunset to night and back again in the morning. And, because the weather is geographically located, when you pass through a moon-gate you'll get different weather at the other end. No seasons though.

The physics in the game does include buoyancy, but we don't utilise that for swimming. We do feel it would be tedious to have to disrobe to swim. This may change, but currently your armour has zero effect on your ability to swim.

Ultima:Ascension is a real time combat game, and there are no plans to add turn-based combat. Arrows do "stick" in your opponent, but they fade out over time after their damage is done, making it impossible to re-use them. Otherwise,



during bow combat, an opponent with a lot of hit points would begin to resemble a porcupine.

Magic: There will be 8 circles of magic (with spells of increasing power in each circle) plus one circle of linear magic (very simple spells that don't cost any reagents or mana to cast). Each circle will have one spell for each of the 5 elements introduced in Ultima 8: earth, air, fire, water and ether. The spells will cost you something, however, like mana, and "on the fly" spells will be restricted by something of that nature. Ritual magic will require the player to perform a specific sequence of activities in order to cast the spell. You will also be able to create potions with magical effects.

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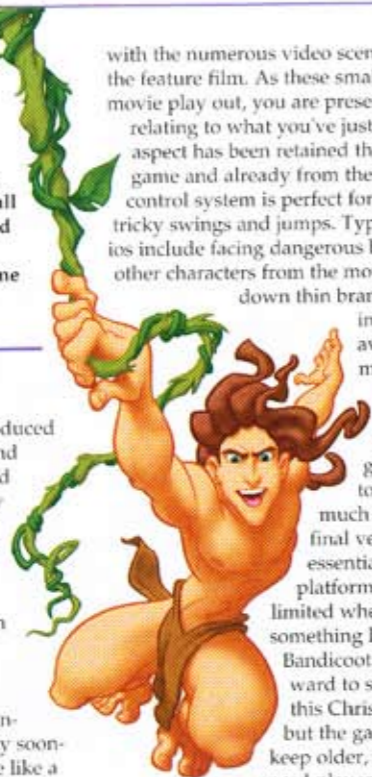
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Like production line workers at the great Sony PlayStation game factory we need to check all new products for quality and in some cases serious flaws and then hand in our report, that's reviewing. Previewing is a similar task but here we have to assess all those early releases, alpha code discs and quick slap together efforts and try and report back on what we think a new game will be like. Below you'll find six such reports. - NAG

TARZAN

87 years ago, Edgar Rice Burroughs introduced the world to Tarzan, since then Tarzan and tales of his adventures have been told and retold a hundred different ways, in many different formats. Now Tarzan will be swinging onto your PlayStation in a game inspired from Walt Disney Pictures' animated adventure, Tarzan. Disney Interactive are finishing the game and it's coming your way sooner than you can beat your chest and make like a monkey. The preview version we looked at impressed us immediately with its lush graphics and slick animations, not to mention the ambient sound effects, funky music and fast paced platform action. Most previous Disney titles just seemed to be lacking that special something, but Tarzan is set to change all that. The game tracks Tarzan as a young boy, facing the dangers of the jungle including running away from a herd of stampeding elephants, diving into rivers and swinging from vines. Roughly a third of the way into the game, Tarzan the boy grows up into Tarzan the man where the level of danger increases. The final game will have around 16 levels of action including a number of secret levels accessed by finding all four sections of a map in each level. The game follows the movie very closely and this is especially evident

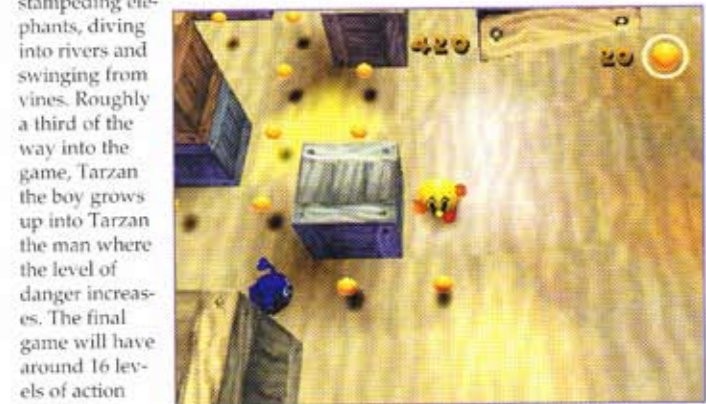


with the numerous video scenes cut direct from the feature film. As these small slices from the movie play out, you are presented with tasks relating to what you've just seen. The fun aspect has been retained throughout the game and already from the early release, the control system is perfect for pulling off those tricky swings and jumps. Typical game scenarios include facing dangerous bosses, playing as other characters from the movie and sliding down thin branches while collecting tokens and avoiding jungle animals. One thing to remember though, it might be a great looking game but you have to wonder how much staying power the final version will have, essentially it's just another platform game and seems limited when compared to something like Crash Bandicoot. You can look forward to some great action this Christmas with Tarzan, but the game isn't going to keep older, more experienced players satisfied for long, definitely one for the younger player. Find out more at www.playstation-europe.com/tarzan.

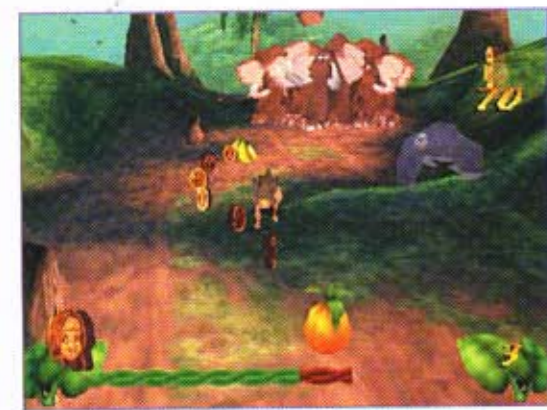
PAC-MAN WORLD

Just how long has it been since we've seen anything meaningful arrive on the scene that features the legendary Pac-Man - any ideas, anyone? Didn't think so...

In fact Namco are releasing Pac-Man World just in time for the 20th Anniversary of the game character that dared to take on the mighty space invaders and won. This new Pac-Man game will feature three different play modes starting with the 'Quest' game, 'Mazes' and 'Classic' Pac-Man. The 'Quest' involves a basic story line but really boils down to the player guiding Pac-Man around a number of different levels, collecting power pellets, avoiding bad guys and negotiating basic puzzles. The game is divided up into six worlds namely, Funhouse, Archaeology, Factory, Pirate, Space and Haunted Mansion - essentially, it's a 30 level platform-style game featuring a full 3D world. The great thing about the 'Quest' mode is the fact that Namco haven't tried to take things too far with this classic update, in other words you won't see Pac-Man pulling out a rocket launcher and pasting all the ghosts. The only arsenal you'll have access to in this game involves some tasteful animation, a little swimming, some rolling and the odd butt bounce, not to mention two new types of power pellet attacks. The 'Mazes' mode will be an updated version of the classic game, but this time all in 3D with three levels of zoom. It plays just like the original and includes Pac-Man's infamous enemies, Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde. There will be around thirty different mazes all with their own graphical touches and all sticking to the original formulae that made the first game so famous. The last mode is the classic original Pac-Man, Namco have used the original arcade ROM for this mode so it looks, plays and sounds exactly the same as those old corner café arcade machines, keeping ardent Pac-Man fans happy. Pac-Man World promises us a nostalgic blast from the past, out in December.



PAC-MAN LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE...



RUN OR BECOME A PANCAKE, YOU DECIDE!



through five perilous missions. You have a number of other highly trained IMF agents at your disposal, so if you like you can send them into battle while you take all the credit. The game is a 3D-action adventure featuring espionage and sabotage elements and looks, feels and tastes similar to Syphon Filter and Metal Gear Solid, a spy thriller featuring locations ranging from the Russian Embassy in Prague to the climax at Waterloo Station in London. Players will need to search for objects and weapons as they explore levels and interact with in-game characters, the emphasis is placed on stealth and in some cases players can even assume the identity of an opponent to infiltrate enemy strongholds. Some of the more interesting weapons include dart guns, gas injectors, blowpipes and smoke gener-



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

Why would anyone in his or her right mind accept a hazardous mission that was filed under Impossible in the cabinet marked classified? Well you're going to find out soon enough as you assume the role of lead Impossible Mission Force (IMF) field-agent Ethan Hunt as he works his way



THIS IS WHERE IT ALL STARTS



through five perilous missions. You have a number of other highly trained IMF agents at your disposal, so if you like you can send them into battle while you take all the credit. The game is a 3D-action adventure featuring espionage and sabotage elements and looks, feels and tastes similar to Syphon Filter and Metal Gear Solid, a spy thriller featuring locations ranging from the Russian Embassy in Prague to the climax at Waterloo Station in London. Players will need to search for objects and weapons as they explore levels and interact with in-game characters, the emphasis is placed on stealth and in some cases players can even assume the identity of an opponent to infiltrate enemy strongholds. Some of the more interesting weapons include dart guns, gas injectors, blowpipes and smoke gener-

As you'd expect there are plenty of gadgets to play with and many of them essential to successful completion of each level including field scanners, wire cutters, night vision goggles and the highly coveted face maker. The game isn't all sneaking and crawling and involves a fair amount of action with shootouts and riding on top of speed trucks. The game will also feature the cinematic soundtrack, including the 'Mission Impossible' theme, first and third person perspectives, over 20 levels and some advanced artificial intelligence. Add all this together and the fact that if you're killed your agency will disavow any knowledge of you should make this title one to watch. Go here, www.infogrames.net for more information.

FORMULA ONE '99

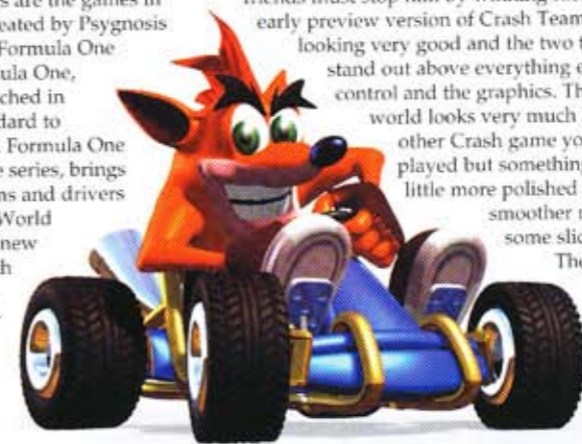


Formula One computer games are among the top favourites of PlayStation users world-wide and the most popular titles are the games in the Formula One series created by Psygnosis and officially licensed by Formula One Administration Ltd. Formula One, the first in the series, launched in 1996, set an industry standard to which all others followed. Formula One '99, the fourth game of the series, brings gamers all the tracks, teams and drivers of the 1999 Formula One World Championship. A host of new features expands the depth and quality of gameplay, with the developers experience and dedication to producing the highest standards, ensuring that Formula One '99 will set new standards for the genre. With over 30 people working on Formula One '99: 14 programmers, 10 artists and a whole lot of others to cover areas like play-testing, front-end design, administration and other tasks, it seems destined for the charts once again. All the circuits have been meticulously recreated through direct access to the archive of the FOA circuit department,



which holds detailed information about each track's unique characteristics. In addition, members of Studio 33 repeatedly studied over 150 hours of television coverage from all over the world, pored over tens of thousands of detailed track photographs and studied each circuit map, until every minute detail had been accounted for and recreated in the game. Formula One '99 has been designed to cater for both entry-level players as well as seasoned F1 veterans. Players are offered a large variety of options (damage, tyre wear, fuel consumption, number of laps, etc.) that can be switched on or off to suit individual players' skills. In addition, players are able to alter their cars' set-up to reflect their own preferences. To give beginners a chance of testing their skills without having to learn a technical manual, the cars' are set-up 95% perfect for each individual track. For all those racing fans on the PSX this may be the title of 1999 for the genre, you can catch our full review in the months to come.

Well this is a first, a racing game with a story... well almost, the story behind Crash Team Racing is a little on the weak side but does provide some purpose to the mindless activity of racing around a track for an endless number of laps. In a nutshell an evil inventor is trying to take over the world and Crash Bandicoot and friends must stop him by winning races. The early preview version of Crash Team Racing is looking very good and the two things that stand out above everything else are the control and the graphics. The game world looks very much like any other Crash game you've ever played but something seems a little more polished and smoother making for some slick racing. The control system is intuitive and very responsive so you can focus on the driving and not the controller. The game has a number of different modes to choose from starting with Adventure Mode where you can race on over twenty different tracks and environments. There is a Time Trial Mode and even a battle mode that allows up to four different players to race on the same screen. Besides the simple task of racing around a track you'll also be able to collect power-ups including bombs, missiles, poison, explosives, invincibility and turbo boost. These extra features add spice to the game as a single power-up can seriously change the course of the race.



as crash detection and advanced computer AI for a challenging experience. UEFA Striker is timing its release with some of the bigger names in football simulations but is already showing signs of competing at the highest level. Simplicity seems the order of the day yet it does not lack the intense gameplay issues that make football simulations successful. All the bells and whistles of crowds chanting, detailed commentary and the odd dive culminate into making UEFA Striker a definite competitor for the top spot in this genre. - NAG



REALISTIC VEHICLES AND SLICK ACTION MAKE THIS THE ONE TO WATCH

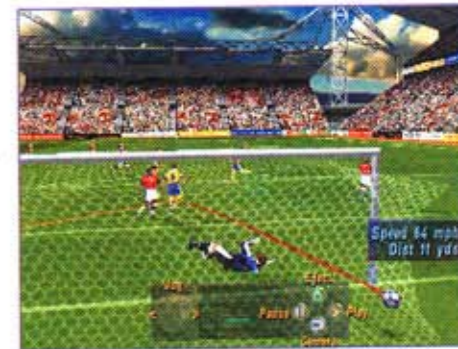


You can also collect fruit on each track and the bonus here is if you are holding ten or more fruit, all power-ups you collect will become even more powerful. The game is also boasting a few technical feats rarely seen on the PlayStation and you can look forward to no annoying fog, pop-ups or dropouts, super high resolution, particle effects and a great physics model. The most remarkable achievement is the fact that up to 4 players can participate on the same track at the same time without any drop in frame rate. So far this game is looking stunning and if you're planning on adding a fun racing title to your Christmas list then give Crash Team Racing a long hard look and if you're still not convinced then go and visit www.playstation-europe.com/CTR

CRASH TEAM RACING

UEFA STRIKER

Especially designed to suit all players and satisfy any football fan, UEFA Striker is a fast and fluid soccer game with a strong emphasis on a user-friendly control method and an exclusive tactical engine developed hand in hand with professional players and coaches. Features include over 150 teams, clubs and national squads, unique 'Total Control System', new 3D engine with more polygons and realism, and an exclusive training mode and certification test mode for access to the best teams. Special attention has been given to the physics engine with ultra realistic ball flight and realism coming to the forefront of Infogrames development, as well



HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES...



Computer Artworks, headed by some say creative ideas/artist genius William Latham, has previously worked on titles such as Organic Art, a surreal screen saver. Now the team is moving on to their first real 'game' but drawing inspiration from their previous work. I met up with producer Vince Farquarson and William Latham himself to get a fuller insight into what they are creating!

Derek dela Fuente

NAG: Evolva, what is the scenario behind the game?

Whereas now you have got things like Dolly the sheep, cloning and genetically modified fruit, what we thought is where will this be in a few hundred years, what will it lead to? We thought like most interesting technology, the military will get hold of it which then begs the question, what will the military do with it? What we have said is, they will take soldiers and they will genetically modify them and mutate them and make them into the ultimate warrior and what that is, is a thing called the Genohunter. In the game you control Genohunters, soldiers of the future. The unique thing about the Genohunter is not only has



NAG: This is your first major game, have there been any major problems?

It's a very experienced team, and at our company there is a policy that we have very high standards so it is a very carefully picked team. I was working as a designer before I came here, all the talent has been here and being quite a high technology product it was pretty cutting edge, we've got graphics, sound, gameplay, plot. The biggest problem had to be trying to keep true to that vision, a lot of companies start out and say we will do a B title, then we will do our big one, whereas we tried to put out the best game possible at the start.

EVOLVA

it been modified over the hundreds of years, it has now got this unique ability to modify itself. So the idea being, you can take this Genohunter, which is like a blank canvas soldier, and you can put it into any kind of combat zone/war environment where it will fight things, and absorb them, analysing their genes. It will find out what is good about that gene and it will use it. It will get better and better until it becomes the ultimate fighting machine within its environment. As the player, you are called the Evolva, the policeman of the galaxy. You just look after all the affairs and keep these Genohunters in the hold of your ship waiting to use them in future scenarios. The first thing you will get is a message from your base saying something weird is happening on the outskirts of your galaxy, you have to go and investigate. What basically happens is that there is this enormous alien parasite, it flies through space eventually crashing into the planet. Once it has landed it sprouts huge limbs and starts growing all over the planet and burrowing through it and producing lots of baby eggs. At the same time it produces lots of guardians to protect itself. Eventually the baby eggs will become mature and they explode the planet, sending off loads more eggs, this is what you are

up against. You land on the planet, you drop off your four Genohunters, and it's game on. It's like an over the shoulder view where you are always controlling one guy, running around, attacking creatures, growing new bits. You have a tactical command mode where you can move your men wherever you need to. The coolest thing about Evolva is that because everything is running on smart A.I. technology we have all these varieties of weapons and different levels. By the end of the game and all the experiences you have been through you will have a completely unique set of Genohunters and it is all done through a screen called mutator. You collect your genes as they build up then you get access to the mutator screen. You get four variants of the claw power up, you have vision chambers, colour and texture variants, so there are aesthetic as well as game play choices to make on that screen. There are fifteen abilities, with five levels on each, and then there's all the aesthetic stuff. The idea is that by the end of the game you've defeated this alien parasite and you have your own unique set of Genohunters. Then you're able to go online where you can trade Genohunters, or you can go head to head in a death match.



NAG: How was the game created?

The original idea was Mark Atkinson's - he came up with the concept and made a prototype of the engine, using the idea of the mutation stuff. Then I came on board and took that original concept and changed it a bit, it was a bit more of a strategy game at that point. It has been a combination of people really. Everything was sketched out to start with - we then imported them in and used them as templates to create the models. The way we work is there would be a design brief that I would do, this creature appears here, does this, etc., and that goes on to the artist who would do an art brief. Then we have regular meetings, usually with Carl and myself and it's quite a firm harangue. The central input from William has been the mutation stuff. He and Mark formed the company to make interesting software now William's involvement is creative director of the company - he's always looking at what we're producing.

NAG: What is the strategy part of the game? It did have a Command & Conquer bit but that was dropped because we came up with a better mechanism. The way we picture it now is a detachable shoot-em-up, you can send off your men individually or all together. There is also the whole RPG thing, we've got a fast guy, agile guy, sniper type guy, they all start with different attributes. The tactical element is that you might want to use the speedy guy to distract the enemy.

NAG: You only have four soldiers, what happens when they are killed? As you go through the levels you are powering up, if you die, you get blown into body bits, and those body bits contain genes, so your other guys can soak them up. When you come to the next level that guy gets regenerated, the down side to that is that he hasn't got all those genes that he powered up so you might want to replay



KILL THOSE BAD THINGS AND USE THEIR BENE THINGS TO DO THINGS

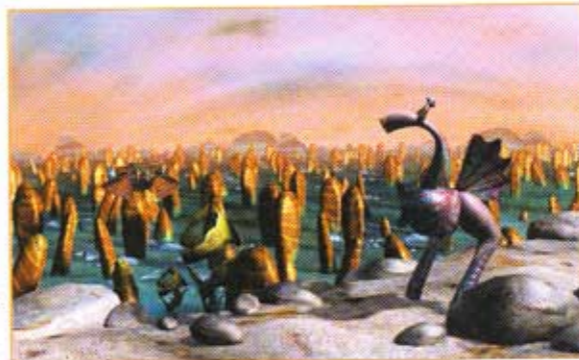
EVOLVA (CONTINUED)

and try and get him with those power-ups. You could choose to power-up your soldiers equally, or just make up one mad guy with the others pretty weak.

NAG: You have said there are millions of combinations so no game will ever be the same, even with just four there are twenty-four variants. With so many will it be discernible to the player?

There is a multitude of things making it different every time you play it, for a start there is the mutator, you have four different Genohunters to start. At the start of the game you can make them any colour you want, there are two sets of colours, then you have 10 weapons with five levels of each of those weapons spread across the four. Then there are lots of different appendages, growing spikes out of your sides and so on. We also changed the mesh itself, you get more armour to make you more bulky. Also as you go through the game

the colours are able to mutate, and we have texture mutation, which is like something from PhotoShop with layers. One guy might be green and smooth with a claw, whereas another guy may be lumpy and concrete looking. You have a certain amount of points you can spend on weapons, aesthetics, etc. You can raise that and raise that and at the end of the game you will get a guy with enormous appendages.



NAG: What sort of tools, etc., have you created for the game?

One of the great things about our engine is that it can accept arbitrary meshes, we are not constrained to a block based or an in-game mat builder. We have actually used Macs to create all the game maps; this is then only limited to our imaginations. For the in-game content we have in-house layout tools. Basically the editor is the same as the game - you are playing the game and you hit a button and dialogues come up at

the side. The really nice thing is that it pauses the game at that point, and you can change your soldier's attributes and then go back into the game. We also used that to do the scripting type things which plugs into the AI which is another interesting area.

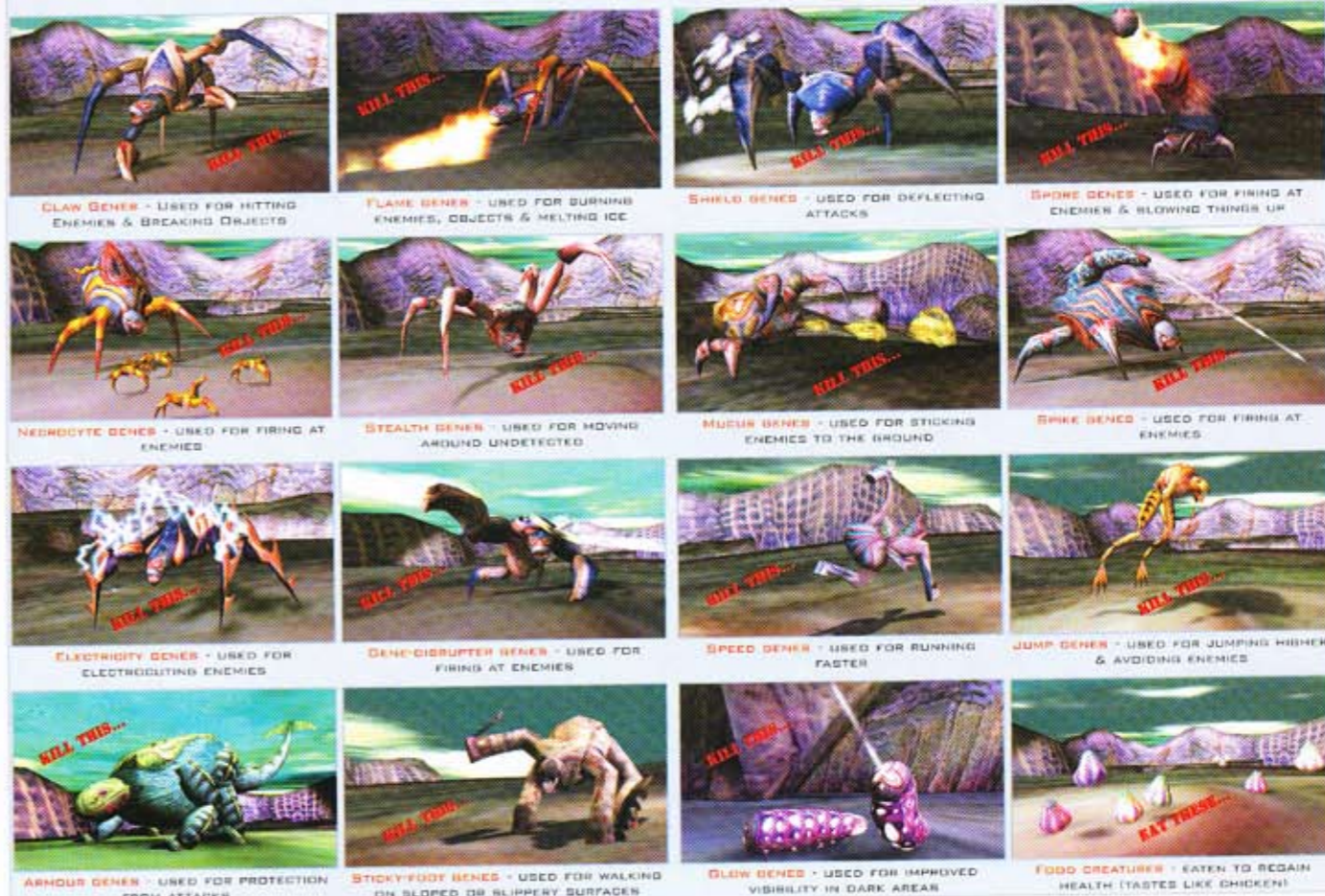
NAG: It has been stated that creatures and environments in the game behave in a natural/realistic way, how?

We have tried to emulate how things really are and not the way that is just convenient for the game. Basically things have biases, it won't be like a standard game AI where it hits a hard boundary because you have set up a parameter, what it does is that it just knows that it likes that area. The further away from that area it gets the more unhappy it becomes and eventually it will want to go back, but what can happen is you can attack him in his home zone and he can say I was happy in my home but I keep getting killed I am going to be less happy there, so the bias will move away. By using that system you get very realistic behaviour. The creatures also have memories, they can hear and speak to each other.

NAG: Your company seems to focus on the graphical element of the game, maybe people will look at it and think ok it looks good but from the gameplay point of view it is

ABILITIES

THE GENOHUNTER ADAPTS ITSELF BY ABSORBING THE REMAINS OF FALLEN ENEMIES AND THEN, AFTER ANALYSING THEIR DNA, MUTATING ITSELF TO INCORPORATE ANY USEFUL ABILITIES THAT THE CREATURE MAY HAVE HAD. FOR EXAMPLE IF A GENOHUNTER KILLS A CREATURE WHICH HAS THE ABILITY TO JUMP HIGH IT WILL MUTATE ITS OWN BODY AND INCREASE THE SIZE OF ITS LEGS TO EMULATE THIS ABILITY. WITH 'MUTATOR' TECHNOLOGY, THE PLAYER CAN CUSTOMISE THEIR GENOHUNTERS ALLOWING FOR MORE THAN A BILLION VARIATIONS, ENSURING THAT NO TWO GAMES ARE EVER THE SAME. PLAYERS CAN THEN EXCHANGE THEIR UNIQUE SETS OF GENOHUNTERS OVER THE INTERNET OR GO HEAD TO HEAD IN MULTIPLAYER MATCHES TO SEE WHO HAS EVOLVED THE MOST EFFECTIVE SET OF WARRIORS.



FLORA

AS WELL AS THE ALIEN AND INDIGENOUS CREATURES POPULATING THE ENVIRONMENTS THERE IS ALSO A RANGE OF DEADLY PLANT LIFE. SOME EXPLODE AND OTHERS SIMPLY EAT YOU.



still Rainbow 6, etc. I think what those games have tried to do, from a high-level gameplay point of view is kind of similar but there are so many unique things about Evolva that set it apart. The whole mutation side of the game, the online side and the look which is also very unique. What you see is what you get, if you see an alien with big claws, kill it and suck it up, you will then have a new claw weapon. What is mixed up is the aesthetic side and other genes, if you are half way through the game and you get a new gene we give you the variants of that gene and then we mix up all the attributes that you have had up to that point in the game to give variety. It is touching on the RPG side but we have put a new spin on it. We get the visuals to attract people in but what makes a game is obviously gameplay.

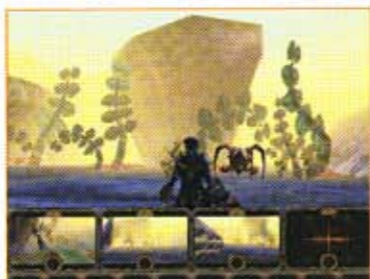
NAG: You have got a strong ethos of an intel-

lectual company with cerebral ideas because of the organic art, is it something the company consciously works on? It is one of a number of things. We are a very ambitious company. I think you have to be working on the technology front constantly to get ahead of the game. That is one of our aims, along with best technology, best gameplay, they are all equally important. The game itself has been in development for two years.

NAG: At the bottom of the screen you have the four-camera views, are they from each of your Genohunters? Basically you have the big bit up the top which is the one you are controlling at that time and then you have a



THE GAME WORLD IS STUNNING



NAG: Who is the game aimed at? I think there is a broad market, people who like action games are going to like it, tactical players will also like it. We are aiming at a fairly typical PC user and we do also get a lot of interest from the not so typical PC gamers. One of the successes so far is that we are getting mass-market interest with people who wouldn't normally play it. Also this genetically modified stuff is quite topical at the moment.

NAG: Are the missions in the game linear? The way you go through the game is linear - there is a plot and a story. There are objectives, which you need to satisfy to move on to the next stage of the game.

NAG: What are your thoughts on other games on the market? Everybody says you should bring something new to the market but the reality is that people do want a certain amount of familiarity. You have to give people something unique, but if you make everything totally bizarre then it turns people off. There is a lack of originality in the market. The trick is predicting what people will want in two years and being slightly ahead, that is our challenge.

DEREK DELA FUENTE

compass which is over the window of the one you have got selected, that shows what's around. Then in the other three slots you have what the other three, that you are not directly controlling, can see. You can change between any of them at any time.

NAG: How many missions are there? Twelve in total spread over three continents including coral marshes, crystal regions. We wanted them all to look different. People want a certain amount of reality but still be taken somewhere new. One thing we tried to do is intertwine all the elements, the way it works is with all the weapons and the abilities, we have also thought of it in terms of puzzles. To give you a simple example, you are going through the game and you are killing creatures and you get to an ice door. You can't get through the ice door, so you go back and you realise there is an area you haven't tried out, so you go there and there are flame creatures, you kill them and the mutator becomes active. You go to the mutator and you pick flame breath, so you go back to the ice door, flame the door, it melts and you are through to the next area. We wanted some abstract switch thing, if there is a wall with a crack in it you need more arm power to knock it down.

NAG: What form does the dialogue take? The whole dialogue is in the form of mission briefings, it is not really an adventure game, and it is more tactical. You have objectives and you are given statistics. You can go back to levels, and they will be saved as you left them so you can go back to tackle parts you couldn't do before.

3D TACTICAL COMBAT SIMULATION



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SWAT 3

CLOSE QUARTERS COMBAT

CREW

SIERRA STUDIOS

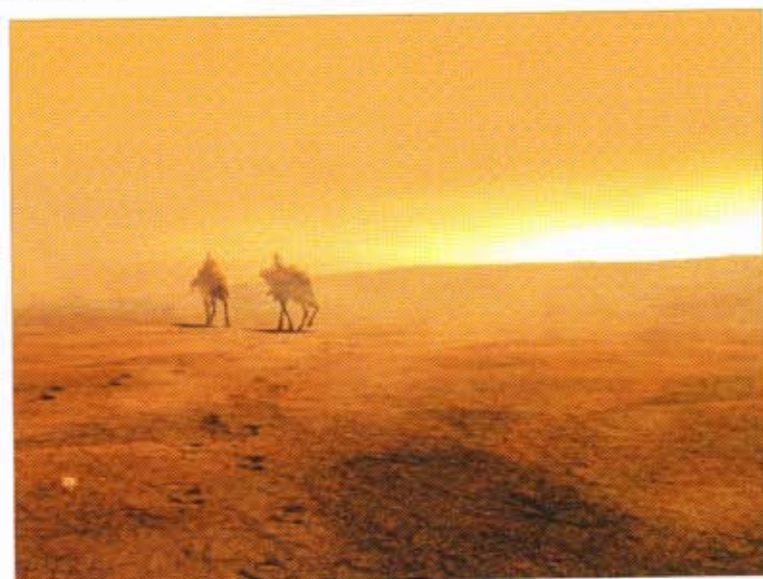
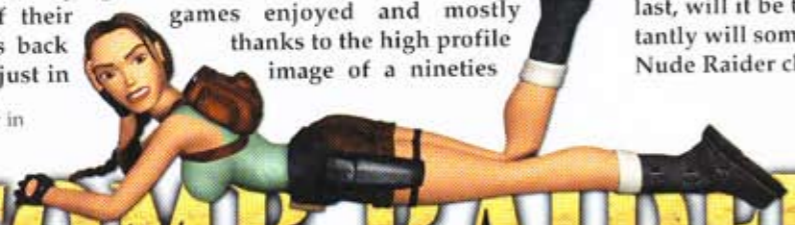


No doubt many will simply yawn at the logo sitting on this page, on the other hand many will already be wiping saliva from the bottom of their quivering lower lip. She is back and as luck would have it, just in

time for the December holiday season. Partly due to the tremendous success the first three games enjoyed and mostly thanks to the high profile image of a nineties

The game will be based entirely in Egyptian locations, the plot revolves around ancient mythology and the alignment of the stars at the turn of the millennium, it's Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation and it's almost here. There's a new engine driving the action as well as a new

TOMB RAIDER THE LAST REVELATION



HOW THIS IS HOW ALL GREAT ADVENTURES SHOULD BEGIN

inventory system and this time the developers have truly turned to the original game for inspiration. Smaller locations, tougher puzzles and no silly trips to London or tropical islands. Imagine, if you can, how the first Indiana Jones movie made you feel, well this is what they're hoping for with this last instalment in the Tomb Raider legacy.

