

NAG

NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE

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win



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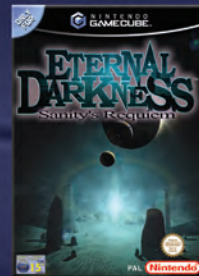


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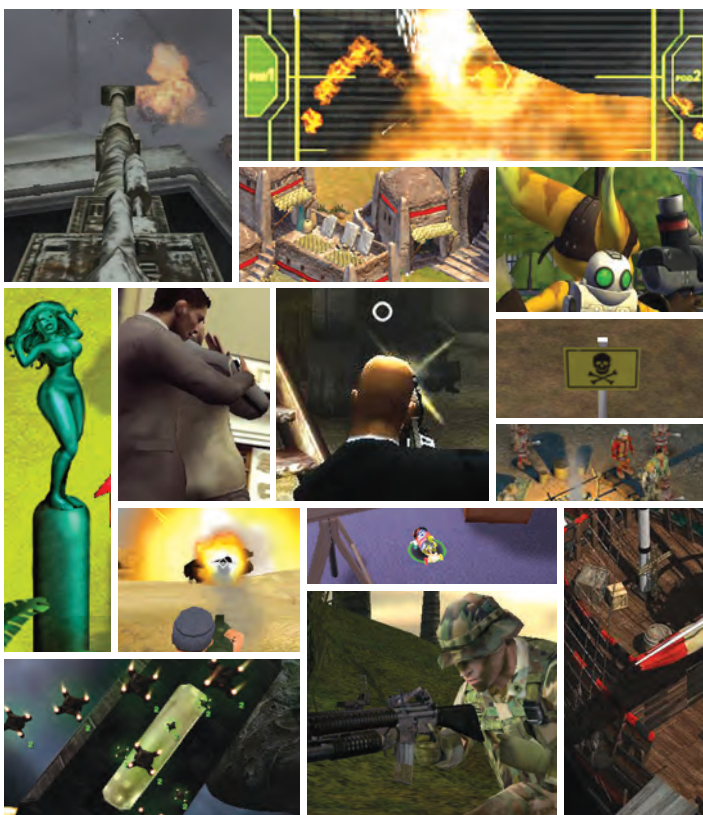
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This month's cover: Enter The Matrix - Go to page 36 now!

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We love you long time!



A new year... really this time

Technically the February issue for most magazines is the first issue of the year... Don't look so shocked, everyone should know this by now. The truth is we put the January issue to bed early in December and in that issue we have to lie, smile and welcome everyone to the New Year and blah, blah, blah. The catch is this - because we put the January issue out at the end of the year it usually lacks the kind of enthusiasm you'd find in a product made at the start of the year, when everyone is fresh and well rested. Just thought you'd like to know.

A real gamer

I receive many letters each month asking me why we cover consoles in NAG. I used to be surprised by this sort of question but now that I've heard it so often my initial surprise and reaction has become a little diluted. The answer to this is simple - we feature consoles and support consoles because we're a gaming magazine and consoles are gaming devices. To compensate for this increased console content we've increased the size of the magazine, it's much thicker now and this, besides our change of printer, is largely thanks to the support we've been getting from the gaming industry, PC and console alike. The bottom line - we'll continue to support all the formats out there, because for better or worse, they're all moving closer together, it's becoming more common for games to appear across multiple formats and while this isn't always the best idea it's the way the world is moving. So, to everyone out there remember there is no spoon. Sorry Matrix fever [see our exclusive interview on page 36], to begin again... to everyone out there - gaming is the hobby, how it's delivered isn't the issue.

Code of Conduct

Something unpleasant passed below my nose the other week that I'd like to share with everyone and then based on whether or not you like my opinion you can respond in the letters section. I won't bore you with the details but it seems there are some people out there who believe that the most important part about playing games online is being allowed to swear and then further to this, kicking up a huge fuss when the people running said online service ban them for not respecting the code of conduct on said servers.

Is this what the gaming community has become?

Many of these players retort with the rationale that the administrators do not respect their freedom of speech. Since when was being able to swear in public your right to freedom of speech?

I was surprised by this largely thanks to the fact that I've rarely encountered this sort of behavior, perhaps it's because I don't play Counter-Strike. My background on this started in the early days and the first time I started putting in serious time in an online multiplayer environment was with Quake, on the Global servers. The gamers back then were respectful, decent and the only time anyone felt as though they were being abused or did any abusing was with a rocket launcher; back then the only time an administrator was required was for map changes and installing the latest patch.

It seems that today the most important thing on the agenda is whether or not I will be able to swear online or to see how far I can push the rules or administrators. I see it this way, either the servers are being filled up with a bunch of childish twits or Counter-Strike has become so boring this is all people can think about.

Anyone who has ever played any game online should be very grateful that these services exist and that the people that run them care enough to set-up and maintain these services. That's correct, it's certainly not your right to be able to play games online in South Africa, and it's a privilege that should be appreciated.

I shudder to think what a company director must think when he's just finished authorizing the use of expensive computers and a large chunk of bandwidth for an online gaming service only to take a look one day at his new project and find a handful of people moaning about how rubbish this new service is because they can't swear.

The bottom line, grow up - especially if you're a 'respected gamer', if you're so revered and respected shouldn't you be the one setting the example?

Now that I've opened the drain hole let's see what comes crawling out - as usual all correspondence to letters@nag.co.za.

Because everyone is asking, the next issue of NAG will be on sale: 6th March 2003 - we'll be featuring a monster hardware round-up in that issue [March] as well as an in-depth look at Sim City 4, including an exclusive interview with the guys at Maxis.

Michael James
Editor

Winners

Age of Mythology Competition Winners

- Ryno Eksteen
- Luke Forder
- Dean Whitehead
- Kevin Lorenzen
- T M Hain

Logitech PS2 Cordless Controller Winners

- Jan Hall
- Daniel Johansson

Spider-Man DVD Winners

- James van den Berg
- Tiago Baptista

CAPTION OF THE MONTH

Come up with a funny caption for the image below and send it to ed@nag.co.za - subject: **February Caption**. If you use the wrong subject in your e-mail it'll just get deleted... The prize each month is a mystery - sometimes it might be a giant rotten potatoe, other times it might be a new gaming rig*

* Usually the vegetable



The Blair Witch playing cupid
Michelle van Zyl

Extra CD



You can thank Vivendi this month for the Warcraft III CD that came with the magazine this issue. Aren't you lucky they love you long time?

deceMBER winner



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Quadro4



Geforce4



Leadtek A280LETD+
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Leadtek A180TDH+
nVidia Geforce4 MX440 GPU
Support 8x AGP
64MB DDR Memory
Video-in & Video-out
(MyVIVO)

Quadro4 400 NVS
nVidia Quadro4 400 NVS GPU
64MB DDR Memory
Quad Display
PCI

Quadro4 900 XGL
nVidia Quadro4 900 XGL GPU
128MB DDR Memory
ProCDRS-03 up to 103 fps

a programming section in your magazine, thanks. TKler

<http://www.webmail.co.za> the South-African free email service
NetWiseGurus.Com Portal - Your Own Internet Business Today!

Ed: *We're looking at this for 2003 - the problem is that it's just too specific a field to make any article worthwhile. Perhaps we could start with coding Flash or something like that. All useful comments can be sent to letters@nag.co.za.*

Education...

Most parents nowadays are convinced that computers and mainly games are degrading to ones mental state of consciousnessnessicity... or something. I challenge that. Has anyone noticed that recently, since the release of Counterstrike, how involved kids have become in weapons and mainly guns. One of my freinds can name every weapon in the United States military arsenal, now many villiage elders and the like may object to this. However I think in a situation of war, however far fetched this may seem, if all military experts were killed or kidnapped by some evil superpower, the governments all over the world (except in Greece, for obvious legal legislations) could start hiring gamers and teenagers to save the day. Ha, suck on that, evil anti-gaming public. Or, in a similar event, we could use the expertese of all the flight sim junkies to fly our planes, or the strategy buffs to advise the president on a suitable course of action (I should make a movie about this). Anyway, the fact is that the antisocial techno nerds that society so willingly shuns are not so helpless and stupid after all and could even save the world someday. Peace

Nic Bold a.k.a Necro

Ed: *I'm starting to get worried that*

the gaming community is digging far too hard and far too deep for reasons to justify a hobby... or do we all really suffer from delusions of grandeur? I expect, having played one FPS title or one hundred, if faced with a gun toting terrorist we'd all run, crying and looking for the nearest place to hide, only later to rationalise the whole experience away in our minds until we're happy that we did the right thing or had no choice. Nice idea though.

crosshairs

I write this after reading the_basilisk's article in the december edition. When i got to the point that he said that the officials ban colour changing crosshairs, it just infuriated me. Firstly, changing the colour of your crosshair would not make you better in any possible way. Second, i am colourblind, i CANNOT see a green crosshair. The only way i can play cs is if i play with a white crosshair(although my friends tell me its light blue:0). Another thing that infuriates me is the fact that in some games, when you start dying,you crosshair starts going red. Or in my case, invisible. Although some games have an option to disablethis feature, others do not. Rendering the game impossible to play. I hope someone high up in the tournament organising community is reading this, because they might realise that some people cant play a game with the default configuration. Just give me and other poor colourblind sods like me a chance.

Just a thought.

Scag

Ed: *I feel your pain brother, I like you also have a handicap... I'm left handed. I used to battle to find a joystick that supports my orientation challenged organic appendage. Good point about the colour blind thing and competitive gaming rules, not something you'd usually think about. I'll ask someone to look this up for*

me.

MTN - Mobile-mail

PLSE PUT MORE HARDWARE REVIEWS IN THE MAG & PLSE REVIEW THE ATI 9500.PLSE PUT SCORES WITH H-WARE REVIEWS.**BYRON WILL**

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Ed: *See the March issue for the launch of our monster new hardware section. It'll be very cool and it's set for the year.*

Where is your magazine?

Hi

I have an avid reader of your magazine for the past two years.

I cant seem to find you magazine anywhere, no one seems to know where it is.

It is ridiculus that on the website it states that the magazine will be on sale from the 2nd onwards, but it now the 10th and the magazine still hasn't been released. How can you say that the magazine will be released on a paticular day and then over week later still not release it. This is shocking, you should of at least changed the website, and saythat the magazine will be released late due to... . This has greatly inconvenienced me.

When will your magazine be released?

Unpleased reader

Adhir

Ed: *I could spend a whole paragraph discussing how our distribution*

network works and the problems we've had of late but I think it'll be better if I just tell you that we've solved the problem, improved our distribution and I'll publish the shelf date of the next issue on the Ed's Note page each month.

Letter of the month

Hi NAG! I r big fan of your mag. My favourite section is the send off. I dig reading that s**t about Shryke and Priest. The point of my letter: the letter of the month. In previous editions of NAG, I've seen that you never seem to choose letters that sing your praises as letters of the month. So umm...as a valued reader I'd like to see you prove me wrong and hand over the award to me!!!...umm yeh...that's about it. Anyway I think NAG is the greatest thing since...computers themselves, and I wouldn't miss an issue for the world...for me NAG is kind of thing still worth living for in this twisted world. I'd shave all my hair for this mag. Man, I love you NAG!!!

therealpaperguy

Ed: *This is not actually the letter of the month - someone just used that as a subject header, very naughty, you thought you'd trick us.*

Other Things

Gamers are Intelligent

I am a ardent gamer. I've been thinking and have come to the conclusion that gamers are very clever people. Though they sometime don't perform well academically they are still intelligent perceptive people. I'm not sure but maybe gaming does that because most games require an aproach that is creative and well thought thus this develops your thinking to a new level.

Yudi

Ed: *So this is the excuse you're heading back home with, "Look Mom I know I hit Gs all the way down the list but I'm only dumb at school because I'm an excellent gamer and spend all my time playing these excellent games so that me and ten thousand other ardent gamers can go work for some imaginary company one day that let's people sit around playing games all day." You'll be lucky if you live through what'll come after that one.*

January edition & price increase

Hi there!

Will we see a price increase next year? Will we see a January edition of NAG?

Happy Holidays!!!

Elton

Ed: *No price increase is planned [notice how I use the word 'planned' - leaves the backdoor wide open], unless you really want one... vote yes or no to a price increase at letters@nag.co.za.*

If you're reading this block of information you're one of those rare and precious readers that read the magazine from cover to cover. The reason that we put this nonsense in these little blocks is to get more people like you reading these small boxes. So far it seems as if you're the only person who actually reads this stuff. This now brings us to interesting and tricky territory, should we continue for just one person or give it up and print a proper magazine?

Remember: letters are clicked on at least once before deletion.
Important: Include all your details when mailing us or you won't get a prize if your letter is chosen as random winner of the month.

Send all topical and otherwise interesting items to the following: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158 [if you must use ink, paper, an envelope and stamps please include an electronic copy for easy processing] o
Real mail to: letters@nag.co.za...

There is a new rule for those of you sending in any artwork for publication - your submission must include the NAG logo or one of our magazine covers [download @ www.prophecy.co.za] built into the image somewhere - and by 'built in' we mean not pasted or stuck on somewhere - built in - you real artists will know what we're talking about - no logo / cover - no fame, NAG logo on CD.

HUMANKIND IS DEFINED BY THREE THINGS: THEIR PRINCIPLES, THEIR DREAMS AND

THE DOMAIN OF THE BASILISK

During the week of the 6th to the 13th of January 2003, a massive debate spread across the SGS (SAIX Games Service) public forums about the Code of Conduct on the Counter-Strike servers. This is a summary of the events and opinions that threw the online Counter-Strike community into disarray and eventually degraded into a children's food fight. I'd like to remind everyone that my view on how SGS is run is well-known, and not positive. But while I am a gamer with a complaint, I am also a self-respecting journalist reporting the news. The following article is based on the facts. If I state my personal opinion, it will be identified as such.

The SGS Story

"Viva la totalitarianism." - Hells Puppy, Forum Member.

The first thing I have been asked is: why do you care? I no longer play Counter-Strike and the events do not affect me directly, so why bother? I do care and it is for several reasons. The most important is the principle that authority comes with responsibility, and if I encounter something that contradicts my principles, I will naturally challenge it. Many (not all) of the players I interact with online and at LANs have expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the servers are run, and with the administrators who seem steadfast in their refusal to change anything.

It all started when a respected Counter-Strike player demanded SGS explain his ban from one of the servers. He had sworn once by accident, been warned for it, and then did not swear again. He did continue to joke around, however, and a while later he was banned. The administrator said that the player had sworn two times, and had been warned on the first occasion, then banned on the second.

Counter-Strike carries a 17 year age restriction, so anyone young enough to be offended by "bad language" should not be playing anyway. In addition to this, there is a mute command which stops all voice and text messages from a specified player. This is the perfect answer for anyone opposed to swearing - if you don't like it, you don't have to listen to it. Hearing what someone has to say is optional, and treating it this way would not infringe on any rights. Those who don't mind swearing, or even those who find it amusing, could still be allowed to speak in the way they are comfortable with. I then made clear my contempt for the SGS policy, the admin's attitude and the overbearing approach of the SGS staff in general. This was, I think, the catalyst for the main debate.

At some point a suggestion was made by one of the players that SGS should perhaps consider relaxing on the swearing issue after a certain time at night, like how age restricted movies are shown on late-night television. SGS at some point then said they would remove the Code of Conduct off the CS servers and hence take the servers down completely as they wouldn't run them without this COC, which resulted in a large number of people begging SGS not to take down the servers and rather just ban the "bad apples" who complained. Later, the servers were restricted to a list of IP addresses, the owners of which SGS claimed had always respected their COC. The restrictions are to be lifted and it seems everyone is "happy" again.

If people are unhappy with something about a service with valid reason, those running the service should make an effort to address it. You can never please everyone, but often the "opposition party" can contribute to the quality of the service through their suggestions. Of course, complainants are often just as immature, but one should be able to read between the lines of the swearing and ranting. There is still a problem, even though some are unable to express their grievances properly. What is the point of the service if not to provide fun for the players? The swearing rule is debatable, yes, but the key word is debatable. Even if, in the end, the people running the service decide not to change a rule, they will gather far fewer enemies if they show that they are at least prepared to listen. This is a truism for pretty much anything public, from politics to business to sport. The Code of Conduct is supposed to be there to ensure a pleasant gaming experience.

I hope that while everyone has seen the seriousness of the situation, they can also see its humour. Remember that when everything comes to a close, this is just our hobby, ladies and gentlemen, and nothing to do at all with real life. Online gaming is free so there's no business involved, and in the grand scheme of things, this is rather insignificant. I reserve no personal judgement on people for their opinions about an online computer game, and I suggest everyone else adopt the same standpoint. Maybe we should just all, as Tom Cruise puts it in the movie Magnolia, "respect the COC."

The view from the other side SAIX Game Service responds

What is it about a cable that turns people into seemingly invincible demi gods? After 5 years of LAN and online gaming, it still amazes me how arrogant and sometimes downright rude players can become. In those 5 years I have seen players swear, abuse, purposefully team kill and generally cause total mayhem. From this lack of self control in some players, we've seen the rise of the admins, players who are entrusted with the care of the servers and the people who play on them. You see the simplicity of the fact is that online and LAN servers are public amenities, just like parks and beaches. They are facilities provided for all to enjoy. And just like the "real world", there are always those who have no regard for the facility or others who use it.

There is an unwritten code in multiplayer gaming... basic etiquette. It is based on the principles of basic decency and respect for others. If you Team Kill (TK), apologise. Don't use any language that may offend. Be mindful of the other players experience and perception of the situation. You are playing with a diverse array of folk. From the young to the old, from the conservative to the liberal. Often there are kids playing on dad's pc, and with some of the language I've seen, I can understand why server admins are so strict of late. Look upon them as the parks board, keeping away the poachers, litterbugs and indecent. Most online services and LANs have a basic Code of Conduct (COC) that will detail what the ground rules are on a particular server. At SGS we post the COC on the main

page and in all the forums. Its design is simple - we created a set of rules that allow the game to be played unhindered, allowing equal opportunity for all, just like any sport. When you enter, you agree to abide by those rules, much like a Licence Agreement for software. And the admins... well they are the refs and linesmen, and they are there, as volunteers, to protect your gaming experience. Although you may feel that you are anonymous online, your IP's are traceable to your ISP, and from there it is simple. Play fair or be banned. It's as simple and as complex as that. Cya server side...

<(nAz)>GodF@ther==SGS==
SGS General Admin



Exerpts from the SGS Code of Conduct

The purpose of the COC is to ensure that everyone has an enjoyable stay on our servers. The rules set out below must be observed at all times.

2.1 We have recruited a number of Public Admins that are responsible for enforcing the COC on our servers. Our Admins are all respected members in the community and by playing on our servers YOU the player agree to treat them with RESPECT. The admins have been requested to play with their default NICK's, but this is not required.

2.2 Admins are responsible for keeping the servers clean of abusive users and for tasks like changing maps and adding more time to the games being played.

2.3 Admins have the right to enforce the terms of the COC, which include the right to GAG, KICK and/or BAN you if you have broken any part of our Code of Conduct in their sole discretion. No prior warning is required.

4.1 You may not use any offensive or sexually explicit language in chat or voice mode. Not adhering to this rule may lead to a temporary or permanent ban.

4.6 You may not use any unlawful, harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, hateful, racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable language toward any other player.

4.11 SGS reserves the right to deny service to any people or persons that they deem are reckless, causing damage, or disrupting the use of the game servers for other people.

welcome to freeloader

The Original

Crack your knuckles and prepare to install a new shell that's bound to make you happy, and keep those pesky know-nothings far from your PC. We take a look at the Sharp Environment, the best thing in Windows Shelling since the Editor started shaving his head.

Windows shells have been around for a few years now, giving us an alternative to the standard Windows Explorer. Unfortunately a decent shell, such as Litestep, also requires a bit of patience to reconfigure and work properly. That means that unless you know what you're doing, you might break something, and these instances have even transpired into having to re-install Windows. So it's rather self-explanatory that most people have avoided the scene completely. Nothing is quite as annoying as having to reinstall Windows after all you wanted was to use some other look in the first place.

The end user's shell god-send comes in the form of Sharp Environment, or SharpE. Essentially, it replaces the Windows Desktop with what a lot of you will find to be a much more efficient way to do things. There's a lot to be said for the program, so let's get started...

The Interface

SharpE replaces your desktop in its entirety. The most obvious addition is the SharpE Bar. The Bar allows for you to use the very useful plug-in function, but more on that later. SharpTray replaces the system tray and makes it much more efficient. The SharpTask component replaces your Taskbar, and finally there's SharpDesk that replaces the Desktop. There are other background components, but you'll discover them as you use the environment.

SharpE comes with a few, basic philosophies in mind: small memory footprint, ease of use, and crash guarding. The small memory footprint is quite obvious if you look at the stats, especially if you're not in XP's 512mb memory sweet spot. The crash guarding might not be as obvious, except that SharpE doesn't crash as often as Explorer. In fact, I've yet to have a full-on crash on my machine. If a component does crash, though, SharpE simply restarts it, and you don't lose anything. A component crash doesn't seem to affect any other components either, so you won't suffer a Domino effect where a service crashes and takes everything else along in the plunge to blue screen doom.

The Ease of Use philosophy is probably the most obvious. All components can be hidden, are collapsible and can be configured through right-clicking on them.

Installing SharpE

Installing is a breeze. You simply run the install file (located on the cover CD), and direct it to where you want SharpE. Then it will ask if you want SharpE as your shell, and you agree. One reboot later and you are in SharpE. The next step will be to install the plug-ins. But what are plugins?

Plugins

The big selling point, to me at least, was the plugins. Other shells have the aforementioned disadvantage of having to be configured manually through scripts or some other, rather intimidating, means. SharpE uses plug-ins, which you simply unzip to the Plugins folder and then activate on the SharpE Bar. Most plugins are community-made and therefore very to the point and functional. These range from something as obvious as a Start button replacement that mimics your Windows Explorer start menu to controls for Winamp to Memory readers, RSS news services and so on.

You can reference the box out for what plugins are on the CD. The Low Dimension website is also always updated with new additions that you can use, so be sure to check that out.

Installing a plugin is a breeze: unzip the file directly to the plugins folder (make sure it doesn't make another directory), then click on the small button left-most on the SharpBar. Hover over Add Plugin and select the one you want active. It will then appear on the bar. If your plugin isn't there, check to see if it's been unzipped correctly.

Hot Keys

Another nice feature of SharpE is that it gives

you universal hot keys. For instance, you can set up your Windows key with W to launch Word, or make combos to launch your favourite games. Unfortunately the shell doesn't come with the standard Windows shortcuts (such as Windows + E), so you'll have to configure those. Traditional ones such as Control + C are still supported, though. To configure the hot keys, go to the SharpBar menu, choose Settings and then select Hotkeys. Then choose your combination and the application you want to open.

Schemes

There would be little point to a shell if you can't tweak its look a bit. Although SharpE doesn't

let you move components to wherever you desire them, it does allow you to change schemes, which essentially mean the colours of the interface. The official site has a wide selection, and you can make your own scheme as well.

To load a new scheme, head back to the Settings menu on the SharpBar and select Schemes. There you can browse your available schemes, change them and even edit them.

Updating

Updating SharpE is pretty easy, thanks to SharpUp. Simply go to the SharpBar Menu and select Online Updates. This will check what you have installed, and see if there's anything new out there. Then you select what you want to update, and it does the rest.

There's a lot more to SharpE, and with enough support it will go far. But if you really don't want to venture outside of Explorer, you might want to give it a miss. Still, it's by far the easiest and most convenient of the shell replacements out there, and once you get used to it, chances are good you won't head back to Explorer. The Low Dimension website is there to help as well, so if you do have problems, give them a visit.

ON THE CD

the plugins

CD Player - *cd_player.zip*

It gives you easy control over your CD player right on top of the SharpBar.

Disk Usage - *diskusage.zip*

This very useful plugin shows how full your hard drives, CD drives and removable drives are.

DP Button Bar - *dppbuttonbar.zip*

With one quick right click, or simply a drag-n-drop you can add your applications to this quick-launch bar.

Memory Monitor - *memory_monitor.zip*

It's pretty self-explanatory - this shows how much memory you have left.

RSS Reader - *rssreader.zip*

This lets you plug into online RSS news services and get the headlines live.

sCMD - *scmd.zip*

A very powerful command launcher, similar to the Run option in Explorer.