EGYPT, PRESENT DAY
The story behind the game is a very focused tale that fills in many of the gaps in Lara's past, detailing how she became so fascinated with archaeology, who she was as a young girl and finally how she, with your help, saves humanity

from Armageddon. We begin in Egypt where we see Lara travelling across the desert on a camel with a guide by her side. She stops at a small rocky outcrop, dismounts and activates an ancient mechanism, revealing what appears to be a virgin tomb. Inside she discovers an artefact and manages to unleash the evil spirit of the Egyptian God Set, Lara also learns that only she can re-imprison Set. To do this she needs to re-animate Horus at the correct alignment of the Orion constellation at the turn of the millennium. Upon returning to the surface she finds herself in danger when her guide attempts to double cross her and steal the artefact. She outwits the fool and he escapes; Lara pursues him and is unwittingly led into an ambush but again eludes her attackers and escapes across the Nile. Here we learn of Lara's rival and his evil intentions. So begins the adventure leading Lara to the Tomb of Semerkhet at Karnak, Alexandria, the city of Cairo and finally on to the Giza Pyramids for the final battle. For the most part the story is

icon who doesn't really exist outside the virtual world, the last Tomb Raider game is upon us. Will it be the last, will it be the best and most importantly will someone please find the real Nude Raider cheat already? - RedTide

related using full motion video sequences, cut-scenes, numerous interactions with in-game characters and information collected from inscriptions and ancient curses. The developers have attempted to seamlessly integrate the actual game, cut-

scenes and videos into one incredibly engrossing experience with the aim of eliminating loading and concentrating on adventuring. In past games the story was used as a means of linking locations but in The Last Revelation the plot is completely integrated into the game keeping the player focused and engrossed from beginning to end. There are also more videos and the final game will feature around eleven movies totalling twenty minutes of impressive rendered video. During the movies the player will be introduced to two new characters who play important roles in Lara's life then and now.



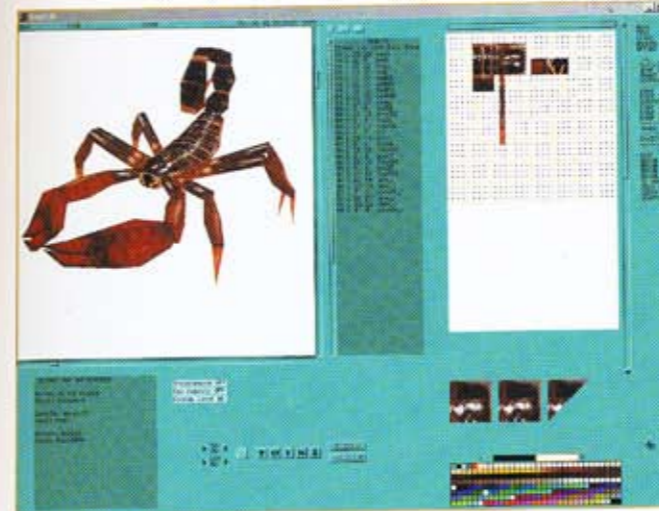
LOCATIONS

Again, the entire game is set in Egypt and spotlights many different areas of archaeological interest such as Tomb of Semerkhet at Karnak, Cairo, The Giza Pyramids, Alexandria and the Valley of the Kings. This might seem a little small but the developers have stated that this game will be around the same size as the previous titles. This time the separate locations are smaller and more atmospheric and do away with all that tedious running around huge outside areas. Players will have a very clear idea of what they need to do from the onset of each level. The focus here is on puzzle orientated levels with higher levels of detail and a greater number of objects to interact with. The overall emphasis is on ancient locations, tombs and Egyptian mythology with strong elements of mystery and suspense. Most of the game's atmosphere is authentic in that many of the locations exist in the real world with some of the buildings and temples in the game still standing today. The only real downfall in creating a game in one

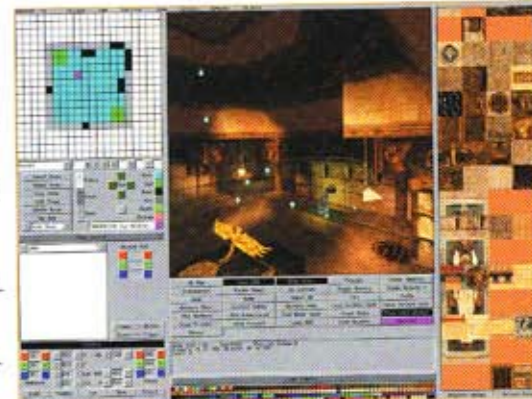
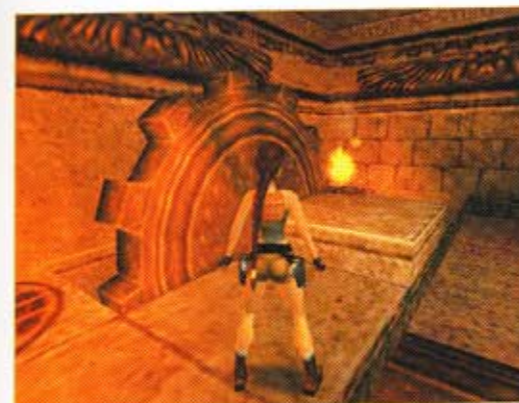
YOUR PASSPORT IS NO LONGER VALID...



THE OLD PASSPORT SYSTEM HAS BEEN DROPPED IN FAVOUR OF THIS NEW DIARY THINGAMABOB. YOU CAN USE THE DIARY TO SAVE OR LOAD YOUR PROGRESS AT ANY STAGE IN THE GAME, KEEP SECTIONS OF MAPS, REMEMBER INSCRIPTIONS AND VIEW THE SCRAP BOOK. CHANGES LIKE THIS WILL REALLY DO A LONG WAY TO MAKING THIS FOURTH INSTALLMENT SOMETHING REALLY DIFFERENT.



THIS IS THE IN-HOUSE ANIMATION EDITOR THAT THE DEVELOPERS USE

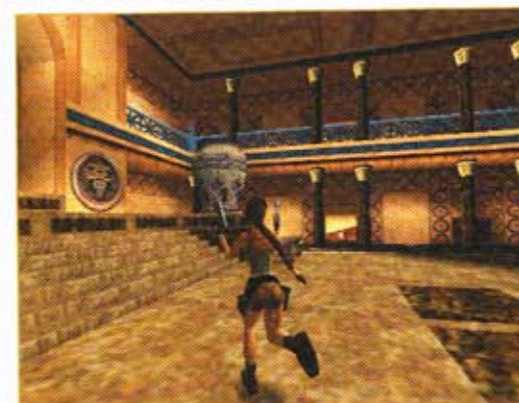


A LEVEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

locale is the fact that you are limited to sandy colours, stone textures and golden statues. Although from some of the early screen shots this might be something of a mute point. For now the game features around fifteen levels with a few central 'hub' levels and takes place mostly inside. Another interesting twist is that some levels will actually serve to take Lara to new locations such as an action packed jeep chase.

NO MANSION

There will be no mansion training level in this fourth game but the 'training' level takes place in Cambodia as a mental 'flashback' that is used to



introduce the player to Lara's mentor, Von Croy, one of the main characters, and here we'll see Lara at the age of sixteen. This is a single level that must be completed before continuing the rest of the game and is used to tell both old and new players more about Lara's history and the

reasons why she is an adventurer today. Von Croy teaches Lara how to perform all her moves, new and old and features a race against Von Croy. After the training level has been completed successfully players will gain fundamental information that will all fit 'perfectly' together during the game when Von Croy makes his return as Lara's main rival.

MORE ROOM IN THE BACKPACK
There will also be a new interface that replaces the old inventory rings

and passport system. The new system will be more like a traditional adventure game inventory where items can be combined and used together. Some of the toys inside the bag include Lara's trusty Colt pistols, a canteen, flares, compass and binoculars that have a zoom feature. You will still be able to carry ammunition including a few new items such as crossbow bolts, a laser sight for the crossbow, tracer bullets for the Uzi and three different types of grenades, standard, smoke and stun. The types of weapons are limited by the setting of the game and the developers have chosen a simple range of weapons that suit the game world, the favourites are still there but there are a few new toys to play with. On an interesting note when using the crossbow your view will change to the first person, for accuracy. On her travels Lara will also find batteries, a flashlight, maps, artefacts, keys and generic puzzle items such as pulleys and ropes. The idea behind the new inventory system is to make life easier and more interesting for the player while adding a new dimension to puzzle solving. Players can combine items such as the batteries and the flashlight for visibility in dark places as well as combining Lara's Colts and the flashlight for shooting in the dark. This also works with sections of a single map. Another nice touch is the inclusion of the binoculars, which will allow Lara to read inscriptions too distant to see with the naked eye. Once these writings have been seen they will appear in Lara's diary, another new feature. Besides being used for saving and loading the new diary system has several uses including information storage such as plot details, locations and ancient inscriptions all critical to solv-

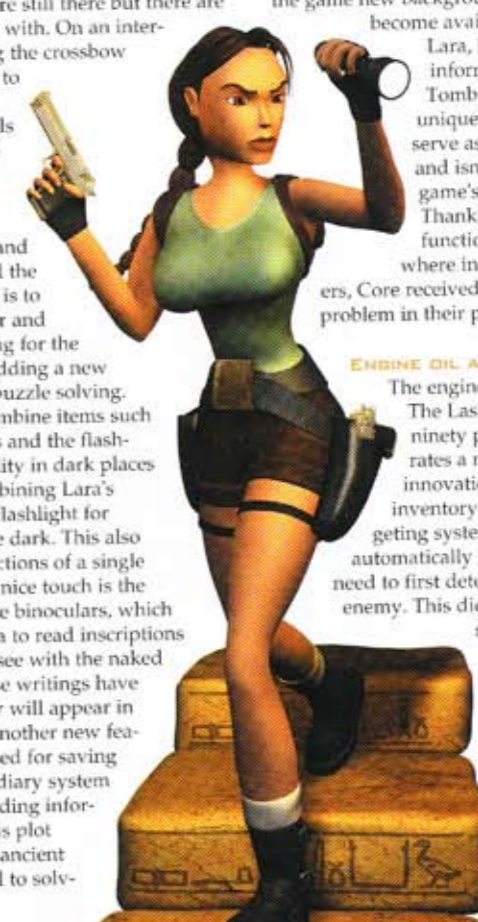
GENRE: ACTION ADVENTURE (PC/PSX)
DEVELOPER: CORE
PUBLISHER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE
SUPPLIER: CREW TELE (011) 233-1111
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 99
INTERNET: WWW.EIDOS.COM

ing puzzles. Sections of maps can be stored here and overlaid on the screen and when Lara has all the pieces for a particular map a secret area will become visible. The diary can also be referred to for hints and tips if stuck, but fre-

quent use will have negative implications. Another interesting trivial purpose for the diary will be the scrapbook and at certain sections in the game new background information will become available such as pictures of Lara, her friends, family and information about previous Tomb Raider adventures. This unique feature will only really serve as amusement for players and isn't vital for solving the game's many puzzles. Thankfully the save and load function can be initiated anywhere in the game as the developers, Core received plenty of heat about this problem in their past games.

ENGINE OIL AND POWER

The engine behind Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation is around ninety percent new and incorporates a number of changes and innovations. Besides the all new inventory system there is a new targeting system, Lara will no longer automatically lock onto enemies but will need to first detect the presence of an enemy. This did detract a little from the suspense of the previous titles because you always targeted enemies before seeing them. Objects in the levels may now also be targeted. A new editing system creates realistic 'real' objects in the game world that can be interacted with as well as greater





THE VERY BEST TOMB RAIDING SINCE INDIANA JONES!

adventurer himself who helps Lara throughout the game and even has his life saved by her.

NEW MOVES

Naturally there are a number of new moves for this fourth game most notably the use of ropes, new shimmy manoeuvres and item manipulation moves. The use of ropes is really exciting news and you should see Lara climbing, grabbing and swinging around some of the levels, a nice touch is her ability to build momentum on a rope from standing still which should open up the scope for a greater variety of puzzles. One worrying thing is that some ropes might break during a treacherous swing and where

levels of detail and stunning architecture. Walls can now be blown up or collapsed and the new lighting system features dynamic lighting and spotlighting effects. Environment mapping textures and 3D objects now allows for realistic reaction to light for example metallic surfaces will be reflective and marble surfaces will shine. Overall the emphasis has been placed on atmospheric detail and significant increases in graphical definition.

HOW DUMB?

One area that has always been repeatedly criticised in the Tomb Raider series is the artificial intelligence or lack thereof. This new game boasts some impressive improvements in this department and with the inclusion of the new aiming system should make for an impressive challenge. Many of the enemies in the game will be able to mimic Lara's movements around the level and considering that many of them will have access to the same range of movements that Lara has should make them formidable foes.

Gone are the days when you could guide Lara to a safe place and then shoot the stupid computer controlled enemies, now enemies will relentlessly pursue Lara or evade her attacks. The type of enemy faced will now also have a direct bearing on how Lara deals with them for example skeletons cannot be shot dead so you must now find new and inventive ways of killing them. Pushing a skeleton over a cliff will ensure he never returns much the same as smashing him with a boulder. Add to this a few supernatural enemies and enemies that can inflict poisonous wounds and you've got yourself a serious adventure filled with danger and intrigue. Considering the setting of the game you can expect the usual group of mummies, sphinxes, skeletons and statues all set about terminating you, not forgetting giant scorpions and beetles. The developers are quick to add that the majority of enemies will not be human but rather more mystical and exciting things to shoot at, another departure from the last two games. Of the human characters two play an important role in the game, one is Von Croy, Lara's Mentor who she left for dead when she was younger - he has some unresolved 'issues'. The other central character is Jean Yves, an old friend and avid

will that leave our sexy heroine? Other applications for the rope climbing ability will also include the ability to climb up and down poles or to activate hidden switches or ring a bell that might open a hidden trapdoor. Lara can now shimmy around corners where in the past if you hit a corner you had to drop to the ground, this now also opens up the possibilities for level exploration. The other moves all generally fall into the object manipulation category with shoulder barging doors, kicking down doors, opening doors with a crowbar,

searching bodies and opening trap doors in the floor or ceiling. Some other small touches have been added such as the running pick up and swim dash. The existing range of moves has also been improved on resulting in more realistic animation and better finer control.

The developers, Core, are promising a puzzle-based game similar to the original Tomb Raider thanks to the new inventory system and new moves.

There will be no more running around huge outside areas searching for one single item. The true challenge will be in working out the puzzles themselves instead of trying to find the item required for solving them. The game world will boast pressure-pads, timed levers, rotating hubs, wheels, hanging switches, switches in bug filled holes, trip wires, breakable walls and direc-



THE MOTORBIKE WITH SIDECAR

tional puzzles requiring the use of the compass. There are new levers requiring new animations to operate and a whole host of small touches that make the game infinitely more detailed and engrossing than ever before.



THE GIRL AND HER VEHICLES

The sexy heroine is now fully skinned and has an increased number of polygons so she can now blink and move her mouth when talking with totally remodelled hands and head. She will also sport a new voice but won't be changing her costume all that often and now when she climbs out of water you'll see water dripping from her. While playing the game Lara will also look directly at important items making the whole exploration process easier and the detection of items simpler. All this boils down to is a better looking Lara Croft and who's going to complain about that, at least now getting her to

stand in a corner and turning around slowly will yield a bigger reward (not that anyone would do that, now would they?). So far the game features two new vehicles, a jeep and a motorbike with a sidecar, there will also be a 'train' level where Lara will have to put her skills to the test on a moving train. The vehicles are also used to link different parts of the game together seamlessly.

WHO CAN SAY

Well it all looks very interesting and exciting but you have to ask yourself if they might be taking the success of this series a little too far. With three games under the belt

already are we finally going to be saying goodbye to Lara Croft or will we be seeing another Tomb Raider next year around this time. Based on the last game this latest instalment really needs to be something special if it's going to impress anyone. As always with these things we'll just have to wait and see, but the good money is on a massive hit, again.

REOTIDE



GIMME NET-VIOLATING-AIR-SHREDDING-LIGHTNING STRIKES GIMME STUD-RUPTURED-TURF-CHURNING SHIN-SHEARING-TACKLES GIMME A-WIDE-AWAKE EYE-POPPING-GLOBAL-SPECTACLE GIMME FIFA



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.

THE MARCH OF TECHNOLOGY

The time for gamers in this country grows short. Not in the Armageddon, end-of-the-world kind of way, but in a slow, cancerous style, as our machines become older and older, and less capable of running the new products that are hitting the market. Our recent survey indicated that a large percentage of gamers out there are still running standard Pentiums, mostly P166 and P200's. This means that, when the flood of Christmas titles for 1999 hit our shores, vast numbers of people out there won't be able to play them. What is to be done about this situation? Well, we can whine and moan

and stamp our little feet until the cows come home, but let's face facts. South Africa is hardly a big market demand in the international view of entertainment software. Developers hardly think "well, let's try to keep this game's specs down for the poor little South Africans." Games are developed for overseas markets, primarily, and it's a hell of a lot cheaper to upgrade over there than it is here.

All we can do is grin and bear it. Look on the positive side. You want to play games, the way they should be played? Then you better learn the self discipline that it takes to save up for the machine! Oh, it's very easy for us to say, what with these fancy machines that we use at NAG, but, believe us, if there were no gamers out there, there would be no NAG!

CREATIVE ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PC PREMIUM SYSTEMS



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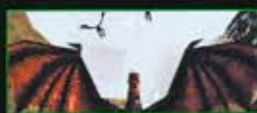
AGE OF EMPIRES II THE AGE OF KINGS



Microsoft's Age of Empires II: Age of Kings is one of the best RTS games to surface this year. This long awaited sequel to the popular Age of Empires deserves to win our Editor's Choice award hands down!

See PG 44

The Awards Ceremony



Drakan PG 52



GP 500 PG 56



Links LS PG 60

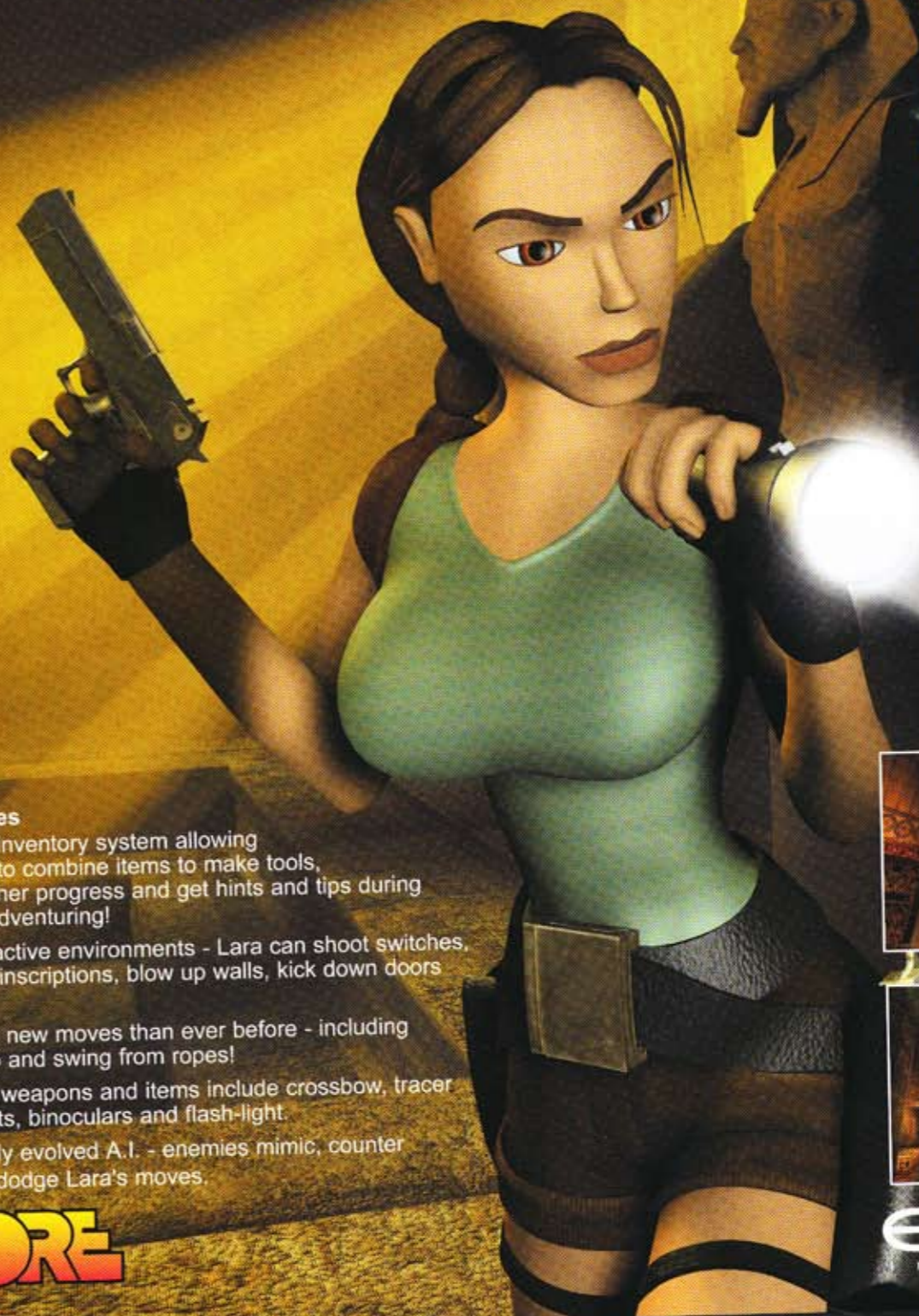


Shadow Company PG 62



WWF Attitude PG 70

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- New weapons and items include crossbow, tracer bullets, binoculars and flash-light
- Highly evolved A.I. - enemies mimic, counter and dodge Lara's moves.



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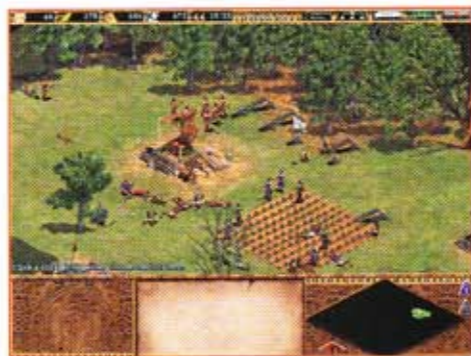
Distributed by Crew. For more information please call Johannesburg (011) 233-1111, Cape Town (021) 418-4240, Durban (031) 579-1974, or PE (041) 513-515. Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation © & TM Core Design Limited 1999. © & Published Eidos Interactive Limited 1999. All Rights Reserved. "PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

Unlike many others, this sequel was not announced until relatively (!) recently. However, ever since it has been hotly anticipated, especially among a solid cadre of Age of Empires supporters, Age of Empires II: Age of Kings stands to gain fresh subjects.

I was probably wise of Microsoft not to let the world know about Age of Kings too soon - rather, they waited until the project was a definite go, then released the news. Thereafter every Age of Empires fan I know couldn't stop speculating. Having found the original somewhat lacking, I did not really expect anything to shake the Earth. Boy, was I wrong! One of the first differences you will notice if you ever played the original, is that the races (civilisations, actually) are far more diversified in their technology trees and units available. The option still exists to play a game with full technology all around, but I find this 'levelling' approach to take much of the intrigue out of the game. Each race now has a unique unit (the Vikings get two, but lack many standard units) and is denied a unique combination of several standard units. For example, the Goths do not build stone walls of any kind (except for their castle) but are able to construct bombard cannons, which the Britons, Celts and Japanese, as well as a few other races, do not have access to. Each civilisation is also given its own 'team bonus' - for

level control (something you'd more likely expect in a first-person shooter, rather than a real-time strategy title) to help fine-tune the performance of the game to the hardware. Detail level seems to have far more impact on game performance than the resolution. Regardless what level of detail you take, you are likely to

be dazzled by the sheer visual detail present here - trees have individual leaves, and come in many shapes and



YOUR PEOPLE ARE LYING DOWN ON THE JOB!

AGE OF EMPIRES II THE AGE OF KINGS



game music and reach for the hi-fi). The control interface is where Age of Empires II truly shines. Microsoft have managed to combine the best of many worlds here (real-time strategy worlds, at any rate) to result in the most comprehensive control system

I have ever seen in a game.

Hot-keys will take a while to master, as there are so many of them. However, they are not all essential, and very nearly all of them are pretty logical. Of course, some letter assignments don't seem to make sense at first, but one's bound to run out of letters sometime! At least they have kept it consistent.

By hitting Ctrl and whatever shortcut a building is ordered with, you are taken to that building; if you have more than one of these, and the one you were taken to is not the one you want, just hit the shortcut again, and you will be taken to the next one. Any building where units are made or research is carried out may be jumped to immediately with a hot-key combination. Groups of units can be assigned hot-keys (as is the norm these days in RTS). Audio queues alert you to various events - different horns and chimes indicate events like attack by enemies, a farm being depleted and requiring rebuilding, or the creation of a combat or non-combat unit. Every chime is echoed by a text message, so you can

sizes. Unfortunately, the developers seem to have decided that static water is good enough for a very late-90's audience (which I can't say I agree with). So, while the waves and swells look terrifically realistic, they look like a terrifically realistic photograph. Oh, well. The next thing that you'll notice is that, very likely, you can't understand most of what your units are telling you. This is because you probably don't speak their languages, not because they are speaking gibberish. Every race has different acknowledgements and reporting voice-overs (though there are occasions where I wonder why it sounds to me like my Frank troops are speaking to me in German). The soundtrack consists of one really long (30 minute) track, which is something like a medieval ditty over a muted house-techno dub - bizarre! (I suspect many will listen to it a few times while they play, then turn off

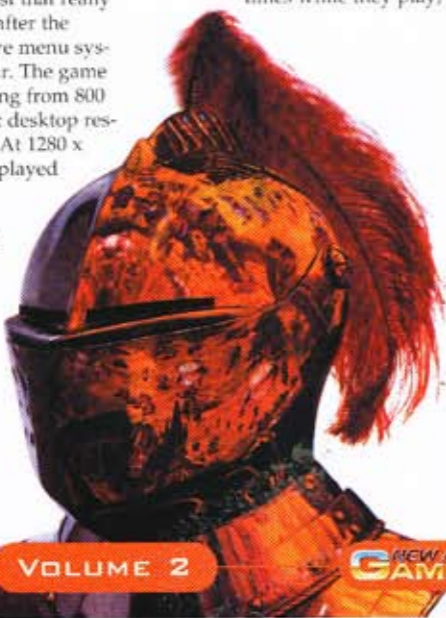


HIGHLY TRAINED SPIES... IN SHEEP CLOTHING

instance, the Franks' cavalry enjoys substantially better visual ranges, while Persian knights are particularly effective against archers.

A FIRST PERSON SHOOTER?

The aspect that is likely to be the first that really strikes a new Age of Kings player (after the clever introduction and the attractive menu system) is the in-game visual splendour. The game supports graphics resolutions ranging from 800 x 600 all the way up to your current desktop resolution (if it happens to be higher). At 1280 x 1024 enough of the landscape is displayed to offset the negative aspect of the rather large buildings. These large buildings are not so big just for the hell of it, but rather they far more closely approximate something approaching a realistic scale (compared to units, say) than just about any game that has gone before. Barracks units actually look like they might fit in the building that gave them birth - several at a time! Besides this, AoE2: AoK also features a detail-



UNIQUE UNITS - BY CIVILIZATION

Mongols

Mangudai - cavalry archer with attack bonus against siege weapons.



The Mongols were almost exclusively a cavalry army. Their ranks included many thousands of mounted archers, the best of which were known as mangudai. These in particular used fiendish tactics to lure their mounted enemies onto their chosen battlefield. Infantry, of course, were cut up from a distance.

Persians

War Elephant - slow but strong and well armoured, can trample areas!



The sheer size of these beasts was enough to break enemy ranks - assuming the elephant could be gotten there - they were not easy to control, but wreaked plentiful destruction, when they finally did get there.

Saracens

Mameluke - camel cavalry with a ranged attack.



Similarly to janissaries, mamelukes were slaves to Islam masters who trained them to be excellent soldiers. They were highly trained and enjoyed strong morale due to their indoctrination.

Teutons

Teutonic Knight - heavily armoured infantry warrior.



These were originally members of the Crusades into the Holy Land. They wore the (then) most advanced armour available, which made them next to invulnerable against the average opponent.

Turks

Janissary - a hand cannoner with longer range.



These were born slaves or enslaved young, and were trained for one purpose - war. Janissaries were so indoctrinated, that they were trusted with the most advanced weapons even though they were slaves. They were, in fact, proud of their status.

Vikings

Longboat - fast landing craft.



These vessels can hardly be called "ships". Despite being of shallow draft and relatively small size, however, they were able to travel impressive distances and allow a strike on virtually any coastline. They carried Viking warriors, including many who could go berserk, on plunder raids.

Vikings

Berserk - infantry unit with regeneration.



Some Viking warriors could "go berserk" and attack without feeling pain or fear. This was unnerving to fight against, as a berserker would often ignore serious wounds, simply from being unaware of them.

Britons

Longbowman - powerful archer with long range.



The 5-to-6-foot longbow was carved from a single piece of wood, and fired 3-foot-long arrows known as "clothyard shafts". It was an uncommonly powerful and extremely accurate distance weapon. Barrages of arrows were rained down upon armies of thousands of men, causing huge casualties and shattering enemy morale.

Byzantines

Cataphract - heavily armoured cavalry, good against infantry.



The Byzantine cataphracts consisted of some of the best-trained and most-disciplined troops ever. They can be considered to be almost successors of the Roman legions, from a training and organisational point of view. Officers were trained in tactics and strategy.

Celts

Woad Raider - infantry with very fast movement.



Celtic guerilla warriors would paint their faces with a dye made from the woad plant (so as to appear fearsome) and raid the Britons from the forests. They would dash in, deliver some damage, then fade back into the trees.

Chinese

Chu Ko Nu - archer with mediocre range but great damage and fire rate.



The Chinese were the original inventors of the cross-bow, and so it is not surprising that they were the first to design a semi-automatic reload design. This weapon had a magazine fitted at the top that allowed a fast rate of fire, at the price of considerable accuracy.

Franks

Throwing Axeman - infantry with ranged attack.



Axes in combat were a throwback to earlier times, when the Frankish tribes roamed parts of Europe. (This style of fighting is similar to that of Apache Indians and their tomahawks). A useful secondary use of these axes was that of chopping up wooden palisades and other fortifications.

Goths

Huskari - infantry unit that is almost immune to archer fire.



These men were the personal bodyguards of the barbarian chieftains that led the sack of Rome. Their sole duty was to protect their chieftain, and thus had few formal obligations. They were well trained and fanatical.

Japanese

Samurai - infantry unit with fast attack.



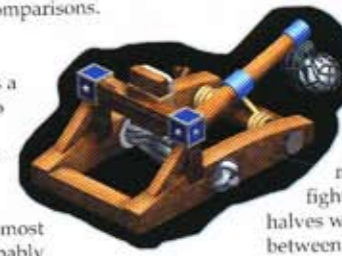
Samurai were similar in most respects to knights of various orders in Europe. They were an aristocratic warrior caste, dedicated to honour and duty.

learn the sounds quickly. A hot key exists for jumping to the last event (a la Starcraft) so you may take quick and decisive action. Another hot key worth mentioning is the "idle villager" key - it immediately takes you to any villager that is awaiting orders (if any such exist at the time).

Very useful for finding those lazy louts when they hide under a tree or such-like. An identical key exists for locating idle military units. All hot-keys may also be reassigned, should you find it necessary. Hold your mouse cursor over any control or readout, and a help message appears, explaining the function of that button or the meaning of the report. Advanced controls include three mini-map modes, as well as info overlays with various statistics and comparisons.

FORMATION

I mentioned formations a little while ago. Let's go back to those for a minute. Some previous games have made attempts at formation management, with the most successful of these probably

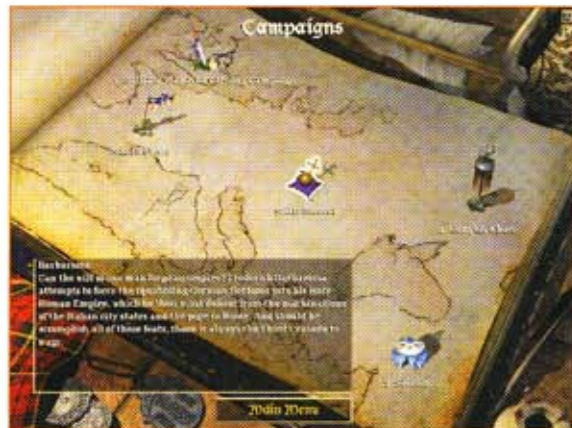


being Knights and Merchants (which is not as impressive a feat as it sounds). Age of Empires II begins a new trend, I believe. The number of formations itself is limited, but at least they are implemented more smoothly than anything I have yet seen. Four basic formations are provided - line, staggered (open line), flanking and box. The most noteworthy of these are the last two. Flanking splits your group in half and opens it into a pincer-like shape, which is maintained in combat and usually in movement (formation is always restored before the destination is reached - more about that later). When instructed to initiate this formation, the most capable front-line units will lead, followed by weaker but more mobile units, and followed up by ranged fighters and monks. Furthermore, the two halves will "squash" whatever you target between them. The box formation revolves

around placing the weakest, most vulnerable units in the middle, surrounded by layers of progressively tougher troops. This is done automatically! Line formations are exactly the same, except that the strongest units form the front rank, with the weakest at the rear. Should you have a long front line or box side containing both foot soldiers and spear-



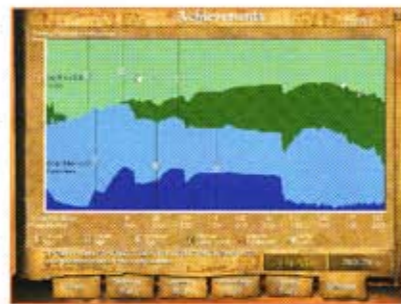
men/pikemen, these will be alternated, thus enabling the formation to deal with both infantry and mounted threats. As a formation passes through narrow areas, it will narrow and elongate (but still retain its overall concept) then the faster units will slide back into place by the time the destination is reached. All units slow to the speed of the slowest unit in order to maintain



EVERYTHING IN THE GAME SIMPLY DOZZES QUALITY

cohesiveness. I repeat - all this happens automatically! Wow! Two main single-player game types are available - campaign mode and 'random map' mode (ie. skirmish). In campaign mode you will find five campaigns to choose from, the first of which is really a tutorial. The remaining four are all cam-

paigned based around events of real historical campaigns. All these campaigns took place in or near Europe in the Middle Ages, which is when Age of Kings is set. Skirmish mode is much like any other RTS skirmish - you choose up to seven computer opponents and off you go! Only it's not quite that simple - there are five levels of play, and the AI is so advanced that it will take an experienced RTS player a number of games before he/she will be able to beat an average opponent! (Of course, it helps to record games and play them back later, examining the computer's building order - but more about that later). Multiplayer is the arena where games are truly tested. I don't think Age of Kings will have any worries in this regard. While the games are still



relatively long (as was the case with its predecessor) you can expect to finish a multiplayer game of Age of Kings quicker than an average game of, say, Tiberian Sun. Some old concepts from the original are still present - Cartography as a researchable technology that allows you to share vision with your allies, trading with Markets and multiple victory conditions. Also, a very simple but crucial little feature was added, which is so obvious it's a wonder no one has come up with it before - you can now mark a spot on your minimap with a "flare" which shows up in the same position on all your allies' minimaps - this tool is invaluable for co-ordinating attacks and notifying friendlies of dangerous or suspicious goings-on, or of recently discov-

ered resource areas. It seems a game type developed for Starcraft, though not particularly popular in Starcraft circles, appealed to the Age of Kings programmers - team games. The way it works is as follows - if two or more players choose the same player number and colour in the multiplayer set-up, they share control of one force (i.e. base and units).

INNOVATION

As hinted above, AoE2 features recording games. This applies to both single-player and multiplayer games, and results in files that are not as huge as I would have expected. This is a feature I have been wishing for in RTS games for years, and finally it comes about. Whether the game is recorded or not is one of the myriad settings you can tweak before the game. Others include terrain/map type (a paltry 13 different kinds!), map size, number of players, lockable teams on/off and many others. This means you can really have exactly the type of game you want. And in case this isn't enough, you can create and edit your own maps and campaigns. The campaign editor is unusual in that it is integrated into the engine, therefore any time you are curious, you just hit the "test" button to launch your level

immediately, then you can return right back to where you were in your edit whenever you want. Age of Empires II: Age of Kings also offers, to those who are interested, a wealth of historical information on civilisations, weapon types and Dark Age tactics and strategies. However, although the entire game's premise is historical to a large

extent, the title itself does not come across as a dry history lesson. Although the basic game concept is not a radical departure from anything we have seen to date, this title offers enough worthwhile innovations to make it worth a look for anyone who is enthusiastic about strategy. With four resources to juggle and the freedom to execute true strategy, we can only wait and see how it is received.

CREATIVE
ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON
CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

BLASTER PC
PC CD-ROM

R.A.V.E.N. GENRE
Real Time Strategy

Developer: Ensemble Studios	Publisher: Microsoft	Supplier: Crew (011) 233-1111	RRP: R 299.00
http://www.microsoft.com			
Multiplayer: Yes	Competitives: Age of Empires	Pro's: Great AI Multiplayer Features Control Interface	Con's: Stationary Water Slows Down at Times
Graphics: 91	Sound: 88	Control: 95	Story: 90
Continuity: 91	Playability: 90	91	

Environmental Audio Ready
No

Min Requirements: Pentium 166 MHz, 32 MB Ram, 4 X CD Rom, 2 MB Video Card, 180 MB HD, Windows 95/98, (DirectX 6.1a)
Recommended: Pentium II 266 MHz, 64 MB Ram, 8 X CD Rom, 4 MB AGP Video Card, 250+ MB HD, Windows 95/98, (DirectX 7.0)

A virtual revolution in control interfaces combines well with totally new concepts in communication and artificial intelligence. Computer opponents fight intelligently, and wise use of all tools (such as formations and aggression stances) will be necessary to ensure victory.



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RICOH



It's true what they say about first impressions being lasting impressions. So true, in fact, that we sometimes allow first impressions to totally cloud our judgement, making it difficult to be objective. It comes about when a game appears to be far more than it actually is, when it bypasses common sense and a critical eye. Such a game, and the one that led me to my moment of weakness, is Requiem.

Shryke

What Requiem is, in truth, is a game that can only just be described as mediocre. Certainly, it does possess many mitigating features, but these are not enough, on an individual basis, to save the game from being a poor effort. One of the better elements behind Requiem is the story. The player enters this dark and horrible world as Malakai, a self proclaimed avenging angel who is hell bent on saving creation, if you'll excuse the pun. The forces of evil threaten the very world itself, and it is up to Malakai to see that humanity is not eradicated. The player treads a terrible world where martial law has been imposed and during the game people are getting beaten and shot in the background. The developers got the feeling of brutality and lost hope perfectly right within the game. The atmosphere that Requiem generates is a dark and depressing futuristic vision of suffering and strife as well as a collection of truly disturbing sound effects and a musical score that sent shivers down the spine. It does seem, however, that the developers spent far too much time worrying about the feelings that the game generates, and not enough on the game itself. One thing that the developers did take care of nicely is the fact that Requiem actually crosses the line between First Person Shooter and Adventure game quite nicely. Running around and shooting everything that moves doesn't work in Requiem. The game certainly requires a tactical approach. However, what at first was a wonderfully refreshing aspect soon became an annoyance. You have to do things just right, or

you don't do them at all. The problem with this kind of approach lies in the fact that every person (yes, even gamers) is an individual, who likes to add his own playing style to the game he (or she) is taking on. No one likes being led through a story like

REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL

a dog on a path, which is what Requiem tends to do. And, aside from that, it passes beyond difficult into the realms of utterly ridiculous at times, making the game horribly frustrating.

I started out by saying that Requiem took me in quite badly, and that is true. But there are many problems with the game that shattered that initial veneer of quality. I am quite relieved to state that I found them, and realised the error of my ways. Take, for example, the graphics. While they're not the worst I have ever encountered, they certainly are nowhere near to being among the best. Certainly, the backgrounds and



environments are nice to look at, and have captured a very stark feeling successfully. It's what populates these environments that's not quite up to scratch. The characters that the player runs into are something of an anomaly. They look all right, but they move poorly - looking a little like crippled ice skaters rather than people running around - unless they are in the process of dying, which they do quite convincingly. One really nice thing about the graphics, however, are the weapons. This may be purely personal taste, but I find the guns

very pretty. The fact that you need to empty two assault rifle clips into an enemy before he finally decides that it may be prudent to at least play dead is besides the point. Game play, too, has its problems. The controls are responsive enough, granted, but they just don't have that crisp feel that other games possess. They tend to be sluggish at times. Being unable to move during a combat situation is incredibly frustrating, and is guaranteed to get Malakai aerated in a whole new, very deadly way. A dubious feature about game play is the inclusion of angelic powers like flight and speed, and various nasty effects that one would really not associate with a heavenly messenger. They are great for effect, and make certain parts of the game easier (or possible) to get through, but they do leave almost your entire keyboard in a maze of hotkeys. And using the long, menu driven way to get to them is impractical, especially in the heat of the moment. Requiem also has a multiplayer function, initially quite entertaining, but



NEVER MESS WITH AN ANGEL!

eventually deteriorating into who can cast the biggest, level destroying spells faster than the opposition. Requiem is one of those games that went wrong in the execution. It's a great idea, and certain elements within the game are good. However, as a whole, it just doesn't quite make the grade.

CREATIVE
ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON
CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

BLASTER PC
PC CD-ROM

SHRYKE
GENRE
FPS Adventure

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 166 MHz 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 2 MB Video Card 116 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium 200 MHz 32 + MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 4 MB AGP Video Card 275 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)

RRP: R 349.00

Developer: Cyclone
Publisher: Ubisoft
Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011) 315-1000

http://www.requiem.co.uk

Multiplayer	Comparatives	Pros	Cons
Yes	Half Life Quake 2 Unreal	Interesting Story Nice Atmosphere	Too Difficult Irritating Controls Sub Standard Graphics

Environmental Audio Ready: No

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
54	75	50	71	59	58

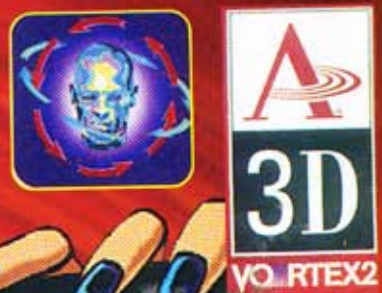
61

What looked great at first turned out to be a little lame. Requiem is not all it's cracked up to be, with several problems that make for a bit of an annoying FPS - Adventure cross over. Even the most devout fans of the genre will probably not want to spend much time with it!

XITEL storm platinum gamers pack

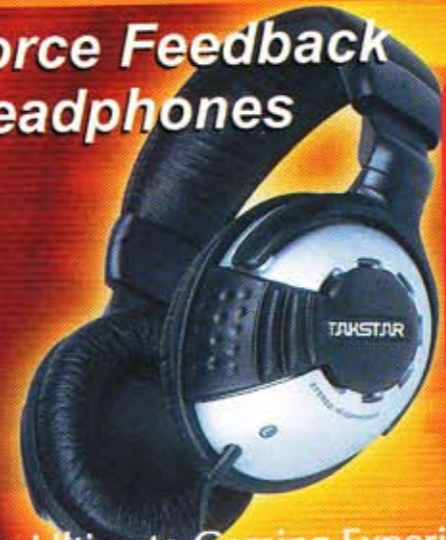


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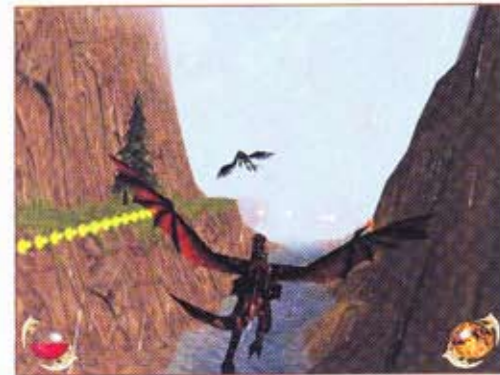
* Subject to original owner and proof of purchase. Headphones 12 month warranty only.

For all time, Dragons have fuelled mankind's imagination with images of fiery breath and ancient intelligence, soaring through the skies with wondrous, hidden treasures. In fact, Dragons can be found in almost every major folklore and mythology around the globe. They have been the staple of fantasy fiction, both in printed and filmed matter, for as long as the genre has existed, as both heroes and villains. And now, they enter into the realm of computer games as one of the two heroes in the wonderful epic, Drakan. - Shryke

DRAKAN

Order of the Flame

When I initially saw the demo for this game, I thought it looked far better than just intriguing. As a matter of fact, when it finally landed up on the Editor's desk, I all but went down on my knees to get my hands on it. And, boy, am I glad that I did. Drakan is a rich and detailed fantasy adventure set on the backdrop of a world overrun by evil creatures who raid and pillage human villages with alarming



NEVER TRUST SOMEONE WITH GREEN BREATH!

regularity and horrible brutality, killing and destroying everything they come across, and capturing slaves to work in their mines. The hero of the tale, the rather foxy (and yes, computer characters can enter into that realm) Rynn, is a warrior who undertakes a mission to rescue her brother from the clutches of these evil creatures. This simple task escalates into a huge



STOP ADMIRING THE VIEW AND ATTACK THE TROLL, YOU BILLY TART!

battle, as she takes on the forces of darkness single-handedly. Through her escapades, she learns of the legendary Order of Flame, a group of human warriors who bonded themselves to Dragons. Advised to take this route by a dying wise man, Rynn tracks down the resting-place of a great

Dragon named Arokh, a legendary creature that survived the fall of the Order of Flame. Once bonded with the spirit of this marvellous creature, Rynn is ready to take on the forces of evil and show them the error of their ways. Drakan is one of those rare games that can truly be described as a diamond in the rough. Not that there's anything rough about the final product. What I'm trying to say is that Drakan sort of came out of nowhere, with a minimum of hype as far as our local market is concerned. It sort of ambled it's way into our offices, and

no one thought much of it until it finally got loaded onto various machines around the place. The general consensus was Whoa! Of course, by that time, I had my hands on it, so there was no way anyone else was going to review this beauty!

Drakan is a wonderfully complex fantasy tale, in the true classic tradition of good versus evil, quests, betrayal, and the fate of the world resting in the hands of one person. As far as the story goes, there is little to fault Drakan on. It does seem a little arbitrary at first, but this feeling soon passes

when the rich history behind the game, as well as the plot, unfolds during game play. And, of course, there is Rynn, the hero of this tale. Well, what can I say?

This is the first computer game character that can really give Lara a run for her money (although one does have to wonder at the fact that we can find pixels attractive - although you're more likely to find the answer in a psychological journal). Rynn, the tall, leggy heroine, is one tough lady, despite her pretty looks and truly gorgeous voice. Personally, I wouldn't like to be on the business end of her sword as she hacks and slashes her way across the landscape. Drakan is first and foremost an adventure game, with heavy role playing ele-

ments, puzzle solving and of course, tons of combat. During the earlier stages of the game, the player takes control of Rynn. Later, when Arokh enters the picture, game play shifts to controlling either Rynn, or the Great Dragon



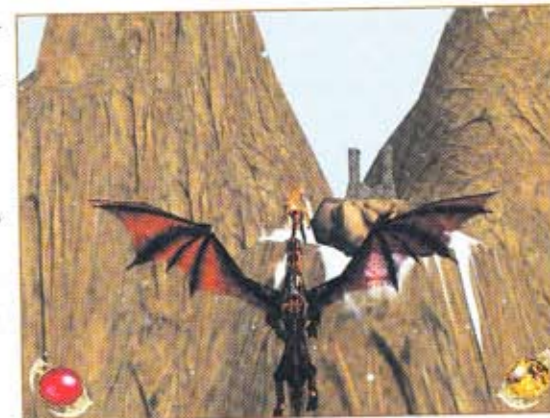
(which Rynn rides - lucky reptile) at the player's whim, with a mere tap of the forward slash key changing between "modes". This is, of course, provided that Arokh is not airborne at the time. The Dragon actually comes in quite handy most of the time. Aside from it's devastating array of breath weapons, which are gained as the game progresses, travelling on the back of a Dragon really lessens the amount of time spent getting from A to B, and simplifies crossing many obstacles - which are all but eliminated

when travelling as the, err, Dragon flies. Additionally, the Dragon is very useful in getting out of a pinch. It was more than once that I beat hasty retreats on foot, with tons of Trolls and Wartoks in tow, leading the enemy directly to where the Dragon waited. Thanks to a thoughtful feature added by the developers, the Dragon lets fly with fireballs when enemies approach, even when you are not currently controlling him. And, even more thoughtfully, he waits for Rynn to get out of the way before toasting everything that



sniper-mode capable bow) the heroine is possessed of several "special" moves, which are listed in the manual and on the reference card. These have something of a devastating effect on any creature unfortunate enough to get on the business end of them.

Making use of the Riot 3D engine, Drakan runs smoothly (even on a Pentium 166, which is it's lowest required specification) and is more than attractive in terms of graphics. Stunning, breathtaking scenery



WHAT COOKS ON YONDER CLIFF TOP?

abounds in this game, and the various characters are beautifully handled and are as believable as it gets these days. Of particular note are the various outdoor scenes through which Rynn travels. They are complex and attractive and, when seen from astride Arokh, the Great Dragon, are even more stunning. Characters move beautifully too, especially the Dragons, which, flap, glide and soar through the game. In addition to the above, Drakan has a wonderful score of powerful music and sound effects, enough to raise gooseflesh on your arms. Wise players will learn the value of sound effects in Drakan. Playing the game is pretty straight forward, with easy to see and logical key commands running the show. However, Drakan is not a simple game. The puzzles are quite challenging, and correct tactical play is imperative. Brashly charging into every combat situation possible will most certainly get you killed, so don't even try it. Additionally, Rynn and Arokh share health totals. In other words, you hurt the lady, the Dragon gets hurt too, and vice



THE GRAVITY DEFLING RYNN, WITH AROKH

versa. This, even though it seems a pretty trivial point to bring up, makes for some seriously tense gaming. Actually controlling either character takes just a little getting used to, but before long you will be smashing your way through enemy after enemy. The multiplayer options included in Drakan are great fun, too. Three play modes are possible, namely air (Dragon versus Dragon combat) ground (where you take your friends on, err, woman to woman) and

Master of the Dragon - a fun game where one of you gets the dragon, and the other doesn't! This final mode is possibly one of the most tactically challenging deathmatch modes I have ever come across - absolutely great fun!

I am not known for my leniency as far as game reviewing goes. I can get pretty hard nosed when it comes to looking at games, and I am not too quick to throw high scores around. However, Drakan is a true gem. It looks good, sounds good and feels good. The game has very few problems (a minor clipping glitch here and there) and, quite surprisingly, runs perfectly on low spec machines. It is a wonderful new entrant to the gaming market, and well deserves all the praise it can get.

CREATIVE ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

BLASTER PC PC CD-ROM

Developer: Psygnosis	Publisher: Psygnosis	Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011) 315-1000	RRP: R 299.00
http://www.drakan-game.com			

Multiplayer	Comparatives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Tomb Raider	Wonderfully Playable Low Specification Excellent Story	Whines About Latest Hardware Drivers 3D Card Required

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
90	95	87	93	92	95

Drakan is one of those wonderful titles that sneaked onto the scene without much hype and excitement. Unfortunately, this means that absolute gems like Drakan are overlooked. This is a game that everyone should play, with great graphics, sound and game-play!

SHRYKE

GENRE 3D Adventure

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 166 MHz 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 4 MB 3D Accelerator 300 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 233 MHz 32 MB Ram 8 X CD Rom 8 MB 3D Accelerator 400 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 7.0)

Environmental Audio Ready Yes

92

In its own unique way the first game showed us that we could relive our childhood plastic soldier battles minus the mud and the begging of parents for replacement soldiers after the aerosol can flame-thrower siege. Playing with plastic toy soldiers could occupy many an afternoon as a child, now you can do it all over again without looking like a fool or getting your clothes dirty.

Not much has improved from the first game, besides a few graphical changes, a few new weapons and pick-ups and a better control system. A couple of other miscellaneous features have also been added but really seem to be more of the last minute stapled on kind than designed with any functional purpose in mind. The fact that so little has been improved upon is a little surprising and the entire package reeks of 'quick cash in on the success of the earlier game'. The new additions to the game raise the old debate of what exactly a sequel should be. Some argue a sequel should improve on every conceivable aspect of a game while others are happy with a few extra levels and a handful of new moves. So Army Men II just qualifies as a sequel but unfortunately doesn't impress.

THE MISSES

The game's graphics are primitive when compared to almost any other game of this kind - average

a year ago, pathetic today. You view the game from a single low resolution setting that cannot be altered. The developers needed to restrict their creative flair a little to accurately recreate their plastic army, or the game would have dissolved into the same

vat from which everyone taps their inspiration. So the plus point is the 'exact' representation of the old plastic soldiers we know and love, the minus point is that everything else is poorly drawn with limited animation. Of all the different missions only a few take place in real world locations like bedrooms and kitchen table tops, these all look good but seem ill defined and lack

ARMY MEN II

any real imagination. The rest of the missions take place in suitable jungle, brush and island settings but the maps themselves look bad, in design and presentation. They should have stuck to rendered bathrooms and lounges and left the jungles to the monkeys. The sound also leaves you feeling cheated although well implemented it lacks variety. The sound tracks are classical pieces of music, you know the kind - royalty free music. Some would argue that these tunes suit the game style, they are different and in trying to be unique create a certain nostalgic

feel. Overall the game is far too short and easy, with the exception of one or two tough missions. Getting killed or failing a mission objective just means a quick restart and once you've figured out what needs to be done and how to do it most missions become easy. No matter what your level of skill, this game isn't going to last longer than a

week of casual play, play it with some determination and it'll be finished in a weekend. From there the multiplayer game should offer a little replay value but forget going up against the computer, as it simply cannot offer any serious opposition when half the time AI controlled enemy units end up stuck behind trees or fences, confused. There are a few decent online multi-

player game types on offer but unless you live in the USA you'll battle to find any servers in this country and there is little chance that this game will be played at any local gaming session. Once the novelty has worn off you're left with an uninspired sequel that is nothing more than mildly interesting. The control system is much better than the last game but it's still difficult to get your small green force to do what you want. The poor path-finding abilities of these plastic toys is laughable and if left to their own devices will quite happily spend an entire mission running up and down the length of a cluster of rocks. The only way to



IT'S A PITY THAT A SCENE LIKE THIS IS SO RARE...

get them to where you want most of the time is to hand hold the entire platoon or they'll end up walking into obstacles or get slaughtered by the enemy. Army Men II is what the first game should have been from a battle field location point of view, if this game had been released back then it would have been something special. However, its attempt at the real time action genre leaves you feeling cheated. In a world where we have serious real time strategy games with better graphics, AI, sound and control, Army Men II just doesn't make the grade. If you're ten years old and just starting to tire of playing with real toy soldiers then you might find this title slightly alluring, but for the rest, stick to games you'll be playing after the weekend.

CREATIVE
ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON
CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

BLASTER PC

Developer: 3DO	Publisher: Ubi Soft Entertainment	Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011)315-1000	RRP: R 299.00
http://www.ubisoft.co.uk			
Multiplayer: Yes	Comparatives: Army Men	Pro's: Real World Locations Improved Control Nostalgic	Con's: Artificial Intelligence Graphics Too Easy
Graphics: 58	Sound: 59	Control: 61	Story: 67
Continuity: 53	Playability: 68	61	

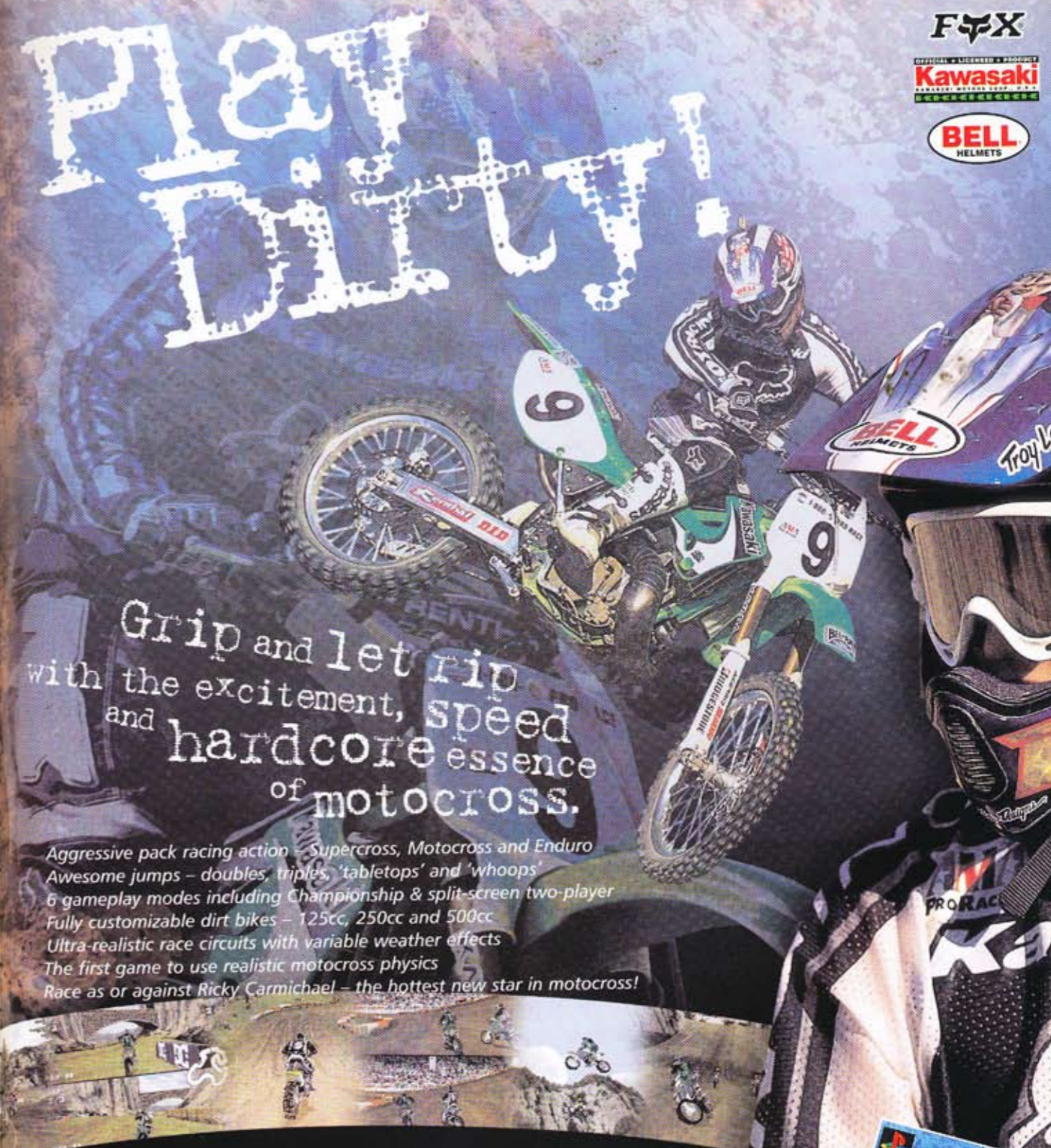
REDTIDE

GENRE
Real Time Action

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 90 MHz 16 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 1 MB SVGA Video 150 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.0)	Pentium 133 MHz 32 MB Ram 8 X CD Rom 2 MB PCI Video 150 + MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 7.0)

Environmental Audio Ready

Army Men II improves on the first game in many ways, superficial improvements that could have been delivered through a budget add-on pack. The few real world locations are great, but not enough to impress. An average effort overall.



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Ever since having the privilege of first seeing this title at E3 in Los Angeles I have had the urge to make my mark on it, only to find out that no Distributor in South Africa was planning on bringing it in. This sent me on a quest to Hasbro/Microprose to get my leather clad paws on a copy of GP 500 which would hopefully end my frustration at our markets inability to bring in all the top titles into our forgotten country. Now as I stand on the threshold of history, I embark on a journey into power, speed, guts and glory as I attempt to stand aloft the ultimate podium, the FIM Road Racing World Championship. **Storm**

My first encounters with GP500 in Los Angeles left me with a bright disposition towards the title from the onset, but as with any racing title there are many gameplay issues that take these titles to greatness. Fuelling my desire was yet another stroke of fortune as I was given tickets to the South African Grand Prix in Welkom, which peaked my interest even more, leaving me anxious the entire day to get home. After returning I ripped open the shrink-wrap like a puppy with a fresh bone and installed what is one of the best racing sims available on PC.

Initial impressions are certainly a good start for any product but so when your interests lie in the specific area in question. After receiving front seat exposure to the real deal in Welkom it was interesting to note how closely Microprose had modelled the game on the Championship. The front cover of the box sports a close up of Kenny Roberts JNR who was instrumental in getting the technical elements of GP500 as close to the real experience as is technologically possible. The Shell Advanced Racing Team and Suzuki Specialists also added the finer touches to GP500 and this shines through in the gameplay and control attributes of the title.

GP500 has few competitors in the market and one rival in EA's Superbikes, but being the newer and fresher of the two has its advantages. The GP500 team has capitalised on the extra development time and has almost surgically produced one of the most realistic racing simulations yet seen on a PC. With the seemingly simple option between arcade and simulation you can decide on the level of realism and the finer options can be manipulated to suit your exacting requirements from the game. Strangely enough the gap between the difficulties of arcade and simulation is not as

great as expected. My personal preference is most certainly arcade mode but after a few days of playing I had come fairly close

As with all racing sims the control factor is critical to the success of any title and Microprose (a track record like no other in the simulation field) have once again shown their true grit and determination to stay aloft the simulation market. Acquiring the talents of Kenny Roberts JNR to help with the development has paid off in leaps and bounds by adding first hand experience to the control of the game. With support for all the major peripherals it was surprisingly easier to control the bike on the keyboard than all my fancy gaming peripherals I have stashed away in my office. Why? I cannot quite fathom the answer to that except that Microprose have created such a wonderful touch and feel about the control mechanism

to a podium finish at the highest AI level. The differences between the two are simple yet effective, the simulation mode tests your control and braking technique to the max sometimes leaving you exhausted from the concentration needed to

overcome the pressures of close knit racing. In arcade mode the control factor is less explicit but the braking is still key success or failure.

Graphically GP500 must receive a thorough round of applause for an almost flawless representation of the sport with 5 differing camera views as well as wonderful models, animations and excellent location graphics. For all the followers of the FIM Championship you will recognise many location landmarks such as the Ferris Wheel at Suzuka in Japan, unfortunately there is no South Africa representative as all the stats and figures are taken from the 1998 season, which include the 14 tracks of that season only. The rider and bike models are superb and rate on the same par as its EA counterpart if not better, but it lacks the same crash model as Superbikes, which in some way is disappointing as the rider is flung off the bike but reacts with stick-like precision in a totally unrealistic fashion. This is one slip-up in a seemingly endless array of eye candy features that include tyre marks, dust clouds, smoke and sparks from the bike scrapping against the tar of the road, to name a few. All these elements combine to catapult GP500's looks and appeal to the top of its genre. The sound effects have been taken from actual bike recordings and though a little irritating at first it becomes clear that this is how it is when you're in the hot seat. Microprose have included EAX and A3D support for those lucky enough to support the API's, delving deeper into the depths of player immersion into this racing sim.



DO WE REALLY NEED TO DO THE VICTORY LAP 8 TIMES?

that I feel comfortable using my most used device, the keyboard. The bike does not jerk quickly to quick movements but rather banks evenly and majestically into corners. This alleviates any tendencies to suddenly correct an indecision, which will result in testing your leather's durability to tar. This does however leave you in the dirt if you happen to brake a little too late or take the wrong line into a corner but then that is part and parcel of concentrating on perfection. The control mechanism and physics engine in GP500 is superb in all aspects and by adding finishing touches such as sliding the bike into corners and powering out, then losing the backend slightly only to bring it back in line, does nothing more than leave me wondering if I am actually watching a televised coverage of an actual Grand Prix with a gamepad in my hand. Other features include tinkling with your bike settings for getting every last ounce of performance out of these powerful machines (adjustments can be made to tyres, engine, gears, suspension) and can get quite technical if you enjoy the finer details of tuning your bike. The game is one of those titles that will keep your interest for more than a few months because of its advanced AI system.

GP500



CAN'T THIS MOTORISED DONKEY GO ANY FASTER!

Honda NSR 500

First Race: 1985
Engine: Two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499.27cc
Power: Over 180bhp
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Weight: 135kg

The NSR500 V4 is designed for high power output and has been a consistent winner for over 12 years with relatively minor changes in design.



Honda NSR 500V

First Race: 1997
Engine: Two-stroke V2 water-cooled, 499.27cc
Power: 135bhp
Bore x Stroke: 68mm x 68.8mm
Weight: 101kg

The smaller NSR500 V2 is a lighter bike, designed for better cornering and overall performance rather than high-end power.