SharpFolder - *sharpfolder.zip*

SharpFolder gives one-click access to a folder's content. Simply click on the icon you've added, and it shows you all the files in the folder.

Start Menu - *start_menu_plugin.zip*

This mimics the Star Menu we've all gotten to love on Explorer. It's not as flashy, but ultimately much more useful.

Winamp Control - *winamp_control.zip*

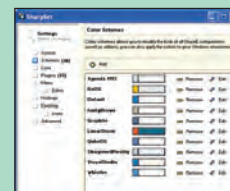
This gives you access to Winamp and all its basic functions.

the details

Software: Sharp Environment
Developer: Low Dimensions
Type: Windows Shell Replacement
Website: www.lowdimension.net

what windows?

SharpE works on most forms of Windows, but if you really want to use it to its capacity, the creators recommend using Windows 2000 or XP. More importantly, a lot of the plugins seem to only lean towards these two (and some only XP). Still, you can install it on 98/ME and use it, but not at full functionality.



the player's role

Someone once said to me, way back when, that a role playing game campaign is only as good as the game master that creates it. I must say that I both agree and disagree. Yes, the game master's input is important, but so much of what happens in a game resides solidly in the player's court. Seeing as how I explained the basic concepts of role playing last time, I thought that, this time around, I would look a little more at the part the player, well, plays, in the game proceedings.

We have all read books. I assume so, anyway. Books rely on their characters as much as they do on a good story. Even the greatest tale on earth would be vapid and boring if the characters themselves were not entertaining and believable, within context of the tale. This is true for role playing as well.

As a player, it is your job to entertain other members of the role playing group through the actions of your gaming alter ego; your player character. To this end, you should keep certain things in mind:

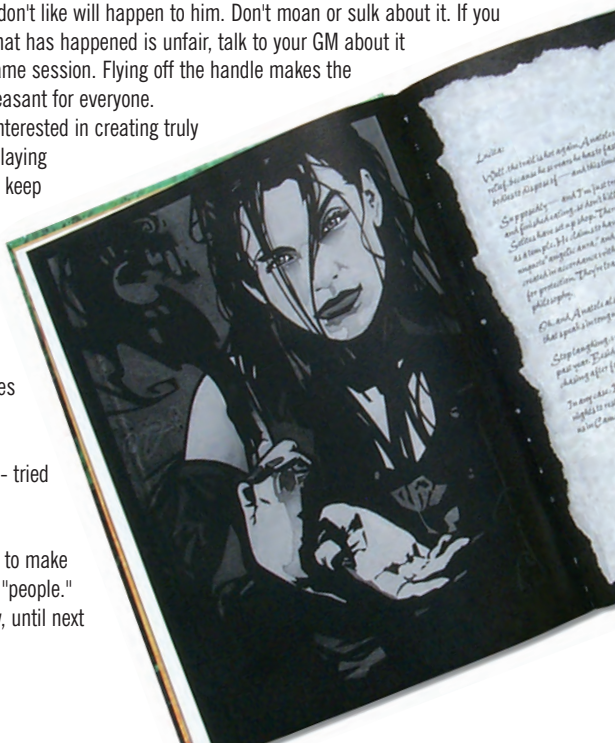
Firstly, make your character believable. This is very important. There are no true uber-heroes. Everyone has some kind of strength, and some kind of weakness. And trust me, the quickest way to make enemies is to be a power-gamer; the type of person who has to have the strongest, fastest, toughest, smartest and best looking character. But we will talk about those types in a later issue.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, make your character interesting. If Tim the roleplayer keeps creating characters that are exactly like Tim is in real life, things are gonna get pretty boring. Vary your characters. At one time, play a street smart dude who knows all the right moves. At another, play a bumbling office worker who can't see without his glasses. Okay, those are extreme examples, but I think you see what I am saying.

Third - even more important than one and two - is to remain faithful to your character. Do what your character would do. Sudden changes of heart and attitude are very rare indeed, and unexpected in an unpleasant way. Keep your character constant. This doesn't mean that your character must never change. But change takes time, folks... keep that in mind.

Lastly, remember that your character is one part of a greater whole. He is not the only one in the game. You need to respect that. And you need to expect that things you don't like will happen to him. Don't moan or sulk about it. If you feel that what has happened is unfair, talk to your GM about it after the game session. Flying off the handle makes the game unpleasant for everyone.

If you are interested in creating truly great role playing characters, keep watching this space. In a future issue, I will be writing up guidelines to creating brilliant characters - tried and tested techniques guaranteed to make impressive "people." But for now, until next time...



a quick note...

Those of you that are familiar with RPGs may notice that we are glossing over product ranges in our reviews, rather than going into a lot of depth on single products. There is a reason for this. Role Playing is an unknown quantity to many people out there, and our aim is to raise awareness about products overall, before we start focussing specifically on individual titles. Just hang in there - the specific reviews will follow in time!

vampire: the masquerade

review

A little over a decade ago, a little known company called White Wolf Publishing produced an RPG that would change the face of role playing forever - not to mention putting the small publisher very securely on the gaming map. This new game put the player in an entirely new situation - instead of fighting the evil monsters, the players were the evil monsters.

Entitled Vampire: The Masquerade, this game brought forth the premise that the world we live in hides another, more secret world - a society of modern Vampires, governed by their own rules and laws, living among normal humans, keeping to the shadows and feeding on blood. Initially intended as a game of personal horror, the title grew rapidly to be one of the most popular role playing titles of all time - probably due to the fact that the "personal horror" aspect of the game failed miserably. Instead of taking on the "woe is me" attitude intended for players, the average Vampire player reveled in the Vampiric state of their character. But this shortcoming did little to deter White Wolf Publishing, who expanded the Vampire universe (now called the World of Darkness series) with several other titles: Werewolf, Mage, Wraith, Changeling, Hunter, Exalted and Demon (the latter is still to be seen on our shores.) One of the peaks of Vampire's success was marked by the release of a PC game version of the game, developed by Nihilistic Software (long time readers will remember the review.)

With a sublime game system and a story intensive setting, Vampire took many gamers, used to the violent nature of preceding RPGs, into a whole new sphere of social interaction, politics and manipulation, all against a backdrop of a world eerily similar to our own existence.

One of the better aspects of this title lies in the fact that the group only really needs the main rule book to play the game. Unlike other games, which may need several volumes, Vampire: The Masquerade is a self contained game, all in one volume. However, a huge amount of source material has been produced for the game, keeping it current and alive, as it were. In fact, the Vampire universe changes as ours does - nothing is constant within that realm.

Although buying a lot of source books is great for enhancing any role playing game, it can be expensive. There are two books, however, that are indispensable, in my humble opinion. These are the Guide to the Camarilla, and the Guide to the Sabbat. These books detail the workings of the two main Vampire factions that exist in the world (good and evil, respectively) and add a wondrous amount of flavour to any campaign.

Vampire: The Masquerade is an enthralling, exciting and intriguing game,

full of deception, alliances, betrayal and all those other things that make politics such fun. If you haven't taken to the night streets of your home town in this game, you haven't lived. Here is a title that fully deserves the credit it gets.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Simple rule system	Fast "evolving" setting
One core book	requires frequent book purchases
Great concept	

SUPPLIED BY: Outer Limits (011) 482-3771
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 INTERNET: www.outerlimits.co.za





COMING SOON

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Once again we enter the world of Anime, the ever popular Japanese animation art form that supports a growing sub-culture within the gaming community...

by anton lines

The key question asked by many anime fans, is "where do I get this stuff?" Unfortunately, this is the difficult part. Since it does not fall under mainstream entertainment (and there seems to be no culture at all in this country), it is not readily available through the usual channels. You will see the odd movie or OVA (Original Video Animation - i.e., straight-to-video series) in certain video stores, but these will be scarce and usually only the old or most well known titles. Also, finding subtitled anime that way is highly unlikely.

There are several flea market stores that sell self-imported anime titles (Hatfield Flea Market in Pretoria and Waterfront Flea Market in Johannesburg, for example). Their stock is often limited, but most will order a title for you if you are willing to pay for it. Another option is to buy the DVDs off international sites. The final choice is to get on IRC, server: snow.shadowfire.org and channel #anime or #anime.co.za, and ask for title-specific help from the people there. If a show is not officially available in the West, there will almost always be a fan-subtitled version available for download. These are legal, provided you purchase an original copy should it become available.

In the reviews starting this month, there will be an "availability" indicator, reading either "common", "uncommon" or "fansub" only.



Ranma 1 & 2

Genre: Romantic Comedy
Year: 1989
Producer: Kitty Film
Format: Series / Movie Series
Episodes: 161 + 12 OVAs and 4 Movies
Language: English / Japanese with English subtitles
Availability: Common

Concept	8
Story	8
Characters	8
Animation	6
Translation	10
Total Score (out of 100)	82

Ranma 1/2 is the first title I am reviewing for several reasons. It is the most popular and prolific anime in the west, it is easy to find, it is exceptionally well translated, and it is easy to get into. I always recommend Ranma to interested people who have never watched anime before, because it is the perfect introduction to the style.

This is also one of the very few animes where I consider the dubbed version to be superior to the subtitled one. That is up for debate, but what is clear is that most dubs are done badly, where Ranma is done particularly well. It is easier for the first-time anime watcher to start in his own language, and there are also no problems with translation errors to get in the way of the enjoyment. Of course, you will find those who aren't into slapstick romantic comedies and will find the show not to their taste. If you happen to be one, I will be getting into more serious titles next month, although I still think you should give Ranma a chance.

The basic premise of the show concerns a young man by the name of Ranma Saotome, heir to the Saotome School of Anything-Goes Martial Arts. His father, Genma, has promised a good friend of his that Ranma will marry one of his daughters. Ranma and Akane (the daughter in question) make up their minds that they do not like each other long before they meet, but upon being introduced there is obviously some chemistry. Now this sounds like your fairly standard situation comedy. The twist comes in the form of "nanchuan", the cursed springs in China where Ranma and his father went to train. While there, they both fell into a spring and now, when splashed with cold water, they transform... Genma into a giant panda, and Ranma into a girl. The humour is slapstick, but of a rather unconventional kind. I am ordinarily not a fan of this type of comedy, but this show had me cracking up because it is just so unexpected. It is the most unique approach to the romantic comedy I have ever seen. Several other shows have now copied the Ranma style, but this was the original, and

should be watched first. The theme of martial arts is very prevalent, and Ranma is constantly fighting someone or other. These fight sequences are done purely to enhance the humour, and this should not be considered a TFSG (They Fought Some Guy) anime such as Dragonball Z. The characters are strong, well developed and varied, to the extent that the show practically writes itself. Apart from Ranma, Genma and Akane, you have a boy with less direction sense than any woman, another who refers to himself as "The Blue Thunder of Furinken High School" and an old martial arts master who steals women's underwear.



A few criticisms must be made, however. The show starts to get very repetitive after the third season, and the producers seemed to start throwing in new characters every episode to try to give it a fresh feel. These characters are underdeveloped and in my opinion, rather annoying. I feel Ranma loses its direction after season 3, mainly because the original creator left the show. The other negative point is that the animation standard is by no means good. This can be justified by the fact that most comedies are not drawn particularly well, and also that this has now become the generally accepted style. I agree that the basic style is appropriate, but the rendering quality could have been far better. To make a comparison, Hayao Miyazaki's Grave of the Fireflies was released that same year. Although, while these criticisms are valid, it would be unfair of me to say they really detract from the show overall.

Wontid

DO you suffer from low self assteam
have NO relashinship
NO life
NO persinality
NO ambiishin
expect little compensayshinn
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(must rite good english)

If you ahnsid ya to at leest 3 of
the abuv then u cood...

ryte 4 NAG

NAG is expanding in 2003 and we need a few more freelance writers to fill all those white pages each month. If you have any writing skills and are interested in becoming part of our freelance team please read on... if not, tear out this page and nail it to your local community message board.

These are the people we need (in order of importance top to bottom):

- Sports reviewers** [must play or have played most types of sports titles]
- Feature writers** [articles must be well researched and should in some way be relevant to gaming]
- Hardware** [some real world experience is essential here i.e. you must have been published elsewhere]
- Console and PC Game Reviewers** [experience will help / must own your own console]

This is how you apply:

Send a 600 word review [game or hardware related] or general gaming article to this address: ed@nag.co.za. Use the subject line: **Freelancer** - or your submission might get missed - besides screwing up on a small detail like this will probably disqualify you anyway. ;) Your 600 words should also not contain any spelling or grammatical errors. We're also interested in your unique writing style and not a carbon copy of any of the current writers.

Only E-mail applications will be accepted, you need full time Internet access to be a NAG writer. You will also need transport so you can collect hardware, games etc. for review (this means that you need to be JHB based).

Please remember that game reviewers are like reality television shows - in any given week there are too many of them. The point is this - if you can write good quality features you'll eventually end up writing the odd review or two as well.

the LAZY GAMER'S guide to the logitech freedom 2.4

In this month's edition of the Lazy Gamer's Guide, where we give you a better look at the hardware out there in the gaming industry, we look at Logitech's Freedom 2.4, from the brand's new cordless peripheral range, and more buttons than you can shake a keyboard at...

The Main Trigger

The main trigger sits at the expected place, and has the number 2 button in reach of your thumb in the normal holding position. Nothing fancy here, since most of your additional firepower is focused on the top.



The Top Buttons

At the top, right underneath your thumb, is a directional fire button (or hat switch), complimented with buttons 3, 4, 5 and 6 around it for easy reach. The hat switch is 8-way directional, so it gives you 8 different click options if the game allows it.



The Shoulder Buttons

The shoulder houses four buttons, arranged along the side. These are mainly for extra functions, since there are quite a few on the joystick itself. Considering it's a programmable joystick, you can move all your primary controls to the top buttons.

The Throttle

What should be standard these days on a joystick - a throttle. This one is very responsive, but positioned at the back, where some gamers prefer it at the front. Made of aluminum, it's not likely to snap off!

The Feet

Don't be fooled by its look - the Freedom 2.4's feet grip solidly, providing you don't jerk the hardware upwards, which won't gain you anything on a standard joystick anyway. It's also more convenient, since it doesn't simply stay stuck, so you can easily remove it when you don't use it.

Cordless USB

The joystick uses a USB plug to connect, which is standard. Its claim to fame, though, is its cordless nature, which means you use a receiver on a radio frequency. The joystick uses three AA batteries (supplied with the joystick).



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Player of the Month

Starting this month we are bringing back the "player of the month" section in NAG. This will hopefully act as motivation for all the gamers out there to get themselves noticed. To become player of the month, that person must have achieved outstanding results in his/her gaming career, or in the case of up-and-coming talent, he/she must have created some sort of a stir. Everyone appearing in this section will have worked hard for their status. We will also be featuring a "clan of the moment" section as soon as the Mayhem offline league starts up later this month. This will not happen every month, but will be there to reflect when a clan has significantly improved, achieved or impressed to some degree.

profile

Name: Chris Barter	Clan: Nightfall
Nick: SWoop	Games: WarCraft III StarCraft:Broodwar
Age: 20	Quake 3 Counter-Strike
Occupation: Student	Quote: "What is cheese?"



Achievements:

- * Represented NDC in the Broodwar Super12 between RSA, NZ and AUS
- * Represented South Africa in the international Broodwar games against Italy, Poland, Austria and Rice Clan
- * 2nd place at 2001 Worfaire preliminaries in Broodwar
- * 3rd place at 2001 Worfaire finals in Broodwar
- * Represented South Africa at the 2001 World Cyber Games Finals in Korea in Broodwar
- * 2nd place at 2002 Worfaire preliminaries in WarCraft III
- * 2nd place at 2002 Gamers Gate in WarCraft III
- * 1st place at 2002 Worfaire finals in WarCraft III
- * Ranked 62nd on Blizzard's US East Battle.net server
- * Played Quake 3 and Counter-Strike for NDC B team

The_Basilisk - How did you start gaming?

nf-sWoop - I have always had a PC around the house and have been playing games since I can remember. I started online gaming with Action Quake 2.

The_Basilisk - How important is gaming in your life as a whole?

nf-sWoop - At the moment it's paramount, I consider it my sport and I take it very seriously. I'm going to be at RAU this year though, so priorities will change.

The_Basilisk - Gaming wise, where do you see yourself going in the future?

nf-sWoop - It all depends on what's available as far as South African tournament gaming goes. If there are tournaments, I can see myself doing well simply because of my level of professionalism.

The_Basilisk - What do you think of the current state of the gaming community in South Africa?

nf-sWoop - Unfortunately it looks like it is deteriorating. New games are coming out and the support is minimal. There are hardly any more tournaments; sponsorship for tournaments has taken a plunge. Gamers in general seem content to keep gaming in South Africa at a social level, and competitiveness is not encouraged. I myself find nothing more fun than a competitive game.

The_Basilisk - What upcoming games are you looking forward to?

nf-sWoop - Ever since Broodwar was at its prime I've been waiting for StarCraft 2. And hopefully DOOM III and Quake 4 won't disappoint. Quake 4 is still a long way off though.

South Africa's First Online Gaming Radio Station

www.zagradio.za.net

Spearheaded by illuz1on, this project was created to have a bit of fun and also to bring South African gaming to a new level as an online spectator sport. It is a SHOUTCast based station, broadcast over the internet, mimicking international gaming radio stations such as ESports Reality, which comments on large events like the CPL. While most of the time our local station will play music, it offers (or will offer soon in the future) running commentary on competitive gaming events and online matches, when they do happen. This is a good way for players to keep up to date on how other clans are faring, especially those who do not have that particular game installed or the capability to connect to HLTV etc. Currently, the radio supports Half-Life: Counter-Strike and Tribes 2. It will also be supporting Quake 3 in the near future. Current DJ's / commentators are illuz1on, Reactive, Jeeva, Surge, Bouncer125, SC, Serenity, Black-Ice and Stryfe. That list is likely to grow. They use a winamp plugin from home to broadcast to the radio server, which then sends it out in streaming audio. The broadcast is delayed for a minute or two, but it is nothing serious.

Listen through Winamp - URL: csradio.counter-strike.co.za:8000 IRC: snow.shadowfire.org - #ZAG.Radio

WarCraft III Community Replays Site

www.war3replays.hwgn.net

For the purpose of serving the WarCraft III community, GuldaN and LiquidGhost have put up a site where you can get replays, replays and more replays. Taken from the top international and local players, the selection is good, and growing steadily. The site is fairly new and still under partial construction, with a strategy section on the way soon. There are also some "how to" guides, a WarCraft III forum, and links to other sites. The ASP news module was written by Mortimer; the HTML base and graphics were done by LiquidGhost; and the site was developed by GuldaN. "It's a load of work, especially if you're learning along the way, but I am working on it. It's cool, I enjoy it, I like the challenge," said GuldaN when we spoke to him about the site. "A month ago I didn't even know how to spell HTML, now I am coding in PHP."

ZAGamers Community Website

www.zagamers.za.net

Seems these community websites have been springing up like mutant tomato plants, but this one has been around for a little while longer. The official site of the IRC channel #ZAGamers is very comprehensive, and contains information about the channel (such as a list of operators and server statistics), a public forum, a downloads section (for those of you who may not have an IRC client), a Javachat applet for anyone wanting to drop in without having to download a client, and a logs section (www.zagamers.za.net/logs). The logs section is a derivative of the www.bash.org website which publishes humorous things that have happened or been said on IRC. With the ZAGamers logs, it's obviously all about #ZAGamers and the shadowfire network.

▼ Never sleep at a LAN

▼ Tower defense fan



After attending a LAN while on holiday in Hermanus I started thinking about the perceptions of lanners in Gauteng and Western Cape. Though this is my opinion formed only after a short discussion with a few gamers down there, it does project a kind of general feeling many of the online community have portrayed in the past.

The question I have heard so many times before: "Why aren't there any big LANs in Cape Town?" When I say big LANs I mean the likes of Worfaire and Gamers Gate that are held on a regular basis. The perception is that no one is interested in gamers other than in Gauteng and companies that host these LANs don't care about anyone outside of the Gauteng province. This in my opinion is a misconception that is slowly gnawing away at the gamer's pleasant attitude when he hears about a big LAN happening in Johannesburg.

Well, to tell you the bad news (if you are anywhere other than Gauteng), it is all about money. The big LANs are mostly sponsored, and monthly big private LANs that aren't sponsored rely on revenue generated by entrance fees, or as many still maintain, do it out of the love for gaming (though, that is a discussion for another time). Huge events with the prize money need sponsorship. Sponsorship is a nice word for people giving money to other people (LAN organizers) who will advertise their brand and products. Advertising at events needs 2 things - lots of people and lots of coverage before and at the event and afterwards in the media. When a sponsor gives money he doesn't usually give you a blank cheque and tell you to make him proud... he expects certain guarantees, which means you have to turn every penny 5 times before you spend it (i.e., spend it wisely). The Head offices (where the decision is made) by these sponsors is usually in Johannesburg, meaning that if you want to have a meeting, its more convenient. It's usually easier to give the money towards something you can go check in on, on a weekly basis. Ok, the short version of the above is that if you have a sponsor that wants to sponsor an event, he wants a noticeable difference in his sales, meaning the best possible brand exposure for the least amount of money.

The other big factor in other provinces is the population density. If we had a LAN in Cape Town city centre, you would receive people from places like George and Saldannah. In my mind that means you cover a greater area, meaning that your brand name has more exposure in the country, but in reality it doesn't work that way. The major big LANs in Western Cape are hosted by dedicated gamers who still have the right values when it comes to hosting a LAN, firstly, LANning should be a fun thing. Also the fact that a lot of the other provinces would not as easily go down to Cape Town as Capetonians would drive to other places (like Johannesburg) to have fun. Yes, I am suggesting that those guys make more of an effort and that Johannesburg people have life too easy when it comes to gaming. In their mind, why drive 1400km for a LAN when we have one here every second weekend? I don't blame them but am rather trying to put the rest of you guys in the picture.

My solution

What do we have in other provinces? We have organisers capable of hosting the big LANs in those provinces. We have the skills for hosting these events as seen by the likes of Fieldy, Emporerwolf and every other LAN that has 100+ people and absolutely no hickups. We have great venues like possibly the Good Hope Centre that could be equivalent to The Dome in Johannesburg. What don't we have? We don't have sponsors that easily spend money away from home. We have sponsors that don't acknowledge the abilities of anyone they haven't met personally. We don't have people working together with each other from different provinces to make things like this happen (what on earth can he be talking about?) i.e. people up here dealing with the sponsors while they get help from the local crowd with the event organizing. Basically that is an attitude once again. The fact that everyone would rather be the chief than the indian, making little pockets of resistance along the way (I blame apartheid for that :), some of us were raised believing we would be chiefs and cannot settle for doing the grunt work). The leaders of communities trying to bulldoze each other for popularity and fame when in my mind they have lost the way. Different major companies that see each other as the opposition while they are unwilling to co exist at any event, giving too little money on their own to make any event comparable with our events (granted, they spend a lot of money on gaming, and we don't have the buying power American gamers have). Gamers who are always sitting on the sideline, unwilling to help because it's easier to comment about how bad it went and how they could have done better when they were too lazy to give suggestions before the event. Yes, I said you were lazy. In my mind, 2003 will be the year we shout so loud, the world will hear us. No ifs and buts, it will be. People must just decide if they are part of the problem or part of the solution. Come up with more answers than questions. More volunteers. People who realize that the major organizations are not pocketing the money they are making but re-investing it into the gaming community, and sometimes, they make a loss (believe it or not...fact) and have to pay it out of their own pockets from the day jobs they do. I believe this year we will see a complete boom with major events, currently everyone is tight lipped about their plans. In the mean time, as South African gamers, start jotting down ideas, they will be needed sooner than you think.

TadMadLad
admin@langames.co.za



You know that the year is in full swing when the fighting starts. As you have guessed the fighting has begun.

LEAGUE NEWS:

The 18th of January saw the start of the Mayhem Off-line League. Twenty four teams from in and around Gauteng battled it out for close on 12 hours. The event could be considered one of the most intensive competitive arenas outside of the WCG and CPL qualifiers hosted by the GLSA and Gamers Gate.