Yamaha YZR500

First Race: 1982
Engine: Two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499.27cc
Power: 180+bhp
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Weight: 131+kg

The Yamaha YZR500 underwent a complete chassis redesign for the 1998 Grand Prix. It has been designed for superior handling, and has a high level of grip for cornering.



Suzuki RGV500

First Race: 1987
Engine: Two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499.27cc
Power: 185+bhp
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Weight: 131kg

The Suzuki RGV is slightly less powerful than its four cylinder competitors, but has an advantage of better braking, and the ability to turn into corners faster.



ELF MUZ

First Race: 1998
Engine: Two-stroke V4 water-cooled, 499.27cc
Power: Over 160bhp
Bore x Stroke: 54mm x 54.5mm
Weight: 131kg

With an engine developed from sidcar racing, the MuZ provides a high output engine, but is less manoeuvrable as it is slightly over weight.



Modenas KR3

First Race: 1997
Engine: Two-stroke V3 water-cooled, 500cc (estimated)
Power: 160+bhp
Bore x Stroke: 59.5mm x 59.9mm
Weight: 116kg

The development KR3 is the only 3-cylinder bike in the competition. The goal of the KR3 is to bridge the gap between V2 and V4 performance characteristics, providing power comparable to a V4 with a 15kg weight advantage.



Computer controlled AI riders are fiercely competitive and will hound you for all you're worth, especially if there is a podium finish up for grabs. I found it extremely difficult to finish in the top three in simulation mode mostly because of the determina-

unlucky on a few occasions leaving me in an overall seventh place for the season, not bad considering, but it does leave a lot of room for improvement.

A thoroughly detailed manual is included explaining every ounce of the game includ-

tion of the AI opposition, but strangely enough it is not impossible to win Grand Prix if your concentration can be held for long periods of play. I was literally sweating with exhaustion (doesn't say much for my mental let alone my physical stamina) after completing a full lap race and only ending sixth I was actually quite proud at my achievement even though it is quite a disappointment that Microprose have left the champagne ceremony unceremoniously out of the game. This is the kind of enjoyment that GP500 holds in store for you by creating the need to achieve more each time you start your engine. I have managed to complete a full season but have been



CHECKING THE TYRES: THE WRONG WAY...

ing racing techniques such as overtaking to pacing yourself throughout the race. It also gives you a lesson on how the rules and points systems work in the FIM Championship for those who don't understand the flags and penalties given to riders. I must make mention of the on-screen help icons that appear while racing indicating when breaking and passing manoeuvres can be performed, this can be disabled but is an excellent guide to beginners in the early stages of your racing career. There is also an intuitive save function as well as a wonderful replay mode that is excellent for watching those sweet overtaking manoeuvres and close line finishes that occur regularly in GP500.

I have been extremely impressed with GP500 and can categorically state that there's nothing on the market at the moment to compete against its playability and enjoyment factors. Everybody who has an interest in racing understands that the FIM 500 is one of the most competitive and closest Championships in the world and GP500 highlights that with its superior realism, control and AI system. Unfortunately this review has to be tainted with a bad ending, where and when will GP500 be available on the shelves in South Africa? As it stands right now there is no representative for Microprose in this country but information sent to us does look good for the millennium as far as Microprose is concerned. My only advice to you if you enjoy anything remotely similar to GP500, make a fuss and get a copy, it's the right thing to do.

CREATIVE
ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON
CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

BLASTER
PC

PC CD-ROM

Developer:
Melbourne House

Publisher:
Microprose

Supplier:
Received directly from Microprose

RRP:
\$ 39.99

<http://www.grandprix500.com>

Multiplayer

Yes

Competitives

EA Superbikes

Pro's

Advanced AI
Smooth Control

Con's

Unrealistic Crash
Animation

Graphics

92

Sound

85

Control

95

Story

NA

Continuity

91

Playability

92

91

Min Requirements

Pentium 200 MHz
32 MB Ram
2 X CD Rom
2 MB Video Card
250 MB HD
Windows 95/98
(DirectX 6.0)

Recommended

Pentium II 266 MHz
64 MB Ram
4 X CD Rom
3D Graphics Card
450 MB HD
Windows 95/98
(DirectX 6.1)

Environmental Audio Ready

No

The story takes place in the mystical Land of Uma. In its time of existence it has witnessed the struggle between Life and Death, Good and Evil. During this time most of the populace was lost and Uma effectively became a large mass grave. In the end, life emerged victoriously and mankind entered to repopulate the lands. Mystical creatures sprouted forth in the form of enchanted dragons, pixies, fairies, imps and other magical creatures. Then once again evil appeared and ravaged the lands, mankind became greedy and brother killed brother. Some magical creatures were transformed into visages of evil while others became totally extinct. In a final act of hope the goddess Kaliba sought the servants of nature, the Druids, and gave them the Time Orb, which was made by six of her tears, to combat the evil. Upon victory the druids split the Time Orb into six crystals and distributed them throughout the lands waiting for a time when they might be needed again. That time has come. A student of the monks Drakil Tanan has been studying Necromancy without his teacher's knowledge and upon discovery been kicked out of the monastery. Turning to dark arts he now becomes more powerful every day and his land is once again faced with evil. Dropping his former name and now known as 'Draak', he controls a powerful artefact

Whilst playing DarkStone the new RPG (or as I like to call it 'Hack & Slash') from Delphine, I couldn't help but remember the glory days of Diablo when I used to spend hours on end playing the game on Battlenet. DarkStone has so many aspects in common with Diablo it is frightening, one could almost say that if the developer was Blizzard, DarkStone could have been Diablo 1 1/2. - *Soul Assassin*

ons should the struggle prove too difficult, as I did, in that case you control one character directly while the other is controlled by the games AI. Each of

the character classes is unique with their own set of skills, methods of attack, and spells.

JUST LIKE...
After creation of your characters you find yourself in the main town where you can practise some of your skills as well as gather information

about the surrounding area and find quests to complete. Darkstone follows a similar formula to that of Diablo and you can also purchase, repair and sell weapons in town as well as learn new skills for your characters from the local inhabitants. All it takes is money and that is after all what adventuring is about, besides

becoming a hero and defeating evil wherever it may show its ugly face. There are numerous quests and dungeons riddled with monsters to keep your champions occupied while playing Darkstone. The main objective of the game is to defeat

Draak with the



six crystals of the Time Orb and rid the land of his tyranny. These crystals can only be received by completing the six main quests, each requiring you to help the people of the land to show that you are 'Pure of Heart' and worthy of their ownership. Unlike Diablo where you only had one Dungeon to explore, Darkstone presents you with numerous 4 level dungeons each with its own architectural design and

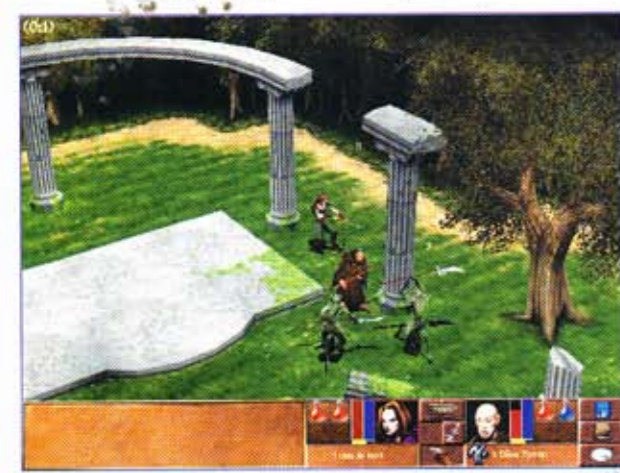
look as well as some outdoor levels. Inside the dungeons

awaits monsters ranging from spiders and bats to vampires and the walking dead and on the last level of every dungeon awaits a boss monster. This brings me to an interesting point or should I say flaw in Darkstone. While the bosses are tough and some very difficult to kill, the majority is also larger than the doors found in the dungeons and cannot move through them. It would seem that Delphine neglected to see that players can just move through a doorway and the bosses are unable to reach them. Since most of the bosses lack a ranged attack you can just kill them through the doorway without taking any damage yourself. A silly oversight if you ask me and I hope they fix it with a patch, maybe they could seal off the room until the boss is dead or something similar.

PUZZLING QUESTS
Besides the usual killing there are also puzzles to be solved in the various dungeons.

DARKSTONE

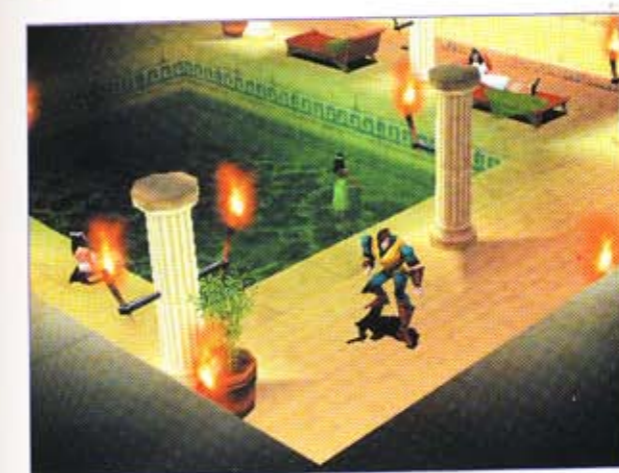
and is ravaging the lands of Uma. To stop him from success you must take on the role of champion and choose your destiny with one of the eight character classes provided - Warrior, Amazon, Wizard, Sorceress, Monk, Priestess, Assassin or Thief. You may choose up to two champi-



I THINK THE POOL SHOULD GO HERE, BRAAI OVER THERE...



DID ANYONE SEE A HEADLESS MONSTER COME PAST HERE??



THIS GUY LOOKS A LITTLE LOST

Some are easy and very obvious while others require a little more brainpower. A perfect example of one of the puzzles would be an armoury that I found containing magical weapons. None of the weapons can be picked up until you figure out that you need to place special medallions upon the two empty pedestals within the chamber. It sounds easy enough, but nowhere is there a mention that you can actually place the medallions on the pedestals. Even then you only receive one weapon as the rest disappear as soon as the first weapon is chosen. The dungeons are riddled with small puzzles like these and they tend to keep the gameplay interesting. Besides the six main quests there are also a variety of smaller quests that can be obtained from the people in town as well as other random quests which you receive by talking to non-player characters found wandering on the outdoor levels. These aren't required to finish the



CREATIVE
ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON
CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

Darkstone breathes some new life into the 'Hack & Slash' RPG genre with its Diablo style gameplay. Excellent graphics combined with an interesting story line makes for a game that will appeal to any Diablo fan. Unfortunately a 3D accelerator is required to play.

game but doing so tends to be fruitful as the NPC who gives you a quest rewards you with gold or a weapon upon successful completion. As we have come to expect from most games these days, Darkstone ships with a multiplayer mode as well, allowing up to 4 players to join a game and adventure together on either a LAN using IPX or on the Internet using TCP/IP. The objective remains the same as the single player game although the map, dungeons and quests are generated at the beginning of every game making each game unique. Darkstone is also great

for playing over weekends at LAN parties since a multiplayer game can be saved and continued at a later stage. There is nothing like a couple of friends getting together to fight the good fight. Unfortunately there is no server interface where players can meet and join together while playing on the Internet. You will have to find willing participants by browsing through message boards on fan sites or on chat sites. A problem I can foresee with Darkstone multiplayer games is cheating. Since there is no server and your character is kept locally, I can see someone bringing out a utility with which you can alter your character's statistics, similar to first versions of Diablo. In my honest opinion they should have used servers to save multiplayer characters on the net. This would have avoided cheating and made the game that much more enjoyable. Graphically Darkstone has an impressive engine that is used to its fullest potential to represent the Land of Uma. Definitely the best engine I have seen for this type of gaming on the market. Darkstone uses a 3D engine instead of the traditional 2D-sprite engine, which was used in Diablo. Unfortunately the game requires at least a 4MB Direct 3D accelerator and joins the small group of games that don't have any software rendering. Special effects such as

dynamic lighting, shadows and transparency are abundant on all the levels and outdoor scenes. Transparency is used everywhere and most noticeably as your character moves behind objects such as walls and trees in which case they become transparent so you always see your character. No more complaining that you can't see your character as he or she moves behind objects! The 3D engine even allows you to zoom in and out as well as rotate the camera angle to suit your needs. Mostly you'll find yourself playing in the default isometric angle, but it is occasionally helpful to move the camera perspective, especially when you need to avoid traps. Even the characters are rendered in 3D, although some of them look slightly awkward, especially the Wizard

which reminded me of the Hunchback with that funny looking hump on his back. They also have a slightly blocky appearance due to the low polygon count used on the models and their faces appear to be square when you zoom in all the way. While this doesn't detract too much from the gameplay it does make the in-game cut-scenes less realistic as they could have been with more detailed models.



IS IT A PET ROCK SIMULATION THEN?
Overall Darkstone offers addictive and enjoyable gameplay. Fans of Diablo will feel right at home and I would recommend the game to fans of the 'Hack & Slash' playing style RPG although finding players on the Internet could pose a problem since Darkstone used direct connections instead of servers.

SOUL ASSASSIN
GENRE
Role Playing Game

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 233 Mhz 32 MB Ram 8 X CD Rom 4 MB D3D Video Card 170 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	Pentium II 350 Mhz 64 MB Ram 8+ X CD Rom 8 MB AGP D3D Video 380+ MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 7.0)

Multiplayer	Comparatives	Pros	Cons
Yes	Diablo	Good Graphics Numerous Dungeons Variety of Classes	3D Accelerator Required No Server Software
Graphics	Sound	Control	Story
86	80	73	80
Continuity	Playability	79	
75	80		

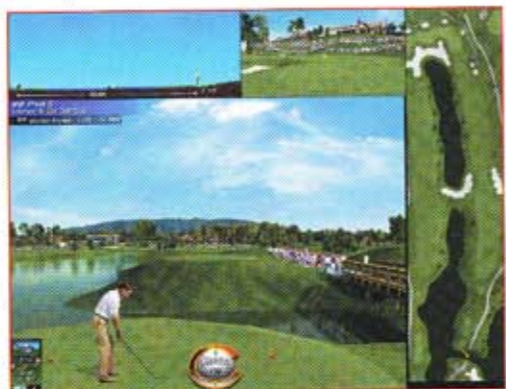
Since the beginning of PC golf, Access Software have moulded and sculptured their way into the record books. Now Microsoft have capitalised on the market share held by the Links franchise by purchasing Access Software and distributing it under the Microsoft banner. But is this acquisition going to change the way Access Software make a golf game? I think not. - Storm

For many years Microsoft have utilised a customised Links for its range of Microsoft Golf. Finally Microsoft has taken the plunge and bought out Access Software and is formally releasing Links LS 2000 under the Microsoft label. This bodes well for the success of the title because of the marketing muscle behind the worlds most successful software company. But has this affected the game in any way? Whether it is Microsoft or Access Software that released Links LS 2000 it would be extremely difficult to better the gameplay and realism of its '99 version. The game itself is fundamentally unchanged with a number of new features that are more of an add-on than anything else. The same wonderful graphical look and feel is used with no changes apparent besides better reflective water. Links has stuck to its FMV based golfers, this time adding Fuzzy Zoeller to its product endorser Arnold Palmer. The FMV animations are identical to its predecessor offering only a few more animations to its list. It's a little disconcerting that this title is nothing more than an add-on, but it is also the only title that can get away with it pretty much unscathed. Most of the additions are added to make the game slightly easier to play and navigate. The addition of a 'Quick Start' function makes it easier for beginners to get in and start hacking. An 'Easy Swing' option allows beginners to gradually upgrade their swing mechanisms to the harder more supported classic swing mechanisms. A new 'Lessons' option thoroughly teaches all newbies about the menus, selections, gameplay and options that abound in Links LS 2000. A new MOP (mode of play) has been added called 'The Wolf Game', which is one of my regular fourballs favourite Sunday games. Being the only addition to the MOP is not what I call forward progress but Links does have the MOP Designer for customising personal game types.



The most significant change is the improved user interface that makes game play and customisation easier for the seasoned veteran.

Links LS has always been the leader in physics technology since it began its journey to entertain us, with 2000 we are rewarded with true precision with regard to physics accuracy. Ball flight, wind resistance, ball reaction to differing surfaces to name a few are mercilessly superb giving the feeling you are playing a training simulation rather than a game. For anyone trying to understand the fundamentals of golf, Links LS 2000 will enlighten you to the wonders of the game. Veterans will be challenged by the control mechanisms including the Easy swing, 2-click and 3-click Classic swings and the newly added Powerstroke Swing System that was added in the '99 version. The Powerstroke mechanism is excellent for understanding ball contact and why the ball reacts in certain circumstances. Powerstroke is modelled after the actual golf swing, which simulates clubhead speed, swing path, face angle and toe-heel alignment at impact. A graphical display shows the clubhead in transit to striking the ball, this helps maintain the clubhead in the right position for impact and hopefully send the ball miles down the fairway.



PROOF THAT YOU CAN DO ANYTHING ON YOUR PC

played at home with friends or on a LAN platform with up to eight players at a time. One of the best features of Links LS 2000 is the online play support, it has MSN Gaming Zone built in for quick access to the chat rooms and play areas, as well as a direct connection to the LS Tour, which brings the game into a professional arena by adding tournament money and prizes. The web site mentions the addition of a commentary team, commentary is lacking in all the previous version of Links and is one of its downfalls because gamers enjoy interaction more than a few birds chirping and silly comments. This however is missing from the copy I have and after enquiring at a different level, is not included in the full retail product. A slight mishap perhaps but a major disappointment to adding atmosphere to the sometimes boring gameplay of Links. Recommending Links LS 2000 is not difficult to do as it is still a wonderful package for golf sim lovers. Luckily for previous owners of the '99 version there is an upgrade pack that is cheaper than a full product. For other gamers looking to invest in a true golf simulation Links will set you back between R350 to R400, a very expensive price considering you can get your hands on Jack Nicklaus 6 (92%) for just on R300. Nevertheless Links LS 2000 shows its true class in many different ways once you start playing it even though it hasn't made great inroads to perfecting its predecessor. This does affect my overall score of Links because I feel that we are a long way off of seeing a perfect golf simulation, leaving a lot of room for improvements and experimenting.

THE SWING BAR: SIMULATES CLUBHEAD SPEED, SWING PATH, FACE ANGLE AND TOE-HEEL ALIGNMENT AT IMPACT.



Links LS 2000 is nothing more than an add-on to those who have already wondered at its glory. For those who haven't this is a superb golf simulation that teams with realism and functionality. It's just a real pity about the lack of any commentary.

Developer: Access Software	Publisher: Microsoft	Supplier: Siltex Dist. / Crew (011) 233-1111	RRP: R 399.00
http://www.links2000.com			
Multiplayer: Yes	Comparatives: Jack Nicklaus 6 PGA Championship Links LS 99	Pros: Superb Multiplayer Unrivalled Physics Great for Beginners	Cons: No Real Changes Lacks Commentary Sprite Based Flora
Graphics: 86	Sound: 81	Control: 92	Story: NA
Continuity: 93	Playability: 90	88	

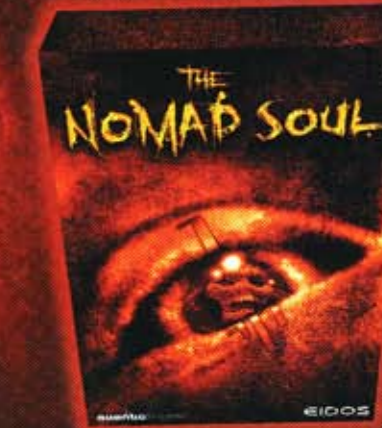
STORM

GENRE
Golf Simulation

Min Requirements	Recommended
Pentium 166 MHz 32 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 1 MB Video Card 80 MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1a)	Pentium II 266 MHz 64 MB Ram 4 X CD Rom 4 MB AGP Video Card 670+ MB HD Windows 95/98 (DirectX 7.0)

Environmental Audio: Ready

Haven't I been you somewhere else before?



THE NOMAD SOUL

It's soul play, not role play

PC CD quantidream **CREW EIDOS** INTERACTIVE

Distributed by Crew. For more information please call Johannesburg (011) 233-1111, Cape Town (021) 418-4240, Durban (031) 579-1974, or PE (041) 513-515. The Nomad Soul™. Developed by Quantic Dream. © and Published by Eidos Interactive Limited 1999. All Rights Reserved.

Since the explosion of the tactical gaming genre in the beginning of 1999, the action was reserved for mainly first and third person shooters. Various attempts have been made to find different interfaces that will give the gamer a better tactical combat gaming experience, but none have really grabbed the hearts of the Rainbow Six, Hidden & Dangerous or Delta Force fans. Shadow Company has got what it takes to face the competition head on in a different and attractive package. **Memnoch**

The battle field is quiet now, the dust has settled down, and you're on full scale damage control. You're one of three mercenaries left after a catastrophic mission in Angola, stranded so to speak, as the company that contracted you left your team for dead.

While your mind runs at lightning speed to find a suitable solution to your big problem, your teammates count their ammunition, and report that the situation is looking bleak. Suddenly your communications device shows an incoming call, and you establish an uplink with an unknown source. Another company has contacted you, offering a contract that, once completed will pay \$30 000 and safe extraction of your squad. Left with no other choice, you accept, and the squad moves out to destroy a SAM site about three clicks from your current position. Nobody said the life of a mercenary was going to be fun, though you do get to visit exotic locations and kill some interesting people...

Shadow Company aimed to bring a rich tactical combat experience controlled in the same fashion as a real time strategy title, and the final result is awe inspiring. In a traditional real time strategy title, there is

no way for the gamer to interact with the gaming environment other than speech from the units or the usual explosions and

playing exists in that the mercs can increase some of their abilities if they are practiced enough. Control of the characters is done

by clicking on the terrain with the mouse, and the floating camera is either controlled by the mouse or the keyboard. The camera is one of the strong points of Shadow Company, and although it takes some getting used to, I cannot picture life without it anymore. The camera can move, rotate and elevate freely, or one can attach it to a designated object. Mercs can be controlled as a group or

individually, and it's real easy to co-ordinate an attack from more than one direction. Apart from being controlled by the player, the mercenaries have personalities of their own, and will react to the environment when the situation calls for it. Your team members will fire back when they're being attacked and in a stationary position. When placed in Overwatch view, a character will automatically engage an enemy when it comes into weapons range and line of sight. The characters have some cocky one-liners at times, while the more quieter types will acknowledge your orders and keep to themselves. In Shadow Company, line of sight and sound plays a major role on the battlefield. When your team makes a lot of unnecessary noise, nearby enemy patrols might investigate, which also makes for some excellent ambush opportunities. A merc with high stealth abilities can sneak up to a guard from behind and take him down with a knife or silenced weapon with ease, while a character with good infiltration skills can manage to remain invisible to some extent when moving nearby enemies. The missions in Shadow Company are very exciting to say the least, and have a Hollywood style feel to it. Each mission has more than a few objectives that will need to be met before moving out to the extraction zone. Name it, it's there, from destroying buildings, rescuing hostages, retrieving nuclear warheads, planting communication bugs to the always exciting elimination of high profile targets. The missions take place in some interesting parts of the world, from Angola in Africa, to Russia and South America. The player has the option to choose the time of deployment in the mission, resulting in day and

night scenarios, to misty mornings or clear afternoons. The different weather conditions will have an impact on visibility, and might dictate which types of weapons will be taken on a mission. An important thing to remember, is that a mission can already be halfway successful if a lot of care goes into the planning process. For say a team of four mercenaries, a good call will be to use two assault specialists, one sub-



gunfire. Here Shadow Company uses a free floating camera view in a highly detailed 3D world, with sounds, weather effects and lighting that will convincingly portray real world settings with a high degree of realism. You get to control a team of mercenaries from all walks of life, at a cost of course. Except for the first mission, one has the option to contract

Shadow Company

LEFT FOR DEAD

up to eight mercenaries per mission, called campaigns in the game. Each character has his/her own statistics, which plays an important part when assigning weapons and orders to your team members. Characters can specialize in handguns, submachine guns, assault weapons, heavy weapons or sniper rifles. Handing a Sig PSG1 sniper rifle to a merc with average sniper skills will be a waste of ammo and will not be beneficial to the well being of the team. Some form of role



OKAY TEAM, LET'S MOVE IN AND ORDER PIZZA

machine expert for close quarter battles, and a sniper with a backup short range combat role. At least one member should have medic training for some patching work on the field, and you're set to go. It takes a bit of playing around to find the perfect combination for each mission, and believe me everything chosen before the mission will have some kind of impact once in there.

Your mercs also have a great array of tools to play with. Different pistols from the BDA to Beretta, some silenced, submachine guns such as the MAC-11, Uzi, Scorpion, MP5K. The heavy hitters come in the form of the AK-47, M-16, Enfield BIW, Steyr AUG, Galil and sniper rifles such as the Sig PSG1 and the Barret .50 caliber. Your mercs can only carry so much, so if you want to switch to a pistol, the rifle must be able to fit into the inventory somewhere, as the rest of the backpack will be filled with other mission critical equipment. Ammunition isn't a big problem, as clips of ammo can be taken from dead soldiers, but medikits, grenades, C4 explosives, wire cutters and some other tools may not be lying around when you need them, so they have to be taken along from the start. Each weapon has three basic attributes namely accuracy, range, and damage. These figures, together with your character's proficiency with that

specific weapon, will finally dictate what kind of damage he/she will be doing to the enemy. There are also LAW rockets and grenade launchers available, but are considered specialist weapons. At the end of a mission, weapons can be picked up from the battle field to be sold later, another means of income, it's a business you're running after all...

The graphics in Shadow Company look a lot like that found in Hidden & Dangerous, except for this style of gameplay a lot more detail is present. Locations like Russia will be covered in snow, with hills and trees that make up the landscape. Wooden huts will have smoke billowing out of the chimneys, and throughout the mission you will hear the wind blowing through the trees and around your mercs. Combine that with the closing mist and changing of the light as the sun is about to set, the environment is pretty and very believable, greatly complimenting the immersion factor. Water is also beautifully portrayed by waves and tides, and nothing looks as



A SNEAKY DRIVE-BY SHOOTING IN AN ARMoured VEHICLE



EXTRACTION POINT



BLOW ALL THESE BUILDINGS AND RUN AWAY

spectacular as your team coming from the dark of night from the ocean with a rubber dingy for a beach landing. Most of the vehicles in Shadow Company can be commandeered by your team, and nothing takes a security gate down quite like a HUMVEE at full speed, or the unsuspecting troops hiding behind it. Shadow Company features multiplayer via LAN or Internet, and the entire game can be played co-operatively. Each player can control one or more mercs, and money and mercs can be donated to other players throughout all stages of the game. It makes a mission so much more exciting when other real players are in there with you. Shadow Company supports the third party Roger Wilco voice communications program which will be favorable for Internet sessions. Being a tad skeptical at first, I was surprised at everything Shadow Company offers. What really makes it better than some games of the opposition is the ability to save in-game, so it isn't necessary to play the more difficult missions over and over again. While the game is close to being very realistic, it's a lot of fun to play and promises some late nights in front of the PC. Shadow Company should appeal to a wide audience, as it includes so many features from different genres into one sleek package, and plays like a puzzle that can be solved in so many different ways.

CREATIVE
ALL GAMES REVIEWED ON
CREATIVE LABS BLASTER PREMIUM SYSTEM

BLASTER PC
PC CD-ROM

MEMNOCH
GENRE
Tactical Strategy

Min Requirements		Recommended	
Pentium 200 MHz	32 MB Ram	Pentium II 266 MHz	64 MB Ram
8 X CD Rom	4 MB 3D Accelerator	8+ X CD Rom	8 MB AGP Video Card
190 MB HD	Windows 95/98 (DirectX 6.1)	200+ MB HD	Windows 95/98 (DirectX 7.0)

Developer: Ubisoft | Publisher: Ubisoft | Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011) 315-1000 | RRP: R 299.00

<http://www.ubisoft.com>

Multiplayer	Competitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Jagged Alliance Jagged Alliance 2	Good Tactical and Strategy Mixture Floating Camera	Minor Bugs Needs More Missions

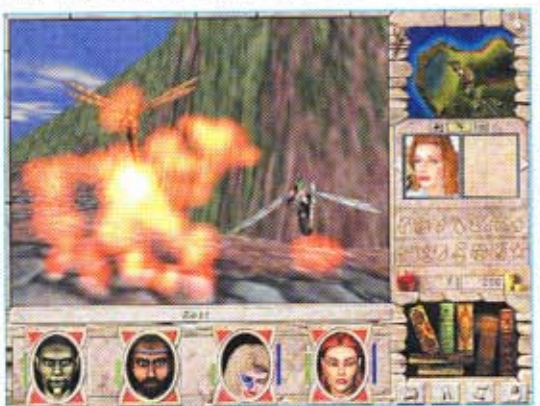
Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
91	87	90	79	85	89

87

Taking a number of different elements from strategy, action, tactical and role-playing games, Shadow Company manages to combine all of these into one great gaming experience, and should appeal to a wide audience.

Might and Magic VII FOR BLOOD AND HONOR

There comes a time when every reviewer finds a game that is just so poor it defies description. Surely, with the technology available to game developers, games as bad as Might and Magic 7 just should not happen. The entire premise behind this computer RPG lies in the fact that the player controls a group of adventurers who have embarked on a treasure hunt. Not the hordes of gold



IT MIGHT LOOK GOOD ON THE OUTSIDE...

collected by a dragon type of treasure hunt either, but the weak "find a hat, find a harp" type of party game that doesn't get played even in the real world. From there, things just get worse. Graphically, this game really stinks. The graphics, which are supposedly 3D driven, are weak, blocky and juvenile. Everything in the world is far too neat and nice - even the swamps - and absolutely no illusion of reality is created within the game. The characters that the player meets are blocky and stilted. Even the characters that the player controls are poorly put together, with fairly generic portraits and typical "fantasy-slut" poses for inventory and similar screens. The generation of these characters, too, is backwards, when compared to gems like Baldur's Gate. It is unwieldy and lacking in control, making for a rather frustrating experience. As a matter of fact, the entire game handles like a tugboat in molasses. Movement is sluggish, response is slow. The characters are moved by way of the arrow keys on the keyboard, which results in getting half your party killed by a dragon fly before you can even turn around to face it. On the whole, this game is really bad, and should be avoided by all those who are not overly masochistic, totally boring or just plain stupid. - NAG

41

RAGE of MAGES II NECRODANCER

This is a rather disappointing fantasy title that could have gone much further than it did, if the developers had possibly been a bit more ambitious. It seems that some of these guys seem to think that gamers like consistency, when this is definitely not the case. We know for a fact that gamers look for improvements in sequels. If the game looks the same, feels the same and plays the same as its predecessor, it's an add-on, not a whole new title. Rage of Mages 2 is not a bad game, it's just a little lame. Hardly destined for the glue factory, this horse does however not run amongst the thoroughbreds. The missions are long, often boring, and a few steps in the wrong direction will, without a doubt, end your party as a bunch of small crispy remains on a forgotten battlefield.