Awards on the day are as follows:

- Psychicken[CHKNHHD] - Stress Bunny On The Day.
- Annihilator[NDC] - Stress Bunny MKII.
- Vapour[SOD] - Stress Bunny Punching Bag.
- WASP!!!! - Control Freak Of The Day for not only refining his skills in The Sims, but also running the servers on the day.
- Jay[evolve] - Random Headshot Award for being randomly shot in the head four times consecutively.
- Sk83r Chick[AE] - Most Agro Gamer for bashing both her fists on the table out of frustration. In so doing almost giving a few Mayhem staff members heart attacks from the fright.
- Legolas[PF] - Player To Whine The Most.
- Matching Shirt Award was a tie between CF and PF, for having matching team colours.
- CR - Best Female Team, wait a sec, they were the only female team.
- warcow[CHKNHHD] - Lost Gamer Award for being the only Tribes 2 player to end up in a CS event.
- Heat[evolve] - PC Of The Day. Evolve played most of their matches with only four players as Heat's Pc was never working. At one stage of the event, the PC in question was in component form and in need of some assembly.
- Storm[evolve] - Flash Bang Of The Day. If only he would flash the enemy instead of his own team.
- CF - Fire Hazard Of The Day, for the use of a monitor with NO casing.

Well done to all teams, the staff of Mayhem wish all teams the best of luck over the next few months.

The standings for January are as follows:

DC A	51	PF	30	CF A	17
AIM	47	AE	30	KMA A	12
DC D	42	FX	27	CR	11
DC I	41	RGC	26	CF B	10
HZO R	40	BHB A	21	GI Agro	10
Evolve	38	BHB B	20	KAN A	4
ACC	34	MIST	19	KAN B	0
TBA	32	CHKNHHD	18	KMA B	0



* Please note that the above standings are subject to change over the next few months, as each team in the league has their turn to play against each and every other team in the league.

DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

8 February - Mayhem off-line Counter-Strike league.
22 February - Mayhem Open LAN

The off-line league is back, Dying time is here. Also keep an eye open for the SAIX On-line Counter-Strike league.

Vapour[SOD]
vapour@mayhem.co.za



Stand up and be counted!

Well, 2003 has been formatted and is ready to receive you... the gamer! Never before have I looked at a year with such enthusiasm for SA gamers! I see huge in-roads that will take us to the next level.

Let me tell you how Gamers Gate will be blowing your mind this year...

On Friday the 28th of February, Gamers Gate in conjunction with Electronic Arts and Pinnacle Micro will host a Command & Conquer Generals LAN party of note. This is a free of charge, invitation only event and will see 50 lucky gamers attend an event where all they bring are their skills and their love for gaming. Pinnacle Micro has kindly sponsored 50 high-spec computers to level the playing fields.

The event kicks off at 7pm sharp and will run through the night and sadly end on Saturday the 1st March at 10am.

The top ten runner-up players will each receive R200 cash and the ultimate winner will receive, compliments of Electronic Arts, the latest Palm Zire hand held computer!

As this event is exclusive to invitees only, I will not disclose the venue. I can however tell you that it will be somewhere in Gauteng.

So, now you want to know who will crack the nod and if this event is the only one of its kind Gamers Gate will host this year?

There will be three Command & Conquer Generals events in total. I have already told you about the first one... And I have told you that it is exclusive...

If you do not receive an invitation to the first one in February, the only way to get your name on the list for the second one scheduled for the end of

March is to visit www.gamersgate.co.za. Enter the Electronic Arts competition on our website by answering a simple question via e-mail, 50 names will be drawn from the entries. The beauty about that competition is that you not only stand a chance of being invited to the next event, you could win a really cool prize sponsored by Electronic Arts.

The third C&C Generals event will take place towards the end of April and will follow the same principal as the second one.

Gamers Gate then kicks into overdrive and its back to the Carousel Casino, north of Pretoria for a weekend of competitive gaming. The exact date will be announced on our website sometime during February, however we can confirm that it will probably be sometime in May or June. Keep checking the Gamers Gate website for more details regarding the event. We will notify you during February of the events scheduled for the remainder of 2003 leading up to our final event in November.

In closing...

We are committed to providing gamers with the very best competitive gaming experience available, huge prizes as well as an opportunity to represent South Africa on an international gaming field! Having said this, the underlying factor will always be pure enjoyment. It is, after all, the reason you started playing games, isn't it?

So, Mr. Gamer... are you as excited as we are about competitive gaming in South Africa? Will you stand up and be counted this year by entering our events? Do you really want to miss another Gamers Gate event?



Len Nery
len@gamersgate.co.za



UK Intel Masters Gaming Championship



On 21 December 2002 the UK's biggest pro gaming event, The Intel Masters Competition, was held in London at the Science Museum.

Competing for a total prize purse of £ 25 000.00, 24 of the UK's most skilled clans came head to head to battle it out in games of Counter-Strike, Return to Castle Wolfenstein and WarCraft III: Reign of Chaos.

Sponsored by Intel, David Mitchell, Intel's head of brand marketing had this to say after the event, "As expected the very first Intel Masters saw the UK's finest gaming talent produce exceptional standards of play and levels of entertainment that had the crowd enthralled right from the first match. Pro gaming requires supreme levels of skill, concentration, and dedication in order to compete at the very highest level. By hosting the Intel Masters and showcasing it to spectators in such a spectacular way we are demonstrating why pro gaming can credibly become established as the 'Sport of the 21st Century.'"

The winners and runners-up for the event were:

Return to Castle Wolfenstein

Winners: 4 Kings (£6,000)
Runners-up: Lemmings (£3,000)

Counter-Strike

Winners: Infinity eSports (£5,000)
Runners-up: Clan One (£2,500)

WarCraft III (Individual Event)

Winner: Iain "Tillerman" Girdwood (£1,000)
Runner-up: Marty "Pure Balls" Rome (£500)



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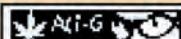










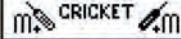











NOKIA RINGTONES

James Bond	11560
A - Team	10435
Mission Impossible	10451
Big Brother SA	11724
The X Files	14904
Spiderman	15314
Twilight Zone	10894
Slim Shady	10393
Ghost Busters	10443
Jingle Bells	15184
Kung Fu Fighting	10846
Thunderbirds	10139
Knight Rider	10076
Addams Family	10038
Higher	10376
The Saint	10056
You spin me	10143
Magnum PI	10893
Airwolf	10432
8 Miles High	11181
Back to the Future	10437
Batman Theme	12058
Battlestar Galactica	10770
Beautiful Day	11242
Because I got high	14005


MOTOROLA RINGTONES

Babooshka	10582
Everybody Hurts	10473
Forgiven	10503
Freestyler	10703
Get ur freak on	10767
Goldfinger	11258
Gotta Man	10506
I feel fine	11276
I still haven't found	10327
Ironic	11286
Itchy and Scratchy	10649
Kryptonite	11295
Looney Tunes	10651
Losing my Religion	11308
Lost in Space	10156
Lovin' each Day	10766
Mack the Knife	10192
Made for loving you	10027
Magnum PI	10182
Malcolm in the Middle	10522
Mambo Italiano	10701
Married with Children	10681
Music	10661
Nellie the Elephant	10207
Night Fever	10256

NOKIA OPERATOR LOGOS

	23215
	23353
	20023
	20333
	23095
	22111
	20274
	21996
	21389
	20298
	20478
	22771
	20136
	20401
	22070
	23185
	21421
	21825
	20000
	20022
	20026
	20027
	20057
	20103

NOKIA OPERATOR LOGOS

	20188
	20270
	20304
	20331
	20339
	20376
	20435
	20578
	20775
	20823
	22012
	22128
	22129
	22229
	22303
	23103
	23762
	22808
	22609
	22442
	22547
	23362
	22777
	23463
	23527

ERICSSON RINGTONES

Addams Family	10778
American Pie	10791
Batman	10099
Big Brother	10313
Born to be Wild	10177
Can Can	10830
Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika	10158
Can't get you out of my head	10835
Clint Eastwood	10843
Come as you are	10062
Enter Sandman	10030
Eternal Flame	10874
Every breath you take	10089
Fallin'	10878
Family Affair	10879
Father Figure	10880
Final Countdown	10882
Flintstones	10883
Fly me to the Moon	10884
Friends	10888
Genie in a Bottle	10892
Get ur freak on	10106
Ghost Busters	10186
Give peace a chance	10895
Goldfinger	10897

SAMSUNG RINGTONES

Because I got high	14079
Nkalakatha	14607
Slim Shady	10393
The Bold and the Beautiful	10794
It wasn't me	10095
Evergreen	14344
Liewe Lulu	11137
Get ur freak on	10106
In the Jungle	10050
SA National Anthem	10537
It's my Life	10759
Mission Impossible 2	10892
Pink Panther	10454
Because I got high - alternate	14002
Castles in the Sky	11954
Final Countdown	10046
Sex Bomb	10719
Uptown Girl	10395
Ms Jackson	10125
You rock my world	12085
Endless Love	14252
Pinky and the Brain	10468
The Good, The Bad and The Ugly	10073
With arms wide open	10401

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PLAYBOY ENTER GAMING

Playboy Enterprises have signed a deal with Groove Games and ARUSH Entertainment to bring Playboy into the world of computer games. The first title will have players assuming the role of Playboy founder Hugh Hefner as he builds his business empire. The game will be available late next year on PC, Xbox and PS2, and will carry a "mature" rating.

HOMM IV: WINDS OF WAR

Heroes of Might and Magic IV: Winds of War, an expansion for 3DO's turn-based strategy game, will be available toward mid-year. The add-on will feature 40 new maps, six new hero campaigns, new creatures and objects, an upgraded Campaign Editor, and new storylines and music tracks.

MVP BASEBALL 2003

Electronic Arts Canada are at work on MVP Baseball 2003, to be released around mid-year on PC, Xbox and PS2 under the EA Sports label. The game will include some innovations such as the option to try to steal bases, as well as means to deal with opponents trying the same. There will be a franchise mode, allowing the hiring and firing of players, player injuries and championship games.

UPCOMING TRIBES GAME

Sierra have confirmed that a new Tribes game is on its way, although it may not be called Tribes 3. As yet, no other details are forthcoming, but an official announcement has been promised for later this year.

PRO RACE DRIVER: LOOK RIGHT, LOOK LEFT...

Codemasters' upcoming PC and Xbox versions of Pro Race Driver will support the Matrox Surround Gaming system, which allows three monitors to be connected for the purpose of displaying wider fields of view in games. The game will feature advanced AI that will render computer-controlled opponents wily but as error-prone as humans.

UPCOMING ENHANCEMENTS TO THE SIMS ONLINE

Electronic Arts will be adding enhancements to their The Sims Online in the near future. These will take various forms, including numerous new objects such as gambling paraphernalia and musical equipment. Another upcoming feature is a secure currency control system, which will allow players to trade. Furthermore, EA intend to incorporate the ability for users to create their own objects and outfits into the game.

DUNGEON SIEGE 2

Gas Powered Games have begun early work on Dungeon Siege 2. The developers are excited by recent advances in 3D graphics technology.



Ganymede Technologies, of Poland, are currently at work on a futuristic vehicle combat game titled Armobiles, for the PC. Set in the near future, it will let players assume the role of drivers carrying military personnel into and through dangerous territory in armoured vehicles. Different vehicles, each with its own weaponry, will be available, as well as several multiplayer modes (split-screen and LAN) and 70-odd single player missions.

Armobiles

As you read this, Virtual Skipper 2 should be available in Europe. Created by Duran Duboi of France, this real-time yacht simulator not only recreates a number of top global yacht racing locations, but also a number of yachts themselves, and requires the player to take into account a multitude of factors such as wind speed and direction, currents and racing regulations, such as safe distances and right of way.

Virtual Skipper 2



Creative Assembly, creator's of Activision's Medieval: Total War, will be releasing an expansion set for this title toward mid-year. Titled Viking Invasion, it will deal with events around 790 AD, during the Viking invasions of the British Isles. Eight new factions will be introduced, each with its own units, and some additional features, related to gameplay and the interface, are being planned. Creative Assembly are also currently busy with Rome: Total War.

Medieval: Total War expansion



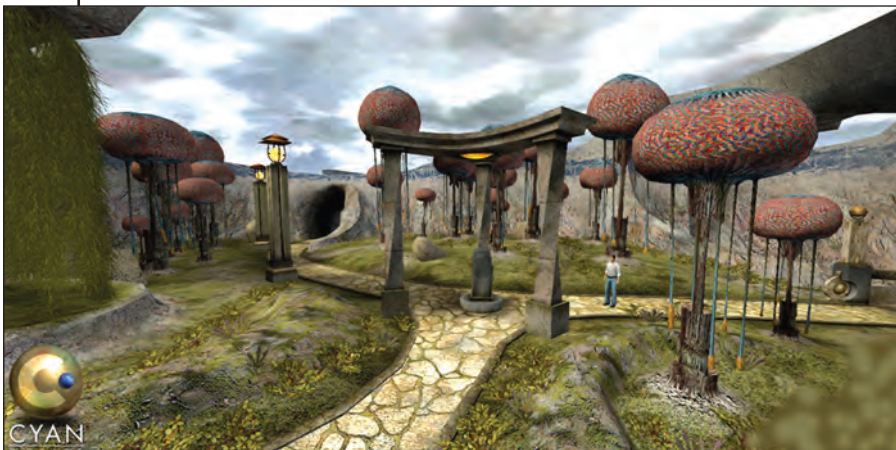
There



There Inc. are developing a direct competitor to The Sims Online, called There, a virtual world that stresses social interaction over gameplay mechanics. To aid in this, players will be able to change their characters' facial expressions with emoticons and body language with moodicons. Players will also, of course, be able to buy a variety of clothing; the Nike brand will be available in-game, interestingly enough. There will feature a complete simulated economy; however, this economy will not be isolated - players will be able to buy Therebucks with real world currency, if so desired, in addition to income from their subscription. Other means of acquiring Therebucks in the game will include various jobs for characters, selling items or performing services, among others. Characters will also be able to own and customise a house. The world itself consists of four zones, three of them featuring various fantasy themes, while the fourth is a photo-realistic recreation of Egypt's tourist areas. There's focus is on social activities, and is designed neither as a game nor a chat-room, but rather an advanced hybrid of both. This title has been in development for over four years, and is expected late this year.

Myst Online renamed

Myst Online has been renamed to Uru: Online Ages Beyond Myst by Ubi Soft and Cyan Worlds, publishers and developers, respectively. This game will make use of broadband connections, and will boast continuous introduction of new story lines and environmental features; it will also offer real-time voice communication. Uru is expected to be ready by the end of the year.



GAME SALES LAST YEAR

An economic analysis company has released its findings regarding last year's PC game sales. Unit sales dropped slightly, but total revenue was slightly higher due to higher average unit prices. Expansion pack sales were up substantially from the previous year. These findings are relatively encouraging for PC owners, as PC gaming is holding up well despite strong competition from console gaming platforms.

CS: CONDITION ZERO DEVELOPMENT REASSIGNED

Counter Strike: Condition Zero, which was in development at Gearbox Software until last August, is now being developed by Ritual Entertainment. The reason for change of production facilities has cited as Gearbox being busy with technology research, and wishing to focus on that.

TAKE-TWO'S 2003 LINE-UP

Take-Two Interactive have revealed their upcoming titles for this year. Max Payne 2, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City (for PC), Serious Sam 2, Hidden and Dangerous 2 and Railroad Tycoon 3 will all be released late this year. A couple of console games are also on their way, including console versions of Mafia.

ALONE IN THE DARK MOVIE

Infogrames have sold film rights to their Alone in the Dark franchise. Shooting will commence in a couple of months.

MGM KILL STARGATE FAN PROJECT

A freeware Stargate: SG1 game was, until recently, under development by a group of fans. Unfortunately, however, this project has met with the same fate as the old Aliens Quake mods that were shut down by Fox; in this case, the rights owners of the Stargate name, MGM, have issued a "cease and desist" order.

ILLUMINATI ENTERTAINMENT FORMED

A new management company has been formed, named Illuminati Entertainment. The company's focus will be on comic book and video game related franchises, and will specialise in multiple media releases of projects, for example, simultaneously on film and interactive formats.

FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

3DO have scored the involvement of four-time Oscar winner Stan Winston (character creator for the likes of Aliens, Terminator 2 and Jurassic Park) in their upcoming horror action game Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The title is scheduled for release late next year on PC, Xbox, PS2 and GameCube, and there is the possibility of a film being made.

PACIFIC WARRIORS II

A new air combat action game for the PC is on its way from InterActive Vision. Titled Pacific Warriors II, it features an instant-action gameplay dynamic, and adds a first person pilot view in addition to the external views of its predecessor. It will allow players to choose between American or Japanese aircraft, and will model both internal elements such as armaments and external objects such as ground troops realistically. Pacific Warriors II will enter final production in August.

STAR WARS GALAXIES RELEASE DATE

Sony Online Entertainment's upcoming Star Wars Galaxies: An Empire Divided will launch on 15 April. This massively multiplayer online role-playing game will allow players to play one of a variety of characters from the Star Wars universe, living in a virtual recreation thereof. Naturally, SOE will continually expand and upgrade their setting.

CODEMASTERS LAUNCH CAREER ADVICE GUIDES

Codemasters have launched a series of career advice guides for people aspiring to a career in video game production. The series focuses particularly on programming, graphics and quality assurance positions, and serves as a reference to guide students' choices of courses in secondary and tertiary educational institutions. These guides can be found at www.codemasters.com/jobs/careers

RUNESWORD 3: WORLDS APART

CrossCut Games are in the early development stages of RuneSword 3: Worlds Apart, a science-fiction themed computer role-playing game. The game will feature the to-be-expected arrays of weapons and armour. In addition, it will offer an in-game editor, allowing on-the-fly editing of modules while playing. The combat system will be a hybrid of real-time, turn-based and phase-based, with the ability to switch between them at will. Worlds Apart is expected to take about 3 or 4 years to develop.

STAR CHAMBER

Nayantara Studios have almost completed development of Star Chamber, their first title, which they describe as both a strategy game and a collectable card game. They are currently accepting applications for gamers with views on play-balance to beta-test the game. If interested, visit www.nayantara.com/starchamber.

MS FS Traffic 2002

Just Flight's FS Traffic 2002 is the latest expansion for Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002, and replaces the default AI aircraft and flights with new AI that enables customising these elements. This should be taking off as you read this.



Warcraft: The Last Guardian is a new Pocket Book novel based on Blizzard's Warcraft franchise. The book has been written by Jeff Grubb, famous for his Forgotten Realms novels. E-book versions are also available at www.blizzard.com/books/lastguardian.shtml.



New Warcraft book

Ultimate Gamers Expo






A convention aimed at gamers has been booked at the Staples Convention Center in Los Angeles from 15 - 17 August this year. Wayne Pepper, one of the founders of this event said, "We realized that fans are not able to access traditional gaming expos and we wanted to respond with an event geared specifically for them. We are allowing fans to sample all the latest technology and games in an arena where they can give feedback directly to publishers." The Expo will feature game and product demonstrations, game design workshops, and tournaments in which gamers can compete in a variety of games/genres. The organizers further promise live entertainment such as music, extreme sports shows, and appearances by celebrities. Admission will cost \$20 for adults (18 and over) and \$10 for minors. For more information, check out the official website www.ugexpo.com

International Release Dates

TITLE	GENRE	DATE
1914 - The Great War	Strategy	01-Feb-2003
Bandits: Phoenix Rising	Action	01-Feb-2003
American Conquest	Strategy	04-Feb-2003
Unreal II: The Awakening	FPS	04-Feb-2003
Battlefield 1942: The Road to Rome	Action	04-Feb-2003
Nascar Racing 2003	Racing	04-Feb-2003
Inquisition	Adventure	11-Feb-2003
Command & Conquer: Generals	Strategy	11-Feb-2003
Ultima Online: Age of Shadows	MMORPG	11-Feb-2003
High Heat Baseball 2004	Sport	11-Feb-2003
Praetorians	Strategy	14-Feb-2003
Cold Zero: The Last Stand	Action	14-Feb-2003
Gothic II	RPG	14-Feb-2003
A Tale in the Desert	MMORPG	15-Feb-2003
New World Order	FPS	18-Feb-2003
TOCA Race Driver	Racing	18-Feb-2003
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	Tactical	18-Feb-2003
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	Adventure	18-Feb-2003
IL-2 Sturmovik: The Forgotten Battles	Simulator	18-Feb-2003
Heroes of Might & Magic IV: Winds of War	Strategy	18-Feb-2003
Project Entropia	MMORPG	21-Feb-2003
Master of Orion III	Strategy	25-Feb-2003
Devastation	FPS	25-Feb-2003
IGI 2: Covert Strike	Tactical	25-Feb-2003
Psychotoxic: Gateway to Hell	Action	25-Feb-2003
Harbinger	RPG	25-Feb-2003
Rainbow Six: Raven Shield	Tactical	25-Feb-2003
Mistmare	RPG	25-Feb-2003
Vietcong	FPS	25-Feb-2003
The Gladiators	Strategy	25-Feb-2003
Galactic Civilizations	Strategy	25-Feb-2003
Post Mortem	Adventure	25-Feb-2003
Warrior Kings: Battles	Strategy	25-Feb-2003

Web Scores

	007 Nightfire	Ghost Recon Island Thunder	MOH: AA Spearhead
How NAG reviews compare to internet site reviews			
NAG /100	42	81	87
www.gamespy.com /100	66	74	70
www.gamespot.com /10	6	8.1	8.1
www.pc.ign.com /10	7	8.4	8.4

PC Charts

INCREDIBLE CONNECTION

1	The Sims Unleashed	Electronic Arts
2	MOH Allied Assault Spearhead	Electronic Arts
3	Harry Potter Chamber of Secrets	Electronic Arts
4	WarCraft III	Vivendi
5	LOTR Fellowship of the Ring	Vivendi
6	Diablo II	Vivendi
7	The Sims Deluxe	Electronic Arts
8	Age of Mythology	Microsoft
9	The Sims	Electronic Arts
10	NFS Hot Pursuit 2	Electronic Arts
11	Battlefield 1942	Electronic Arts
12	Soldier of Fortune II	MegaRom
13	Half Life Platinum	Vivendi
14	FIFA 2003	EA Sports
15	Diablo II Lord of Destruction	Vivendi
16	Age of Empires Collectors	Microsoft
17	The Sims Vacation	Electronic Arts
18	Zoo Tycoon	Microsoft
19	Neverwinter Nights	MegaRom
20	Unreal Tournament 2003	MegaRom

CHARTTRACK UK

1	Sim City 4	EA Games
2	The Sims Unleashed	EA Games
3	The Sims Deluxe	EA Games
4	Norton Antivirus 2003	Norton
5	Age of Mythology	Microsoft
6	MOH Allied Assault Spearhead	EA Games
7	The Sims Vacation	EA Games
8	Norton Antivirus 2003 Firewall	Norton
9	MOH Allied Assault	EA Games
10	Microsoft Office XP Student Ed.	Microsoft
11	WarCraft III	Vivendi
12	The Sims Hot Date	EA Games
13	Norton Internet Security 2003	Norton
14	GTA 3	Rockstar
15	Combat Flight Simulator 3	Microsoft
16	Zoo Tycoon	Microsoft
17	Mafia	GOD Games
18	Soldier of Fortune II	Activision
19	FIFA 2003	EA Sports
20	Easy CD Creator V5.0 Platinum	Roxio



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u loooooong time"
- Lo Ping Beech



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Indy Racing League



Codemasters are bringing the 2002 Indy racing season to the PlayStation and Xbox towards mid-year. The game will feature all the cars and teams from last year's season, as well as commentary and crowds that respond to events on the track.

Chessmaster



Ubi Soft will be bringing Chessmaster to the PlayStation 2. The game will feature the whole spectrum of options and functions, including different chess sets, tournament modes, player statistics and support for Sony Online, allowing players to play others around the world. This port will debut next month.

Rayman 3

Ubi Soft's Rayman 3 is coming along nicely, and early development versions exist for the PS2, Xbox, GameCube and Game Boy Advance.

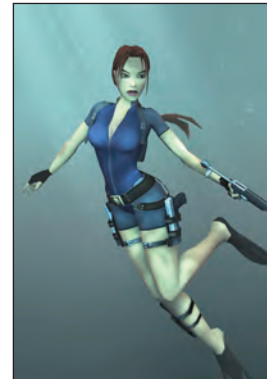


The three console versions provide pretty much the same 3D platform adventure, while the GBA version is a unique 2D adaptation. The GameCube and GBA versions will be connectable, unlocking features in both games.

Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness



Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness is due for release shortly on PS2 and Lara Croft is looking as juicy as ever! She now sports over 5000 polygons as opposed to 500 in previous games.



Running on a brand new engine built from the ground up to fully utilise the power of PlayStation 2 and the latest PC graphics cards, Lara will traverse an intricately detailed world, which takes her from the back streets of Paris to the hellish depths of Prague.

Everblue 2

We recently mentioned Capcom's upcoming aquatic adventure title Everblue 2, which has players assume the role of a salvage diver, acquiring artefacts, interacting with aquatic fauna and unravelling a family mystery. Everblue 2 is already out in North America, and Europe will see its arrival later this year.



Burnout 2



Acclaim will bringing its highly successful arcade racing game to the GameCube and the Xbox later this year. Burnout 2: Point of Impact will have larger tracks, fully tuned-up custom motors, a new points system allowing you to unlock challenges and modes throughout the game as well as a new "Crash" mode which allows drivers to perform insane crashes and incredible pile-ups.

METROID PRIME
COMING 21 MARCH 2003
 NINTENDO GAMECUBE

StarCraft: Ghost



Nihilistic Software are developing Blizzard's upcoming StarCraft: Ghost. The game is being designed for Xbox, PlayStation 2 and GameCube, and is expected late this year.

Fugitive Hunter



Infogrames, under their Atari brand, have announced Fugitive Hunter, currently in development at Black Ops Entertainment and due out next month for the PlayStation 2. Fugitive Hunter is a first-person shooter that features a former Navy Seal as protagonist. The weapons, in addition to their to-be-expected variety, will be customisable to some extent.

Die Hard: Vendetta

New York cop John McClane returns to the PlayStation 2 in a first person action adventure titled Die Hard: Vendetta. Players will be able to incarnate up to 100 different characters, and play in 14 areas and a number of game modes for example "King of the Hill", "Deathmatch". New and limitedly available weapons from the single player game are added to the multiplayer mode, including Boxing Gloves, Minigun and the Paintball gun. The game will also feature a multiplayer option with two to four players able to take part in the action. Expect the game to be released later this year.



Amplitude



Sony's Frequency, a rhythm game for the PS2, will soon have a sequel, titled Amplitude. It will feature a wide selection of tracks and artists, the option for players to create custom soundtracks and networking support, allowing players to play against each other online. This game will be available from March.

WHERE DO YOU THINK THE NAG EDITOR GETS ALL HIS INFO FROM?

(HINT: THE UNOFFICIAL
LARA CROFT FANBOY SITE
DOES NOT REALLY
DO GAMING
NEWS COVERAGE)


prophecy.co.za
gamers 'till we die

UPCOMING GAMECUBE TITLES

A new Pikmin game is on its way, as well as Mario 128, which is based on the original Mario 128 demo, which featured 128 Marios at the same time.

XBOX 2 IN 2005

The Xbox 2 has been officially announced to be in the works for a 2005 launch. At present, the design of the machine is very similar to that of the Xbox, but no doubt the specs will change substantially in the next two years.

TOCA NOT LIVE

TOCA Race Driver for the Xbox, coming next month from Codemasters, will not include Xbox Live support. The game will feature 42 vehicles and 38 circuits, but no online multiplayer.

POKÉMON FOR GC

Mid-year will see the introduction of the Pokémon series to the Nintendo GameCube. Rumour has it that Nintendo intend to make Pokémon Ruby or Pokémon Sapphire connected to the GameCube via a link cable a prerequisite.

YS ON PS2

Nihon Falcom's 14-year old Ys computer role-playing franchise will soon be represented on the PlayStation 2. Ys I & II: Eternal Story will feature new content absent in the PC versions. This series has appeared on an incredible number of platforms, and the PS2 games will be appearing towards mid-year.

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4

Nintendo's 2003 Game Boy Advance line-up will include Super Mario Advance 4. No other details about the game are available as yet.

INITIAL D SPECIAL STAGE ON PS2

Sega are currently at work developing a game for the PS2 based on the Initial D Special Stage comics and animated films. Two main game modes will be on offer, one wherein players race for points that they trade for upgrades to their cars, and a story mode featuring various environments. This title will be released in March.

WINNING ELEVEN 6

Konami has announced the release of World Soccer Winning Eleven 6 International in March this year for the PS2. Players will be able to select from 54 national teams and 40 club teams and take part in gameplay modes for Exhibition, League, Cup, Practice and Master League. It will also feature 14 stadiums as well as an Umbro Training mode which will allow players to improve their skills in Tutorial, Free Practise and Skills Challenge modes.

Web Scores

How NAG reviews compare to internet site reviews

	RATCHET & CLANK	THE GETAWAY	HITMAN 2
NAG /100	93	90	80
www.planetps2.com /100	78	74	90
www.ps2.ign.com /10	9.2	7	8.4
www.gamespot.com /10	9	n/r	8.6

International Release Dates

TITLE	PLATFORM	RELEASE
Falcone: Into the Maelstrom	Xbox	February 1
Evil Twin	PS2	February 4
E.T.: Return to the Green Planet	PS2	February 4
Freaky Flyers	PS2	February 4
Galerians: Ash	PS2	February 4
Colin McRae Rally 3	Xbox	February 4
The Lost	Xbox	February 4
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	PS2	February 4
Guilty Gear X2	PS2	February 4
Daredevil	GBA	February 4
Summoner: A Goddess Reborn	GC	February 4
Jungle Book Rhythm N'Groove	PS2	February 4
Barbarian	GBA Xbox GC	February 10
Primal	PS2	February 10
Vexx	Xbox	February 11
.hack infection part 1	PS2	February 11
EverQuest Online Adventures	PS2	February 11
JoJo's Bizarre Adventure	PS2	February 11
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Xbox	February 11
Vexx	GC PS2	February 11
Capcom vs. SNK 2 EO	Xbox	February 11
Black Stone: Magic & Steel	Xbox	February 11
P.T.O. IV	PS2	February 11
High Heat Major League Baseball 2004	Xbox PS2	February 11
Disaster Report	PS2	February 11
Everblue 2	PS2	February 11
Pride FC	PS2	February 11
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	GBA	February 14
Colin McRae Rally 3	PS2	February 14
Duke Nukem Forever	PS2	February 15
Dakar 2	PS2 Xbox	February 15
Robocop	GBA	February 17
Downforce	GBA	February 17
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	Xbox	February 18
Dark Cloud 2	PS2	February 18
My Street	PS2	February 18
Apex	Xbox	February 18
Yu-Gi-Oh! The Duelists of the Roses	PS2	February 18
Dakar 2	GC	February 18
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	Xbox	February 24
Xenosaga	PS2	February 25
Kung Fu Chaos	Xbox	February 25

SOON THE TIME WILL COME FOR ALL TO FACE THEIR INNER DEMONS.
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Nokia have begun shipping their HS-1C Camera Headset, which is a miniature camera that connects to a Nokia phone via its Pop Port. The unit weighs in at a mere 60g and is roughly the size of a cigarette lighter. It offers an image resolution of 640x480 at two quality levels and 24-bit colour depth. Images can be browsed on the phone and then sent to another phone.

Nokia HS-1C camera

Creative have released a 2.1-channel sound system capable of a total peak power of 80W with a frequency range of 30Hz to 20kHz. It also features a wired remote control, headset jack and a separate volume control for the subwoofer, which includes a phase inverter.



Creative I-Trigue 2.1 3300

Xbox DVD Movie Playback Kit

Microsoft have released a DVD Movie Playback Kit for the Xbox. The kit's design contains no messy cables or unnecessary complication, and includes a full-featured remote control that allows the user to access any function available on a standard DVD player, as well as some that are unique to this kit, among them high magnification zooming and loop setup, whereby a selected section of a movie can be set to repeat.

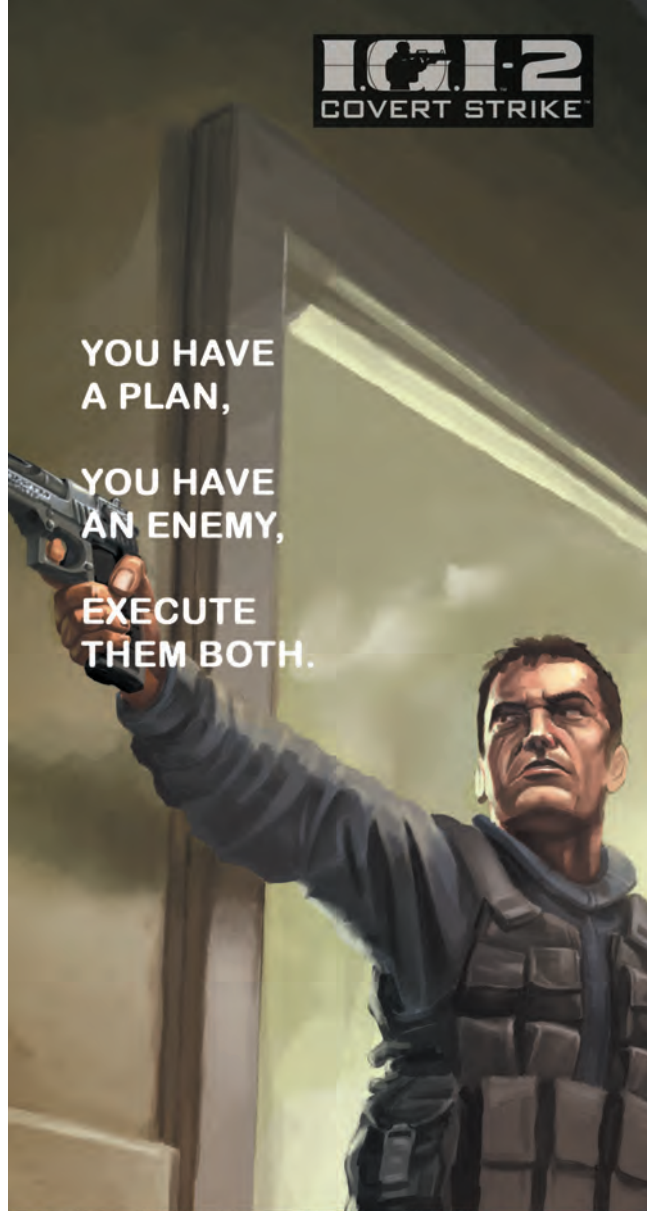


Aio all-in-one LCD PC

Elitegroup have announced new ergonomic-futuristic all-in-one LCD PCs. They feature 15" XGA (1024x786) LCDs, are easy to control, and are optionally supplied with a wireless keyboard and mouse. They also come with a built-in 2.1-ch. Sound system w/sub, Firewire and USB 2.0, S-VIDEO. Included software is a word processor and MS Office-compatible apps, WinDVD, Pccillin, etc.



new age gaming



YOU HAVE
A PLAN,
YOU HAVE
AN ENEMY,
EXECUTE
THEM BOTH.



IGI2 - Covert Strike [Coming Soon!]

Snipe out terrorism as David Jones takes aim once again in this spectacular action and stealth sequel to Project IGI. Shadow David Jones through Russia, across Libya and into China in three linked covert campaigns, as he infiltrates locations including military airbases, harbours and secret government installations. Features completely new AI systems and an outstanding array of realistically modelled weaponry in both single and multi-player modes.

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CH FLIGHT SIM YOKE USB

CH Products have introduced a Flight Sim Yoke, which is a control option for players who want increased realism in their simulated flights. The yoke more accurately represents the control column of heavier aircraft than does a joystick. The device includes all the usual programmability options, and connects to the PC via USB.

WAFER-THIN, FLEXIBLE TVS?

Researchers at Xerox have been investigating semi conducting organic polymers that hint at tantalising applications. The new materials score over silicon-based semiconductors in that they don't require the same stringent production facilities that silicon-based technologies do. Other properties of the materials indicate that fairly soon we may be witnessing the advent of colour screens on a sheet of plastic, and similar applications. Reminiscent of the animated photographs in films like *Minority Report*.

ATTEMPTS TO CRACK XBOX KEY ABANDONED

A group known as The Neo Project recently tried to launch a dispersed-processing program to crack the Xbox's master key. This key would allow users to run virtually any software on an Xbox. This effort to crack the key has been abandoned "for legal reasons", although the chances of actually discerning a 2048-bit long key was negligible to begin with. It is, however, apparently possible to derive the private key held by Microsoft by means of the public key stored in the Xbox itself, but the mathematical relationship between these two keys would have to first be discovered.

MICROSOFT PLAN MINIATURE HOMES FOR THEIR SOFTWARE

Microsoft are planning to market several miniaturised devices that would enable the software giant to expand its concerns into new markets. Their proposed smart watches will receive data via FM radio, although what would be transmitted, besides a synchronisation signal from an atomic clock, is unclear at present. Some manufacturers are interested in integrating GPS technology into such watches. Another item on Microsoft's program is a collaboration with Intel, currently code-named "Media2Go", which is intended to be a very portable media player capable of carrying up to 12 hours of audio. This latter is expected to be released later this year.

New Game Boy Advance

Nintendo plan to release a new version of the Game Boy Advance, named the Game Boy Advance SP. Improvements over the older model include a smaller, lighter design, a flip-top screen with a built-in light and a rechargeable battery that provides up to 10 hours' illuminated playing time or 18 hours without use of the light. It will be available in three finishes - silver, black and metallic blue. All Game Boy Advance software will be compatible. The unit will be released locally on 28 March, and will retail for around R1500.



fxCUBE-Bluetooth keyboard

Flexis, of Korea, specialise in the production of flexible roll-up keyboards. Their latest innovation is a version that is Bluetooth-capable. This keyboard is a mere 2.5mm thick, and is damp- and dust-proof to the point where it can be washed!





Gainward has announced the new Ti 4300 Ultra graphics card on NVIDIA GeForce 4 Ti 4200-8X, featuring U2BIOS alternative BIOS solution. The card based on 8-layer PCB, features 64Mb of 3.3ns BGA DDR SDRAM. The most unusual innovation is the alternative BIOS boot button (on the photo; near VGA socket). It should retail for about \$157.

Gainward Ti 4300 Ultra

PowerBook G4 with 17" display

Apple's latest notebook, available from this month, features some high-end characteristics. It carries a 17" 1440x900 LCD screen, 1GHz PowerPC G4 processor, 512MB DDR RAM, a 60 GB hard drive, a 64MB GeForce4 440 Go graphics adapter and SuperDrive DVD-R. Connectivity options include FireWire 800, Gigabit Ethernet, DVI, S-Video, USB 1.1, Bluetooth, 802.11g AirPort Extreme wireless networking and a V.92 modem. All this, no doubt, will not be coming cheap!



Cg Compiler Version 1.0

NVIDIA have released their first official version of the Cg Compiler. Cg is a new programming language and environment that allow developers to code graphics without having to directly access a graphics card's assembly language. Cg Compiler version 1.0 can generate OpenGL 1.4+ and DirectX 8.0 code. This compiler can be downloaded from developer.nvidia.com.

Cg Toolkit

PLAYSTATION 3 SPECS START BEING DEFINED

Sony, IBM and Toshiba are working together on development of the "Cell", a chip capable of handling intricate graphics and sound over the Internet, and which is expected to go into production as early as next year. Speculative estimates suggest that perhaps four such Cell processors might be employed in the next PlayStation, which would yield a speed of around one teraflops! Cell will be considerably faster than anything currently available, and will therefore require suitably high-speed links in order not to be bottlenecked. To this end, Rambus are on-board with their Yellowstone chip-to-memory interface and Redwood chip-to-chip interface.

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Tom Clancy's SPLINTER CELL™

Sam I am...



Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell **[Coming Soon!]**

Infiltrate terrorists' positions, acquire critical intelligence by any means necessary, execute with extreme prejudice, and exit without a trace! You are Sam Fisher, a highly trained secret operative of the NSA's secret arm: Third Echelon. The world balance is in your hands, as cyber terrorism and international tensions are about to explode into WWII.

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TOSHIBA AND SONY UNVEIL THINNER CHIPS

Sony and Toshiba have announced a new technology that will allow the production of 65 nanometre chips. The chips, which will go into production in a year's time, will be about a quarter the size of current ones, and will deliver higher performance. The new chips will be ideal for mobile applications.

ONE IDEA, TWO PATENT APPLICATIONS

Two companies have recently filed patent applications for very similar sound devices. Color Kinetics and Apple Computer both have applications for patents for electronic device cases that feature LED technology to allow them to be coloured at the owner's whim. Apparently, the two companies were collaborating on the design in 2001, but Apple pulled out of the agreement.

TOP CHIP SUPPLIERS IN 2002

Last year's top chip supplier was Intel, not surprisingly. In second place was Samsung, with a staggering sales growth, almost doubling their business. Toshiba came in 5th, Motorola 8th, IBM 12th and AMD at a surprisingly low 16th, having suffered a huge drop in sales.

90-NM PROCESSES FROM INTEL AND IBM

Although using different techniques, both Intel and IBM recently presented their 90-nm process technologies. Intel will implement their version in their upcoming Pentium-4 "Prescott" Processors, due late this year or early next year. IBM are looking at moving on to the 65-nm process as soon as possible.

NINTENDO WORKING ON NEXT CONSOLE?

Rumour has it that Nintendo have approached NEC in connection with developing a chip to power their next console system. Nintendo have not confirmed this report.

SIS LICENSE HYPER-THREADING

Silicon Integrated Systems have acquired licensing for Intel's hyper-threading technology, and five of their upcoming products support this standard.

INTEL'S MOBILE TECH

Intel have named their new family of mobile technology "Centrino". This label includes the next processor, Banias, its related chip sets and the 802.11 wireless networking technology. All these elements will start appearing in the first half of this year.



Monster Game have released an audio system for the Xbox and PlayStation 2 gaming consoles. The XG SSGS-500 features 5.1-channel surround sound, a wireless remote control and a comprehensive set of mounting accessories.

XG SSGS-500 5.1 sound system

Klipsch's sound solutions



Klipsch have introduced some high quality audio systems. The Klipsch ProMedia GMX D-5.1 and the Klipsch 5.1 Digital Dream Multimedia System are both full-featured systems with great sound reproduction, but with correspondingly high price tags. The latter is designed specifically with the PC user in mind, while the former will accept input from any source, including PCs, home entertainment systems and gaming consoles.



InterAct ShadowBlade Arcade Stick



InterAct's ShadowBlade Arcade Stick is currently one of the finest choices of arcade joystick for the PlayStation 2, barring the huge and expensive X-Arcade controller. The ShadowBlade boasts a full list of features, including programmability that includes the ability to save combinations of up to 14 steps; these settings are maintained even while the unit is off, at which time its cable can be packed away in a special compartment at the bottom of the unit.

Soltek's GeForce4 Ti 4200-8X

Soltek have released the GeForce4 Ti 4200 8X range of graphics cards. The two models (SL-Ti428X-D7DTV and SL-Ti428X-D6T) have very similar specifications, with the main difference being the 128 MB RAM and the bundled software of the D7DTV, as opposed to the 64 MB D6T version.



Xbox Live Starter Kit



The Microsoft Xbox Live Starter Kit allows users to subscribe to the Xbox Live online gaming network. Included in the kit are a year's subscription and the Xbox Communicator, which facilitates voice communication in games. Users must, of course, have high-speed Internet connectivity to make use of the Live service. Since the launch of the service on 15 November last year, over 250000 units have been sold, doubling Microsoft's expected initial sales.

Microsoft Wireless Desktop Kit

The Wireless Desktop Kit from Microsoft comes with a Wireless Base Station, a four-switch router with an integrated wireless access point, and a Wireless USB Adapter. It also has a default 128-bit Wired Equivalent Privacy (WEP), plus a built-in hardware firewall, support for Network Address Translation (NAT) and Universal Plug and Play. Expect to pay around \$199 for the perfect answer to a small gaming LAN.



TWO SCREENS, NO KEYBOARD

Estari are developing a novel laptop computer. Named the 2-VU, its internal specifications are fairly similar to those of conventional laptops. The distinguishing feature is the fact that the unit has no keyboard. Instead, the notebook opens up to reveal two large touch-sensitive displays, which can be used individually or together as one large screen, in portrait or landscape orientation. A software application will be available that turns one screen into a virtual keyboard, should that be desired, and the 2-VU will be able to connect to a regular keyboard if needs be. Currently, the problem with the design is that, given the dual 13 and 15 inch displays, the 2-VU is prohibitively expensive, but the developers will be introducing a 10-inch version after the initial launch of the flagship models.



new age gaming

HOLIDAY IN VIETNAM

As we arrived the scenery was breathtaking, just take a look at this wonderful photo

Accommodation was nice too

Great hikes!

and the helicopter trip was amazing!

Soon as we landed...

All hell broke loose!

It was too much for some!

but me...

I was well up for it!!!

VIETCONG

Vietcong [Coming Soon!]

Experience the danger, fear, and unpredictability of lethal jungle warfare in Vietcong, a first-person action shooter set during the infamous conflict in Southeast Asia.

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enter the matrix

developer: shiny entertainment
 publisher: infogrames
 distributor: megarom [011] 805 7303
 release date: 15 may 2003
 genre: action adventure
 internet: www.shiny.com | www.infogrames.com

One of the most anticipated games for 2003 is only five months away, yet not that much has been forthcoming from Infogrames... that is, until now. With Dave Perry coming to the UK shortly to meet the European press - exposure of this title will be reaching saturation point shortly. Derek dela Fuente, our correspondent, spoke with Dave Perry recently, firing a series of questions at him.

David Perry is President of Shiny Entertainment, the development company responsible for Enter The Matrix [coming on PS2, Xbox, GameCube and PC, release



▲ The man of the moment... David Perry

date: May 15th 2003]. Everyone has heard of the film 'The Matrix' so you can easily imagine what 'Enter the Matrix' is all about. The first interesting aspect pertaining to the game is the fact that the concept and storyline have both been created by the Wachowski brothers (writers and directors of The Matrix) and will be a mix of gaming ideas - action, fighting, amazing stunts, martial arts, shooting, driving and so on. The game will also include new footage from the original actors and will expand The Matrix universe with new and compelling ideas. If you consider that experts from both sides of the industry (film and video gaming) are putting their collective minds together on this project, the resulting game should be something special. For one thing, rumour has it that the PC version could be up to 5 CDs in length.

How has the storyline for the game been created? Is it the ethos of the first film or references to segments, plus incorporated ideas from the sequel? What kind of cohesion will be familiar to Matrix fans?

David Perry: The storyline of Enter The Matrix is the vision of Larry and Andy Wachowski - they wrote the script and are the game's creative directors. This game is fully a part of the entire Matrix experience - unless you see the films and then play the game, you won't be getting the entire Matrix story.

The story itself is unique in that it tells a story that's parallel to The Matrix Reloaded (the film), with the two stories intersecting at key moments. In the game, you'll leave one scene and walk right into a scene in the film, and then out again to continue your story.

How intertwined is the game and the film and its sequel in terms of creation and events?

The Matrix, the film, intrigued, transfixed and enthralled. Will the game offer such values?

David Perry: Right from the get-go, the Wachowskis envisioned this game as being part of the entire story, and they've borne that out by taking a very hands-on role. The play dynamic and story mix is very authentic, and the game will carry the Wachowski seal of approval. The real question is - if you're a true Matrix fan, can you really avoid playing this game and seeing what the Wachowski brothers have done?

With the game targeted for most formats, does this mean a generic mix of styles to suit each machine? In what areas do you feel, in terms of hardware and techniques, have you been most innovative?

David Perry: We're using the full range of Shiny's cross-platform technologies, so each version will have the same story and same play dynamic. The game engine on each format pushes the machine right to the limit of

its capabilities. You're getting the best possible experience no matter how you play it. Our biggest challenge, I think, has been creating all the different types of experiences

“... with an hour's FMV footage shot especially for the game.”

required to bring the Wachowski vision to life - game engines for exploration, fighting, shooting, driving and flying the hovercraft; as well as displaying the original film footage and the in-game cinematic sequences - even hacking.

Who do you assume and what are your main and sub tasks? What are your main attributes and do they improve with experience and time?