SOME GUYS IN A FOREST GOING STUFF

The game is not without its good points, of course. The story is sound, and the variety of objects that can be used during play is vast - not to mention the fact that a veritable army of retainers can be built up through hiring and bribing mercenaries. Our main problem with this game is that it just doesn't tow the line. It does not even bear comparing to its competitors, in terms of advancement. In other words, not enough has changed between the first game and this one. It's just like you're playing the same game over again, which, although nice for those wall flowers who like familiarity and comfortable cotton socks, really irks the serious player. The game is simple enough to play, and challenging - at times to a point of ridiculousness - and can, at a push, be called engrossing. But, most times, it falls into the categories of boring and pointless. - NAG

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Give everything a fair chance is good solid advice when reviewing any game - this noble credo often leads to many hours of despair when sitting in front of a dismal title. The hours seem to drag by as each new mission or level loads. Peacemaker is one such title and it definitely is a huge waste of time. The game is an arcade action affair where you fly one of three helicopters into battle against everything the computer cares to throw at

PEACEMAKER



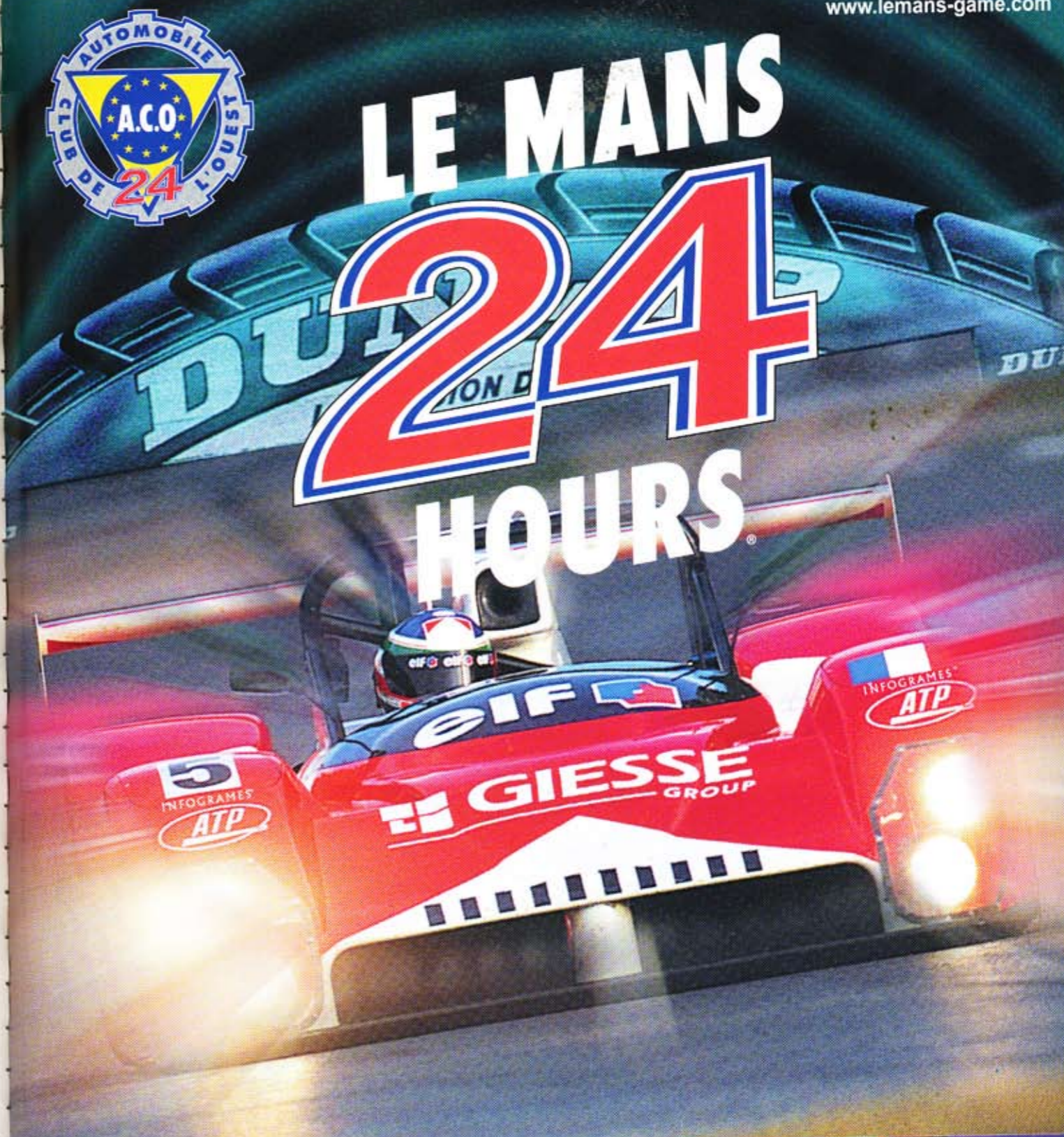
IT MIGHT LOOK EXCITING BUT IT STINKS

you. The developers mistakenly thought they could rely on graphics and meaty explosions to hide the games numerous and serious flaws, but they were wrong - no matter how well you dress up a turkey it still smells and tastes like poultry. You start getting suspicious at the lack of any sound effects or music once the game loads up, the option screens are poorly put together, limited to the absolute basics and the game's story is told with a single sad essay. You are put through your paces as the game starts with a rudimentary training mission before you can move onto the real action. The graphics are acceptable as are the sound effects but interest is soon lost within the first few minutes when you realise this is as good as it's going to get. The control of your craft is nearly impossible using the mouse and only barely gets better when using the keyboard or a joystick. The missions themselves are uninspired and all feel just like the last one. Adding all these poor components together and the fact that there is no multiplayer leaves this game hanging by a thread. If it's fast paced action you want then go into the computer store and while closing your eyes reach out and pick up any random game on the shelf and it's guaranteed to be better than Peacemaker. - NAG

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LE MANS 24 HOURS



The Ultimate Racing Experience!

PC CD ROM PlayStation EUTECHNYX

CREW INFOGRAMES

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In a market already saturated with racing games, it seems pointless to produce yet another product, which simulates the rigors of competitive vehicle driving. There are so many titles, so many variants on the racing theme that it is nigh impossible to come up with a new idea for the market. All that is left is improving on what has come before making games faster, prettier and more realistic. Or so it seems. But, every now and then, some bright spark in a dimly lit room says, "Hang on, wait a minute, I think I've got a truly original idea..."

Sled Storm is possibly one of the most original racing concepts I have seen for quite some time. This was not my initial thought, I assure you. When the Ed handed this one to me, I didn't quite know whether to laugh or to cry. I am not a great fan of racing games, unless they display something different from all the others; a new angle or approach to add appeal to the title. I started to protest, but was silenced by a sage nod from the Ed, who simply said, "It looks pretty good." I grumbled as I inserted the disk into the console, and moaned my way through the various introductory screens. Then, as the sounds of Rob Zombie's Dragula (the Hot Rod Herman remix, of course) blasted out of the TV's speakers, I became enraptured with what I saw...

The entire concept behind Sled Storm is brand new. Certainly, winter sports have been covered in racing games for the PlayStation before. Titles like Cool Boarders and Big Air spring to mind, which were both enjoyable and fresh. However, the main thrust of winter sport racing games has been in events like snowboarding, which appeals to the mass market and allows developers to get wonderfully fat endorsements from clothing designers and the like. Sled Storm, however, is different. Instead of snowboards, competitors within this game ride snowmobiles - you know, those funky snow "bikes" that look a bit like jet skis on ice. Okay, right. So we have a game in which the vehicles are capable of speed only just in excess of those of a rabid tortoise, right? Wrong! The mobiles used in Sled Storm are enhanced speed machines intended to tear up the powder in a big way. Of course, whether the specifications on these machines are realistic I don't know (never mind that specifications are actually totally

SLED STORM



BURNING UP THE POWDER!

irrelevant). These babies churn up the snow as they careen around complex and challenging tracks, launching themselves over even the slightest bump.

Sled Storm is a racing game with a few differences. In what could only be called mildly organised mayhem, the player has to control one of six characters in a breakneck race around one of several tracks.

These tracks are of either a "mountain" or "sled cross" category, and new ones are (obviously) unlocked as the game progresses, up to a total of 14 tracks.

Thus far, it doesn't sound much different from any other PSX racing game, now, does it? Well, in theory it isn't. But there are a few elements that make Sled Storm a game really worth playing. Sled Storm has, first and foremost, a lot of attitude. Everything from the music to the way the competitors react to each other is brimming over with machismo and bluster - the characters talk big and loud, especially when shouting insults and heckling the other riders.

The rivalry between these six very tough, very cool characters is more than apparent in the game. Of course, each character has strengths and weaknesses that set them apart from each other. Some are faster riders, others turn better, and others are better at performing tricks. Yes, you read that right: tricks.

In order to upgrade your snowmobile,

you will have to master the art of tricks. These are not huge aerial stunts performed in tandem by the snowmobile and its rider, but are rather antics that the rider performs while flying over jumps and the like. Tricks can range from the relatively simple Lookback and No Hander to the more complex Back flip, One Handed Superman and Nose Dive Suicide No Hander - 40 tricks in total. Each trick has a "cash value" - in other words, perform a trick, and earn bucks to upgrade your snowmobile. The more complex the trick, the more money you earn. Of course, performing a trick more than once reduces the amount you earn for pulling it off. The more you do a trick within a single three-lap race, the less you earn each time you perform it. Variety is, after all, the spice of life! And merely doing the correct key-strokes to complete a trick aren't enough. If you don't make a successful landing after the trick, you forfeit any money that it may



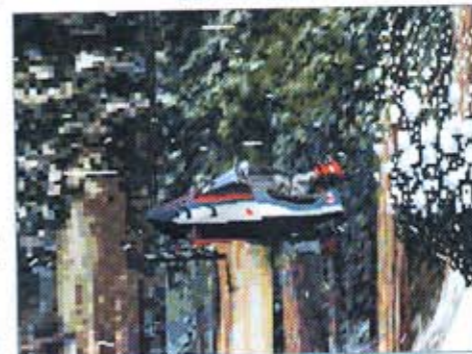
WATCH THOSE BRANCHES! WATCH THOSE BRANCHES!

have earned you! Sounds great, right, but what's it like to play? Let's start at the top, and work our way down.

Graphically, Sled Storm is one of the most impressive PlayStation titles I have ever clapped my eyes on. The tracks and environments are presented beautifully, with varying terrain and scenery - although these speed past too fast for you to notice, more often than not. The characters themselves are also beautifully handled, each with their own particular clothing and snowmobile finishes. Even the way that the characters fit onto the backgrounds is wonderful. The 'mobiles kick up snow and leave tracks behind, take out scenery (another way to earn a few bucks) and generally just look like they are a part of the action on the screen, rather than just floating on top of it. Thankfully, clipping problems, which seem to crop up so often in PSX titles, are few and far between. I did spot a few while playing the game, but they were less than invasive; I hardly noticed them at all. A



GETTING READY TO GO...



ONE ROUGH LANDING COMING UP!

final note on graphics: I have to mention the excellent Instant Replay function, which Sled Storm possesses. Varying camera angles and views make for fairly exciting watching, while a funky "pause and pan" of every major trick you perform adds a fresh and stunning

element to what is normally an under-exploited section of any game. Music by Rob Zombie, Uberzone and Econoline

Crush, to name but three of many, makes up a score that, when added to the fun and exciting sound effect tracks, makes Sled Storm as fun to listen to as it is to watch. The heart pounding rhythms of the music do a lot to add to the thrill of the game (proving that sound is so

important once again) while the screaming engines and raucous comments thrown by the competitors add to the fun. Sled Storm is, from any PSX player's point of view, easy to start playing, difficult to master and impossible to put down. The controls are simple yet comprehensive, allowing the player full control over his character with a minimum of fuss. The performance of tricks, too, is not overly complicated, with Electronic Arts having been kind enough to include a full "trick per-



YEE HA! TOTALLY OVER THE TOP!

formance guide" within the game manual - exact instructions on how to pull off the most amazing stunts aboard your snowmobile. This does, once again, prove the value of reading game manuals! Another great aspect of this game is the fact that it needs infrequent, and relatively short load periods. In other words, in Sled Storm, you really do spend more time playing the game than watching a "loading" screen. And, as an added bonus, while the tracks load, you can browse through the collection of songs available, and pick what you want to listen to while you race!

It is a sin for a game this good not to have a multiplayer mode. But, of course, this heavenly game does everything right, and the multiplayer mode is right there, ready for action. Playing the multiplayer mode game is just as much fun as tackling the single races or tournaments of single player mode, if not more so. The action runs on the usual split screen mode, which, although a little confusing at first, allows you to have a good giggle at your opponent's performance... provided, of course, that he isn't trouncing you!

As a complete package, Sled Storm is great! It is fun, without being flippant or silly, exciting without being too overboard, and challenging without being too difficult. I personally give it a big thumbs up, for both racing game enthusiasts and just about any game player who enjoys a thrilling time!



SHRYKE

GENRE
Snowmobile Racing Sim

Controller Support

Vibration Function Compatible

Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras

Memory Card 1 Block

1-2 Player

Developer: Electronic Arts
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Supplier: Electronic Arts Africa (011) 803-1212
RRP: R 329.00

<http://www.sledstorm.com>

Multiplayer	Competitives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	Big Air Cool Boarders 3	Exciting Gameplay Unique Idea Great Graphics & Sound!	Some Graphical Glitches No Track Editor

Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability
85	80	87	NA	80	85

83

A stunning thrill a minute racing simulator, pitting you against your opponents on jacked-up snowmobiles, of all things! Great fun, and highly recommended for both racing enthusiasts and those that just enjoy a really fun, exciting game!

The fighting genre on the whole can easily be described as a sad and shallow pool of stagnating entertainment. So it's not often that a fighting game comes along and dares to try and do something different. Destrega is such a game, but sadly during the transition from concept to game something important has been left out.

Picture a game where you have total freedom of movement in a huge fighting arena, an arena littered with rocks, stairs, buildings and other natural or man-made features. Imagine you could fly through the air while casting a magical attack or simply run up to your opponent and smack him/her/it squarely in the face. Now with all this in mind add twelve highly detailed characters, plenty of visual effects splendour and some compelling action and you should have all the ingredients for one superb title, probably the best fighting game ever, right? Well yes and no. Destrega has all the right ingredients for a culinary masterpiece but the chef of the day has ruined the whole dish by adding too much salt and not enough of everything else.

MAGICAL RELICS
There are many game modes on offer, including the usual endurance, team, practice sessions and multiplayer options, lastly the single player game is told in the story mode. Here you are presented with video sequences and the traditional story involving the good guys trouncing the bad guys. The quality of the movies is decidedly average, the voice acting is terrible, it almost sounds as if all the voice actors read their lines in complete isolation to each other, either that or the programmers have no sense of timing. The musical

DESTREGA



taken to the battlefield where you must fight whoever might be in the arena with you, if you beat your opponent you are again taken back to the story mode where more of the tale is told. This continues until you beat the game or give up half way through. It is commendable that the developers, Koei have tried to vary the usual plodding through endless battles with little purpose other than to move up the ladder with something different. That said, if you're going to add a whole movie driven story at least get that part of the puzzle looking good and sounding great.

LET'S FIGHT

Moving away from the story and single player game you'll be pleased to discover that the actual fighting bits (the real backbone of the game) are rather excellent, but unfortunately flawed and therein lies the games biggest problem. On the whole Destrega has a great story which is poorly told, it has a unique and visually stunning fighting mode which suffers from a few little problems that effectively remove the fun and add pointless plodding through opponents. Part of the problem is in the way the fighting works - you have three major kinds of magical attacks that work a little too well, so the whole game degenerates into a match of who can run away quick enough and who can cast the biggest spell the fastest. The only time you end up using your feet and fists is quite by accident, should you stray too close to your

opponent for example. What all this boils down to is a game that isn't fun to play and seems to be based more on luck and timing than any real skill. What is impressive however are the games graphics and level of detail. All the different magic attacks are visually fabulous, and the camera following the action zooms in and out according to the positioning of the two fighters. Even when both characters are displayed fully on the screen there is little reduction in quality, which is a refreshing change. Again, the game presents you with a good thing ruined by poor execution. Even though the fighting is limited in the fun department, it does make up for it a little by offering the



SOMEONE NEEDS FIGHTING LESSONS

player twelve different characters, huge open fighting arenas and the ability to use the terrain to your tactical advantage hiding behind things.

GREAT GAME, BUT...

Destrega is a pioneering title that put heaps of imagination and innovation on the table... for a change. The game's biggest problem is that it doesn't add up right, if you can take the good with the bad then you might find more than a few hours of enjoyment in there somewhere. Perhaps the sequel will refine this emerging concept a little better but until then try before you buy.



ONLY COWARDS USE LONG RANGE ATTACKS

Destrega is a nice change of pace, the developers have tried to bring something different to the tired fighting genre and have succeeded while they've failed. Once again we see that great ideas and graphics do not a great game make.

Developer:
KOEI Co. Ltd.

Publisher:
Sony Computer Entertainment

Supplier:
Star Kinekor Interactive
(011) 445-7900

RRP:
R 399.00

<http://www.playstation-europe.com>

Multiplayer

Yes

Comparatives

Bushido Blade

Pro's

Great Graphics
Something Different
Huge Arenas

Con's

Poor Movies
Repetitive Gameplay
Dulls Alter Time

Graphics

87

Sound

63

Control

71

Story

51

Continuity

50

Playability

66

65



REDTIDE

GENRE
Fighting

Controller Support

Vibration Function Compatible

Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras

Memory Card 1 Block

1-2 Player

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED



DUAL SHOCK™



Good morning, Mr. Phelps. Prepare to enter the most demanding Mission: Impossible ever. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, will be to guide your team through 5 spectacular missions, encompassing over 20 levels of game-play. As always should you, or any member of your IM force be caught or killed, the Secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions.

This information will not self-destruct in five seconds, but you may... Good Luck Jim!

Kitchen sink, step ladder, bucket, shovel... the latest builder simulation? No, it's WWF Attitude, the latest offering from Acclaim Sports and also their last outing with the WWF. But can Attitude live up to the success of its predecessor? - Madman

Without a doubt WWF WarZone was the finest wrestling game when it came out. The only other two games that could possibly have superseded it are WCW Revenge which was only available for the N64 and Firepro Six Man Scramble for the Saturn. WarZone introduced a unique Create-a-Wrestler mode, which was undoubtedly its major selling point. It also offered a variety of game modes for 1 to 4 players. All of this pales in comparison to its sequel, WWF Attitude. The most noticeable change must be the roster depth. Where WarZone only offered 16 characters Attitude boasts over 40 though many characters are hidden. Also revamped is the Create-a-Wrestler mode, which now resembles one of those build-your-own-pizza menus on steroids. On offer this time are an absolute plethora of modes with almost each aspect of the game and its conditions customisable, you can even create your own Pay-Per-View!

The main "quest" section of the game is Career mode, just like WWF WarZone only with much more depth. This time you start ranked as 20th, once again a rookie fresh out of training school. When you start you only fight House Shows and Saturday Night Shotgun matches, not very glamorous. You'll notice that when your wrestler makes his entrance on a House Show, absolutely no lighting effects or fireworks greet him. A Shotgun entrance is much the same only with minimum lighting and fireworks. Eventually you'll be able to compete in Raw and Pay Per View where you will see the actual entrance you see on TV. When you climb to 1st rank you can challenge for the WWF European Title, and after five successful defences you step up to the Intercontinental Division where you battle for the Intercontinental Title and ultimately progress to the third and final division, where you compete for the ultimate prize: the WWF World Heavyweight Championship. Along the way are not only standard singles matches but also tag team match-ups, 2 on 1's, cage matches, hardcore matches, 3 on 1 matches (don't ask, you don't want to know) and more. Once you've made it to the Heavyweight belt you know you're a pro. Admittedly, the Career can be finished within one day if you play on normal or easy difficulty, especially if you're a WarZone veteran but it's fun nevertheless. You can also play a tag team career where you and your virtual partner begin your hunt for the Tag Team Championship. The career has a lot more depth than WarZone, mainly due to the increased roster and will keep you busy for some time unless you attempt to do the whole thing in one go as opposed to in portions.



I HATE YOUR HAIR, SO I'LL JUST BREAK YOUR ARM



ATTITUDE

Get It!



MODIFY TO YOUR HEARTS CONTENT!

LAYING THE SMACK DOWN

If you decide the career isn't for you, you'll probably opt for one of the numerous available one-player matches unless you have a friend or three over. In single player you have numerous choices as to what

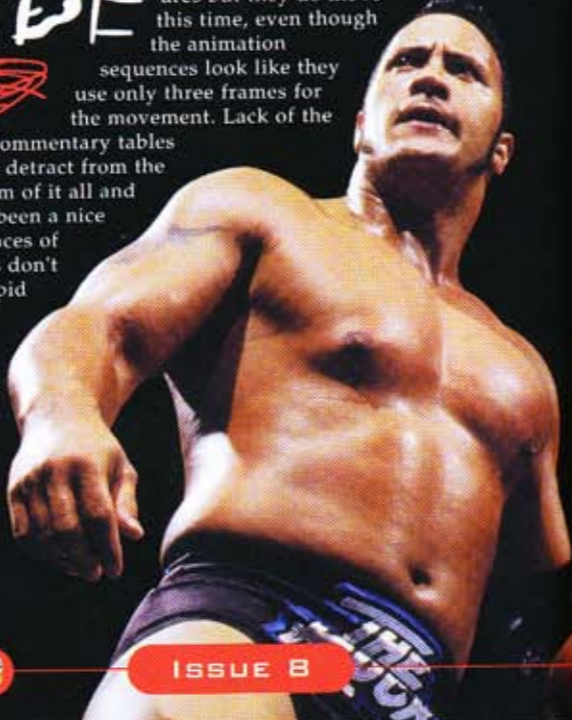
sort of match you'll be competing in. In WWF Attitude you choose your 'base' type of match (e.g. one-on-one, tag team, war etc.) and then you have the option of choosing different match options and win modifiers. You can play a standard one-on-one vs. match, tag team match, gauntlet (face five opponents, one after the other without regaining health), tag team gauntlet, tornado match (two-on-two where tag team rules do not apply), war match (every man for himself 4-man match), King of the Ring (work your way from the quarter finals to the finals), Royal Rumble, Survivor Series, Stable Matches (like a War match but with teams consisting of four wrestlers with Survivor Series rules), Triangle and Triple Threat matches (3-way matches with slightly differing rules), Lumberjack matches (one-on-one with two wrestlers outside the ring waiting to pummel anyone who ventures outside the ring) and more. Most of the matches can become Iron Man matches (most pins within time limit), win-by-finisher matches, submission only matches or best of three wins. Combine these match modifiers with options like Cage matches, Hardcore matches and that sort of thing and you have a recipe for extreme violence! Another area where Attitude surpasses WarZone is in the sheer number of weapons that you can deposit upon your opponent's head with a more than considerable amount of force. I seem to see different weapons every time I play the hardcore match! Old favourites like the table and 2 x 4 are back but also on offer this time round are guitar cases, ladders, stop signs (one of my favourites), shovels, a microphone and loads more! As I've already said, the wrestler entrances are excellent and are true to every detail of the real thing, including Gangrel's "ritual", Ken Shamrock smacking himself in the head as he prepares to enter the ring and Kane and the Undertaker's idiotic gestures of almighty power. You'll think you're watching TV!

BLOOD IN MY EYES

I found Attitude to be graphically impressive, the wrestlers look extremely realistic though I have to say it did look a bit stupid having these authentic looking wrestlers in what seems to be a 'generic' ring. The members of the crowd look like those cardboard stand-up figures but they do move this time, even though the animation

sequences look like they use only three frames for the movement. Lack of the commentary tables does detract from the realism of it all and

would have been a nice touch. The faces of the wrestlers don't have the stupid grins they had in WarZone and all look fairly good, the only exception being the Rock who looks like a bit of a chimp. The



THE DEFINITION OF UGLY IS NOW OFFICIALLY THIS SCREENSHOT!

stadiums are realistic, if you're setting up an exhibition match or Pay Per View you can even design your own! You have a choice of the corner scaffolding banner logo, ring apron logo, entrance logo, light colour as well as pad colour and rope colour. Apart from the ring looking very 'generic' the stadiums are well designed and look excellent, they are a faithful representation of their real life counterparts. When wrestlers bleed the blood stays on them, a nice touch would have been if the blood would spill and stay on the mat, but it isn't serious considering the already tremendous depth of the game.

Once again, Acclaim have got it right with the sound. The crowd sounds realistic and lively, shouting out random comments or chanting for a certain wrestler. As before, it pays to get the crowd on your side and it really helps to immerse you in the game. Groans of pain and taunts from the wrestlers are also present and accounted for, with plenty of comments recorded for each wrestler. Commentary comes from the 2-man team of Shane McMahon and Jerry 'The King' Lawler, with Shane providing the play by play and the King providing the colour commentary. Much of the commentary is humorous, some bits downright hilarious. The King provides his usual 'dark' commentary as well as numerous requests for additional violence and the odd insult for the fans, wrestlers or his commentary partner. I didn't find the com-



BE GOOD BOYS NOW AND GET BACK IN THE RING

DIY

You know the saying, "If you want something done, do it yourself." If you feel the 40 wrestlers on the roster don't sate your unwholesome appetite for violence, maybe it's time to brave the depths of the Create-a-Wrestler section and get the job done yourself. If you thought that the WarZone creation mode was revolutionary, wait till you see Attitude's! Now, every aspect of the wrestler's face is customisable, with a wide range of noses, eyes, mouths and hairstyles available. You can choose your



mentary to be terribly repetitive and you'll have to play loads of matches before you've heard everything those two have to say. Wrestler theme music is played when the wrestler enters the ring, and the victor's music is played after the match, something that was missing from WarZone. In a team match, whoever made the pin fall or executed the submission manoeuvre that won the match has their music played - another neat addition.

wrestler's theme music, ring entrance, fighting style as well as run-in partner and allocate attributes in six different categories. Additional attribute points and custom clothing etc. are available by winning certain titles or Pay Per Views in Career. The main improvement in the custom wrestler area must be that you can now choose each and every one of your wrestler's moves, as well as the combination to perform it. Each wrestler now has a finisher (can be performed when opponent is in red) as well as a trademark move (which you can pull off if your opponent is in yellow health or worse). Each move you choose for your wrestler has a certain size and the combined size of all your wrestler's moves may not exceed 100%, just to make sure that everyone plays fair. Overall, the new creation section is more than impressive and really adds to the life span of the game.

OH HELL YEAH!

Overall Attitude is a vast improvement over WarZone, not just a roster update. The gameplay will be familiar to anyone who played the first and is easy to learn if you haven't so you'll be body slamming and tomb stoning in no time. Controls are still easy to pick up, the most complicated consist of no more than three directions and usually one or two button presses, though some are slightly difficult to remember and you may find you need to stop and think during the middle of a match, which is guaranteed to irritate your friends. Apart from gameplay and control, much has changed including a number of subtle additions and changes that blend in together to make Attitude the total package. The only gripes I have are a few graphical glitches, such as wrestlers stepping through the ropes and so on but apart from that I can't find very much wrong with it. If you're a wrestling fan you should have no doubt about getting this one, especially seeing as it's Acclaim's last outing with the WWF and WCW Mayhem is still a long way away from South African shores. If you're just looking for a spot of fun, you should also give Attitude a look; it packs loads of fun and re-playability into one CD labelled WWF Attitude. It's definitely one of the most playable and enjoyable games available at the moment.

WWF Attitude aims high and achieves what it set out to. Great graphics and sound, decent control and stacks of fun and variety make for a game that will have you coming back for more each time. Wrestling fan or not, if you're looking for some fun, look no further.

Developer: Acclaim Sports	Publisher: Acclaim Sports	Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011) 315-1000	RRP: R 399.00
http://www.acclainsports.com			
Multiplayer	Comparatives	Pro's	Con's
Yes	WWF WarZone WCW Thunder WCW Mayhem	Extensive Roster Variety Create-a-Wrestler	Tricky Control Graphical Glitches
Graphics	Sound	Control	Story
93	88	83	NA
Continuity	Playability		
93	92		
90			



MADMAN

GENRE
Wrestling Simulation

Controller Support
Vibration Function Compatible

Optional Extras
Memory Card (Block)
1-4 Player(s)

It has been quite some time since the PSX has had a tennis title to rave about and even then they were quite average releases. Now, after battling with the ball machine for a year and a bit, Ubisoft have finally managed to bring a serious tennis simulation to the PlayStation. Serious is a strong word so I'll have to rephrase that last statement slightly; they have created a true to physics representation of the game of tennis - good enough for me.

Once again my sporting background helped me prepare for this review, even though my embarrassing defeat to a young lady (who by the way is one of SA's finest) is being echoed around the offices. After licking my wounds and wrapping the swollen ankle I thought it would be less of a barrage on the ego and knees if I volunteered for reviewing a tennis simulation from Ubisoft and Multimedia Warehouse. Only now have I suddenly begun suffering from tennis elbow and terribly tender tendons in the right hand. This helped me simulate a little more than expected, the aches and pains of real tennis, what next, a head injury [that can be arranged if you don't get on with it, Ed].

It is very seldom that you get a tennis simulation on the PSX, especially one that is endorsed by some of the best male and female players on the globe. So it was with great interest that I loaded up what is to be a wonderful gaming experience. All Star Tennis 99 has some of the best looking graphics in this genre and offers superb motion captured animations for each of its 8 licensed and 4 fictional players. Having the option to play as Michael Chang, Jonas Björkman, Amanda Coetzer (SA's finest), Richard Krajicek, Gustavo Kuerten, Conchita Martínez, Jana Novotna, or Mark Philippoussis is excellent for lovers of the game of tennis. For those who care, each player has its

own strengths and weaknesses based on their four attributes over the years. All Star Tennis 99 has a highly advanced physics engine and deserves praise because of its attention to the flight of the

All Star Tennis '99

ball and reaction to different court surfaces. There are 6 strategic shots available to choose from: slices, smash, top spin, backspin and lob & volley. Unfortunately certain animations such as the slice are not correctly simulated in the graphics but the ball does react properly in the air and on the court surface.

The gameplay has its ups and downs in All Star Tennis 99 with the key selection being the Arcade mode which gradually pits you against increasingly more difficult opponents. Though I battled to overcome the

last two players I found the rest to be uncommonly easy once I had made my way to the net. An interesting idea to bring in a Bomb mode was extremely refreshing to the gameplay adding a few thrills and spills to the game of tennis. This is done by way of dropping a timed bomb where the ball lands in the court, it then explodes after a few seconds or when detonated and if you or your opponent happen to be on it, it will leave you sprawled on the floor for a few seconds. The other option of Smash tennis is a single game option of singles or doubles, or a multiplayer tournament with a minimum of four human players that can be played over the 8 different courts available in Wimbledon, Mediterranean, California, Paris, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Japan & Australia.

The control mode is simple and effective with timing a key issue in surviving long rallies. The ball must be within the rackets path to have any chance of guiding the ball back. Serving and volleying is the most effective tactic, almost too effective against early opponents. Movement of the characters is smooth and realistic and even a dive or two has been added

for the more athletic players. A special shot feature lets you build up towards an awesome shot command that will more often than not win you the point and is one of the most rewarding eye candy features of the game.

The sound effects and crowd chants are wonderfully arranged in the game. Umpires ask for silence as the crowd heckler calls out or a cellphone goes off during play. Players grunt with the excursion of every shot reminding me of good old Monica Seles in her prime.

All Star Tennis 99 may be one of the best tennis sims on the PlayStation but has much



THE BOYS PREPARE TO TRASH THE GIRLS

room for improvement. A tournament option with rankings and world events would be the most obvious inclusion. A subtler special shot option that gives you a chance to at least return the ball and an easier button selection to initiate the shot would make it fair on the human players. The replay mode is constantly being shown and is interesting at first but irritates after a while.

These are minor issues but affect the overall balance of the game and its staying power. While I enjoyed All Star Tennis 99 but continually couldn't help thinking that I would not be playing the game in two weeks time.



A true tennis simulation in its roots but offers fun elements that unfortunately don't save the lack of depth in the title. A good control and physics engine helps to bring out the realism in the game as well as the humorous and realistic sound effects.

Developer: Smart Dog Productions	Publisher: Ubisoft Entertainment	Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011) 315-1000	RRP: R 379.00
http://www.ubisoft.com			
Multiplayer: Yes	Comparitives: Pete Sampras Tennis Anna Kournikova's Smash Court Tennis	Pro's: Excellent Sound Effects Fun Game Elements Advanced Physics	Con's: Lacking Depth Tournament Multiplayer Only
Graphics: 81	Sound: 85	Control: 71	Story: NA
Continuity: 45	Playability: 75	71	



STORM

GENRE
Tennis Simulation

Controller Support:
Multi Tap
Compatible

Optional Extras:
1-2
Player

The ancient bloodline was embodied 2,000 years ago just outside of Bethlehem. 1,900 years later, its dark secret surfaced in the small town of Rennes-le-Chateau.



BLOOD OF THE SACRED GABRIEL KNIGHT BLOOD OF THE DAMNED

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These days, referring to a game as an adventure game is almost a cop out. Let's be honest - virtually every game out there is an adventure, whether it be a 3D format, or a platform game. They take us to a myriad of new places, and flood us with tons of new ideas. However, some games are still highly deserved of the adventure game moniker. These are the games that, in my own humble opinion, not only take the player through the various stages of the prescribed adventure, but also take him beyond - to new concepts, new ideas and new thought patterns. They surpass being just plain old adventures on screen, and become whole new adventures for the mind. Shadow Man is such a game...

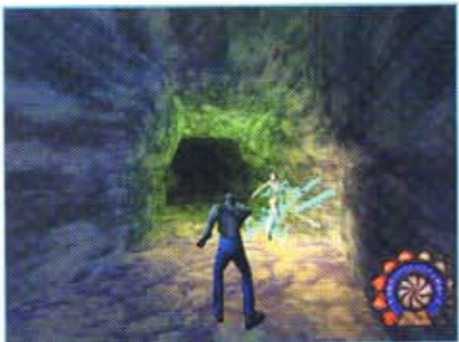
It is not awfully often that a game can be called truly impressive in almost every sense. However, Shadow Man certainly deserves this distinction. The player enters the world as Mike, a down on his luck, ex-student whose action directly resulted in the death of his family. Wracked with guilt, Mike was discovered by a Voodoo, or powerful voodoo priestess, who forcibly embedded a powerful voodoo symbol into Mike's body. At this time, he became a dual person. Mike, a normal man in the world of the living... and the Shadow Man, a powerful warrior capable of transcending the veils that separate life and death, and entering the strange and surreal afterlife of voodoo legend: Deadside.