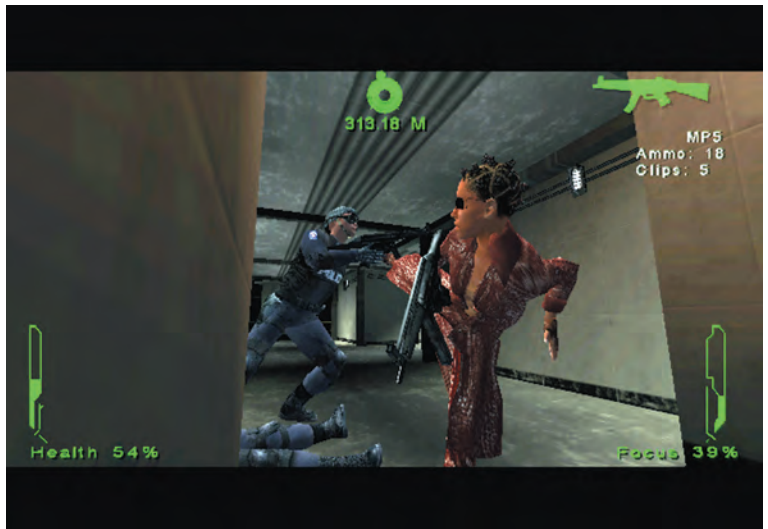
David Perry: At the start of the game, you'll choose to play as either Niobe or Ghost. Niobe is the Captain of the Logos, the fastest ship in the rebel fleet. Ghost is the weapons guru - the Wachowskis described him as a Zen-Buddhist-Apache-assassin. Both characters are soldiers, just like Trinity and Morpheus. Zion, the home of the rebels, faces a new threat, and Niobe and Ghost play a key role in the story that ensues across the game and the films.

Through the playing of the game itself, and the game's hacking system, you'll discover many secrets that will allow your character to improve their skills or unlock different play dynamic modes.

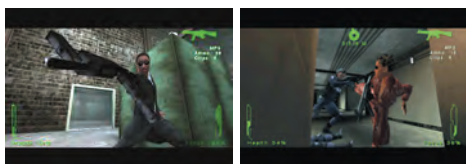
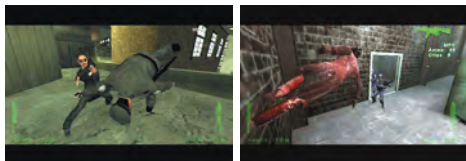
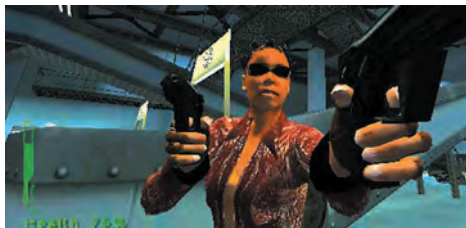
An action/adventure title is a broad genre. Can you pinpoint the main essence of the game and is it more than action with possibly some strategic or tactical play?

David Perry: Enter The Matrix is all about action. This isn't a stealth game where you creep from room to room and try not to be discovered. That's just not the Matrix way. Just like the lobby scene in the film, you'll jump right into the action. We want the player firing thousands of bullets and wading through people that try to stop them.

How many detection (hits) points will the average character have and is movement and subtlety an important part of the game? What kind of physical



▲ This is Niobe, one of the characters you'll be playing

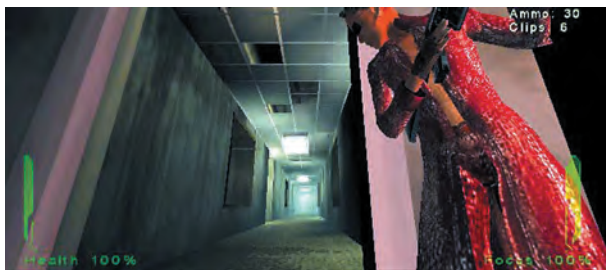


movements can the player control?

David Perry: All of the movement and animation in the game started life as motion-captured footage, using the actual movie actors and stunt teams. All of the fight moves were choreographed by Master Yuen Wo-Ping, the films' choreographer, so the game features action in the true Matrix style. You control characters through fantastic, rule-bending fights, where characters are cart wheeling around the levels, running on walls, dodging bullets and jumping off walls to deliver flying kicks.

What kind of interaction have you had with the actors incorporated in the game? Have you motion captured them, recorded hours of dialogue, etc?

David Perry: The game itself is the result of a completely new and unique type of collaboration between the gaming industry and Hollywood. Through the Wachowskis, we've enjoyed an unprecedented level of access to everyone working on the film - besides the actors; we've even worked with the set designers, costume directors, martial arts choreographers, special



effects teams, etc. to really bring the true Matrix experience to games. The actors themselves spent months and months performing motion capture, facial capture, and recording all sorts of dialogue, for every possible situation a game character would find themselves in. We had to hand the actors huge scripts to get everything we needed for the game, and they took it on brilliantly. I think they are looking forward to playing the game as themselves.

What onscreen help and game icons/menus will there be to assist the player?

David Perry: These films are just perfect for games, because The Matrix already has the concept of an 'Operator' - a character that sits in the Real World and monitors everything that's going on. So, the Operator is the perfect vehicle for talking to the player - sending him objectives, strategies and information. In the game, Sparks is the characters' Operator, and you'll be in constant touch with him throughout the game.

A quote of 'bending the rules in combat' has been mentioned.

Can you elaborate on this and will your opponent you're facing be able to do the same? How intuitively will the wide range of moves and actions be in combat?

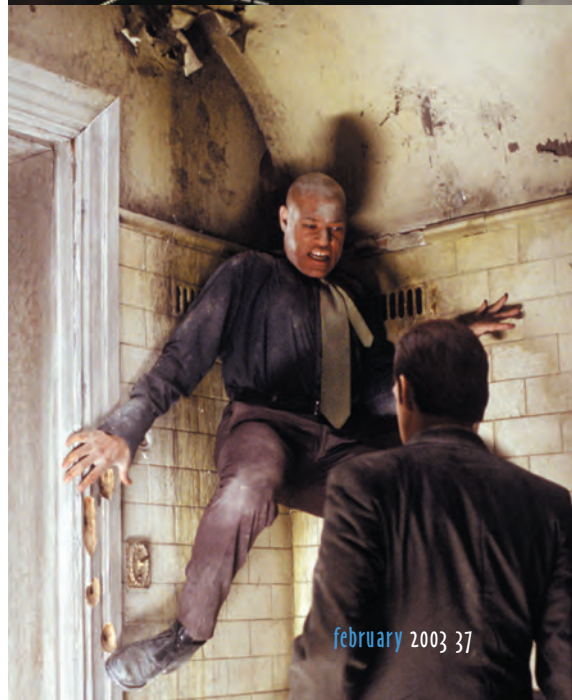
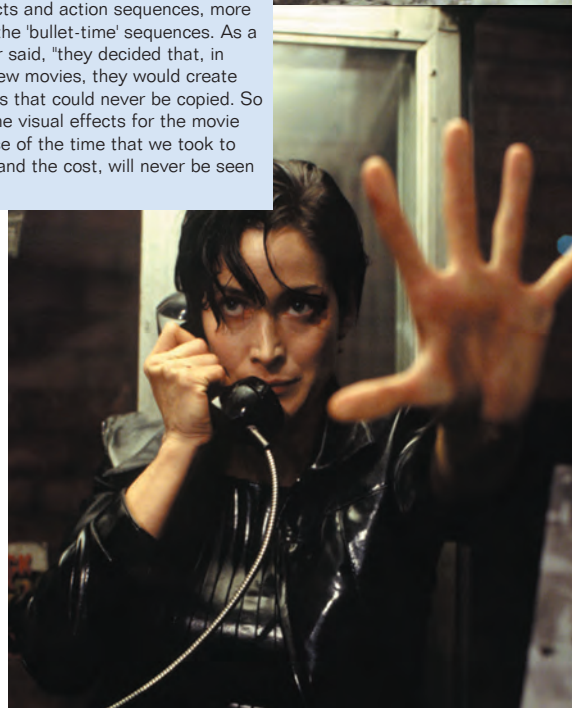
David Perry: Just like in the first film, the characters can 'free their minds', and bend the rules of the system they're in, The Matrix. So, they can jump impossible distances, run up walls, take on dozens of bad guys and so on. In the game, we call this Focus Mode, and you'll have a pool of Focus ability that regenerates over time. You spend Focus in order to unleash these special moves, like weapon strips, combo moves, running and cart wheeling to dodge bullets, all the while firing a hail of gunshots of your own.

Well, folks as you can see this game offers a lot... but then again all Shiny titles have always been eagerly anticipated. Some of the in-game fighting sequences will stretch not only the imagination of the gamer but also look stunning thanks to martial arts expertise being available to Shiny to ensure every move is pixel perfect. We are in for a real treat, even fighting upside down. It was good to note that PC owners will not get a generic console based game. With all the major film stars incorporated in the game this can be seen as the first true interactive/game/movie experience - with an hour's FMV footage shot especially for the game. The locations and settings are diverse and detailed, as is the cast. Enter The Matrix has a lot to live up to...



movies

At a recent press conference, producer Joel Silver threw down the gauntlet to action movie makers by declaring that The Matrix sequels would, "end the way movies have been made up to now, because they can go no further". Apparently the Wachowski brothers, once again writing and directing the new movies, became angry that so many adverts and films ripped off The Matrix's special effects and action sequences, more specifically the 'bullet-time' sequences. As a result, Silver said, "they decided that, in these two new movies, they would create visual effects that could never be copied. So we have done visual effects for the movie that, because of the time that we took to make them and the cost, will never be seen again".



rise of nations

developer: big huge games
publisher: microsoft
distributor: comztek 108001600 557
release date: q2 2003
genre: real time strategy
internet: www.riseofnations.com

Lately, it has been my opinion that Microsoft's "Age" series has been falling increasingly behind their competition in the real-time strategy arena. Overall, the pace of the games have not been improving enough to entice new RTS players, and even among hardcore players Age's popularity has been on the wane. A new game is coming from Microsoft, and despite the fact that it builds on Age of Empires principles, a major streamlining of the

fundamental dynamics has been taking place. Perhaps in order to reflect this overhaul, the game doesn't even bear an "Age" title. But will it make the grade?

My first look at Microsoft's upcoming offering was brief, and left me unimpressed - "Age of Empires all over again", I thought to myself. Yes, the Age series has been a high-profile franchise in real-time strategy, with a large and devoted cadre of followers. But the overall game dynamic has been showing signs of age, and the evolution of modern RTS has been

leaving Microsoft's representative behind. So when I saw the age-old interface with the diamond-shaped mini-map in the middle of the bottom-mounted side-bar, my heart sank. But the next day I sat down to begin the evaluation of this early beta, and gradually started coming to the realisation that this game, although very much based on the Age of Empires game style, has departed from

the formula in intriguing and refreshing ways. The following days saw my opinion being reinforced as new details kept coming to my attention.

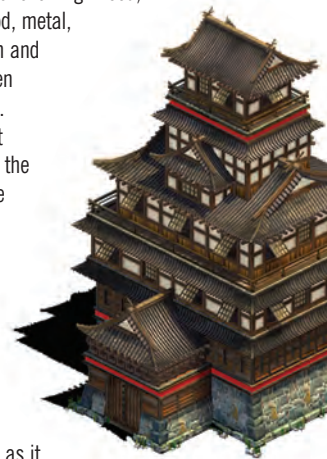
Let's begin by taking a look at the overall game dynamic. As before, citizens, which are created at the town centre (called the City) take care of construction and resource gathering. However, a new approach has been taken with regards to resource accumulation - instead of citizens walking to and from the deposit and drop-off

sites, they now work at appropriate industries, which add to the relevant resource's income. These industries (logging camps, mines, farms and so forth) can employ variable staff complements, depending on the richness

of the nearby deposit; the income generated is also proportional to the abundance of the resource. Certain special resources can also be found from time to time on the map, and these are harvested by merchants created at the marketplace. An interesting new aspect is that once a player's nation reaches a certain level of sophistication (the Industrial Age, to be precise), oil becomes available as a new resource to be collected and used. The resources themselves are the following - food, wood, metal, wealth and

knowledge, then eventually also oil, of course. Knowledge is a resource that cannot be traded for (say, at the marketplace) but can only be generated. It is used for researching technologies.

A new concept that has been introduced is the idea of controlled territory. Each city under a player's control claims territory around itself, and exerts "ownership pressure", as it were. Castles do the same. Each city can have one of each of certain infrastructural buildings, for example, marketplace and university. This necessitates the building of additional cities, not only in order to expand national borders, but also in order to increase production of various resources, particularly knowledge.



▼ Tactical advantage #342161 - Using attack choppers against feudal asian settlements

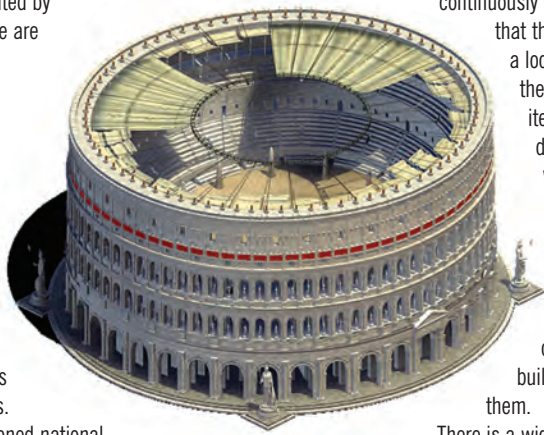


▼ Old and new - no forgetting your civilisations roots here...



The number of cities a player may build is limited by technology. There are four main technologies: military, civic, economic and scientific. Each level of progression in these disciplines allows the research of various upgrades and technologies.

The abovementioned national territory concept is one of the most interesting innovations in this game. Most games will be decided by the portion of the map controlled - whoever controls 70% or more of the total map area for a certain amount of time, wins. Troops in enemy territory suffer



attrition damage, small amounts of damage that are continuously inflicted; this reflects the fact that they are in unfriendly lands, with a local populace that is opposed to their agenda. Various researchable items can increase the attrition damage. On the other hand, walls have not been included in Rise of Nations, presumably because a player's territory is quite a defence in its own right. Players can only build upon their own territory, and can extend their borders by building cities and forts close to them.

There is a wide variety of selectable victory conditions, i.e. ways to win the game. In addition to territory held, one can build wonders and hold them for a certain amount of time to win, or one can obliterate one's enemies. Several other game modes are available, as well as a variety of map types and numerous optional settings. Overall, the effect of the various improvements has been to speed up

the game somewhat. Look, you can still expect to play a game over an hour long, but it's also possible for a match to be resolved in 15 minutes. The play dynamic has also been streamlined and is less complicated to get to grips with, even though the technologies themselves, for example, have become even more involved than before. This looks like it's going to be a good one!



the end is nigh!

Eventually, in Rise of Nations, once the Modern Age is reached, players gain access to nuclear technology. This, inevitably, results in atomic weapons becoming an option. However, take care! For if too many nukes are detonated on the map then, irrespective of who used them, everybody loses! Armageddon! This is a rather nice touch that makes the use of nuclear arsenals in the game more "realistic" in its implications. I can see games ending in Mutually Assured Destruction scenarios!



▼ Seems like fighting is the in-thing...



impossible creatures

developer: relic entertainment
publisher: microsoft
distributor: comztek [0800] 600 557
release date: Early 2003
genre: RTS
internet: www.microsoft.com

Impossible Creatures first made an appearance in 2000 at E3 in L.A. - back then it was called Sigma [a name I still like] and all the parts on display looked amazing, especially the combiner [more on this later]. It's been a long two years of development since then and now I finally have my greasy paws on the press beta for a little show and tell. For those of you who have more bandwidth than sense and who have already played the commercial 'limited demo', don't read any further - you're just going to be wasting

time on stuff you already know. As for the rest of you welcome to the weird world of Impossible Creatures.

Well, seeing that it's called Impossible Creatures the first logical question must be, what's so impossible about them and why should you care? Explaining the impossible part has a lot to do with the fact that in this dimension and on this planet you simply cannot breed a giraffe with a chameleon and expect the offspring to retain all the best qualities of both parents; what you're

likely to get is a bizarre creature that bears an uncanny resemblance to your mother-in-law [sorry, couldn't resist]. Thankfully Sigma, sorry, Impossible Creatures, is a game that allows you to do just that, combine different creatures and eventually create an army of, umm... let's see... these unique Impossible Creatures. The idea then is to take on other diverse creature armies created by your multiplayer opponents - human or computer depending on what you selected. I'm sure this all sounds exciting on paper, but anyone with a little experience in sorting developer hype from fact might have told you, this idea probably sucks in practice - exercise some caution before parting with your cash. The good news from someone with a little experience in these matters is that the concept does actually work in practice. Relic, the developers, have taken enough time with the creature combiner to make



▲ This is the magical creature combiner. Be warned: if you spend too much time fiddling with this aspect of the game you'll never look at your pets the same way again

▼ Just another day at the office...



▲ Just normal henchmen in action

▼ Zoom in close to keep an eye on them



▼ Coal is an important resource



by Moral Minority



select two different animals and then proceed to swap heads, bodies, legs and tails until you have something that looks a little better than the pavement special you fed one day and now won't go away. Creating impressive looking units is easy but you'll need to watch the attributes of your new beast or you'll find to your horror that your new monster unit can easily destroy an entire base with one swipe but unfortunately takes nine days to get beyond the perimeter of your own base... by water only. Its fun playing God but you soon realise that your skills are sorely



an enjoyable experience with enough technical and statistical information to keep even the most critical RTS gamer satisfied. It's going to be tough settling on an army that works in every situation in this game considering the sheer number of options on offer here. From what I've seen so far Relic are going to start something we'll probably see more of in the future because unlike a few other similar concepts we've seen in previous RTS games they've done it very well here.

What do you get if you combine...?

Starting with the interesting stuff, the creature combining process is as simple as baking a cake, you

lacking when it comes to combining looks with effectiveness. This fiddling with body parts to develop the ultimate creature is plenty of fun and considering the number of possibilities you're certainly going to be spending more time than is healthy tooling around with this aspect of the game. Some things to remember when building the ultimate army is that some creatures are of a higher technology level and using too many of these high level combinations leaves your game open to early rushes. The idea is to select a well balanced range of creatures that compliment each other and can be used throughout the game - having too many Goliaths will spoil the mix. To assist you at the end of the army creation process you

can have the game analyse your efforts and tell you what you need to improve on or change completely. The thoughtful developers have also included a few standard armies so if you're the impatient type or lack any sense of fun you can also go with one of the predefined armies.

As it stands now the game is what you could call a simplified RTS with little attention paid to aspects such as unit experience, formations and the like. The game uses two resources, namely coal which is mined by henchmen [Peons] and electricity which is 'farmed' by building certain structures. As you gather more resources and expand your base you'll be able to build defensive structures and advanced buildings that will allow you to improve the abilities of your henchmen and creatures. You're able to do everything from improving a creature's range of sight to how fast your henchmen work. This 'upgrading' of creatures is about as advanced as the game gets when it comes to advanced strategy, the rest is up to your intelligent creature creation and battlefield prowess.

Technically the game features a lovely game engine that whips the landscape around at a frightening pace and allows for an impressive level of zoom, it'll remind many players of the magnificent Black & White engine. The code in this copy of the game performed well despite the high level of interaction on the screen, impressive for a RTS title. From an audio point of view the game is competent, with a number of amusing messages from your henchmen to lighten the action. From this early test Impossible Creatures is looking good and should prove successful thanks to excellent production values and a fun game concept. If Impossible Creatures gains acceptance in the multiplayer community it'll go far or as usual if not it'll end up as an elaborate idea that was fun for a while but lacked any serious staying power.



"The idea is to select a well balanced range of creatures that compliment each other and can be used throughout the game - having too many Goliaths will spoil the mix."

▲ The game also features some decent special effects

▲ Your henchmen, hard at work

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pillage

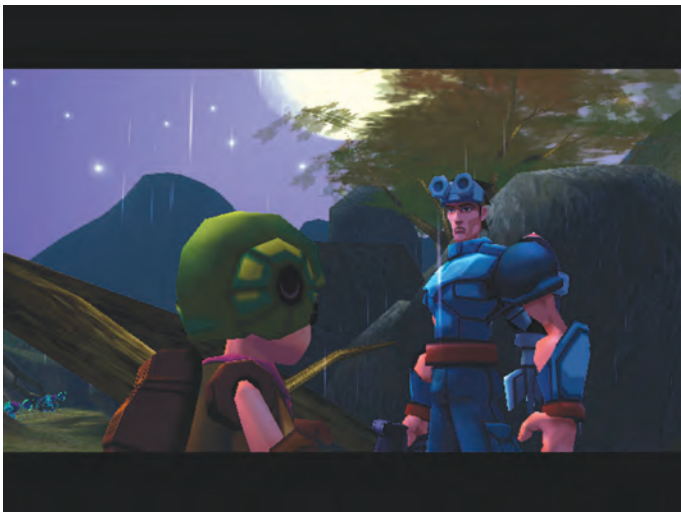
developer: zed two
publisher: tba
distributor: tba
release date: 2003
genre: action adventure
internet: www.zedtwo.com



▲ A face not even a mother could love... yet kinda cute, in a runty sort of way



▲ If Ugly back there isn't a good guy, the dapper dude in the front had best look behind him...



Although the UK development team working on Pillage is not large, it is comprised of a very experienced and talented group. At Zed Two they don't go in for extreme specialisation. They don't have a hardcore driving/racing team, nor a collection that only makes puzzle games - but have a wide range of skills, and try to provide new challenges as a studio, and to every individual on the team, with each new project. Consequently, most games Zed Two produce, in whatever genre, tend to add a new twist or an idea to a particular theme. They are all avid gamers who love a wide variety of game styles, so with this they bring ideas and techniques from other genres to every game produced and Pillage is no exception!

The team includes members who have worked on all Zed Two's previous products, including Wetrix and AquaAqua, both hits worldwide. Speaking and explaining their philosophy

and game to Derek dela Fuente was Ste Pickford, Managing Director. Pillage is an original, action strategy game where a gang of brave warriors must fight an evil band of creatures and avenge the destruction of their tribe. Like all games Pillage has a background story. "In the dark years ahead, when our enemies are but warped reflections of ourselves, and where our allies may be more than they seem, a boy, his sister, and a rag-tag assembly of unlikely warriors are the planet's last hope. But, as they soon discover, immortality comes at a price. Twisting perceptions, time, and emotions, Pillage is a tale of love, loss, redemption, hope... and green, ugly mothers." The story is a massive part of Pillage, so Zed Two don't want to spoil the experience for any players by giving away the plot before release. The objective is to ultimately beat the enemies over the course of a long journey to their home, with a string of tactical battles to be fought along the way. The story plays out over 19 levels, each of which highlight a key battle in the story of the heroes' quest. "Pillage was inspired by the desire to make a modern RPG game that wasn't geared to the sensibilities of Japanese audiences. Most RPGs use number-based combat systems which have barely changed from their origins 15 years or more ago. We felt that the abstraction of such numbers was no longer really necessary, and the artificial 'pop up' battle scenes were out of date. We wanted to make an RPG where the player was a little more involved directly in the action and the set up of each fight." "Also, we felt the long, convoluted, over complicated, sappy, melodramatic storylines contained in most Japanese RPGs were not suited to western audiences. I often found myself cringing at the embarrassing dialogue and corny plot twists presented to me when

"Pillage is an RPG game that is a great one player experience, but with an awesome two player battle mode included - that is an almost unique feature in itself!"



▲ He is either missing his team mates, or considering his dinner menu



▲ As if they weren't bad enough when they were small - big ugly things...



▲ Looks sort of like South African roads during the holiday season...



▲ Apparently making things go boom is a pretty big theme in this title...

playing RPGs that I otherwise enjoyed. We wanted to create a story that would appeal to us, or gamers like us, something more like a good quality Hollywood movie. The unique qualities of the game are its fresh approach to the RPG genre, taking ideas and techniques from other genres, using the latest game play technology, and not being lumbered with a 15 year old, out of date battle system that we are afraid to change."

Each character has different weapons, different targeting systems, different weapon upgrade paths, etc. "Broadly speaking, the enemies in the game have similar abilities to the humans, so you are more or less fighting an equivalent force. This becomes an important feature in the two player game, where the player can take on the role of the enemies and build a party of ugly creatures to battle their human loving friend." One key feature of the game is the enemy AI. The AI works by giving the enemies no 'magical' information about where the humans are on a level. They have to work it out by themselves by spotting humans, and communicating these positions to other enemies that they can see or hear. This means that it's possible to trick and fool the enemies, and often be surprised by their actions.