The world presented in Shadow Man is a stark and harsh one. There is not much love here (especially in Deadside). As the Shadow Man, the player has to foil the plans of Legion, an enigmatic creature bent on taking possession of the Dark Souls, powerful evil entities that would grant him huge amounts of power. With the help of the evil and twisted, prostitute slaying architect commonly known as Jack the Ripper, Legion has built a haven for these evil powers within Deadside, and plans to bring about Apocalypse through the use of

their dark power. Only the Shadow Man - the only being capable of containing these Dark Souls safely - is powerful enough to stop Legion's heinous plot... Often, when a game is presented on both PC and PSX platforms, one rendition of the game outshines the other by far. This is not the case with Shadow Man. Here we have two equals in the gaming world, the only difference lying in the fact that one is computer based, while the other is to be found on a console. Game play in the PSX version of this game is smooth, with few problems bogging the player down. The controls are comprehensive and, although a little confusing at times, can easily be mastered. The game itself is fast paced, and requires both quick reaction in combat situations and careful planning to get through the maze like puzzles and problems that can be found throughout the game.

As you may have realised from the earlier paragraphs, Shadow Man is possessed of a rich and complex story. What was not mentioned is the fact that Shadow Man also has a great sense of humour which, although possibly lost on younger players, is perfect for the game's older target market. I found myself giggling more than a few times at off hand comments passed by some of the characters within the game. Shadow Man is very certainly aimed at the more mature player. The very essence of the tale is quite disturbing, and some of the concepts and imagery within the game will most certainly be lost on younger players. This does not mean, however, that younger players will not enjoy the fast paced and challenging action of the game - it just won't have the same depth or impact that it would on older players. Shadow Man is not the prettiest PlayStation game that I have seen, but it does rank

amongst the best as far as graphics go. At times, the characters look a little disfigured (particularly during cut scenes) but the vibrancy of the tale and vitality of their personalities go a long way to negate this minor problem. The graphics are smooth and neat, without many of the clipping problems to be found in other PSX titles. The scenery is dark, yet strangely alive, both in the living world and the visually disturbing Deadside. As far as sound effects and scores go, Shadow Man is great! The music is typically pounding and rhythmic, as is fitting to the Voodoo behind the tale, and sounds within the game are superb. Of particular note - a firm personal favourite - is the wonderful, rich bass timbre of the



KILLING DEAD THINGS... YEAAH!

Shadow Man's voice. I would kill to have vocal chords capable of that most excellent sound! Shadow Man is a good, solid game for adventure fans. It will prove challenging and frustrating even, to every gamer, and it's story will engross anyone who plays it. It is an addictive, exciting journey into the unknown, and comes with my personal recommendation. However, prospective gamers should be warned that it deals with some disturbing and rather adult concepts.



Enter the dark world of Voodoo mythology as the Shadow Man, a warrior capable of walking in the lands of the living and the dead. An exciting, puzzling and enjoyable journey through the strange world of Deadside, with a few laughs to boot!

Developer: Acclaim		Publisher: Acclaim		Supplier: Multimedia Warehouse (011) 315-1000		RRP: R 329.00	
http://www.acclaim.net							
Multiplayer		Comparatives		Pro's		Con's	
No		Tomb Raider		Excellent Story Great Sound		Graphical Glitches Requires Lots Of Memory	
Graphics	Sound	Control	Story	Continuity	Playability	79	
68	85	80	89	72	82		

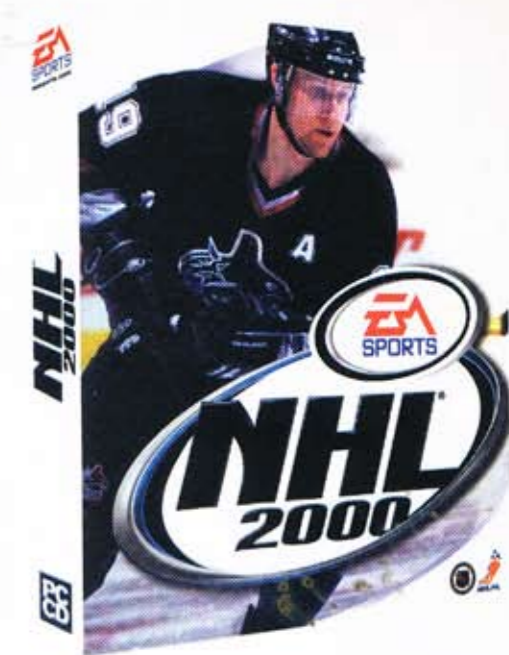
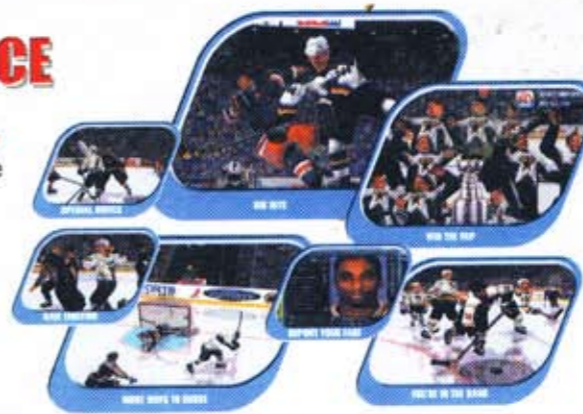
SHRYKE
GENRE
3D Adventure

Controller Support
Wireless Function Compatible
Analog Controller Compatible

Optional Extras
Memory Card 3 Blocks
1 Player(s)

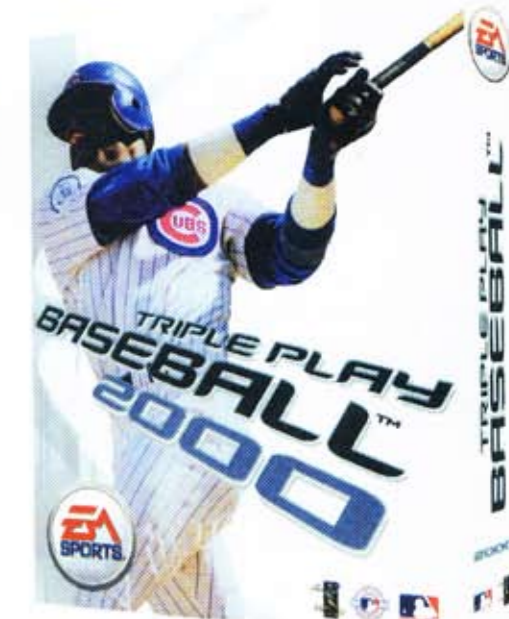
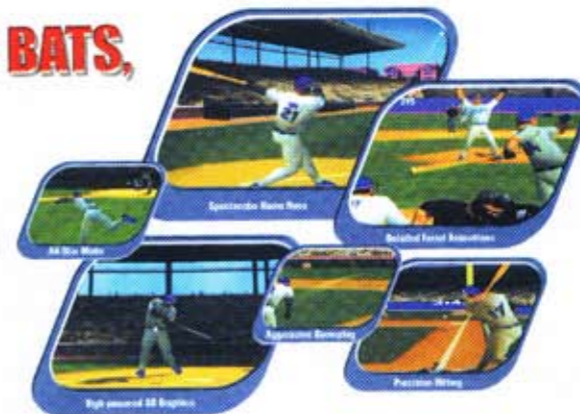
SMOOTH AS ICE

IMPORT YOUR FACE & VOICE - Get in the game plus create your own taunts and celebrations.
FULL INTERNET GAMEPLAY - Go on the road with your favourite team.
DEDICATED BIG HIT AND SPECIAL MOVE BUTTON.
NEW DYNASTY MODE - Create a team to play in consecutive years / seasons.
ALL THE TEAMS, ALL THE PLAYERS.
FULL NHL SEASON AND 98 / 99 PLAYER STATS.
FEATURED MUSIC - Garbage "Push It" and Überzone "Docta-Docta".



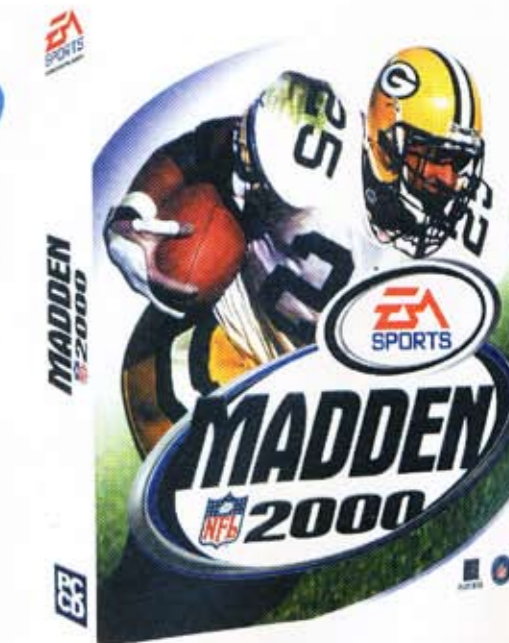
BIG MEN, BIG BATS, HARD BALLS

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If it's in the game, it's in the game!

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Bargain Buys



Electronic Arts Africa has just released their second edition of this compilation set, **The Biggest Names The Best Games 2**. The title weighs in at **R 299.00** and is distributed by Electronic Arts Africa on (011) 803-1212.

DIE HARD TRILOGY

Take up the reigns as Detective John McLaine, the wise cracking LA cop portrayed by Bruce Willis in the highly successful Die Hard movie series. This action packed game allows you to enter any of the three scenarios presented in the three films: take on terrorists in the Nakamura Towers, storm through the embattled Dulles Airport, or drive a cab through New York's Central Park in a bid to stop a mad bomber. This is a thrilling, action packed game, rife with bad guys, weapons, explosions and hostages. You may select any of the three missions to start with - the missions do not have to be completed in any particular order. Within these missions, you will find a number of different game styles,



including third person and first person views. The common thread between all the various game modes is a need for

quick reflexes and quicker thinking. This is a sure win title for those out there who love fast paced action, rife with snappy comments and quips a-la John McLane.

TIGER WOODS 99

Still one of best golf simulations on the market, Tiger Woods 99 is an immersive, impressive sports game that will appeal to both golf lovers and amateurs alike.



This game is challenging enough to be enjoyable for the expert yet simple enough not to be frustrating for inexperienced players.

Take to one of the best golf courses in the world as Tiger Woods (or any of several of the world's top golfers) and play your way to the top! Tiger Woods 99 features some of the most impressive graphics available to golf gamers, as well as brilliant sound, featuring a play by play commentary. Club selection, play style, everything is up to the player. It is up to you to guide the golfer of your choice to victory! Tiger Woods 99 will definitely provide the player with absolute hours of fun and entertainment, and

will simulate the feeling of being on a golf course so realistically, you will be able to hear the birds, feel the breeze and smell the freshly mowed grass under your feet!

TRESPASSER

Enter the world based on Michael Crichton's Jurassic Park in Trespasser, an "add-on" to the blockbuster sequel to Jurassic Park, *The Lost*



World. An innocent trip to Costa Rica ends in disaster as a plane crash lands your character on Site B (Isla Sorna),

John Hammond's Dinosaur production island. Of course, the original actor, Sir Richard Attenborough, performs the voice of John Hammond. This small island in the Cinco Muertes island group is, of course, populated by dinosaurs created by Hammond's company, InGen. Let the games begin... As the trespasser, you enter this FPS Adventure in a bid to escape the island and, more importantly, survive. This 3D game is a tense, often thrilling, often terrifying trip into the world created by author Michael Crichton, who is also responsible for tales like *Airframe* and *Disclosure*. *Trespasser* will chill you to the bone as you fight for your life against ruthless creatures from another age. Beware, for every step counts in this one! And the dinosaurs don't die too easily either. This is a game where discretion is often the better part of valour.

FIFA 98 - ROAD TO THE WORLD CUP

The world's most popular game is well represented by the FIFA range from EA Sports. This title features the teams from around the world as they prepare for the Soccer World Cup. Literally hundreds of teams are available to play - including every soccer-playing nation in the world's national teams, as well as league teams for the major European soccer playing countries. As always, quality is the watchword in this EA Sports product. Great graphics, excellent sound (including live in-game commentary) and stunning game play are the order of the day. FIFA 98 RTWC surpassed its predecessors with ease, as is always the case with the FIFA range. New features include improved team management facilities, and the widest range of team selection. This is certainly a sports fan's dream, being one of the greatest soccer games to ever grace the monitors of gamers around the world. It is a wonderfully challenging game that is still playable.



Match the team of your choice up against any other team in the world, play friendly games or enter national or

federation leagues in your quest for football glory. Without a doubt, FIFA 98 RTWC is one of the best titles in the FIFA range, and one of the

best in this impressive boxed set.

NEED FOR SPEED 3 - HOT PURSUIT

Fast, faster, fastest! Electronic Arts ever-popular Need for Speed series enters the realm of cops and crook in this fast paced driving simulator. Get behind the wheel of some of the fastest cars known to man - and a few unknown models



that EA have created especially for this title. Drive fast through several types of landscape, ranging from rural

to desert canyons to modern cities. But, beware, for the police are out there! A new feature in this game is the fact that the long arm of the law is out to put you in prison for your bad driving habits. On the other hand, should you wish to represent the authorities, challenge yourself by getting into a police pursuit car and chasing down, ambushing and generally busting offenders. A full multiplayer suite guarantees the long life expectancy of this title, with several play modes and almost infinite variations making this one of the most fun multiplayer games ever. Add to that full Internet support, with new cars, tracks, patches and addons being created constantly, and you have a truly versatile, full and fun game that will keep you busy for years!

FUTURE COP: LAPD

It is the future, but not any kind of future that we could want. Crime rules the streets, and the cops of the LAPD are not exactly having a good time. However, the introduction of robotic, armoured assault units, armed with state of the art, powerful weaponry, is making their lives a

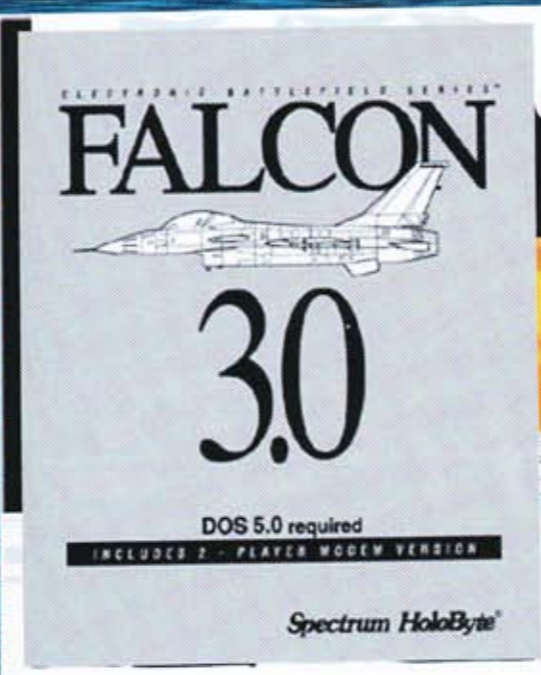


bit easier. Got a problem that is going to take just a little more than the usual force? Call these bad boys and

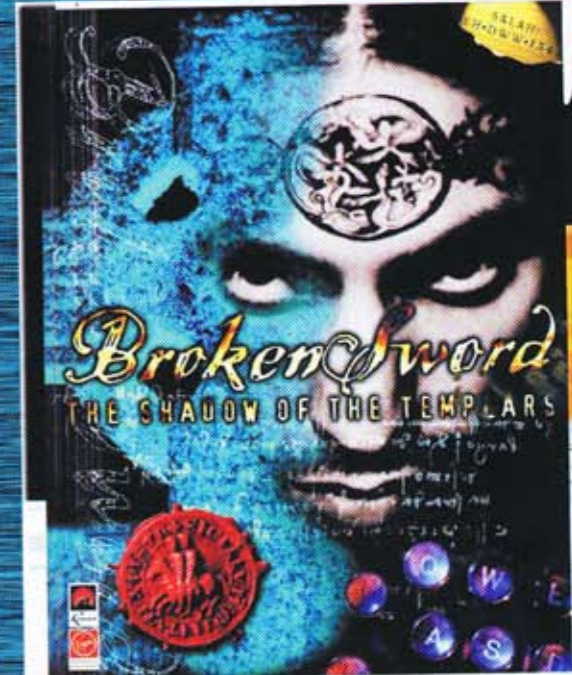
take the criminals down in a way that they know they've done something wrong! This beautifully presented isometric game features a camera that automatically pans for the best view of the action, getting you right into the action for every machine gun blasting, rocket launching, bomb detonating second of gameplay. The wonderful graphics work hand in hand with a mind numbing sound effects package, creating a thrillingly enthralling piece of PC game ware. No job is too big or too small for these cops as they tackle terrorists throughout LA, on a wide variety of missions with varying objectives. But be warned - just because you ride around in several tons of armoured vehicle doesn't mean that you are invincible - should you not be careful, you will most certainly be blown into micro-particles by enemies that are smart, cunning and very numerous. - NAG

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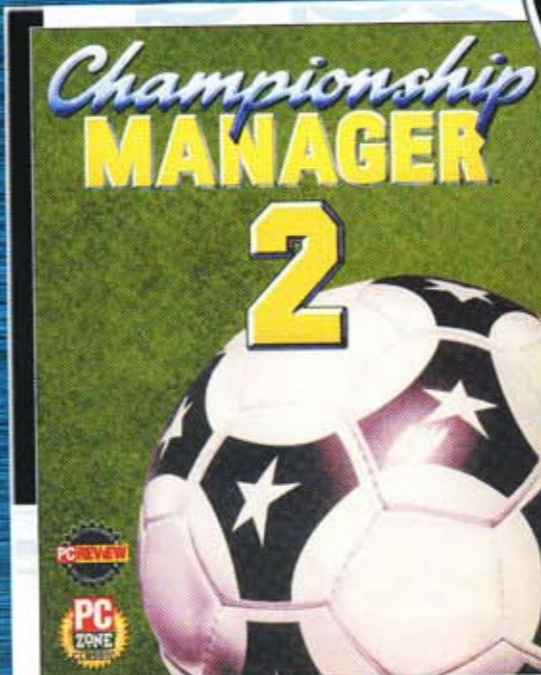


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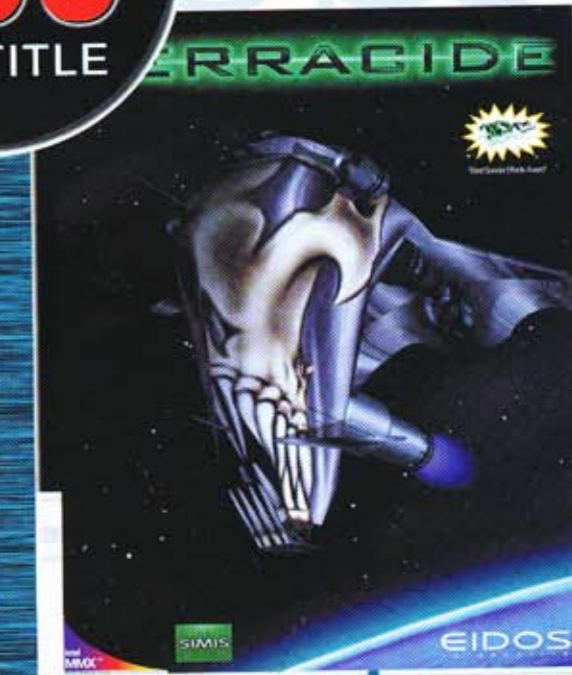


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To start off I just want to explain the commotion this card caused upon arrival here at New Age Gaming. Never in my life did I have to fight so hard to get my hands on a review sample. As soon as it showed up the whole staff was at the door harassing our Marketing Manager for the box, and of course they only sent one. Luckily the Editor calmed things down and gave me the card for review with a firm understanding that it comes back to him afterwards, he needs to 'Give a second opinion!' Yeah right - I'll probably never see the card again. Just thought I would get my two cents in for the record. On with the review!

For the first time a Creative Labs product arrived in a box that is black and doesn't use the usual Orange. Definitely a box to attract your attention. Inside you will find the 3D Blaster GeForce card, a manual, driver and utility CD, a Win DVD CD, as well as a special edition of Evolve Scout. As with most products today installation is easy and there is a chapter

It has arrived!... The latest 3D accelerator from Creative Labs has hit our shores and sports the new GeForce processor from nVidia. The card promised to be the next step in 3D gaming and also the fastest on the market, but does it deliver the goods? Find out in our in-depth look at the 3D Blaster: GeForce from Creative.

will be prompted for the drives and after the installation the 3D Blaster GeForce is ready for some serious action. The 3D Blaster GeForce features 32 MB of RAM, nVidia GeForce 256 chipset and has support for AGP 2X and AGP 4X. The GeForce 256 chipset utilises

Quake 3 Arena will support optimisation by using T&L on the GeForce based cards. As can be seen from the benchmarks we did the scores aren't anything to rave over when considering the 3D Mark score and pretty much compare with the rest of the top end cards on the market. This is due to the fact that no card or benchmark supports T&L yet. On the other hand if you have a look at the Treemark scores you see truer reflection of the cards capabilities. The GeForce also supports spherical environment mapping for more realistic reflections within games. Until now

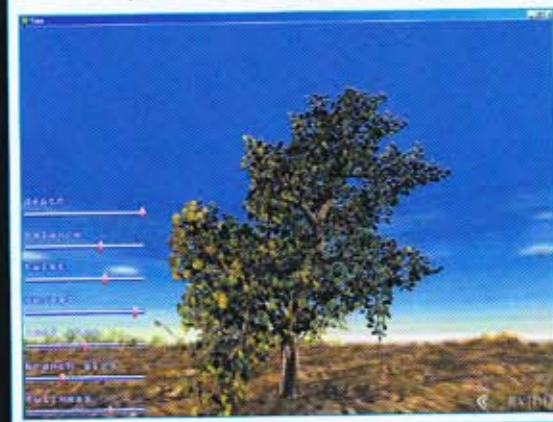
3D BLASTER GeForce

nVidia's new QuadEngine technology, enabling the card to render four 32-bit pixels per clock cycle. This is twice as much as the TNT 2 chipset. The card is also able to render 15 million polygons per second, and all this just to play games. With twice as many transistors as the current Pentium III processors the GeForce is

no longer just a 3D accelerator but should be thought of as a Graphics Processing Unit (GPU). If that isn't enough it also has support for DVD playback and features an 8:1 scaling engine so you can watch DVD titles in a Window or Full screen without any quality loss. The GeForce 256 chipset has been getting a lot of attention in the press lately since it is the first 3D accelerator to support Transformation & Lighting engines on the chipset. Essentially what this does is free up processing power on your CPU, which until now has been doing all the T&L calculations, for more important gameplay features such as improved AI (Artificial Intelligence). Unfortunately this feature was only added in DirectX 7 and we will have to wait for the first games to appear that make use of the new API to see the true power of the GeForce. For games to take advantage of this feature

TREEMARK
Included on this month's CoverCD is a small benchmark utility for 3D accelerators called Treemark. It was written by nVidia to show off the GeForce chipset. It does however give a good indication on how intensive T&L calculations are. The utility can be used with all the newer 3D accelerators and will give you a good indication of just how fast the GeForce really is if you compare your results with the ones below.

Complex Benchmark = 11.8 FPS
Simplex Benchmark = 42.7 FPS



in the manual about installation should you be a first timer. Simply plug it into your AGP slot, screw the card firmly in place and you're done with the hardware installation, of course you do still have to connect the monitor. Upon bootup of Windows you

they would have to have been specifically coded to do so. Developers have announced their support for hardware T&L, and you can bet that we will see games making use of it soon. Interestingly enough John Carmack from id Software has stated that

3D Mark Pro Benchmark			
Resolution	3D Mark Score	FPS (Racer)	FPS (Shooter)
640x480	4182	44.7	39.2
800x600	3728	39.2	35.5
1024x768	3128	31.6	30.8
1280x1024	3136	31.7	30.9

The test machine was a Creative Labs Blaster PC Premium containing a 450MHz Pentium III processor, and 128 MB of RAM. The latest drivers from the actual manufacturers were used for the test.

only boxed environment mapping has been supported, unfortunately this method does not produce the most accurate or realistic result. With spherical mapping you get detailed reflections and the object with the reflection can be moved around without impacting the quality or realism of the reflection. Overall the 3D Blaster GeForce offers the latest in 2D and 3D technology. Unfortunately there are no games making use of the advanced features although there will be games making use of it next year. For this reason we will hold back the Editors Choice until we can see the card at its full potential. The biggest problem I can foresee with gamers buying the card is the price. At a retail price of R2599.00 the card is expensive and beyond the price point of a lot of gamers. If you want the Rolls Royce of graphic accelerators I would highly recommend it to any gamer who can afford it. Creative Labs has always had excellent driver support and has support centres throughout South Africa should any problem arise.

Pro's: Transformation and lighting engine. Spherical environment mapping. DVD playback support.

Con's: Currently no games that make use of Transformation and Lighting hardware available.

R 2599.00 (RRP)

Distributor: Multimedia Warehouse
Tel: (011) 315-1000
www.creative-asia.com

Ask gamers what the perfect gaming mouse is and you'll probably come up with the Logitech Wingman Gaming mouse. At least that's what Logitech did and most gamers agreed that the design is the best suited for gaming. There is no new funky design, or improved ergonomics - the Wingman Gaming mouse is basically an improvement on an old design, more specifically an improvement on the original Mouseman. Luckily this mouse just arrived in time to replace my original Mouseman, which uses the exact same design and is almost falling apart after two years of use. It is funny how long we keep a mouse and upgrade everything else on a regular basis.

The design is solid fitting in the palm of your hand and features 3 buttons that can be programmed via the mouse software. It also has a small indentation on the left for your thumb to give you that extra bit of control. And to give it a gaming feel and look the mouse sports grey, white and black colours. While the design might not be new, everything else on the mouse is a gamers dream. It features USB and PS/2 connectivity and uses a heavier mouse ball for more precise control, a feature a lot of Logitech fans have been requesting. The mouse also introduces a higher sampling rate on the PS/2 port, and updates up to 200 times a sec. The sampling rate can be configured by using the Mouseware driver software - the default rate on a PS/2 port is 40 updates per second. While the same functionality can be gained by third party software such as the ps2rate program, I think gamers will appreciate the inclusion of such func-

Logitech Wingman Gaming Mouse



tionality within the drivers. The higher sampling rate means that you get more precise control over movement in games and your motion also tends to be smoother. I did notice quite a substantial improvement in control while we were playing our daily game of Quake III test and must admit that the improved sampling rate does make a difference. One important aspect to remember about this mouse should you consider buying one, is that you tend to use your whole palm for control and not just your fingertips. If this is the way you use a mouse than the Wingman Gaming Mouse is what you need, if not you might want to try the Logitech Mouseman+ wheel mouse, which has a design more suited to those who use their fingers for control. Overall the Wingman Mouse is an excellent design and I would highly recommend it to any gamer.

Pro's: Configurable PS2 sampling rate. Comfortable design. USB and PS2 support. Heavier mouse ball.
Con's: Not suitable for "fingertip" control.

R 349.00 (RRP)

Distributor: Crew
Tel: (011) 233-1111
www.logitech.com

Logitech are well known for their monopoly of the mouse market and are the market leaders in the international OEM (products shipped with complete PC's) manufacturing channel. This has been accomplished by Logitech's Research & Development Departments meteoric rise to the top of mice design and technology.

Though cordless technology has been around for quite sometime, Logitech have added this unique feature to their award winning MouseMan Wheel design that has taken our Quaking community by storm. The cordless feature does eliminate the tedious wires that lie around the table and it uses digital radio technology that eliminates the need to have to point the mouse at the receiver. The range is more or less two-metres though I managed to push that to five-metres and it still performed as well at both ranges.

Logitech Mouseman+ Cordless



The design is sleek, futuristic and comfortable because it's designed to cup the hand in its natural position. The grip area of the right hand thumb (only available for right-handed consumers) and the pinkie finger is made from a rubber compound for better grip and comfort. The rest area and buttons are made from a heavy duty plastic, this does not detract from the sleekness, but rather enhances its looks. The MouseMan design offers a four-button configuration that has a standard two-button and wheel that acts as a third button and scroller, as well as a conveniently placed thumb button which is well positioned for anything from gaming to internet brows-

ing. The buttons are extremely responsive with an advanced click mechanism for ultra sensitive situations. The wheel is also composed of the same rubber from the grip points and finishes off the mouse's attractive looks and features.

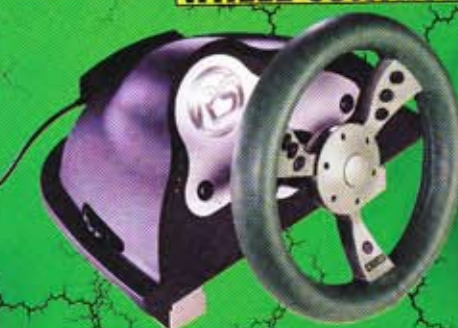
Everything is however not rosy for the gamer, the mouse is highly responsive making it extremely difficult to configure sensitivity, which in turn needs to be moderated by external programs such as 'PS2Rate'. It is also very heavy for a mouse and even provided with the mouse. Even with its weight it does glide over mouse pads and surfaces with elegant ease and its anti-static mouseball deters dust build-up on the roller mechanisms. The mouse does come in at a fairly heavy price of R 499.00 but is backed up by a five-year guarantee that shows Logitech's support for its product and it comes with a PS/2 and serial adapter. There is a USB version coming into the country as well over the next few months for all those with USB support. Overall I found the Cordless Mouseman Wheel to be a better business solution than a gaming one but for all those must have gaming junkies out there, this is a not a bad alternative.

Pro's: No bothersome wires. Radio frequency. Mouseman's sleek design.
Con's: Unsuitable for precision gaming. Thumb button positioned on grip.

R 499.00 (RRP)

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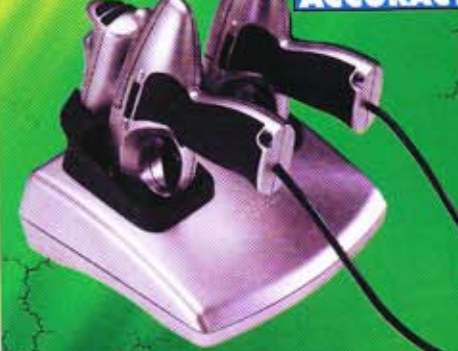
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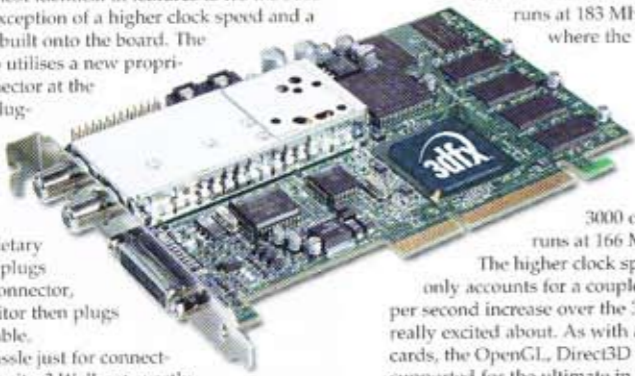


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The last of the Voodoo 3 series of cards has just hit the market. The new Voodoo 3500 TV from 3dfx is almost identical in features to its 3000 with the exception of a higher clock speed and a TV Tuner built onto the board. The board also utilises a new proprietary connector at the back for plugging in your monitor. Included in the box is a proprietary cable that plugs into this connector, your monitor then plugs into the cable. All this hassle just for connecting the monitor? Well not exactly.



3D Mark Pro Benchmark

Resolution	3D Mark Score	FPS (Racer)	FPS (Shooter)
640x480	4431	48.2	41.0
800x600	4454	48.9	40.9
1024x768	4441	48.5	41.0
1280x1024	4439	48.5	41.9

The test machine was a Creative Labs Blaster PC Premium containing a 450MHz Pentium III processor, and 128 MB of RAM. The latest drivers from the actual manufacturers were used for the test.

The cable also contains S-Video Input and S-Video output connectors should you wish to connect a device such as a video machine or PlayStation to your monitor or if you want to connect your PC to a TV. As far as 2D and 3D features are concerned they

are similar to the Voodoo 3000, the only exception is a higher clock speed as mentioned above. The 3500 runs at 183 MHz, where the

Voodoo3 3500 TV

lem as its predecessors and slows down to a crawl if it encounters a 3D scene utilising more than 16MB of textures at the same time. This isn't a major concern at the moment, but as games get more complex and start using bigger and higher resolution textures the Voodoo 3 chipset becomes a less viable option and we can only hope that 3dfx address this issue in the upcoming Voodoo 4 chipset. The Voodoo 3500 is also not capable of rendering in 32-bit colour, something that all the other 3D chipsets have been offering for a while now. Even with all these flaws the Voodoo 3500 TV still remains one of the fastest 3D accelerators on the market as can be seen from our benchmarks. It is good value for money and retails at a price of only R 2050.00. You get a decent 2D display card, a fast 3D accelerator and a TV tuner all in one. The card should definitely be considered by anyone aiming to upgrade this Christmas.

- Pro's:** Fast frame rate.
TV Tuner.
S-Video in and out.
- Con's:** 16-bit colour rendering.
Struggles with 3D scenes with over 16 MB of textures.
- R 2049.00 (RRP)**
- Distributor: Puma Technologies**
Tel: (011) 802-4751
www.3dfx.com

First there was Force Feedback input devices and now Xitel has said let there be light (or sound in this case) and introduced the first Force Feedback headset. I know exactly what you're thinking right now. You are wondering just how the hell Force Feedback earphones are going to enhance your gaming experience and that it is just some type of gimmick to sell the product. Truthfully I had the same thoughts running through my head when I was first presented with the product and after playing with it for several days I can say that it really works.

The box contains a unique set of Force Feedback headphones, a Storm Platinum A3D PCI Soundcard, a user manual and of course a driver disc with all the necessary software required for Windows 95/98. All of this at only R 999.00, not a bad deal considering you get professional quality headphones and a PCI soundcard capable of 2 channel surround sound.

The headphones are made of quality components and have a very sturdy and rugged design, not to mention that it looks good. As I mentioned the headphones support Force Feedback using the A3D 2.0 and DirectSound 3D APIs, although we had no problem getting them to work with EAX as well. This is probably the first Force Feedback device, which I can say enhances your gameplay without any drawbacks. Usually with input devices the Force Feedback compromises your control, but with the Storm Platinum headphones there is no compromise since it doesn't affect the game in any way. What it does do is give a more immersive gaming experience while also enhancing 3D posi-

tional sound. Not only can you hear where your enemies are coming from in games such as System Shock 2, but you can also feel it through the vibration created in the earcup. Firstly let me say that the headphones don't rock your head all over the place, you simply feel a slight vibration.

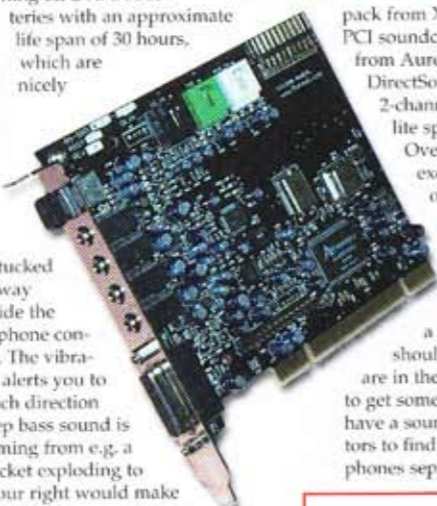
The vibration is created by a unique built in active bass amplifier running off 2 AAA batteries with an approximate life span of 30 hours, which are nicely



tucked away inside the headphone controls. The vibration alerts you to which direction deep bass sound is coming from e.g. a rocket exploding to your right would make the right earcup vibrate more than the left giving you extra auditory input as to which direction your enemy is coming from. The mechanism is genuinely innovative in its design and does add immensely to further the gaming experience. Not only does the Force Feedback add to the value of this pack, but the headphones also produce crystal clear sound for those times when you want to listen to music. The Force Feedback can be turned off while listening to music using a slide

switch, which is located on the controls on the headphone wire. There is also an independent volume knob on the controls to easily change the volume

Storm Platinum Gamer's Pack



without having to fiddle with any software settings. This particular pack from Xitel also contains the Storm Platinum PCI soundcard, which utilises the Vortex 2 chipset from Aureal. It supports A3D 1.0, A3D 2.0 and DirectSound 3D for surround sound and with its 2-channel output you can connect up to 4 satellite speakers to give you true surround sound. Overall the Storm Platinum Gamers Pack is exceptional good value for money and offers innovative technology to further the gaming experience and therefore gets our Editor's Choice award. Considering the quality of headphones you might pay a bit more if you purchase similar headphones and a similar soundcard separately. You should definitely consider this product if you are in the market for a new soundcard and wish to get something extra for your cash. If you already have a soundcard you can also contact the distributors to find out where you can purchase the headphones separately.

- Pro's:** Innovative Force Feedback Technology.
High Quality Headphones.
2-channel A3D PCI Soundcard.
- Con's:** Not viable if you own an EAX or A3D 2.0 soundcard.
- R 999.00 (RRP)**
- Distributor: Proton Technologies**
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THE DIFFERENCE WILL AMAZE YOU

The new Wingman Extreme joystick is part of the Logitech revamp scheme for the millennium and is the flagship joystick for release from Logitech. Changing from the previous Wingman design must have been a difficult decision if the accolades handed out to the device can be anything to judge it by. Can this new modern design stand up to public scrutiny or will it die in joystick heaven?

Firstly we must point out that the fundamentals of the joystick have remained intact with the large sturdy base and ergonomic grip forming the staple diet of the success of the Wingman joysticks. Though the design is for the most part totally different it is mostly cosmetic, comfort and button positions that have changed to allow for easier accessibility to the peripheral's features.

It is difficult to grasp one significant change as there are many but the most needed certainly is the addition of the twist handle (rudder) that Microsoft made famous with their Sidewinder series. Though it must have been difficult to bow down to public demand and utilise something from its major



Logitech Wingman Digital Extreme 3D

competitor, it was the one and only downfall of the Logitech Joysticks, until now. But something that can be taken out of the Logitech handbook is the new 'Thumb Sweep' positioning of its four major buttons. A simple movement of the thumb gives you access to four buttons and an 8-way hat switch for quick response for all command requirements. Another significant change is the throttle lever that is designed to comfortably fit the left thumb into position while controlling a further two ultra click buttons. All of these design changes have made progress towards a simplistic yet responsive gaming device.

All the buttons are fully programmable and are made from heavy-duty plastics for excellent reliability. The entire unit shows off quality and performance, except for the hat-switch, which in some ways feels flimsy, but it showed no signs of deterioration even after hours and hours of arduous

testing on my favourite flight sim. The stick performs exceptionally well with superb responsiveness and quiet

moving action. The unit comes with no extra software besides the Logitech Wingman Software 3.20, which was a little disappointing considering the price. A handy Game-Port and USB connector is supplied for differing computer users as well as the option to lock the twist handle by turning a simple screw. Has the Logitech Wingman Digital Extreme 3D done enough to warrant another crown jewel for the Switzerland based company? Yes. This may not be for the ardent flight sim fan (though it would perform well enough) but offers the all round gamer a sturdy companion for those long hard gaming sessions.

- Pro's:** New Thumb Sweep accessibility. Addition of the twist handle. Awesome rudder ergonomics.
- Con's:** Flimsy hat-switch. No extra software.

R 299.00 (RRP)

Distributor: Crew
Tel: (011) 233-1111
www.logitech.com

Logitech Wingman Gamepad Extreme

Logitech have certainly been listening to their consumers if you look at the changes to the new Wingman Gamepad Extreme. A funkier more futuristic feel and look is the most notable change and the addition of a High-Tech G-FORCE TILT Sensor. This sensor uses micromachined accelerometer technology to detect body movements and is surprisingly accurate and responsive for its purpose. Though not the first controller to utilise this innovation it's most certainly one of the best of its kind. After a few hours of playing Acclaim's new Trickstyle, I found it quite refreshing and rewarding to utilise the motion sensing instead of the gamepad. One downside to the technology is the stress it puts on the hands to continually manipulate the controller in all directions, which leaves the hands and wrists quite fatigued after a good gaming session. Other features included are new button and D-Pad designs, which are finished off with a more attractive blue luminosity durable plastic. The D-Pad has been redesigned to capitalise on all of its 8-way directional system and offers superb digital response. Two trigger fingers are strategically positioned giving the feeling of holding a gun in each hand and having the grip for allowing instant response. The gamepad has six buttons ergonomically positioned for ease of use over the right thumb position and even with my small hands were easy to reach. There is one very big oversight from Logitech in the lack of proportional support that is utilised in most games today, as most of the more favourable gamepads have this feature somewhere on their device. The overall design of the gamepad conforms to all hand sizes and has potential of being one of the best-designed gamepads on the



market, however the slippery plastic finish tends to let down the sturdiness of the grip that is important for the longer playing sessions. Logitech has never professed to being the cheapest brand of peripherals on the market but have worked up the reputation of offering excellent quality and durability of product. This is further enhanced by the offering of Star Wars Rogue Squadron: Elite Missions (requires 3D-accelerator), a dual Game Port and USB connector, Logitech's Wingman 3.20 software and a years guarantee on the device. These offerings bring the pricing into perspective in today's economic environment even though most gamers will spend the odd Rand more on personal peripherals such as gamepads. The Wingman Gamepad Extreme certainly offers an abundance of innovations and features for most gaming requirements but the lack of proportional support does leave the Extreme fairly exposed to its competition. It must be said that the Wingman Gamepad Extreme has been elected the official gamepad of the AMD Professional Gamers League, whether it's money or design that won it this accolade, it certainly merits a mention.

- Pro's:** New Motion Sensing technology. Fully programmable buttons. Excellent quality and design.

- Con's:** No analog support. Slippery plastic finish.

R 399.00 (RRP)

Distributor: Crew
Tel: (011) 233-1111
www.logitech.com

Zykon Virtual Twister

Most people believe that motion sensitive controllers are nothing more than a gimmick to move stock off shelves. And, for the most part, that is a correct assumption, with most motion sensitive controllers not performing as well as is claimed. The Zykon Virtual Twister, however, is a definite step in the right direction. Featuring a solid-state internal motion sensor that is sensitive to every slightest movement - and not to mention moves accordingly - the Virtual Twister is a wonderfully responsive controller that is a joy to use, albeit after a little practice.



- Pro's:** Excellent Motion Sensitivity. 28 programmable buttons.

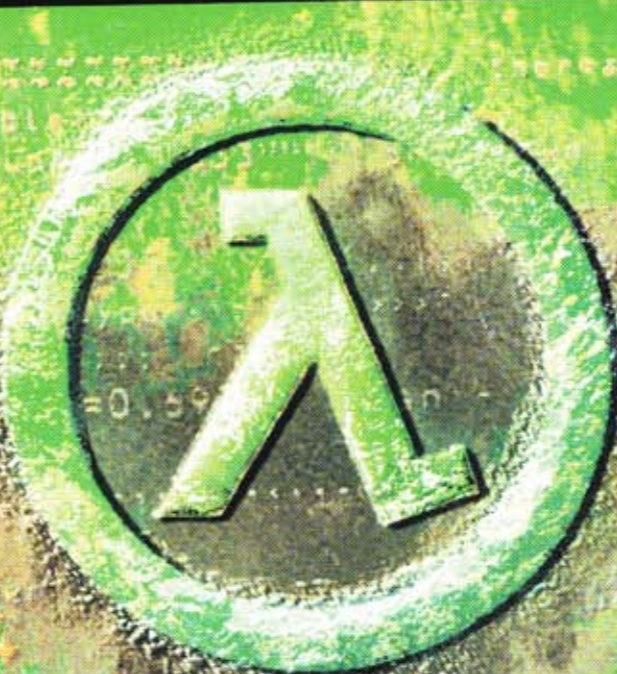
- Con's:** Confusing D-Pad. Uncomfortable to grip.

R 299.00 (RRP)

Distributor: Proton Technologies
Tel: (011) 486-0748
www.zykon.com

HALF-LIFE

OPPOSING FORCE



An Entirely New Episode for the Game of the Year

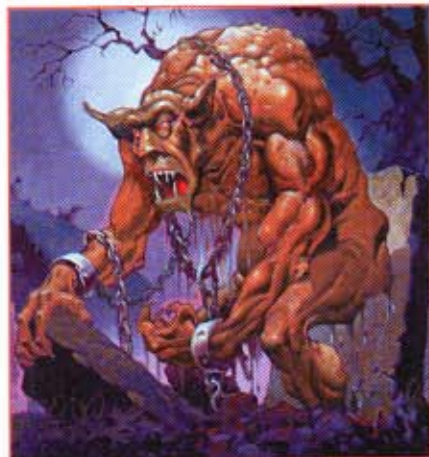


COMING SOON!

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Mercadian Masques pre-release attracts hundreds of players

Magic spreading far and wide



East London got a taste of something different recently, when the first sanctioned DCI tournament was held at a local library, attracting 46 players. With all proceeds going to a charity to help sufferers of Downs Syndrome, even teachers at local schools were keen to get involved, and in one case, even play. "We were really pleased with the turnout," said the organiser, Petrus Hillebrand. "We'll be coming up again next month to try and get a regular event off the ground." Petrus travelled 350km from Port Elizabeth with co-organiser Mark Whitnall to judge the event. "The number of players in East London is growing rapidly," said DCI co-ordinator for SA, Martin Frain. "The city will definitely be put on our circuit, and will be able to host sneak preview, pre-release tournaments next year." For information on the East London events, contact Petrus on 082-800-3501. More evidence of growth in South Africa is Rustenburg, a city in North Western Province. A handful of players have formed a club, which has grown to 35 members in a month. Organised by the hockey coach and Magic newcomer Conal McGuirk and playing at the sports club, tournaments take place with a television in the corner, so participants can watch the rugby. Platinum miners play restaurant owners, and plans for DCI judge certification have been laid. "It's really good to see such enthusiasm for the game," said Martin. "All it really takes is one person to get the ball rolling, and you get this kind of thing happening. I think we're going to see even better things next year." Contact Conal on 082-322-3864.

Over 350 players around the country got a sneak preview of Mercadian Masques before its release in October. Masques, the major stand alone set for the 1999-2000 season, was also played in-store at a number of shops a few days before the release, giving players a further opportunity to take a look at the cards. The cards become tournament legal on the 1st November 1999, while the Tempest block (Tempest, Stronghold and Exodus) move out of the Standard environment. They are still playable in Extended events, however. There are

Mercadian Masques™

350 cards in the set, including foil land cards. Available in tournament packs, theme decks and boosters, players have commented that the set is strong, with no "broken" cards (though we may see some before too long). It plays slower than Tempest, and major changes can be expected in the style of play and deck construction in tournaments at the end of the year. Cards include a Two-Headed Dragon, a 4/4 flyer for two red and four other mana. It can only be blocked by two or more creatures, and can block two creatures. And for a red and one other, you can pump it +2/0. But it's not just the rare cards that rock. Moment of Silence, a white instant - for one mana - allows you to force target player to skip his or her combat phase for that turn. Blue gets a big stomp for three blue and five other: Tidal Kraken, 6/6, and un-blockable. Green gets its own 6/6, and for a mere one green and three other you get Hunted Wumpus.

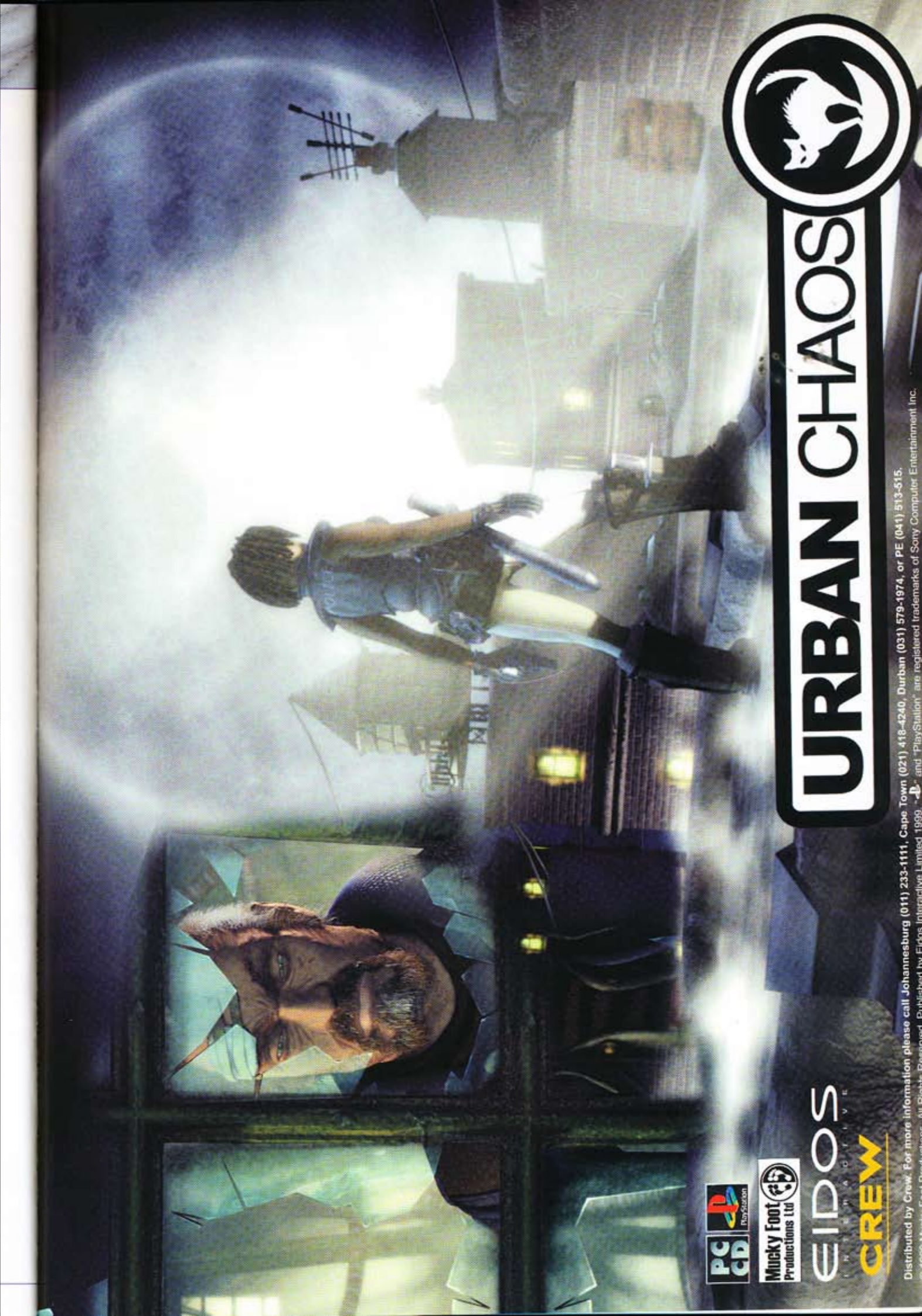
The downside is that your opponent gets to put a creature into play (so you better hope he doesn't have that Kraken in his hand). Black gets its own Wumpus: Thrashing Wumpus, a 3/3 for two black and three other. Once in play you can pump black mana into it, doing a point of damage to each creature and player for every point of mana. There are cards that prevent you from being the target of spells or abilities, others that give you an extra turn and still others that you don't have to use mana to cast. The next major event, Pro Tour Qualifiers for Los Angeles, will be Mercadian Masques sealed deck events, with the top eight playing booster draft. Durban will get to hold its first PTQ, with South Africa's other event being held in Johannesburg. Both events will be in December, and will cost R100. Contact Rob Thompson about the Durban event on 083-449-2702 and Peter Coode for info on the Johannesburg event on 082-466-0197.

Magic at CNA

The easiest way to get into Magic: The Gathering is with the new Starter gift box, complete with a 30 minute instructional video, two 40 card decks, an over-sized card, play mats, play guide and rule book. These will be on sale before Christmas at CNA Interactive outlets around the country, at around R130. CNA Interactive is also looking at the possibility of stocking the full range of product, making it easier than ever to pick up boosters when you need them.

Get into the Arena

Arena Outpost has been launched in South Africa, starting in two outlets: Game Wizards in Edenvale, just outside Johannesburg, and Outer Limits Cape Town. "We're testing the waters in these two shops before we expand to cater for demand on a nation-wide basis," said organiser Martin Frain. "The new system is much easier to co-ordinate than the previous one, and I think more shops will be able to handle it - with a bit of help from a couple of interested players, I'd say any shop could do it." The shop's organiser decides what format its league will be (say Standard) and registers players, who each get a score-sheet to keep track of their results. The shop also keeps a tally, so players can see how everyone is doing. Players pay R15 to join the Arena league, which runs for five weeks. You can play any other player in the league (no more than twice though) and you get points each time you play, win or lose. With one point for a loss or two points for a win, you can quickly reach the 15 points needed to get a foil Urza's Saga land. Prizes are also given to the player with the most points at the end of each season - even though that player may have never won a match! These prizes are sent to the organiser to award to players at the end of each season, once the shops full results list is sent to Games Emporium. At least five new shops will offer Arena before the end of the year. If you would like your local shop to host arena, mail Martin at dci@geon.co.za.



URBAN CHAOS



EIDOS
CREW

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MULTIPLAYER MAYHEM

One of the biggest gripes from the South African gaming consumer is the price of software and hardware in this country. The fact that piracy stems from the price of games is only an excuse for us to pirate the products. We assume that our distribution companies in South Africa are making tons of money off us to line their own pockets - is this so? I managed to corner one of the product managers of Multimedia Warehouse for our region and interrogate him for a few hours and this is what I came up with.

The South African market is certainly not in what you would call a booming phase at the moment, this is due to a number of factors. We are in a growing market that has the potential to be one of the most successful industries in this country. With everything as it is we need to dissect the problems and explain where the money is going for peace of mind to you the consumer.

The Gamers Side

The Early Years

Since sanctions had a grip over us in the 80's gamers were forced to pirate products because of the lack of titles in South Africa. The Commodore and Spectrums were in their prime as small independents offered hundreds of titles at dirt-cheap prices. Being from an intelligent background it wasn't long before more and more people utilised this method to get their hands on the latest products. As sanctions

warehouse division that is now Incredible Connection, confirming that sales were going well and that games meant profitability. Prices were pretty high, peaking at around the R 299.00 price point, but sales were not effected by it because there was no indication of sales dropping. A wonderful market to be in.

Current Day

Market evaluations are constantly thrown out the window and product manager's jobs are being put on the firing line. Sales figures have been dropping for some time now and titles that should have been successes have begun to perform badly at retail level. Research shows that piracy is reaching an all time high and that large syndicates (drugs and car theft) are laundering their money into pirated software and setting up sales divisions all over South Africa. Fuelling this is the consumer who is under stress to live, allowing very little disposable income

duction of the games. Local CD plants are expensive but with higher volumes it becomes accessible for distributors to reach lower price points. Unfortunately game sales are averaging 500 units per product throughout South Africa for the average title, while top titles are reaching only 5000 units. Considering that smaller countries such as Greece and Turkey almost quadruple our sales goes to show that we are at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to overseas distributors lowering their prices. So why don't they do local productions and pay royalties to the overseas distributors? Because 500 unit sales just don't cut it in the biggest entertainment industry in the world. Local CD Plants charge much more for small volumes as set-up and mastering costs are expensive (trust us we know with our CoverCD). We need to stop the piracy which researchers say steals

PRICE WARFARE

filtered away and products started to slowly filter their way back into the country it became clear that a full retail product offered more than a few stiffy disks. Then came the industry support of CD-ROM technology and we started to feel the inertia created by this impressive medium. Games became better as more could be stored on the disks, and piracy became almost none existent because CD-R's were not commercially available and it was hip to have a CD-ROM drive. This created a boom in South Africa for the software distributors and for the consumer, as more titles became available increasing the range to nothing we had seen before. We couldn't do anything but buy originals because it was the only way to get our hands on the games we most wanted to play. These were the good times.

Current Day

As quickly as the gaming industry boomed, so it started to falter, with increased interest rates, high inflation and dodgy government taxes, it has become difficult just to keep up with living expenses. Unfortunately this is the current state of affairs for the consumer as he tries his utmost to make his money reach further, in so doing so he will try to cut all the corners possible. Game prices seem high because there is less money and a constant moral battle is being waged between the Flea Market guy and CNA Interactive. We are hard pressed to keep up with the Jones's who have a souped up machine capable of playing anything available, while we tweak and clock everything in site.

The Corporate Side

The Early Years

Larger corporations and companies had done the market research needed to invest in a gaming distribution network, or had they? The first independent gaming distributor in South Africa was Vision Software, which is now called Electronic Arts Africa since EA decided South Africa deserved a chance to prove itself as a self supporting country. With the success of EA Africa it was decided that investing in gaming would be inevitable as Crew bought out PC Multimedia and Multimedia Warehouse started an internal gaming distribution division. Software Connection expanded into a

for games and recreational activities. A reshuffling of retail thought is being put into place as retailers are starting to stock only the top twenty titles, this is bad considering that there are over 100 releases in December for Multimedia Warehouse alone. Distributors are being forced to fight for retail shelving, in some cases having to pay for it. Because distributors sign contracts with overseas distributors they cannot only bring in what they consider good titles, but also the bad apples of the bunch as well. Most of the time the failures of these titles effect the profitability of the good titles as this money is recycled into the losses. It's becoming increasingly difficult to keep the orders high because sales are so bad. This in turn affects buying power, which in turn affects pricing with the overseas distributors. There is no choice but to keep breaking the R300.00 threshold that has been kept for so long.

What do we need to do to bring prices down? Firstly I feel that prices will not drop significantly but will rather stabilise under the R 300.00 barrier. If you take overseas prices of \$ 44.95 (R 278.69 before shipping) and £ 24.94 (R 256.99 before shipping) we are not that far off overseas standards. What will definitely help the pricing is the localising of pro-

almost 83% of our markets sales and buy the games we enjoy. There is no other industry in the world that gives you ample opportunity to test the product like the gaming industry. Previews, reviews and demo's should be enough to make a conscious decision on buying a product and if it's not up to scratch then you made the bugger up, not the distributor. Stop squabbling over prices and work out how much enjoyment a game gives you over other entertainment industries. Now is the time to support local distributors and gaming developers (more and more starting) if we are going to see any action in the pricing sector, otherwise we might not be so lucky to have the game selection's on the shelves this time next year.

Who profits where?

Based on a current title in the market (October 99 release) and an order of 500 units from a prominent overseas distributor. (This title is graded A, which is top quality in the world market and is from a popular genre in South Africa based on historical figures). Ad Valorem taxes are put on all computer entertainment products by the government at a rate of 10% (for what reason we still have no answer) which includes games, educational and music CD's.

Final note

If anybody is making money then it is the overseas distributor but local production is certainly the way to go for local distributors. Electronic Arts Africa have been producing their top titles locally for some time now and have been able to price titles such as Cricket 99 and Aliens vs Predator at R 279.00. Hopefully with piracy getting a wrap over the knuckles other local distributors can muster up enough sales to warrant local production, only then will we see price drops.

You probably wondering what the price of games has to do with Multiplayer Mayhem? Well, its such a controversial topic that the Ed decided you simply had to know. We'll be back to normal next month - this article will self destruct in 5-seconds, 4, 3, 2,...

Imported Titles	
Per unit value \$ 22 at currency rate	R 136.40
Shipping, Ad Valorem, customs and duty taxes	R 50.00
Imported cost for distributor	R 186.40
Distributor profit	R 58.70 per unit (15%)
Price to retailer	R 245.10 (R 215.00 Excl. VAT)
Retail price to consumer	R 299.00 incl. VAT
Retailer profit R 53.90 (22% - most retailer's have an average 20% - 25 % mark-up)	
Local Production	
Royalty per unit @ \$ 14 at currency rate	R 86.80
Average local CD, manual and box cost	R 30.00
Local production cost for distributor	R 116.80
Standard distributor mark-up (25%)	R 29.20
Price to retailer	R 166.44 (R 146.00 Excl. VAT)
Retail price to consumer (30% mark-up)	R 219.95 incl. VAT
Retailer profit R 53.51 (30%)	

There is still hidden marketing and retailing cost (advertising and shelving displays) to the distributor, which are absorbed from a 2% rebate from the overseas distributor but if you do the figures it doesn't even cover the cost of a cup of coffee. If any profits are to be made then all of the 500 units need to be sold (highly unlikely in SA).



GAMETRONIX

TOPWARE INTERACTIVE

VALKYRIE STUDIOS

MONOLITH

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The Demo Scene

Quick. Think of the most talented people you know in programming, art or music. Chances are they are specialists in one - or perhaps two - disciplines. Most coders can't draw for toffee and plenty of musicians think coding a music player from scratch is trivial - until a coder shows them the 1000 lines of code that just mixes the music together 50 times per second. Artists of course live in a special world by themselves, untouched by reality or the ability to communicate effectively with non-artists. But you're going to need them on your team - they are a rare resource. The point I'm getting to is that you'll have to co-

Working Together

- Teamwork and Other Wisdom

BY PAUL FURBER

INTERNET: [HTTP://WWW.SURF.TO/DEMOS](http://www.surf.to/demos)

E-MAIL: [SADEMO@EGROUPS.COM](mailto:sademo@egroups.com)

E-MAIL: MAVERICK@IS.CO.ZA

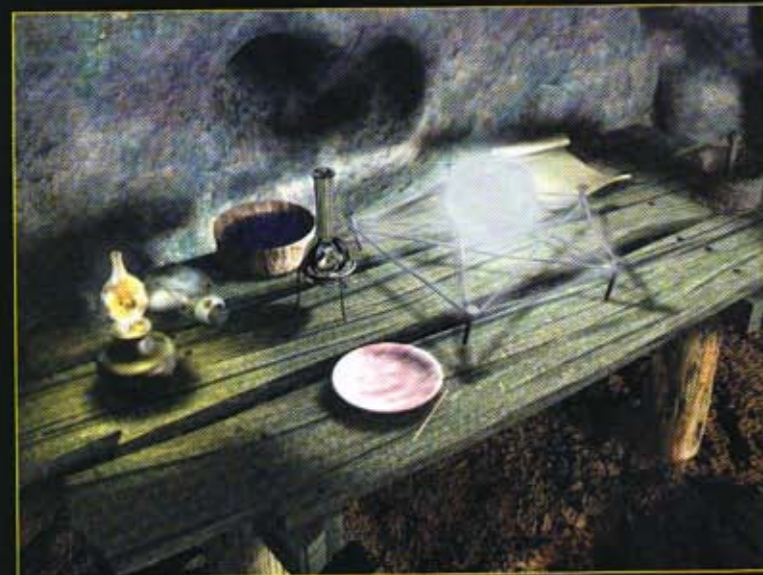
To achieve that means working together with other members who have different skills. This becomes even more important when (or if) you

decide that you want to do a game. Some evidence to back this up comes from the Open Source movement. (To broadly define it quickly would be impossible, but I mean those groups of volunteer programmers who write free software - such as Linux, BSD, Apache, GNOME, KDE and all the tools that go with them.) Despite Open Source's proven stability and superior methodology, over 80% of all projects started as Open Source fail or never get past the beta stage. The reasons are worth looking at because they give some insight into why you and your team might not finish a demo, or even get it to the point when you're reasonably happy with it.

Free software is written by volunteers. So are demos. Voluntary projects suffer from a number of unusual problems, the first being they are done by volunteers. When people give spare time, they don't owe it. They get no pay cheque and little outside reward. So when someone doesn't do something on time or loses interest, all you can do is grin and bear it. Volunteers also tend to be highly

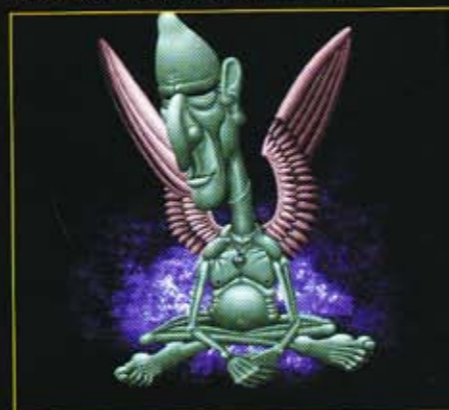
individual. So are demo scener. When it comes to art and music, this can be a bonus. In the programming world, it can lead to disaster. One coder may prefer one language, another may despise it. One person's coding style will be completely different to another's - yet they might have to collaborate on the same troublesome piece of the project. Of course that's the fun of working together with different people - new ideas and different views can often help you solve problems by seeing things differently.

But that won't help you on deadline. What will help is a number of guidelines laid down from the start of a project. None of these are my idea; in fact most of them are shamelessly pinched



operate with the other guys in your team if you want to finish a production. Finishing is actually one of the very best measures of the skill and determination of a demo crew. Ideas are cheap. To turn your idea into a finished, polished, debugged and working production with all the highs and disappointments along the way is what counts.

operate with the other guys in your team if you want to finish a production. Finishing is actually one of the very best measures of the skill and determination of a demo crew. Ideas are cheap. To turn your idea into a finished, polished, debugged and working production with all the highs and disappointments along the way is what counts.



from a guide to writing free software (exactly which guide it is I can't remember but there are plenty on the Net to choose from).

1. Decide on a timetable. This doesn't have to be carved in stone - just as long as everyone knows what has to be finished and by when. Commercial game teams know the value of a well laid-out timetable - even only if they can see how far over deadline they are.

2. Decide on standards BEFORE you start. This includes how your project will fit together, which languages will be used, which libraries you're going to use and what tools will be needed.

Chuckling everything together the night before doesn't work too well. I know. I've tried it.

3. Make sure everyone in the team knows what they are expected to achieve. If you can at least agree on some of these guidelines before you try and attempt a super-whiz-bang game or demo, then you'll have a head start.