Pillage has a completely deformable landscape - each explosion from a weapon firing will cause some

landscape damage, changing the landscape shape somewhat. The enemy AI responds to this, adjusting their movement and tactics accordingly. This means that no two games of Pillage - even on the same level - are ever the same.

The locations on offer are very important, and help tell the story of the game. The story involves a long journey over a significant period of time, with changes in scenery and season, and many locations have important strategic value in certain battles. Further into the game smarter enemies are encountered, with more sophisticated communication equipment. However, the players' team earns upgrades to their weapons, which add more strategic possibilities to each battle. Being on all formats, which include GameCube, Xbox, PS2 and PC, you would assume that technological innovations are a prerequisite!

"I would say that Zed Two is not focused on technology per se, but focused on game play. Sometimes innovative game play requires innovative technology, and we feel we are very strong in technology research when it relates to game play, but not technology for technology's sake. The play dynamic is hard to measure, and hard to

demonstrate to the audience before they have actually bought the game, so perhaps that is why a lot of games seem to be more focused around technical or graphical ideas - it's easier to sell a product that way."

"Although viewed as a console game in terms of design and concept, it could work well on the PC and is a colourful and endearing game."



developer: rebelmind
 publisher: cdv
 distributor: tba
 release date: early 2003
 genre: action adventure
 internet: www.gromgame.com

RebelMind, a German based developer, has been around many years building up a good reputation and the core personnel have worked on many top games which include Mega Blast, Dark Moon, Gorky 17 and other titles. Darek Rusin, CEO of RebelMind, spoke with Derek dela Fuente about Grom, which has been in development for over 2 years and is targeted for early 2003.

The main inspiration for Grom comes from the mind of the designer, Krzysztof Krawczyk, who likes to surround himself with various strange books and other suspicious materials. The more he reads, the more incredible theories he creates. Grom is a child of such a process, having all started with the discovery of the 'real truth' about journeys to Tibet by the Nazis and how that connects to their secret weapon projects. Other inspiration comes from Tibet itself, from its history, legends and religion.

Grom is best billed as an action/RPG. The play dynamic is divided between battles and storyline, although the first will probably take most of your time. The RPG side to the game is mostly built around character development and weapon usage.

Grom has a non-linear story line, the working of which

was explained as follows "Grom works similar to Japanese RPG titles: there's a more-or-less linear storyline which is revealed to the player as he progresses through the world. However, you're not forced to hurry following it. You can take your time wandering around, fighting random battles and gathering experience or you can get back to the locations you have already visited and look for some quests to earn additional money or skills. The player can also seek travelling merchants and trade with them, and do many other things."

The background story to the main character needs to be understood. Grom is an officer of the Polish special task units, who, in September 1939, performed special missions behind German and Soviet lines. All his family died during the siege of Warsaw and he cannot forgive himself that he wasn't with them and was therefore unable to help them. Soon after, he was caught by the Soviets and sent to a labour camp No. 566 in Tajikistan, but managed to escape from the camp and, after a long journey, gets to Tibet. Here, inhabitants of a border village find him snow-bound and manage to save his life. Grom decides to stay here and try to forget about his past, forming a little group of smugglers, delivering whisky, cigarettes, chocolate, and similar items to China. Since losing everything dear to him, Grom now thinks only about material profits and starts to care only about himself and nothing else. But during the game our hero will start to change...

In the game Grom is the leader of our team. The storyline follows his quest, his actions and decisions. However, he's not the only one. In the game you will control up to 5 characters at once, some of them will be more important to the plot, some less - but everyone is

unique and has his or her very own story to tell. Fights - real-time fights - allowing players to control supporting characters, along with forceful tactics and planning was expanded on by Darek.

"The best way to understand combat in Grom is to imagine a crossover between Diablo and, for example, Warcraft. At some points in the game we have 5 characters in our team so this rules out one-on-one battles. At any time you can get direct control over any character of the team. If you select him (or her) he will do whatever you order, just like in Diablo. However, if you deselect him and switch to another character (or a group of them), he becomes controlled by an AI module and performs actions on his own. Of course, we can let him know whether he should be aggressive, shoot only for his own protection or even retreat as soon as he sees an enemy."

Also implemented is a pause mode, similar to other



▲ These guys are so desperate for chicks that more than their palms got hairy!



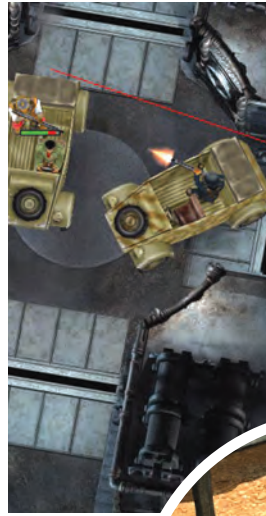
▲ Top floor... ladies underwear, perfume, cosmetics and utter mayhem...



▲ When lighting looks like this, trouble has to be around the corner...



▲ The latest in Tibetan security technology - rickety towers with loudspeakers



▼ Hey, I thought we were supposed to fight Nazis! Where did these bats come from?



games like Baldur's Gate or Freedom Force. When you stop the game, you can review your characters' statistics, change their weapons, set their destination points or let them know who to attack. It's still to be decided whether this feature makes it to the final game, but if so, it will surely be a blessing for those players that prefer a slower pace for battles. If you use this mode a lot, then combat gains more tactics and finesse, and relies less on brute force. With such an expansive story and a diverse set of locations, the team seems to be on the right track. "Yes, there's a lot of diversity to Grom's locations. Of course, I'm not going to list them here and spoil the game for you, but let me present just a few. You will start the game in a 'civilized' part of the region, a British military camp on the borderline. Later you will visit an Indian town and then set off to the land of Tibet, where you will travel to an ancient monastery, go to a sacred oracle, discover a magnificent hermitage and run into Nazi outposts located in the middle of a deserted plain. You will explore a secret military base carved inside a huge mountain, a legendary flying fortress and even non-existent, imaginary places. And there's so much more!"

Some may find the connection between the Third Reich and the mystical land of Tibet a little questionable. "Well, I'm not an expert on the subject, but our designer says that the Nazis' expeditions to Tibet are a

documented fact. He is basing the story on a few books with facts and speculations regarding secret weapons of the Third Reich and I'm not talking here about simply more powerful bombs, but about things like anti-gravitational vehicles (UFOs)."

Why would Nazis look for these things in Tibet? Well, it seems that sacred, ancient Hindu texts did a pretty good job describing how to build an anti-gravitational machine. The king Arjuna himself and his Lost City, where a few of these are supposed to be hidden, are described in Mahabharata, but there's a whole separate manuscript about UFO-like ships, called Vyaanika-Shaashtra (or "Science of Aeronautics"). It describes everything, from how to build and fuel these machines to what to eat when you start flying them. It's pretty amazing stuff, and it feels like you step into a whole new world once you start reading it."

Onscreen dialogue and information will be executed in the usual way common to many action/RPG titles, with voice-overs in all storyline critical dialogues, along with cut scenes, whilst leaving the less important scenes in text only. All on-screen texts, as well as voices, will be fully localized, if regional publishers so desire.

One of the most interesting aspects of the game, is the technology. Backgrounds are made of high-resolution pictures pre-rendered using 3D tools. The advantage of this is the ability to show an incredible amount of detail and depth, which you can't yet reproduce in real-time. On top of that there are real-time 3D animated objects, like characters. These are more or less like in any other high quality title on the market: hi-resolution modelled (800-1200 polygons) and textured, skeletal animated and lighted.

All in all, the team believes that the technology they've chosen gives them the best of both worlds: very detailed backgrounds with smoothly animated characters. Grom comes over as a very unique title, one that should do well with strategy gamers.

korea: forgotten conflict

developer: plastic reality technologies
publisher: cenega
distributor: tba
release date: middle 2003
genre: rts
internet: www.koreaforgottenconflict.com

Cenega, the Czech based publisher who have already one of the most eagerly awaited titles for 2003 in Shade: Wrath of Angels, is building up their 2003 release schedule with a 3D RTS/Action title based around the Korean War. Coming from Eastern block developers Plastic Reality Technologies, this will be available on both PC and Xbox.

Taking on the role of the Commander of a group of five military specialists (yourself, a medic, a demolition expert, a sniper and a scout) you will face fifteen missions full of action and tactical conflict spread over five campaigns. Derek dela Fuente spoke to two members of the development team, Michael Lekovski, game designer, and lead programmer, Petr Smilek, to get a better insight into Korea: Forgotten Conflict, to be released in the second half of 2003.



Q: What has the team done before either collectively or individually?
 Previously we developed a budget logic puzzle game, LocoCommotion, for Take 2 Interactive about two years ago. Sold as Toytrains, it was a success, especially in

Germany. The player had to solve more than 50 puzzles and create new levels.

Q: Why develop a game based on the Korean War? Did this conflict give you more scope than WW2 or other wars? How have you researched the game?
 From the very beginning we wanted to bring gamers a top rated game in an attractive and unusual setting. We soon realised that we could use the Korean conflict, which happened only five years after WW2, a perfect choice for us. In our endeavours to get it looking and playing authentically, we collected a large amount of material and studied this war and today we can make the statement that the year long Korean War was a bloody conflict which turned into another conflict called the 'Cold War' - a kind of war between democracy and totality. To design a game around such a historical event is very rewarding.

Q: The game perspective seems somewhat unusual. Explain why you chose this 'fish eye' view as opposed to the traditional views found in strategy games. Do you not think that there is a chance of alienating players with this perspective?
 We do not think so. For example, in Commandos the player has only one option to set a camera view. In

Commandos 2 the player may rotate the camera 90 degrees, in interiors rotation is 360 degrees. Why? To provide the player real joy and better feeling in the game. Our technology allows us much more. In Korea: Forgotten Conflict you may look behind the corner of the building without being disorientated by rotation of the scene in 90 degree. The player may zoom without decrease of graphic quality, etc. The player who would like to completely use all advantages of 3D technology should play Korea: Forgotten Conflict. If the player is more conservative, he may set the camera's characteristics, which are according to his needs and imagination.

Q: What do you believe this game offers the strategy player above what they are used to (apart from the setting)? What makes Korea stand out in a crowded market?
 Forgotten Conflict provides an unusual setting, one that has so far been dismissed, which will surprise the player with its diversity. New and different weapons (unavailable in WW2), the first use of jet aircraft in conflict, along with operation of secret services and Special Forces are all features. The surroundings offer the player a variety of locales. For example, the war-torn city of Seoul, the airfield of An Tung, which





the engine

In Korea: Forgotten Conflict, the new Typhoon engine (the XReality Engine was heavily re-designed into the new Typhoon engine, which is better suited for large outdoor environments) is used, with the following features:

- very detailed 3D graphics, engine pushes up to 500,000 triangles per frame
- highly detailed dynamic shadows
- dynamic lighting
- flexible weighted animation blending system
- multitexturing (lightmaps, detailmaps, etc.)
- special vegetation rendering system (grass, bushes,...)
- state of the art particle systems
- extensive LOD support
- advanced physics system
- support of vertex shaders for character animation and vegetation (trees, grass) animation
- support of pixel shaders for advanced terrain texture synthesis
- full 3D motion planning (navigation meshes) for excellent AI path planning

currently serves as a base for modern Mig15, or the debarkation of allied forces by Inchon. Korea: Forgotten Conflict brings new technology, has fantastic graphics and great playability. What more could you wish for?

Q: Which character do you use at the start? Do you have a choice of starting characters? What are your main objectives and sub objectives?

For each mission lead officers will choose members of the commando team. Each character may also be chosen by the player himself. The player, through the briefings, will realise that, for instance, in the next mission he will need an expert for demolition tasks. So he has a possibility to choose his best character.

Each mission has some primary and secondary tasks, which means that during the action the tasks may change.

The player himself, according to his tactics, ability and cleverness may choose a variety of solutions. Of course, the final mission rating may be even better by achieving of the bonus tasks.

Q: What is the make-up of your squad? How are they replaced if killed? Do they have individual attributes? If so, what are they?

Members of the Commando are replaceable. It depends on the type of mission. Sometimes it may happen that if a particular member of the Commando dies, the game is over. In this feature the game is similar to Commandos. The question of inclusion of RPG features has not been solved yet and we are presently thinking

of ways to do it. But now it's clear that the player will face unique characters, not anonymous soldiers.

Q: How realistic is it? Do you use any 'developer license' in regards to game dynamic? E.g. does a character die by a single shot, and so on?

The soldier may be killed by one shot, if the soldier uses an adequate gun. The detailed surrounding is a great help for the player. The member of the Commando may hide in a bush and stay undiscovered by enemies standing very close to him. When it's raining, aiming will be reduced due to poor visibility and other factors.

Q: Are there any differences between the PC and Xbox versions? Are you developing the console version?

The differences will be applicable to each machine. We

will strive to get the best out of both the Xbox and PC

and will not view any of the formats as a port. We will develop both formats.

Q: What weapons and equipment will be available? Are they real world weapons? How are these gained?

All weapons are real, according to time and use. In Korea: Forgotten Conflict the player will encounter at least 50 different types of guns and vehicles, including aircraft and helicopters.

The player will be able to use a variety of equipment, including pistols, guns, machine-guns, flame thrower, anti-tank guns, etc.

Q: How diverse are the missions? How many are there and what environments do they take place over?

As mentioned above, the player will fight in a variety of surroundings such as streets of Seoul, join the debarkation by Inchon or capture a modern model of enemy aircraft from a Chinese airfield. The Korean environments are very varied. The game consists of 15 missions divided into 5 campaigns, which follow key events of the Korean War. Total time of play will be around 50 hours. Variability of solutions and achievement of bonus tasks will provide a longer time of play.



lionheart

Lionheart movie



developer: reflexive entertainment
 publisher: interplay | virgin interactive
 distributor: tba
 release date: early 2003
 genre: rpg adventure
 internet: <http://lionheart.blackisle.com>



▲ Just like other Black Isle titles, you get to hit green things with sharp metal items



▲ Quick! Quick! Blast it with your "mysterious green stinky acid mist" spell...

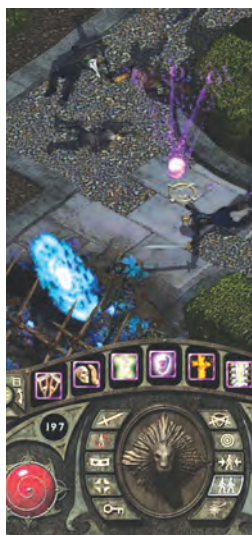
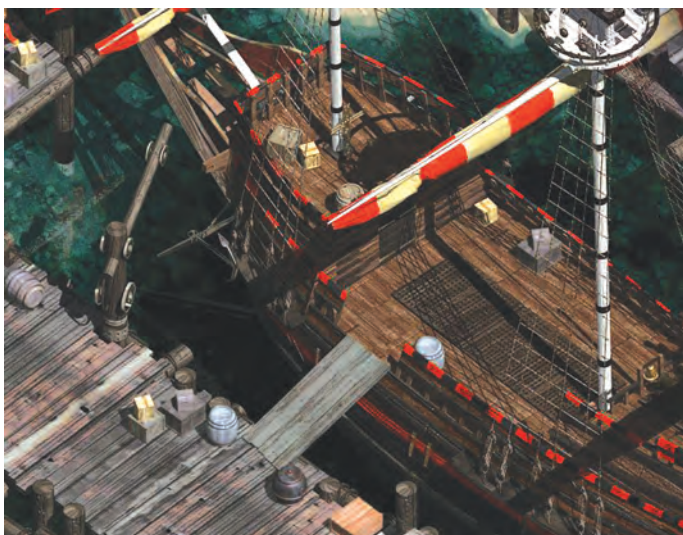
One eagerly anticipated title for 2003 is **Lionheart**, published by North America Studios Black Isle and developed by Reflexive Entertainment. While Reflexive is responsible for the vast majority of the play dynamic and design decisions, Black Isle oversees development and contributes wherever possible to ensure that the two companies can bring you the best gaming experience. **Derek dela Fuente** gleaned information from **Chris Parker**, Lionheart's producer.

"Lionheart, a 2D computer role playing game, is being developed with the same sort of design ideals that all Black Isle role-playing games have been made with. Reflexive has added a lot of fresh ideas into that mix and is powering Lionheart with their Velocity engine, which delivers crisp detailed visuals and the flexibility necessary to develop a complicated CRPG. I think the back-story is intriguing on a lot of different levels because it's not only been written as a cool RPG story, but it's also taken advantage of actual history to create a world that stands apart from 'typical' fantasy role-

playing. We have a ton of side-quests, puzzles, dialogue driven interactions, interesting characters, varied terrains, fantastic spells, intense combat, and all the other goodies that makes a great role-playing game. When you get right down to it, I think it's just going to be a fun game that has a lot of depth and great mechanics that'll keep you into it and then bring you back for more."
 "The character that the player creates (or selects, there will be several pre-made characters) can be one of four races and has customisable base Attributes, Skills, Perks, and Traits. All of these will be used to determine how successful your character is at any given task, as well as how the world reacts to your character. And of course as you venture through the game you'll gain experience and levels which you can use to increase the abilities of your character."
 The background idea to the game is an interesting one; one that sees Earth being devastated in the 12th century by an event called the Disjunction, which unleashed magic and spirit kind across the planet. Many of the primary cities across the globe were razed

by never-before-seen hordes of monsters. The geography of the land was altered in many places, such as England, which was broken into many smaller islands. Many of the animals of Earth were infused with spirit kind just as people were, producing both fantastic and horrible beasts.
 Some 400 years later, the introduction of magic and all that goes with it has altered history as we know it. Events leading up to the game are in many ways eerily similar to real world history but are in others, strikingly different. In most places, governments and cities have grown up to replace those that were destroyed. The changing face of history has had a big effect not only on humans but also on events. For example, the Inquisition has taken hold in Europe, but their purpose is to ferret out those who possess magical skills. Similarly, the Spanish Armada is preparing to set sail against England, not for historical reasons, but instead because England is more open to the use of magic in general.

The mixing of changing fact based historical events with the addition of fantasy offers a rich delight of ideas, as was explained. "From the outset, the broadest concept for the game was that it would be a fantasy role-playing game which included magic. We decided to use the SPECIAL system, the rules system used in Fallout 1 and 2, and adapt it to real time and magic use. The introduction of an altered Earth actually came after these prior decisions were made. In fact, the altered Earth idea really came on the back of 'SPECIAL' (explained shortly) and its roots in Fallout, which is also an altered Earth game."
 "We picked the time period for the game, a time for when the Disjunction occurred, and then we started de-constructing and re-constructing history to suit our needs. With our altered Earth and the introduction of magic, we don't have to worry about mashing any real history and have free reign to introduce plot points and stories that we think are best for the fun-factor of the game."
 Chris continued his initial thoughts. "The character the player assumes is thrust into this world as one who is



imbued with a magical spirit, and is thus possessed of magical ability. Because of this, the character begins the game in the hands of the Inquisition, about to be put on trial for the possession of magical talents. After escaping from this predicament the character is able to join with one of many power groups to both find protection from their persecutors and to begin their adventure through the main story."

Lionheart uses the SPECIAL system, which offers some similarities to the Fallout games, although from a RPG perspective, Lionheart is somewhat lighter and more action oriented. In most cases you can sneak through or talk your way out of a bad situation and there are skills for this, but there are places where you will have to fight in Lionheart (it's hard to reason with a zombie).

Another difference is that the game is primarily skewed towards a more combat driven playing style, which introduces more strategic opportunities and obstacles in the game. Finally, since it is real-time, combat is a bit more hectic than the previous SPECIAL games.

New features or changes to the system primarily come from the change from turn-based (like Fallout 1 and 2) to real-time and from the introduction of magic. "We have introduced a number of new setting related Perks and Traits in addition to the skills needed for magic use. Some old features, like targeting body parts and attacking quickly have been modified to make them easily changed model options for the player. We have also added Racial Traits, which work much like Traits you must select, for the non-pureblood races in the

game."

Lionheart will come with a four-player co-operative mode and getting this right was a big task. The game keeps track of a number of things in the background and modifies itself on the fly. So when you are in a level with just one character, the monsters that you fight against will be different than if there were multiple characters or a single character of much higher level. In a similar fashion, the items you find in the game are for the most part generated at run-time to both make them different and interesting and to ensure that they are properly balanced. There currently aren't any plans to include any other modes besides cooperative multiplayer. Fans of the genre can look forward to playing this game early in 2003.

the background

Black Isle Studios is the role-playing division of Interplay Entertainment. Black Isle was formed in 1996 but didn't start using the name Black Isle Studios until 1998 with the release of Fallout 2. Black Isle Studios has developed/published Fallout 1 and 2, the Baldur's Gate series, the Icewind Dale series, and Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance.

Reflexive Entertainment is a game developer based in Lake Forest, California, about 20 minutes from where Black Isle Studios is located in Irvine. They have brought several games to the market including Zax and Star Trek: Away Team. To find out more about Reflexive Entertainment, visit their website at www.reflexive.net.

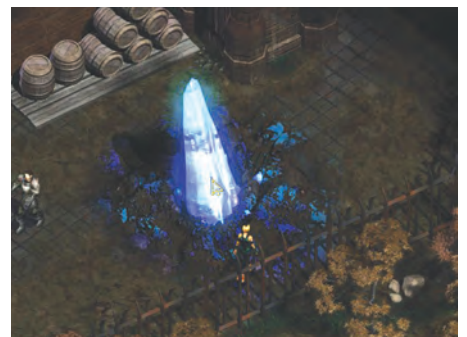
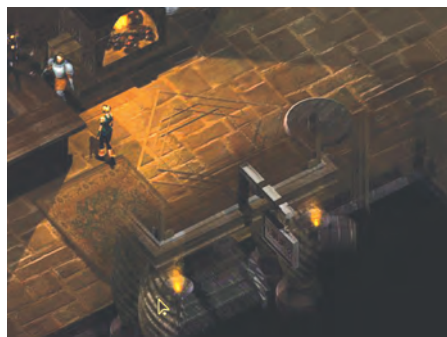
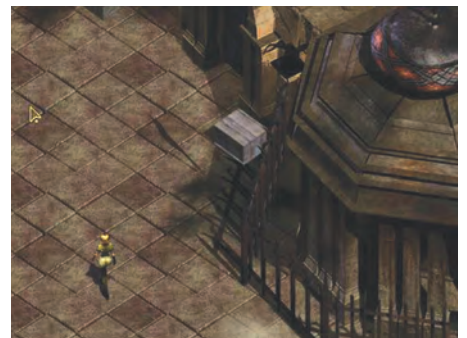
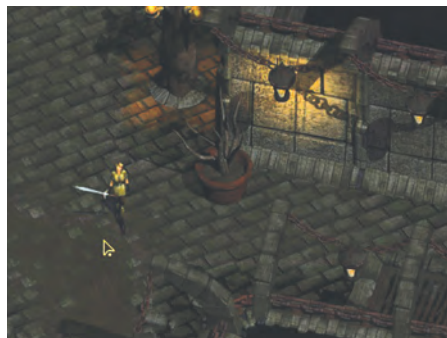
Lionheart's temporary name was originally Fallout Fantasy. It was called Fallout Fantasy because the name implied it used the SPECIAL system in a medieval setting. This was a working title name and was never intended to be released to the public.

the cast

The human race has produced three reasonably distinct sub-races as well as maintaining a pure bloodline, and the player can pick from these four character types. Pureblood humans come from a bloodline that is untainted by spirit kind. Demokin spring from a bloodline tainted with the essence of a demonic or impish spirit. Feralkin come from a bloodline influenced by a beast spirit. Those whose bloodline has been tainted by an elemental spirit are known as Sylvants. Each of the different human races has different starting attributes and tend to excel at different types of skills within the game.

the special system

SPECIAL is the name of the character development system that first appeared in Fallout and later Fallout 2. It is a classless system which uses statistics, skills, perks, and traits to define the strengths and weaknesses of a character. SPECIAL is an acronym for Strength, Perception, Endurance, Charisma, Intelligence, Agility, and Luck. Coincidentally, these are the primary statistics for characters.



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award ceremony



NAG Editors Choice

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NAG Award of Excellence

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NAG Award of Merit

Games which score over 85% and below 90% are given this award. A game scoring here is good in every way but lacks that something extra that separates it from classic status.

Ratchet & Clank [PS2]

"The sound effects are also very well done, with explosions sounding... um, explosive, and the unmistakable clank (if you'll excuse the awful pun) of metal on metal is faithfully recreated.."