By the time you read this Optimise will have come and gone. I look forward to seeing who knew all this already! :)

PAUL FURBER - 'MAVERICK'

RAYMAN 2

THE GREAT ESCAPE

Have you met Rayman, the humorous super hero with the fastest pace and the coolest actions?



Top-notch gameplay, real-time 3D, suspense, breakneck action and stunts! Deal with dangerous environments from huge precipices and unstable pontoons to infected swamps, defeat villainous enemies and complete your missions. An extremely talented hero who has a whole host of actions: jump, swim, loop the loop, water-ski, scramble between two vertical walls, use his hair as a helicopter and more! Groundbreaking cinematic sequences add to the players clarity and enjoyment

Ubi Soft
WAREHOUSE



South Africa Distributors: Multimedia Warehouse a division of SDD - www.mmw.co.za JHB (011) 652-8400 Bloem (051) 447-3193 CT (021) 550-8300 DBN (031) 263-0121 PE (041) 363-0540 © 1999 Ubi Soft Entertainment. All rights reserved. The logo and character of Rayman are trademarks of Ubi Soft Entertainment, Design Ludi Factory.

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.

Wip3out

If the fast pace and accidental crashes are getting to you, then feel free to abuse these cheats. From the main menu go to 'options', then 'game set-up' and finally select the 'default names' option. Enter the following names to enable the corresponding cheat code. A flash on the screen will confirm that the cheat is active.

Change Blue Turbo Triangles to White Turbo Triangles:
Enter 'BEBEDEE' as the default name in the options menu.

Collisions:
Enter 'NOWHEELS' as the default name in the options menu.

Enable Link Mode:
Enter 'LINK' as the default name in the options menu.

Infinite Weapons:
Enter 'DEPUTY' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlimited Hyperthrust:
Enter 'MOONFACE' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlimited Shields & Thrust:
Enter 'GEORDIE' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlock All Tournaments:
Enter 'BUNTY' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlock Phantom Class:
Enter 'JAZZNAZ' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlock All 4 Prototype Tracks:
Enter 'CANER W' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlock All Challenges:
Enter 'THEHAIR' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlock All Teams:
Enter 'AVINIT' as the default name in the options menu.

Unlock All Tracks:
Enter 'WIZZPIG' as the default name in the options menu.



Phantom Class:
Enter 'AVINIT' as the default name in the options menu.

All Tracks:
Enter 'WIZZPIG' as the default name in the options menu.

Pick Autopilot Direction:
When on Autopilot, if your ship comes to a split-junction, press left or right to choose which way to go.



Faster Start:
Rev your engine on the starting grid so that when it says 'Go!' the blue bar is equal to where the damage bar, the grey one ends at the bottom of the screen.

Don't Hit That Wall:
Before hitting a wall, use Autopilot as the weapon, no matter how late. If you hit the wall there will be no effect.

Prototype Track:
Finish all the tracks using all teams with single race mode then pick the prototypes option on the main menu.

Opening New Tracks and Teams:
Besides using the cheats you can always do things the hard way. There are a total of eight tracks and eight racing teams. Here's how to open all of them in single-race mode. Note that you must do this separately for each racing class (Vector, Venom and Rapier). Finish all four initial tracks at gold with any one team to open the fifth track, Hi-Fumii. Finish Hi-Fumii at gold with two different teams to open the sixth track, P-Mar Project. Finish P-Mar Project at gold with three different teams to open the seventh track, Manor Top. Beat Manor Top at gold with all four (initial) teams to open the eighth track, Terminal. Beat Terminal at gold with all four (initial) teams to open the fifth team, Qirex RD. Beat any two tracks at gold with Qirex RD to open the sixth team, AG-5. Beat any three tracks at gold with AG-5 to open the seventh team, Assegai. Beat any

PLAYSTATION CHEATS

four tracks at gold with Assegai to open the eighth team, Icaras.

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

Debug Mode:
Pause the game and then hold L1 or R1. Now enter Up, Up, Down, Right, Right, Left, Circle, Right, Left, Down.

First-Person View:
Press and Hold R2 + L2 while playing.

How to Beat Kain:
When you get to Kain, you'll be in a room that is circular and has different levels. You need to stay at the bottom in the centre. There is a thing here that restores all your health back to normal and keeps it there. When Kain shoots you with his energy ball, stay on it until you have full health again. Then look around until you see a big blue energy ball, and run towards it. Kain is making the energy ball. Quickly slice him with your Soul Reaver. Keep this up until you have killed him. During the end of the battle, he will go to the very top of the room where you can't see his energy ball. At this point just run to where you think he is. It may take a few tries, but you can beat him without any injury.

Refill Health and Magic:
To activate these codes, pause the game then press and hold L1 and R1. When the game is resumed the cheats should be working.

Refill Health:
Down, Circle, Up, Left, Up, Left.
Refill Magic:
Right, Right, Left, Triangle, Down, Right.

Point Blank 2

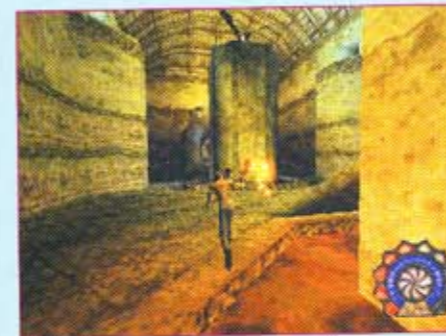
Warm Up:
In the Point Blank Castle Mode you will see two little men riding balloons up towards the top of the screen, you may shoot them for practice or to warm up on your aim or just because they're there!



More Points:
If you enter the endurance mode in the Point Blank Castle Mode, on the way up the castle you will see things like birds, UFOs and other things as you run up the castle. If you shoot these objects on your way up you will receive extra points.

Shadow Man

I'm On Fire
To cover Shadow Man in flames, follow these steps. Make your way to the very last room in the Temple of Life (it holds the Baton). Next, move to the last small room on the right, and press Action at the



altar. Shadow Man will offer your Cadeaux in exchange for an energy upgrade. Press Action again at the altar. Shadow Man will say something about the Loa moving out of that altar. Run out and head to the altar next to the one you were just in. Press Action at the altar. If everything goes well, you should see a "Cheat Activated" message flash across your screen. Go into your inventory and you should see a new item, the Book of Shadows. Select it and your cheat should be there. At the time I found this, I had 24 Dark Souls, and that might make a difference, but I don't think so.

G-Police 2: Weapons of Justice



Unlimited Ammo:
Start a new game. When the weapon screen appears hold L1, L2, R1, R2, Circle. You should hear a laser shot confirmation sound if you entered the code correctly.

Passwords:
To gain access to all the levels in

G-Police 2: Weapons of Justice from the main menu select options, then select the password option from the next menu. Now enter the password for the level you want to play, if correctly entered the level number will appear at the bottom right corner of the screen. Now select end from the letter selection screen and choose to continue.



Level 1:	POLICE
Level 2:	OCTOPI
Level 3:	BRAINS
Level 4:	FINGER
Level 5:	BANANA
Level 6:	JUNGLE
Level 7:	VOODOO
Level 8:	SQUEAK
Level 9:	DUNDEE
Level 10:	TRAPOT
Level 11:	BUTTER
Level 12:	INDIGO
Level 13:	STROUD
Level 14:	ELIXIR
Level 15:	LIQUID
Level 16:	STAPLE
Level 17:	SHIRTS
Level 18:	APPLES
Level 19:	GADGET
Level 20:	TANUKI
Level 21:	SALADS
Level 22:	DUFFCO
Level 23:	PHONES
Level 24:	ASSERT
Level 25:	OXYGEN
Level 26:	JOYPAD
Level 27:	ACTIVE
Level 28:	MENACE
Level 29:	WINDOW
Level 30:	AGENDA

Enter the password UTOPIA in the password menu option, you will see the word 'cheat' in the bottom right hand corner of the screen. Select 'end' from the letter password screen, return to the previous screen, and select the new 'database' option. This will unlock all the movies, music, artwork and 15 secret missions.

Dino Crisis

Bonus Outfits:
If you beat the game in under 8 hours then you will get new costumes to wear as you play again.

D.D.K Door Locks:
To open the DDK doors use the "H" disks, then to find the DDK password simply take away the key letters from the code letters. For example if the code is HRCEFAGDI

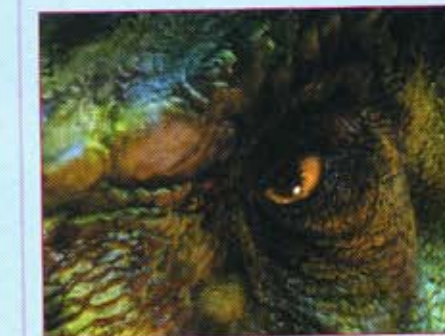


and the key is BCPGI take BCPGI away from HRCEFAGDI to get the password HEAD. Also, the D.D.K lock downstairs is 'NEWCOMER' for the password. You have to have both 'N' disks when you do this.

Fourth Outfit:
When you finish the game for the first time, Regina will get two new costumes. If you play through the game twice, you will get a 4th outfit, it will change her into a cave girl, almost as though she came from the portal. An extra bonus for getting this is that if you CHECK her guns at your EQUIP menu, they will have turned to an ancient type weapon. They will still function like normal, though.

Infinite Grenade Gun Ammo:
When you have seen all three endings to Dino Crisis (you must play three separate games from start to finish). Regina not only starts with Grenade Gun in her arsenal, but she also has unlimited ammunition.

Open "Operation Wipe-out":
If you beat the game on Normal in under 5 hours the game will unlock a sub-game called Operation Wipe-out. Here you have to kill all the



Dinosaurs in under the given time limit. Note: You only get a limited amount of ammunition.

All-Star Tennis '99

Big Heads and Feet:
Choose any player and court, and start a normal game. While you are playing, press L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 + START. A tone will confirm the code.

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

Over a month has now passed since Tiberian Sun was released, and thousands of battles have already been fought around the globe. In this two-part feature, we discuss some winning concepts to help you in your cause. This month we take a look at some basics, and analyse GDI in detail.

R.A.V.E.N.

BASIC CONCEPTS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Fast resource collection is one of the keys to Tiberian Sun, as is the case with all real-time strategy games. Even when starting with maximum credits, it is easy to ignore resource gathering and keep building, with the result that once the credits are finished, it becomes apparent that the economy cannot support the production facilities. As in the original Command & Conquer, still the

Bear in mind that 'low power' means reduced building rates, so everything takes longer; some defensive structures also require power in order to fire (Obelisk of Light, Surface to Air Missiles and the RPG Tower).

BASIC BUILD ORDERS

How you spend your initial funds will determine how well you do in the later game. The most basic and versatile build order (for medium to high starting resource games) is as follows: deploy your MCV,

quately defend both the Construction Yard and the first Refinery (if they have been placed sufficiently close to each other). These, supplemented by Light Infantry and a couple of Disc-Throwers, will discourage any early attacks, including those based on Engineers. One or two more Vulcan Cannons should be thrown up in a planned fashion to protect Power Plants and future War Factory and Refineries.

GDI INFANTRY AND MEDICS

In Red Alert, the emphasis was on armoured units. This is no longer the case in Tiberian Sun. It is vitally important to maintain a balance of unit types. With GDI, infantry truly come into their own because of Medics. The presence of just a few Medics within the ranks of your infantry will ensure their longevity. Bear in mind that Tiberian Sun features unit experience, and so infantry that are no longer 'expendable' become very useful.

COMMAND & CONQUER TIBERIAN SUN STRATEGY GUIDE

most efficient ratio of Harvesters to Refineries is initially 2-to-1, respectively. The more Refineries the better, in general. However, here a complication arises. Although the Harvesters' AI has been upgraded to prevent them from trying to harvest, say, directly under an Obelisk of Light, they are nonetheless still not the brightest unit on the battlefield. It is far from unknown for Harvesters to insist on heading for the furthest refinery possible to offload. To solve this, it becomes important to increase the number of Refineries, but to allow the ratio of Harvesters to Refineries to slide toward about 1.5:1. Also, avoid having two bases that are far apart. Rather keep clustered or, preferably, scatter refineries evenly across the map. Try not to leave many jobs 'on hold' simultaneously and plan what you will be building and when, and keep a small reserve of credits for structure repairs (and unit repairs, if you are playing GDI).

POWER MANAGEMENT

A very common prime target for experienced players of Command & Conquer are the opponent's Power Plants. This is largely due to the fact that many players tend to cut their power supply too fine. In the early game, try to build several low-grade Power Plants, rather than one or two advanced ones. This will ensure that no single Power Plant is providing too large a portion of the power supply, therefore reducing the impact of losing any one of your Power Plants. Also, always make sure that the Power Indicator displays at least some green at the top. This usually indicates that you can survive at least one, sometimes two, Power Plant losses before going offline. Always keep an eye on your Power Plants' health, and repair any damage as soon as possible. Also try to always be aware of which buildings you may afford to shut down in an emergency.

build a Power Plant, build a Barracks / Hand of NOD, build a Refinery while training 6-8 Light Infantry (use the first 3 or 4 to scout with, the



TWO TURRETS CAN ADEQUATELY DEFEND AN EARLY BASE

remainder to defend with), build a War Factory, build a Power Plant while building a Harvester, build a Refinery, build a Power Plant, Radar, Refinery, Power Plant, etc. At various points during this procedure, you should be placing defensive structures and generating units. Of course, this build order is not even possible in games with starting credits below 1000, and is far from advisable in games of under 6500 credits. However, it can be modified in any way necessary to suit your needs. Remember that the lower the starting credits the sooner you need to get your income rolling, and the cheaper the troops you should build initially.

GLOBAL DEFENCE INITIATIVE

EARLY-GAME DEFENCE

GDI enjoy the most effective anti-personnel defence around - the Vulcan Cannon Tower. This gun has moderate range, and often hits two or even three infantry units at a time. In the early game two well-placed Vulcan Cannons will ade-

quately defend both the Construction Yard and the first Refinery (if they have been placed sufficiently close to each other). These, supplemented by Light Infantry and a couple of Disc-Throwers, will discourage any early attacks, including those based on Engineers. One or two more Vulcan Cannons should be thrown up in a planned fashion to protect Power Plants and future War Factory and Refineries. Infantry gain promotions the quickest, and so it is quite possible with a balanced cadre of Light Infantry, Disc-Throwers and a few Medics, to create an elite force quite quickly. Such a squad, if looked after properly and not thrown into suicide missions, can remain useful right into the final stages of the game. They can also be used to clean up armoured units that have fallen prey to EMP attacks. Flying Infantry are also important, as they are the GDI infantry unit capable of shooting at air units (in fact, Flying Infantry are the only unit in the game that can shoot at air units while itself in the air). Flying infantry are also afforded partial immunity in the early game due to the small number of units capable of hitting them while they are aloft.

MID-GAME DEFENCE

Not long into the game, most players will be building all sorts of armoured units. By this stage, therefore, you need to be building some RPG Towers. These are exceptionally effective against all sorts of mechanised units, especially if you keep an eye on them and repair any damage immediately. They are particularly effective at taking out APCs, which is the most common Engineer delivery system. Also place a couple of SAM Towers - these should be placed such that they intercept incoming aircraft as early as possible, so throw them slightly forward (but next to ground defences). Remember that SAMs have very long ranges, so you can spread them a bit. You will also need to build an EMP Cannon, which is especially useful against Artillery, Stealth Tanks and subterranean units, as well as against other Titans and Wolverines. It is also at this point that walls become viable. It is usually a good idea to wall off the Construction Yard, if possible. In general, if you can't wall an area off then use walls to guide your enemies into your defences and restrict access to important structures. Remember that GDI towers integrate into walls. Pavements are useful occasionally, to restrict subterranean units and to reduce crater damage within your base, but it can be hard to judge when the expenditure is worth it.



THE BASE GROWS, AND ITS DEFENCES WITH IT

GDI ARMOUR

GDI definitely have the most brutish armoured units. Titans pack a very hard punch with a reasonable range, and Wolverines chop infantry up. Once again, keep a balance of unit types, so try building equal numbers of Titans,

Wolverines and Hover MLRSs. Keep in mind their strengths and weaknesses - Titans and Wolverines are too heavy for thin ice, for instance, and Hover MLRSs can traverse water (important!). Also, never send an attack comprised of armour alone - send infantry

in with it - you will find it far easier to deal with enemy infantry pests, and will be able to deal with a wider variety of threats. Hover MLRSs are very important - they are one of few GDI units that can shoot at air targets, and have very good range against both ground and air targets. They also can traverse Tiberium Veins without harm, as can Wolverines (the only mechanical combat units that can do so). An armoured but non-combat unit at GDI's disposal is the Mobile Sensor Array - its ability to detect cloaked and subterranean units makes it invaluable, and your base should always be covered by at least one of these, and at least one should be available to participate in attacks, especially against NOD. What makes the Mobile Sensor Array useful even against GDI is the fact that it detects enemy units within a radius and displays them on your Radar Mini-map, even if you haven't explored there yet, or if in fog-of-war.

THE ROLE OF APCs

One of the most important GDI mechanised units, the Amphibious APC acts as a fast-delivery system for all kinds of infantry. Their most popular use is to carry Engineers around, and deservedly so, but they can also carry the Ghost Stalker and other units, if need be. Not only does the APC protect its passengers from Tiberium poisoning, but it can also cross water. This makes it invaluable for strikes at places where opponents least expect them. Their ideal companion is the Hover MLRS, as it can also travel over water, and can deal with any armoured threats while the APC squashes any

infantry it comes across. Keep in mind that the APC is not very tough, so care must be employed to keep it out of danger when possible.

GDI AIR

GDI has at its disposal the most versatile air force, with three different air units at their disposal. One of the handiest uses for a Carryall is the ability to rapidly transport an MCV across great distances and any terrain. Another use is as fast-delivery for Mammoth MkII and Disruptors, as well as Mobile Sensor Arrays and APCs loaded

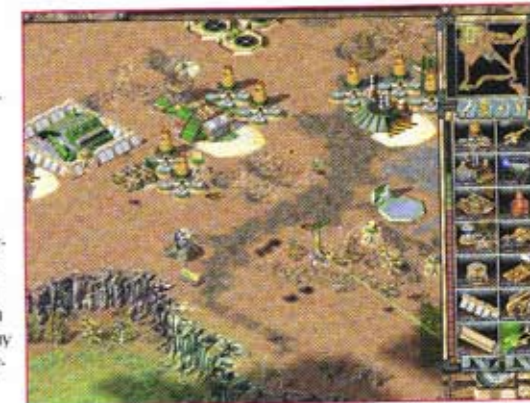
with troops. Orca Fighters are good interdiction units, useful for taking out single large threats, even if mobile. Orca Bombers are truly devastating to any static set-up, but are fairly erratic against moving targets. An Orca Bomber will begin

unleashing its payload somewhat before its designated target point, and paves a line to somewhat beyond the target point, then comes back for another pass. Careful choice of target points and approach angles will therefore yield the most damage - bear this in mind when sending Bombers off - rather take the time to divert them in order to come in from a

better angle - the time spent this way will be well worth it, considering the Orca Bombers' reload time.

MAX-TECH WEAPONS

Both sides in Tiberian Sun feature a number of 'super-weapons', some of them derived from Command & Conquer. GDI still controls the awesome Ion Cannon, and also boasts the Firestorm Defence as well as the Mammoth MkII and the Ghostalker super-units. Even Disruptors should be classed in this category. None of these weapons you will use in any huge numbers, so the key is their efficient and effective use. When using an Ion Cannon, avoid random shots or shots 'just because you can'. Rather try to integrate an Ion strike into some form of attack (in conjunction with air units, Engineer assaults, armoured or infantry attacks or any combination thereof) even if you have to wait a little longer to do so. Some targets are more worthwhile than others - for example, every accurate Ion Cannon strike at an Obelisk of Light will destroy it; the same for Power Plants - no Power Plant can survive an accurate direct hit. Other structures that die to one Ion Cannon strike - Component Towers

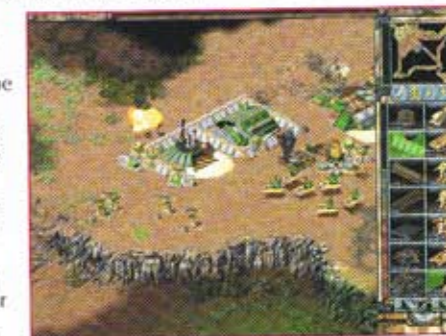


ADVANCED STRUCTURES - THE BASE GROWS FURTHER

with any upgrades (and without), NOD SAMs, Laser Turrets, Helipads (note if a Helipad is destroyed, so is any unit currently docked with it. The same applies to Repair Bays). Mammoth MkII's should have Orca Carryalls to ferry them around, as should Disruptors. Take advantage of the Mammoth MkII's and the Ghostalker's railguns by targeting something beyond your intended target - this way you will strike multiple targets. Remember that the Ghostalker heals in Tiberium. You will never require large numbers of Disruptors - choosing their targets carefully will reap greater benefits - target them as you would the other super-units, as the disruption beam hits anything it passes over (except for other friendly Disruptors).

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

While space does not permit a lengthy discourse on numerous strategies, here are a few more pointers. In the early game, rely quite heavily on infantry - build several Light Infantrymen, then switch over to some Disc-Throwers. As soon as your first infantryman is injured (or earlier, if funds permit) train a Medic. As soon as you are able, train another one (this way they can heal each other too). Continue to build infantry even after your War Factory is up - this is the only way you can take advantage of multiple production facilities - because they are different. Consider taking a force consisting of around 8 Light Infantry, 8 Disc-Throwers, 4 Medics, 4 Flying Infantry, 2 Titans, 2-3 Wolverines, 3-4 Hover MLRSs and an APC with a couple of Engineers into an opponent's base - used correctly, this force might just end the game! These numbers aren't fixed, of course, but are an example - however, if you can put together a force like this early enough, it can be very difficult to



defend against. In the later game you might consider bringing 1 or 2 Orca Bombers and 1 or 2 Orca Fighters in with the rest, to pave a way. The final touch is to churn out a few Carryalls, then load 2 or 3 with Disruptors, one with a Mammoth MkII, another 1 or 2 with Mobile Sensor Arrays, and finally one with an APC containing a Ghostalker and a handful

of Engineers. Optionally, another Carryall can fly in an MCV, in order to build structures offensively. We hope this classified run-down will help GDI commanders who are fighting to do the right thing! Next month we will discuss some advanced concepts and take a long, hard look at the options available to The Brotherhood of NOD.

16
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PREPARE YOURSELF
FOR THE THIRD.

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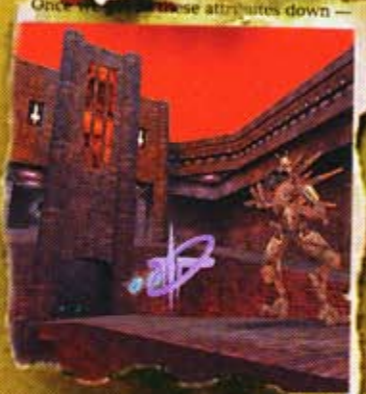
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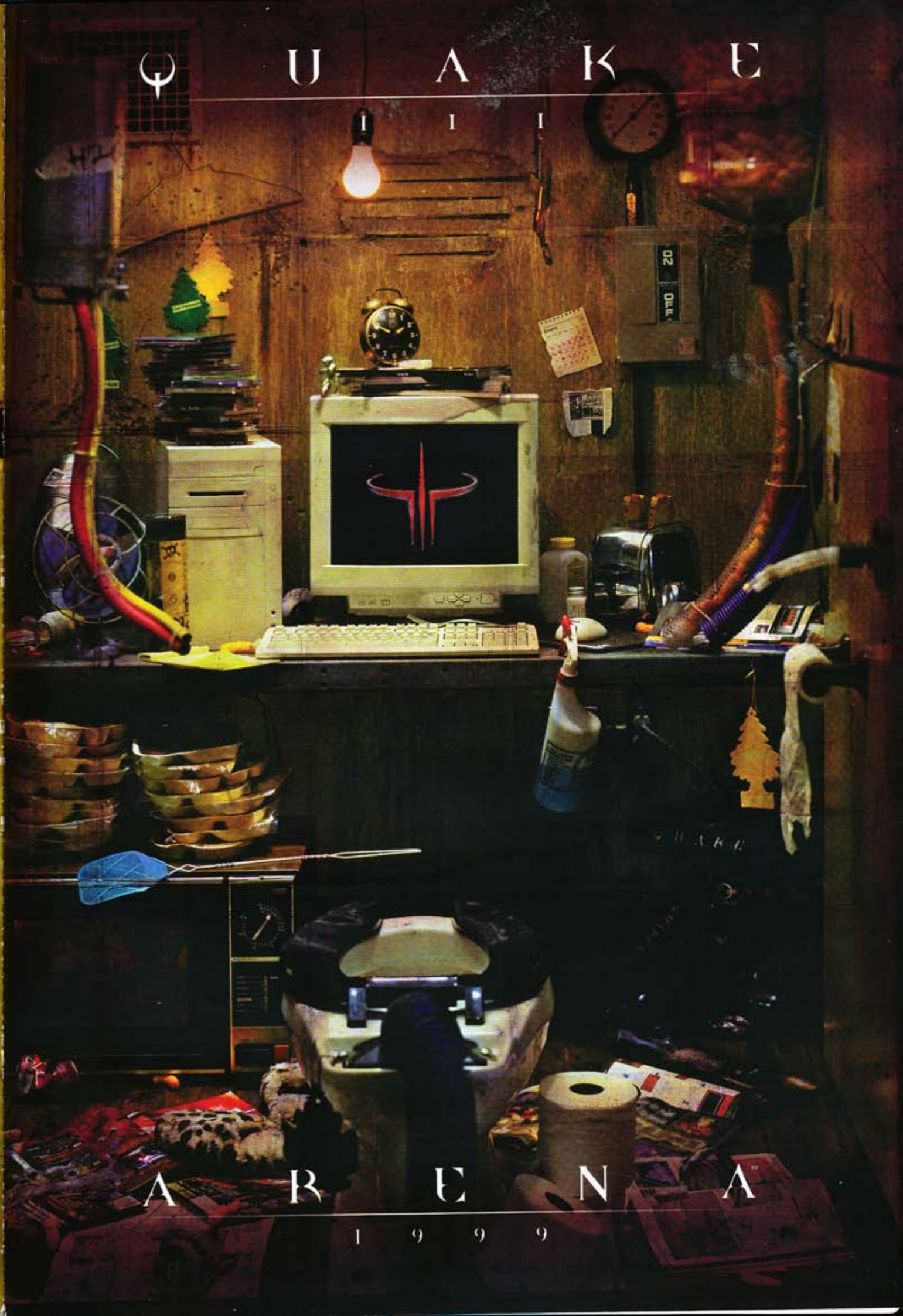
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Firstly I would like to congratulate our Editor-in-Chief, Warren Steven and his wife, Tracy on their healthy new baby daughter Kiara (picture enclosed). She was born on the 18th of October at 1:40 PM, right in the middle of our make-up week I might add. She definitely has the timing of her father, lets just hope as she gets older she doesn't have his accurate aim in Quake Arena, otherwise I might have to give up the game for good. On the other hand if she takes after her mother Microsoft will have to develop a few new variations of Solitaire to keep the game challenging. Once again, congratulations to her distraught and very tired new parents.

As for the games that came in for this month I can just say that the distributors have no idea about timing. Up until two weeks before we had to go to print we were worried about not receiving any new titles for review, and then the tide of games hit us. Age of Empires II arrived days before print and we had to lock poor R.A.V.E.N. away in a room so he could finish it and get the review out on time. He came out afterwards - passed the copy to the Editor and promptly passed out, of course all it took to get him




DON'T EVER GO NEAR THE BOTTOM HALF OF THIS!

awake again was a strategy game running in the background. Eidos Interactive has also made their re-appearance into the South African market after they were absent for a short period of time. Crew now officially distributes their games so everyone can look forward to all their exciting

new titles such as Omnikron: Nomad Soul, Revenant, Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation and so on being available here. I have also heard word that Microprose and Hasbro will be back in South Africa at the beginning of next year, hopefully in time for Grand Prix 3. Things are definitely looking up in the gaming market as we approach the festive season.


As for what games are coming for our December/January issue, I will pass you on to our Editor who seems to be having a slight problem with his predictions lately. What did he say earlier this year 'It's easy, all you do is look at the local release list and put in the names of the biggest titles coming for the month', yeah right! The popular developer saying 'It will be ready when it's done' still holds true and release dates change on a daily basis.

We need to come clean... We don't have a clue what's coming next month, sorry!




RESIDENT EVIL 3
NEMESIS

Boo! Scared? You should be, it has been a little while since we saw Resident Evil 2 and it's still difficult to forget just how scary that game was... Even now as these letters and words are appearing in your mind, somewhere, a zombie is eating someone. This next game promises to deliver a survival horror adventure of epic proportions. Should be here any day now... and we can't wait.




BATTLEZONE II
HIMMEL COMMAND

Some people hated it and others loved it. The first game in this series was a definitive genre buster that had many people enthralled with its unique blend of strategy and first person combat. The second game looks even better and the developers are hoping that the sequel will make its mark on the mainstream market. We'll check it out for you next issue and tell you what we think, if it arrives, ever...




DIABLO

Into the dungeon we go, again, for the second time, been there, died many times, ran away, you know... that dungeon, remember? Well Diablo 2 will be arriving soon and we've already had nine vicious fistfights in the office (mostly just pushing and name calling really) over who will be reviewing this monster title. So, to find out who pushes the hardest and knows the dirtiest names read our December issue.



THE X-FILES

The PlayStation isn't really the first place you'd go looking for an adventure game inspired by the cult television series, the X-Files now is it? Well your search is over (if you were looking that is). This spooky, often confusing and utterly engrossing series will be beaming down onto a PlayStation disc soon. The only mystery that remains is... will it ship on time?



SWAT 3
CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

This unique new title is promising to mould a new genre as players are sent on challenging missions of increasing difficulty to swat flies. As you progress through the game you'll be faced with new environments to play in including a greasy downtown restaurant and a local municipal dump, with huge car-sized flies. Players will even get to pilot a giant flyswatter. [What rubbish, who writes this stuff anyway? - Ed]

a NAGging suspicion...

The many faces of Quake
written and illustrated by Shryke



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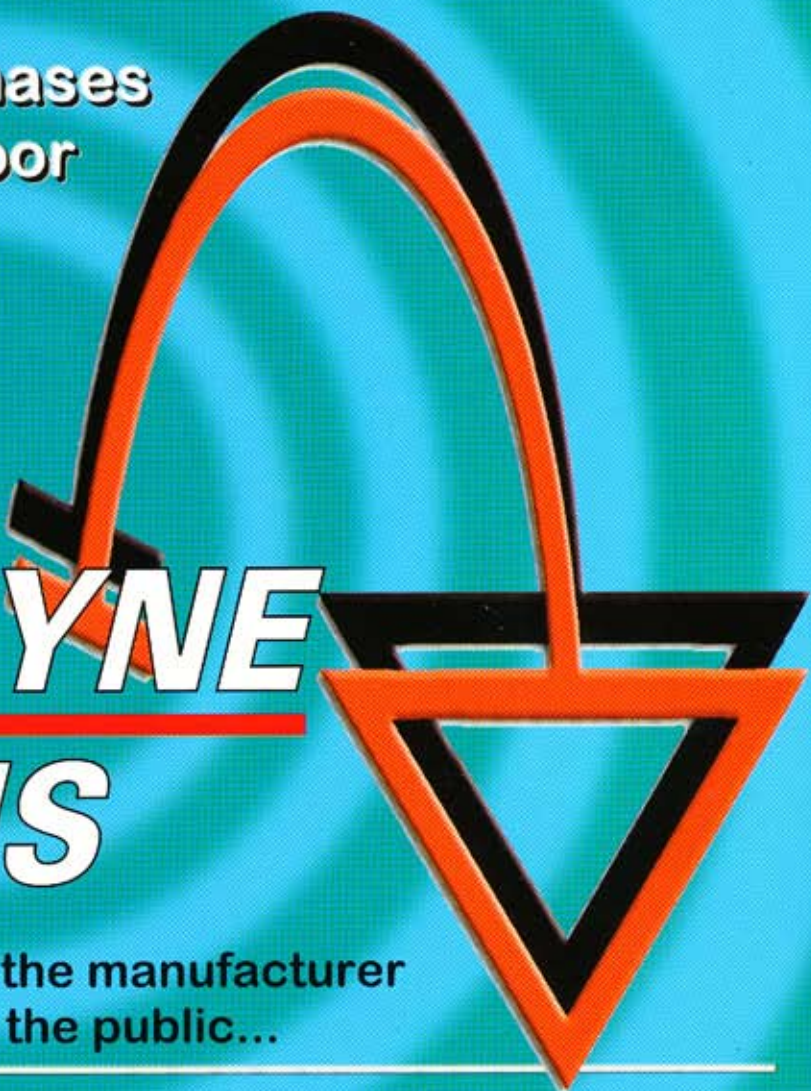
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