Adam Liebman

93%



Kingdom Hearts [PS2]

"...although Square and Disney appear to be a rather odd couple, their collaboration has produced an absolutely riveting title"

Adam Liebman

91%



The Getaway [PS2]

"You need to know when to duck, when to dive and when to come out with guns blazing."

Walt Pretorius

90%

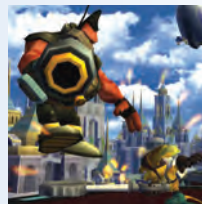
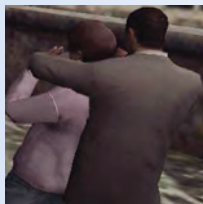


MOHAA: Spearhead [PC]

"You begin your campaign parachuting out of a plane, anti-aircraft fire screaming past you, avoiding enemy planes and watching one of your squad members plummet to his death as his parachute refuses to open."

Anton Lines

87%



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SPECIFICATION

Intel P 2.0 GHz 512KB
Gigabyte P4 845PE ATX Motherboard
Leadtek MYVIVO TI 4600
ViewSonic P90f 19" Monitor
TwinMOS 1 GHz RAM DDR 266
Maxtor 60 GB ATA133 7200 HDD
AOpen CD ROM
AOpen P4 Black Tower Chassis
Logitech Cordless Desktop



GIGABYTE TECHNOLOGY

ViewSonic

AOpen



Leadtek



TwinMOS Technologies

Maxtor



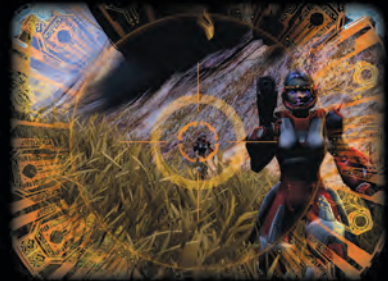


FEBRUARY 2003

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Unreal[®] II

THE AWAKENING



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james bond 007: nightfire

developer: gearbox software
 publisher: electronic arts
 distributor: ea africa [011] 516-8300
 price: R 299.00
 genre: first person shooter
 internet: www.ea.co.za

It's weird to think that only a short 60 odd years ago, if you were a secret agent caught in another country, you were interrogated for days and then executed, elaborately (sharks with lasers) if your name was James Bond. It's a pity then that the same fate doesn't await game developers who produce shoddy work by licensing something as good and wholesome as James Bond and then thrash out a substandard tacky effort. Please note that this specifically applies to the PC version of this title - the console version includes a number of additional ideas such as car chases and the like to improve the experience.

Part of the marketing and promotional hype behind this game is the fact that the story is original, that is, not hacked off one of the James Bond movies and pasted into the game. Naturally, for fans, this sounded like an exciting opportunity to experience even more James Bond, particularly seeing that this game was released to coincide with the big screen James Bond extravaganza, Die Another Day. In addition to this NightFire is the first James Bond game to be available on the PC in a long while. The problem is that this

game is such a let down it'll probably be the last time we see anything serious from agent 007 on the PC again.

I wonder what all those evil villains would say if they knew all they had to do to get rid of James Bond and destroy his credibility was hire a mediocre development team... Goodbye Mr. Bond has never rung more true.

The giant magnifying lens in the sky

The game is a plot driven first person shooter with a dash of adventure that tells the tale of Rafael Drake, who is planning world domination using his 'legitimate' international corporation to cover it all up. Oh, yes, and it's up to you, James Bond, to stop him. Not that original - wasn't this the same idea behind Die Another Day? It's the tried and tested, how many times have we heard that one, nudge, wink, and yawn, and in this one it's about missiles instead of a giant magnifying glass. The plot may be unique to the game but not to the rest of reality. It seems there is a great template out there that dictates what belongs in all James Bond movies, and this set of rules seems to have permeated the whole game. The story is so bland and predictable it isn't even worth wasting space on,

needless to say you must save the day by making your way across the nine different missions or locations the game has on offer. Each of these missions is broken up into playable chunks that all see Bond dashing about in this location or that. The different scenarios are typical of a Bond movie with exotic island getaways, the odd penthouse and surprisingly the International Space Station - the creators haven't left anything out of this one, and you'll even get to play with a fancy laser gun. The different missions are diverse enough to keep you entertained but the overall impression you're left with is that the level designers, like the artists, saw too many Bond movies and instead of trying to be innovative, ended up playing it safe with tried and tested locations, situations and too many corridors and doors. The game also suffers from a lack of attention to detail; the environments are bland and while all the right items are in the right places you never get the impression of realism as everything is too sharp and shiny, reminding you again and again that you're just playing a game. Besides the usual FPS styled play dynamic, one interesting change of pace has to do with all the gadgets available in the game; they range from your standard issue laser watch to a Zippo lighter camera



▼ I can't take it anymore... my AI routines suck so bad I'm ending it here before I give henchmen a bad name everywhere. Yell!





▲ As dumb as a fence post...

thingamabob. The inclusion of gadgets adds an interesting dimension to the game as specific tasks involve using specific gadgets. This is fun for a while but loses its lustre after yet another mission involving your electronic lock pick and cellular phone grapple. A more open-ended system would have worked better instead of bolting the player on such a predetermined pathway through everything the game has to offer. The other change of pace is the, now standard, stealth mission - during the game the situation occurs where you must sneak around darting or killing bad guys using your silenced pistol. Make a noise and the alarms go off bringing more bad guys or simply terminating the mission. On one hand the developers have tried to vary the experience here and there but on the other there just isn't enough of it to make a real difference. This is secret agent stuff and certainly not the Rambo styled play dynamic the game keeps slipping back to. To add another shameful spoonful to the slush pile, the game is also, unfortunately, plagued by a number of bugs - they range from minor infringements, graphical glitches and the like to what can only be described as a complete disregard for standards where we see previously dead bodies either sinking into the scenery or simply floating slowly through the air until they disappear through the ceiling. While we're here... although it cannot technically be described as a bug, the artificial intelligence in the game makes a mockery of the term. Enemies will often stand around calmly while a fellow henchman is killed right next to them - there are also numerous instances where enemies will stand still, almost as if they cannot see you, while you plug them in the coconut.

Annoyingly there are good bits in the game, described below, but they are randomly inconsistent; often while

Developers that frighten us...

Gearbox are the developers responsible for this less than satisfactory offering, incidentally they're the same people who put Counter-Strike together. As a side note they've stopped working on Condition Zero, that task has been handed over to Ritual Entertainment (Star Trek: Elite Force II, Sin, Heavy Metal F.A.K.K.2 and the excellent Quake Mission Pack No. 1 Scourge of Armagon). But back to the news - the worrying thing is that Gearbox have been commissioned to do the PC version of Halo too, let's hope they take the whipping they've received for this travesty in the spirit it was intended and fix up their production values before they really mess up the potentially excellent game Halo might eventually become. You have to wonder then... does this mean Electronic Arts will be the official publisher for Halo on the PC? That'll be good news by the way.



▲ An agile Bond makes his move



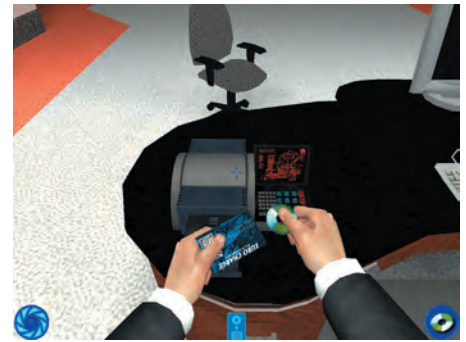
you're playing you'll experience a solid piece of action or atmosphere only to be washed away again by a flood of negatives that always seem to be just waiting around the corner. For example, while scaling a building you're required to avoid enemy detection; this would have been a fun bit of gaming until you figure out that it really doesn't matter what you do, the result is the same, so instead of engaging in a bit of stealthy 'Agent 007 crossed with Spiderman' you can simply rush up the face of the building without a care in the world. This sort of problem makes it hard to see the good stuff because there's so much reminding you all the time of how poor the overall effort is.

It's not all gloomy however, there are a few moments here and there that just ooze quality and James Bond atmosphere... for example the opening movie is well put together and would look at home on the big screen; some of the missions are quite varied, such as taking out a helicopter while suspended in a cable car and having to scale the glassy surface of a skyscraper. The story although unimaginative is well told via some sharp video sequences and decent voice acting. The Pierce Brosnan likeness is uncannily accurate as well as the voice acting of M and Q. More on the positive, the game is well paced and hardly ever forces the player to backtrack over territory already completed.

End game

This is going to be a short paragraph because this game has what can only be called a passing attempt at a multiplayer effort. Although the development teams are radically different, it's hard to believe that the same publisher responsible for Battlefield 1942 can find a multiplayer game this poor acceptable enough to place their logo on.

Besides only offering three dull multiplayer modes [free for all, team match and CTF] the levels are embarrassingly poor and follow no form or function conducive to an engaging multiplayer experience, this is especially evident with the CTF maps. Next to poor level design the AI Bots [referred to in the manual as 'highly intelligent'] are horribly stupid and considering



▲ One of your cool gadgets



you definitely aren't going to find anyone desperate enough to have a match against you, you're essentially left with a game that has no multiplayer option. This makes the mediocre single player game just that much more lacking.

In a world where No One Lives Forever 2 exists, this spy action game is a laughable effort that does a serious injury to the James Bond license and just shows once again that porting a console game over to the PC is not a smart idea, especially if you're going to do a tacky job of it and take out all the fun parts of the original console version. A further insult to injury is the appalling artificial intelligence. Now if you add up the fact that the levels are very linear by nature you have a game that can be completed, on the hardest setting, in only a few sittings and with a dull multiplayer game that nobody will ever take seriously you're not left with a pretty picture.

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REVIEWED BY
Michael "RedTide" James

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 500 MHz	Pentium III 1.0 GHz
128 MB RAM	256 MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	16 x CD ROM
32 MB D3D Video Accelerator	64 MB D3D Video Accelerator
675 MB HDD	1.4 GB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Decent video sequences	Lack of imagination
Cool gadgets	Dull
The bond girls are curvy	Too short and easy

AT A GLANCE

This game has appeared on all the other platforms [consoles] and while on a console it works magic with exciting car chase missions and other play dynamic variations - on the PC you're stuck with a vanilla flavoured first person that's as dull as it is lame. No imagination or effort has been spent on this one, if you want a good spy action game go and buy No One Lives Forever 2.

score 42

harry potter and the chamber of secrets

developer: Amaze Entertainment - Know Wonder
publisher: electronic arts
distributor: ea africa [011] 516-8300
price: R 199.00
genre: adventure
internet: www.ea.co.za

If you could bottle and sell the secret recipe that makes Harry Potter such an epic phenomenon you'd have yourself an even bigger epic phenomenon - love him or hate him, you simply cannot escape Harry Potter. Many 'purists' have called the Harry Potter series of books a blatant rip off of everything to do with fantasy that has ever appeared in the past; whatever these books may or may not be they certainly have managed to capture the imagination of millions of people all over the world. Now we have the second Harry Potter game from the second Harry Potter movie from the second Harry Potter book. The good news is that it's much better than the first one.

It's difficult to say why this new effort is better than the first one, perhaps it's the fact that you can now actually trade with all those hundreds of Every Flavour Beans you end up collecting while playing, perhaps it's the challenging level design or the addition of the wizard duelling club or perhaps, more likely, the developers learnt from their past mistakes and have taken the necessary steps to right all the nasty wrongs that plagued the original game.

Telling tales

If you've just read the book or watched the



movie the game wobbles noticeably in the beginning as it tries to cram half an hour of movie into ten minutes of game footage; soon enough all hopes that this will be a faithful recreation of the movie and book are dashed as great leaps through the plot are made for the sake of getting to the juicy bits of the game. Naturally no game will ever be exactly faithful to any movie or book and instead of trying to recreate the Hollywood experience the game developers have decided to stretch their creative license to the extreme. This isn't a bad thing however as the game is fun to play and should be enjoyed by the younger players it's aimed at.

From a technical point of view the game looks half decent this time around - it's certainly no Unreal Tournament 2003 and instead uses the older and heavily modified original Unreal engine to present everything you see on the screen.

Almost all the textures align correctly with



▼ This is a good example of how well the level design complements the play dynamic



▲ You mother may have told you this before, but we'll say it again... this is what happens if you leave potatoes in the pantry too long past their sell-by date

hardly any clipping or glitches ruining the experience. However pretty to look at, this engine is starting to date; that said, on the positive side at least it will run on almost any machine you install it on. As good as it looks, one weak area is the sound. In the game Harry will say incantations while he waves his wand around performing various spells - these sampled mutterings are repeated with no variation at all and they're repeated often, over and over, making the experience tiresome. The actual music itself is great but is often lost thanks to the repetitive nature of the spell vocalisation. The voice acting is average and reminds one little of the real characters and world created in the movie.

Abracadabra

The play dynamic of the game is based on the simple platform bean collecting blueprint that seems to go down so well with the intended audience. The game is played from the third person perspective and largely involves completing mildly complicated levels using newly acquired spells or combinations of previously learnt spells and the new spell. While you play you must collect wizard cards, challenge stars and every flavour of bean while negotiating the levels and avoiding enemy creatures. Many of these wizard cards are hidden away in the game and the idea is to explore carefully and thoroughly - many of these secrets are well disguised making the level replay value higher than most other games of this nature. There are incentives for finding absolutely everything, for example, collecting all the silver wizard cards unlocks an entire secret section of the game and collecting enough beans allows players to upgrade their broomstick for Quidditch and even purchase armour by trading with other game characters. Besides buying new toys you can also buy the necessary ingredients to make health potions.

There are some control improvements to the game including a much simplified spell casting system and an easier ride on the broomstick while playing

Quidditch, it seems people were having trouble playing the first game and spending too much effort fighting with spells and broomsticks instead of enjoying the game. Again, similar to the first game, the imagined game of Quidditch is well handled and while it'll never be any FIFA or Tiger Woods [as far as production goes] it certainly puts the player in the driving seat and makes it easier to actually win games. This is a smart move considering younger players might become irritated and loose interest in the game if they're constantly beaten. Other worthwhile additions to the game include a map, more spells and more creatures. Next to the boss creatures there is a wide variety of other nastiness lurking about the levels including everything from Fire Crabs to spiders and spike plants. Another big addition to the game is the Wizard Duelling Club, here you face off against another wizard and by using a selection of three spells and some quick finger work on the keyboard you must defeat your opposition, you can even bet beans on the outcome of the match. The duelling club could use a little more polish as it's rather limited and repetitive becoming dull after only a few rounds, perhaps we'll see an improved duelling club in the inevitable third Harry Potter game.

Although the game is a little cut-scene heavy and tends to put up the loading screen too often the game action following the video sequences is well handled and manages to keep up with the overall pace of the story - the problem with this is that actual playing sequences are too short - essentially if you take away all the video sequences you're not really left with much of a game at all, the developers have made up for this a little by creating a truly mysterious and engrossing game world with numerous secrets and more clever hiding places than the first Tomb Raider, but despite this it's still too short and can be easily completed over a long weekend, naturally the younger the player the longer the game will take to complete.


Love it or hate it you'll probably end up buying this game if only to keep your kids quiet, if you find yourself



in this category fear not, it's a great game and it'll definitely keep the young ones busy long enough for you to get some serious 'adult' gaming done.

also available on PS2 | GC

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REVIEWED BY
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16 MB D3D Video Accelerator	64 MB D3D Video Accelerator
600 MB HDD	600+ MB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Much improved	Repetitive sound effects
Fun	Simple
High replay value	Short

AT A GLANCE

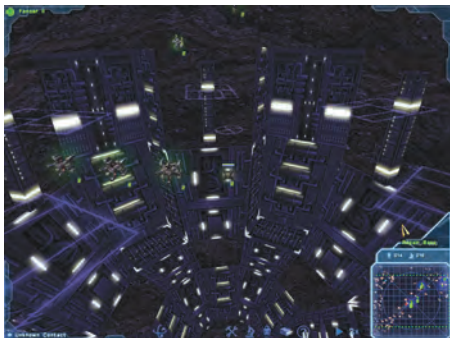
For the targeted audience the game scores good marks by making the action easy to follow, quick to learn and never penalises the player for making mistakes. Overall a much better game than the first and with some excellent set pieces such as the spider boss makes this game a good buy to keep younger players entertained.

score 72

o.r.b.

Some years ago, Homeworld made a stir in the strategy gaming world by introducing a totally new style of real-time strategy game. The premise was fundamentally different from that of other RTS titles current at the time, all of which dealt with conflict on a two-dimensional surface. Oddly enough, despite Homeworld's success, its genre did not take off, perhaps because many players found the 3D navigation system daunting. Several space RTS titles were released, but mostly these dealt with combat in a 2D plane, which hardly represents space accurately! Now, for the first time since Homeworld: Cataclysm, a new 3D space RTS has emerged.

"O.R.B." stands, in this case, for Offworld Resource Base, although no doubt the acronym's development was an exercise in reverse engineering. This game is a direct-line descendant of Homeworld, and bears more than a passing resemblance. In fact, I'll deal with the comparisons right now, in order to save having to repeat myself later - in almost every respect, O.R.B. can be likened to Homeworld. This includes the control interface, the strategic map, the technology research system, the way resources are gathered and the very game dynamic itself. In this regard, this game can be considered exceptionally unoriginal, but then so can every first-person shooter released since Quake! So why, you may ask, even bother with O.R.B.? Why not simply play Homeworld? Firstly, the story is, of course, different from that of Homeworld. Sadly, however, this isn't much of a story, as events depicted in the timeline are epic in scale, but lacking in characters. The whole "plot" is presented in "racial first person", as it were, describing momentous events in a style very reminiscent of a history text-book, only not as entertaining. The main shortcoming here is the lack of characters - everything is presented in terms of "we" (being whichever race is the focus of the campaign being played at the time), delivered in a voice that is supposed to sound impressive and portentous, but there are no characters to get involved with, no emotional bias or drama. Nations don't make good characters! Nevertheless, despite all of the above, the ambience and atmosphere are masterfully set by the art and music - while it seems the developers didn't have a good writer on board, they did have access to top-notch artists! The cut-scenes have to be seen to be believed - alien-looking ships that would make the



developer: strategy first
 publisher: strategy first
 distributor: tba
 price: \$ 34.95 [±R 300.00] [excluding shipping]
 genre: 3D rts
 internet: www.o-r-b.com



▲ Fighters take on an undefended military base... take that, you morons!

producers of many a science fiction TV show proud, stunning environments and dazzling effects. These graphical standards are maintained throughout the game, with the in-game engine providing amazing visuals, even at the lower resolutions. (O.R.B. supports resolutions of up to 2048

across!) The soundtrack also contributes to the overall atmosphere of the game, and responds to events during play. Other than that, the sound effects are relatively unremarkable - explosions sound like explosions, and radio acknowledgements from units serve their purpose. One unusual element is something that was used, albeit poorly implemented, in the Star Trek: Armada series, and this is the concept of manpower. Although strategy games for long have made use of this idea, real-time strategy games making use of it have been very few and far between. In O.R.B., manpower is a struggle to increase (as, it can be argued, it would be in a real life situation). Certain researches allow a gradual increase in manpower, and multiple facilities (be they mines, repair bases or military bases) also increase the available workforce. This workforce must be allocated between "available", which drives production, and "research", which is self-explanatory. Some people also go off to become starship crew - they become trained as pilots. Available pilots are treated as a resource - if you don't have enough of them to crew a ship you've ordered, that ship's construction cannot be completed. Technology management involves researching various individual technologies, then developing craft prototypes based on your levels of sophistication in the various disciplines. From one mission to the next (in the single player campaigns) you retain your previously acquired technologies, reflecting the fact that this is one complete journey,

rather than a series of isolated skirmishes. One aspect that truly impressed me was the scale of distances and object sizes. Distances between objects are truly astronomical, and asteroids that on the map look like pebbles take minutes to circumnavigate. To aid with all this, O.R.B. features a time compression function, though maxing out at 3X speed seems inadequate. Because of the distances involved, this game lacks the frenetic pace that makes the more successful RTS titles so popular. In fact, I would virtually consider O.R.B. a pure single player game. As such, it is very engrossing and provides a good challenge - the missions start off easy enough, and there are tutorials to teach you the basics, but soon enough the difficulty starts escalating. Difficulty levels are selectable. In skirmish mode, the AI doesn't seem too strong, and is defeated with too much ease. If you enjoyed Homeworld, odds are you'll like this one. However, don't expect much that is new. If you've never tried 3D space RTS, and are a strategy fan, check this one out, it's well worth it.

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REVIEWED BY
 Alex "R.A.V.E.N." Jelagin

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 500 MHz	Celeron 866 MHz
64 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
24 x CD ROM	48x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Card	64 MB D3D Video Card
600 MB HDD	1+ GB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Beautiful graphics	Unoriginal
Very atmospheric	Trite story
	Identical factions

AT A GLANCE

This game plays very much like Homeworld, and may appeal to fans of that game, so long as they don't expect great innovation. The pace of the game is rather slow, and so it lends itself best to single play. It's best to regard this one as an interactive sci-fi flick.

score 72



we have 3 copies of each of these two games to give away courtesy of MegaRom

If you want the Vietcong game name one of the operatives you may use in Vietcong...

If you want to win a copy of I.G.I.-2: Covert Strike tell us the name of the lead character...



Entries to reach us by the end of February 2003
Send your answers and personal information to:
COMP@NAG.CO.ZA: Subject: Vietcong or IGI2
Postal entries can be sent to:
P O Box 237, Olivedale, 2158
NOTE: Only 1 [one] entry per person - any more
and we delete the whole lot...

COMPETITION

medal of honour allied assault: spearhead

developer: 2105
 publisher: electronic arts
 distributor: ea africa (011) 516 8300
 price: R149.00
 genre: first person shooter
 internet: www.ea.com

In the original Medal of Honour, you took part in the epic struggle on the front line, as the allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy and began to press forward into France against the German occupation. This time round, you play the role of one of the paratroopers dropped behind enemy lines ahead of the main force, with orders to disrupt German supply and transport routes, and to pave the way for the main assault. The expansion is just as epic and involving as it's predecessor, and will have you immersed in the action very quickly.



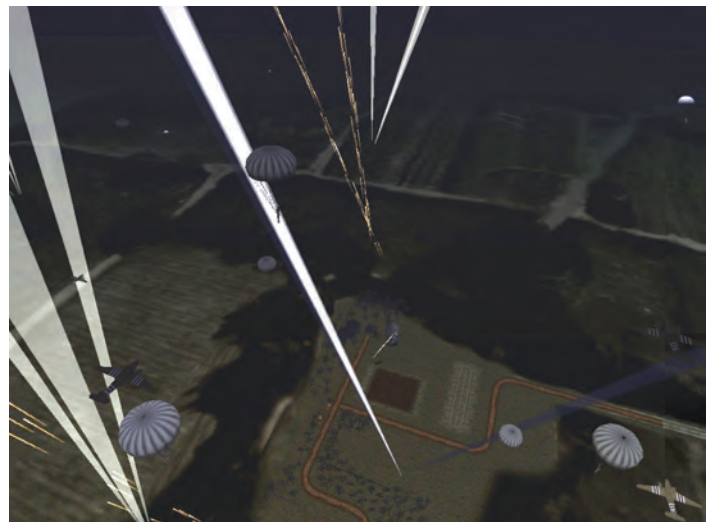
The main reasons I enjoyed this game as much as I did, are its massive scope and its incredible variety. You begin your campaign parachuting out of a plane, anti-aircraft fire screaming past you, avoiding enemy planes and watching one of your squad members plummet to his death as his parachute refuses to open. Once you reach ground level, you crash through the roof of a barn, and have to quickly cut yourself loose from your chute before you are stormed by several German soldiers. This looks as adrenalin-filled as it sounds, and immediately draws you into the game's

world. The various difficulty settings make it perfect for casual players and hardcore veterans alike. The learning curve is wonderfully natural and the controls are easy to get a feel for. The feeling of immersion and realism is kept up the whole way through the game. This is done by the use of a very pleasing

3D engine (what do you expect, it was programmed by id Software). Graphics do not necessarily make the game, but in this case it is the sheer appropriateness of the visuals that impresses. The graphics are used as the tool to create the world that the player experiences. In any case, I found myself forgetting about how the game looked because the action was so intense. In a real war, would you be looking around thinking "Gee, this is some really cool scenery." The scenery is remarkable, but it is quickly overshadowed by the atmosphere that it creates. Also contributing to this, is the truly amazing sound. The technical brilliance of how it has been recorded, and also how it has been integrated into the game world, is something you can only fully appreciate with a 500 RMS watt surround sound system. If you are lucky enough to own something like that, you will know what it was like to be on a World War II battlefield. The voice acting for the characters is superb, and the music, when it does appear, is distinct and emotive.

Unfortunately there are two negative points I must mention. Firstly, like many games nowadays, the hitboxes on the enemies are not always accurate. You will sometimes have to shoot an enemy several times before he visibly takes the damage. This bug is particularly apparent with explosive, splash-damage weapons such as rocket launchers and tank guns. The second point is that the graphics slow down disproportionately on higher resolutions and detail settings. If you have a powerful 3D card, it will still be

more than playable, but anyone in the average range is going to suffer. The game is very smooth on lower settings though, and will run acceptably on most PC's. All in all, these two factors do not detract too much from the enjoyment of the game, and are therefore forgivable. This is the definitive expansion for the definitive World War II Shooter.



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REVIEWED BY
 Anton "The_Basilisk" Lines

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 450 MHz	Pentium III 700 MHz
128 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Accelerator	32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
800 MB HHD	1.2 GB HHD

PLUS	MINUS
Very atmospheric	Some hitbox problems
Inventive missions	Poor performance on higher resolutions
Brilliant sound	

AT A GLANCE

This is a thoroughly solid expansion and well worth it in every department. If you did not play the original Medal of Honour, I recommend getting yourself a copy and one of Spearhead as well. This is as close as you can currently get to being in a war; very realistic without compromising the element of enjoyment.

score 87

▲ If you can't go over it...

▲ Experience skydiving, only R99.99 a lesson

ghost recon: island thunder

developer: red storm entertainment
publisher: ubisoft
distributor: megarom (011) 805 7303
price: R199.00
genre: tactical first person shooter
internet: www.ghostrecon.com

Throughout the Rainbow Six series there have been various mission packs to extend product life, and the Ghost Recon series is no exception.

The Desert Siege mission pack brought a desert campaign with 8 new single player missions and various small multiplayer enhancements, but nothing too spectacular. Although Island Thunder can be seen as more of the same thing, it somehow manages to surprise, and blows a breath of fresh air into classic original...

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder takes place in the year 2009, on the island of Cuba. In this hypothetical scenario, Fidel Castro has passed away, and the island is in a state of chaos on the evening of free elections. A drug running warlord has other plans for Cuba, and Ghosts have to intervene to liberate the new democratic republic. This setting provides Island Thunder with 8 new single player missions with the best scenery as of yet in the series. Maps range from jungles with drug factories, mountainous terrain, holiday beaches, and highly detailed towns for the urban settings. The missions flow dynamically through the maps, and

except for the well-known search and destroy and hostage rescue types, there are also more defensive elements, and more dynamic scripted rescue elements where timing is of the essence. One mission requires your squad to protect a voting hall against intrusion from various entrances, and then the rescue of various civilians that are being harassed by warlord's troops. In another, whilst looking for downed pilots, a firefight breaks out in the distance between the pinned down pilots, and one must race to the spot and protect them from overwhelming opposition. This hardly gives one the chance to admire the new high-resolution textures and beautiful weapons models carried by you and your squad, but makes for tense yet exciting situations. Whereas Desert Siege only allowed for new weapons to be used in multiplayer scenarios, Island Thunder makes them available in the single player missions. A silenced SOCOM M4 rifle makes for a very effective scouting weapon, and is handy during the outdoor rescue missions. The SR-25 sniper rifle is based on the M-16 mechanism, thus providing faster reticule recovery combined with good firepower in shorter engagements. The MM-1 grenade launcher has the last say as a squad offensive weapon, and will quickly

eradicate advancing enemy squads once one gets an accurate firing solution. Also available are AGS-17 grenade launcher emplacements. Various other weapons are available in the quick missions and multiplayer sessions. Binoculars with a range finder now forms part of one's kit, and does not take up valuable weapon slots anymore. New multiplayer game types include Defend, Cat and Mouse, and Behemoth. In the Defend type, players play a defensive co-

operative role against advancing AI soldiers. In Cat and Mouse, each player starts as a cat, and the first victim becomes the mouse. This person gets a lower-powered weapons kit, and an icon above the head and on the command map, but gets more points for a kill. Behemoth is the other way around, where the mouse gets a higher-powered weapons kit. Island Thunder now also has in-game movie sequences with Blackhawk helicopter and Zodiac boat insertions. The entire mission pack comes as an exciting and highly polished add-on, and belongs in the collection of anyone that enjoyed the original Ghost Recon and the earlier Desert Siege mission pack.



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REVIEWED BY	
Fred "Hotdog" Müller	
MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium II 450 MHz	Pentium 4 1.0 GHz
128 MB RAM	256 MB RAM
4 x CD ROM	24 x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Accelerator	64 MB D3D Video Accelerator
500 MB HHD	500 MB HHD
PLUS	MINUS
Great missions	Way too short
New high resolution textures	Non functional vehicles
Better looking weapon models	
AT A GLANCE	
Island Thunder proves that a good mission pack will sell if the developer adds quality maps, new weapons and game modes. Although it is possible to finish in a few hours, it is worth the purchase as it is fun, good looking and very challenging. This mission pack may extend the life of Ghost Recon well into 2003.	
score 81	



▲ I wish this jungle itching would stop!

▲ Eh Susan, you make a uniform look good

conflict desert storm

developer: pivotal games
publisher: sci
distributor: wwe [011] 462 0150
price: R299.00
genre: Squad-based tactical shooter
internet: www.conflict.com

One would expect this to be another "Task Force Dagger", but thankfully it is nothing of the sort. Virtually free of the usual "feel good, we love America" attitude, it will surprise many with the fact that it is a well rounded, worthwhile game. There is nothing ground-breaking in this title, and I doubt that anyone who is not into tactical shooters will be converted to the genre because of it, but there is nothing particularly negative to say either. Basically, if this sort of thing is what you enjoy, you will get enjoyment out of it.

The game takes place just after Iraqi forces crossed the border into Kuwait at the start of the Gulf War. You take charge of a squad of special forces operatives who must infiltrate installations, destroy communications facilities, attack supply lines and rescue prisoners in Iraq. There are four members in your squad, each with different specializations: the leader (assault specialist), the sniper, the heavy weapons specialist and the combat engineer. As the player, you control one of the four operatives at a time, and use him to give orders to the rest of the squad. You can switch between characters at any time, depending on the task at hand. Something I was relieved to see, was that you have the choice of playing with the British SAS or the US Delta Force. The difference is, however, only in uniform and in voice acting. But being able to steer clear of American accents is a very welcomed feature. I was put in an immediate good mood

as I started the tutorial. This is partly because your first drill instructor sounds a lot like Homer Simpson. The training "missions" are very humorous and worth playing even if you don't need to learn the game's controls. I wonder if the developers watched "Full Metal Jacket" before designing the tutorial. The actual game missions themselves are fairly standard, and there is nothing new or special to be said about them. However I was glad to see there were no issues with buggy waypoints and victory conditions, and while there are "puzzles" to be solved, the player is never confused. The locations are quite pretty (Kuwait City being a good example) - atmospheric and background effects are vivid and colourful. Level design will also keep the player interested, as the scenery is involved past the level of pure eye-candy. You choose to play in either 3rd person (normal) mode or first person (zoom) mode. Control is often problematic, and there are bugs in your movement especially if you run into an obstacle. You cannot jump, and the feel of the mouse sensitivity takes a while to

get used to. Your squad doesn't always do what you tell them - the A.I. is acceptable, but raises an eyebrow every now and then. Enemies get stuck often, as do your teammates. At least they know how to aim. Graphics are good-looking and very stable, in fact this is the most crash-free game I have played in a long time. Movies are handled in-engine (as seems to be the trend lately). The sound is decent as well. I would recommend this to fans of the genre, who will certainly find it worth their time. As for everyone else, while it is a fun game, it certainly won't stand out.



also available on PS2

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REVIEWED BY
Anton "The_Basilisk" Lines

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 450 MHz	Pentium 4 1.0 GHz
128 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
32 MB D3D Video Accelerator	64 MB D3D Video Accelerator
930 MB HDD	930 MB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Solid engine	Control issues
Fun	Unoriginal

AT A GLANCE

While it isn't the most innovative title out there, Conflict: Desert Storm does right what many of the similar titles out there do not. It manages to avoid American propaganda and boast reasonably good technical attributes. Instead of realism, this plays more like an arcade game, and at least it's a fun arcade game.

score 74



▲ This is not what is meant by "know more about your enemy..."



▲ The American way: if you destroy it, you win!



▲ Interesting things sometimes happen in the background



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- VIA P4X266A Chipset
- 2*DIMM Slots for DDR 200/266
- Support AGP 4X & AC '97 Audio
- 6 USB 2.0



MV43N

- Support Intel Socket 478 Processor with FSB 400/533 MHz
- VIA P4M266 Chipset
- 2*DIMM Slots for PC-133 SDRAM
- 2*DIMM Slots for DDR 200/266
- Support AGP 4X & AC '97 Audio



AK32A

- Support AMD Socket 462 Processor with FSB 200/266 MHz
- VIA KT266A
- 2*DIMM Slots for 200/266
- 2*DIMM Slots for PC133 SDRAM
- Support AGP 4X & AC'97 Audio

micro commandos

The world being taken over by aliens isn't exactly a new theme. In fact, from as far back to War of the Worlds, right through to Independence Day, extra terrestrials have been eyeing our verdant planet. Whether for resources, or food, or whatever, it seems that, according to a certain breed of science fiction writers, we are nothing but a big old target for aliens. Of course, most of these tales don't have aliens the size of bugs...

As the electronic entertainment industry stands at the moment, there really isn't much space for manoeuvring in terms of originality. Most of what we see these days is just a rehash of something that has been done before. In fact - in my opinion - there really isn't anything that hasn't been done. We are sitting at a juncture where, more than anything else, it seems, concepts have to be utterly brilliant in order to succeed, and back stories have increased in value a thousand fold. Given this situation, it really is no surprise that Monte Cristo would develop a title like Micro Commandos. Break the situation down: they wanted to create a Real Time Strategy title, but were faced with a market

inundated with titles in that genre. So, after a brainstorm, they came up with a concept that, while not truly original in execution, is quite new in terms of background. Micro Commandos puts the player in control of a faction of aliens who wish - in the long run - to take over the earth. At first, most of the in-game operations are beach head establishment scenarios, of course, and the whole thing just progresses from there. The only thing is... the mighty invading force are all around the size of Parktown Prawns. Sure, it may sound a bit silly, but the game enters a whole new dimension as you, the player, invade household after household in your quest for glory. Micro Commandos takes the usual level of RTS micro-management to a new level. It's far more micro, and it's a lot more managed. What I mean is this: instead of just having to worry about gathering the three basic resources of the game (food, power and raw materials) the player actually needs to pay attention to the feeding, rest and medical needs of individual units. This requires a huge amount of zipping around and clicking on things, to make sure that your units aren't

dying of hunger or exhaustion. There are only three types of units available - carriers, engineers and soldiers - which can be retrained to perform any of the tasks needed within the game. There are not too many buildings either. Some units can be modified (by putting them in vehicles, and the like) but for the most part, this title's complexity lies in actually playing the game, not what you have to play the game with. Micro Commandos is not the best title I have seen.

The graphics are so-so, the sound track and voices are pretty annoying, and the interface has issues. But, in all honesty, I must say that I did enjoy playing the game (when it wasn't crashing on me). Players looking for something different, who don't mind having to manage units with very little independence, may quite like it. If you can, try before you buy.



▲ Here you pose an insignificant threat...



▼ The world of the big supplies all your needs

developer: monte cristo
 publisher: monte cristo
 distributor: wwe [011] 462 0150
 price: R299.00
 genre: real time strategy
 internet: www.montecristogames.com

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REVIEWED BY
 Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium II 300 MHz	Pentium III 550 MHz
64 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
4 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Accelerator	32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
700 MB HDD	700 MB HDD

PLUS	MINUS
New approach	Iffy graphics
Quite fun	Unstable
	Management intensive

AT A GLANCE

Micro Commandos is a fairly original take on the real time strategy genre. Take command of an army of aliens - all pint sized little runts - intent on taking over the world. It's a fun title, but requires a lot of micro-management. In fact, the game has more management than combat.

score 64

airline tycoon evolution

developer: spellbound
 publisher: monte cristo
 distributor: wwe [011] 462 0150
 price: R299.00
 genre: management
 internet: www.montecristogames.com

We have, in our capacity of virtual lords of virtual worlds, managed everything from cattle ranches to entire cities - even intergalactic empires have been in our hands, waiting for our expert guidance. So it's little wonder that not much new seems to be coming out in terms of management titles. However, there have been some attempts to breathe new life into old concepts - one such idea resulted in Airline Tycoon Evolution.

People just love to travel. Whether for work or pleasure, there is always a ton of people going from one place to another. And, obviously, since the establishment of

airline companies, the world has got smaller, and people have gone travelling even more. As a player of Airline Tycoon Evolution, you get to be the boss of a fledgling airline company, taking people yon and hither across the globe. Of course, it's not quite as easy as all that...

Airline Tycoon Evolution is (visually, at least) not your normal management game. Instead of presenting the player with a ton of maps and the usual isometric view, the game shows the player a rather cartoonish version of an airport, in which his or her daily affairs must be conducted. But don't be fooled by the humorous nature of the game characters - this game is tricky to get right, and a successful company is not the easiest thing to achieve.

The player needs to manage every aspect of the airline industry - passengers, freight, aircraft, security, staff and the like are all the player's responsibility. These are handled in various different offices situated around the airport. And this leads to the first major annoyance of the game. Every time you send your character to an office, the entire journey is shown. No matter how much you pound your keyboard, you have to watch this happen. But we can get over that. The main money-spinner for any airline is actually flying somewhere. It is a sort of supply and demand model on which this game is based. To make sure you get places, you have to visit one of two travel agencies, and accept flight

contracts. Make sure you have a pen and paper handy, folks, because you will (annoyingly) have to keep notes to keep track of all your plane destinations and arrival times. After all, having a plane fly anywhere without passengers or cargo is a waste of money. And if you mess up your dates and have to renege on a contract, you will have to pay a hefty cancellation fee. Extra planes can be added as used, new or custom designed models. Obviously, the more planes you have, the more income you can make - especially with larger capacity planes, and planes that have a longer service range. Then again, more planes mean more maintenance costs, higher staff wages, and so on. Basically, this is little more than a stock standard management game, complete with a few problems (like horrible voice acting and annoying little sequences.) It is fun to play, and you may find yourself spending many hours coming to grips with it. But, in the end, it is neither great, nor is it awful. It is just plain average.



▲ The gang discussing the next zoo parade through the airport terminal



▲ An accurate simulation... the only thing missing are people dressed in orange robes handing out philosophy



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REVIEWED BY
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium 133 MHz	Pentium III 550 MHz
32 MB RAM	64 MB RAM
4 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
2 MB Video Card	16 MB D3D Video Accelerator
400 MB HDD	400 MB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Fairly addictive	Average
	Poor voice acting
	Can get annoying

AT A GLANCE

Here is a stock standard management game with little or nothing to make it stand out as an example of the genre. You get to run an airline - booking flights, buying planes, hiring and firing - in a cartoony setting full of annoying sequences and poor voice acting. Nothing to write home about here. Not too bad, just average.

score 60

platoon

The Vietnam war was, by most accounts, one of the largest mistakes ever made by the US government. A great number of people died in a war that had questionable motivations, and results. The controversy around the war sparked a huge number of feature films, with Oliver Stone's Platoon being a shining example of the genre. Now, several years after the film was first released, Monte Cristo

treats gamers to the first ever PC title that deals with this conflict.

When Monte Cristo announced that developers Digital Reality were working on a game based on the hit movie Platoon, there was quite a lot of speculation that started flying about - mainly due to the fact that no game based on this film, or even on the Vietnam war, has ever been attempted. But they were careful to caution gamers that the game would not be properly based on the film. In fact, the correlations were few. However, they assured us that the feel of the movie was what they were after. They failed. The PC game Platoon has absolutely nothing in common with the film, save for two things: its name, and a period of history. Other than that, zip. In fact, the film is rather insulted by this shallow and quite uninteresting title. Based around the experiences of the fictitious Martin Lionsdale, the game takes the player to an RTS vision of the Vietnam war - often said to be one of the most horrifying and brutal conflicts ever. Obviously the brutality and horror weren't even a consideration by the developers. In fact, they tried to avoid it. Sure, ok, there may be a tad too much violence in PC games these days, but there was also a tad too much violence in other situations too, like, say... the Vietnam war, for example.

Ok, so big deal. The game isn't gory. That isn't the be all and end all of gaming, after all. How does it play? In truth, not that great either. See, the guys at Digital Reality had some absolutely brilliant ideas about line of site, cover, position and the like, which would have been great if they had been implemented properly. Take, for example, the fact that your units have a fairly "straight ahead" field of view; they have almost no peripheral vision. Add to this the fact that they are thick and have absolutely no built

developer: digital reality
 publisher: monte cristo
 distributor: wwe [011] 462 0150
 price: R299.00
 genre: real time strategy
 internet: www.montecristogames.com

in self preservation, and you soon realise that your units are going to get taken to bits if flanked by more than about thirty degrees. I know the USA lost the war, but this is ridiculous.

Platoon is a game in extremely serious need of a patch. In-game functions - interface buttons - don't work, and the whole game just feels dodgy. The controls are sluggish, and units are unresponsive.

Platoon is a great idea gone wrong. With annoying voice acting, iffy graphics and several major in-game issues, Platoon strays from the straight and narrow into the fields of mediocrity. It is so mediocre, in fact, that the game does not even have a sense of excitement. Frustration, yes, excitement, no.

I am sure that the first patch will sort out a few of these issues, but, in truth, Platoon cannot be saved by something as simple as a patch. A great pity, because this certainly had a lot of potential.



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REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium II 500 MHz	Pentium III 600 MHz
128 MB RAM	256 MB RAM
4 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Accelerator	32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
500 MB HDD	500 MB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
"New" subject matter	Interface problems
	Dumb units
	Not exciting

AT A GLANCE

This rather sad attempt at cashing in on a licence does not go far to bring the Vietnam war to life. The first game based on this conflict, Platoon is a rather tame RTS that, while full of good ideas, lacks in a great many fields. The only thing that makes this game "killer" is the fact that the boredom may get you. Utterly mediocre!

score 58



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Quake II

When Quake II first hit the shelves a few years back, it was met with great enthusiasm and managed to impress a huge amount of gamers with its state of the art graphics and captivating game play - not to mention a fun and explosive multiplayer mode.

After having crash landed on a mysterious alien planet, the player must take on strange and powerful enemies in an attempt to find out what happened to the other members of his squad. The player has the fate of humanity in his hands in this first person shooter.

With a large number of challenging missions that can have far reaching effects in the game, as well as smart enemies out to hurt you in the worst way possible, Quake II is a very exciting title. Tons of weapons, huge action and a huge, 32 player capable multiplayer mode add to a great game.

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force

Those poor people on the USS Voyager - they're always landing up in the strangest situations. Like now - pulled into a strange area of null space and very close to destruction, the crew of the ship is drawn into a truly hazardous situation...

Using the Quake III engine, this first person shooter based on the popular television series presents the player with forty intense single player missions, as well as sixteen multiplayer arenas. Fight off a host of scavenging aliens and even penetrate deep into the heart of a dread Borg Cube in this exciting, heart-stopping title. With nine different weapons (each with two firing modes) and geometry which can be altered and destroyed through player actions (not to mention that the environments were all modeled on actual Star Trek sets) this game promises a huge amount of action, challenges and fun!

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2

Whether Tony Hawk is the best professional skater in the world is something that could be argued by those in the know. But whether Tony Hawk's Pro Skater is the best skating simulator title in the world bears no argument. There is just no beating this series!

With all the over the top action, massive air and incredible tricks that made the series famous, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2 is a nice look back at the history of PC skate simulators - and is, above all, great fun.

Whether you create your own custom skater or use one of the thirteen pros included in the game, the challenges that await you are enormous! Multiple game modes will challenge your skills, as will the multitude of parks available for play. Not to mention that the game has a brilliant sound track. This is a great purchase for those who need a gaming fix, but don't have oodles of cash.

Sonic 3D

That spiky blue mascot of the Sega corporation is back on the PC. Yes, that's right, Sonic the Hedgehog may be visiting a desktop near you. Seven action packed, detailed 3D levels await the player in this fun platform title - one of the first to use the concept of three dimensionality in the platform genre. A wide variety of challenges await the player, along with hidden levels, power ups and those familiar gold rings. Not to mention the minions of the utterly horrible Dr Robotnik. Sonic 3D may be a rather dated title at first glance, especially compared to some of the newer 3D platform games we have seen. However, it is undeniably a classic game, as well as a great innovator in a genre that was little explored when this title was first released. Plus the fact that, above all, it is great fun!

Civilization: Call to Power

Do you have what it takes to rule? I don't mean just any kind of rulership either - we are talking a time span starting from the dawn of man right through to the year 3000 AD. Because that's what you are going to have to do to conquer Civilisation: Call to Power.

As part of one of the most popular PC game series ever released, Civilization: Call to Power allows the player to lead his chosen nation to their destiny, whether that be global domination, or utter ruin.

Management, research, strategy - all this and more awaits the player in this classic title. Over 65 units, 90 technological advances and a 7000 year time span awaits the player in this enthralling title from Sid Meyer. Additionally, the game can be played in a multiplayer mode, either via LAN or the Internet.

Sega Rally 2 Championship

When it comes to arcade style rally games, few can beat Sega Rally 2. In fact, the spirit of rally driving is so well captured within this title that it is still a favourite among rally simulation players. With great detail, this title truly looks great on virtually any PC!

Twenty one different cars can be experienced on seventeen tracks in this title, which features several game modes - including single races, time trials and a stunning ten year championship mode.

With force feedback support and realistic 3D sound (which accurately reproduces road surface effects, as well as engine noise, accurately researched for each car in the game) Sega Rally 2 Championship makes the player's virtual experience as real as possible.

There are even multiplayer modes available, including a two player head to head game, playable on a single computer. If you are a driving enthusiast who has little cash left after the last vehicle modification, then this is a title just for you - at the right price, too!

Grand Theft Auto & GTA Mission pack 1

Take a trip back to where all the mayhem started. GTA3 may have been one of the best games of 2002, but you have to pay homage to the title that spawned this rather reckless title. Yes, that's right, the original Grand Theft Auto, as well as its first mission pack are available in this great software pack. This great value is improved by the fact that the original GTA is an absolute classic...

With a vast amount of combined missions (the expansion pack alone has 30), a slew of vehicles and more virtual road than you can shake a very big stick at, Grand Theft Auto is a funny, challenging and thoroughly enjoyable experience. Whether you take on the American or British missions, you are guaranteed to have a riotous time! Drive cars, steal them too, complete challenging missions and wreak general havoc on the unsuspecting public in this absolute classic.

Worms 2

Ah, yes - this has to be one of my all time favourites. The Worms are back - nastier, deadlier and armed to their nonexistent teeth - in Worms 2, a brilliant platform style game that pokes fun while enticing the gamer into its simple yet strategic missions. Take your team of Worms to the ultimate glory as you blow up, stab, shoot, grenade, bash, prod, punch and sheep your opponents with a variety of utterly zany weapons. This is one of the most addictive titles ever created, without a doubt. Whether you take it on in single player mode, or group up to 6 players together for some utter invertebrate mayhem, this game will provide you with hours - nay, years - of fun. A wide variety of environments, conditions and weapons, as well as a random terrain generator, allow for endless variety within the game, while the personality filled worms and their crazy antics will have you coming back for more.

Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines

During the Second World War, a great number of secret missions took place in the heart of enemy territory. As a matter of fact, these missions were so exciting, so challenging and so downright dangerous that a series of games has been established around them, and the first title in the series, namely Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines, has been released at a price affordable to everyone. Twenty-six incredibly challenging missions await the player, each with a variety of different goals, obstacles and difficulty levels. Manage a team of crack commandos as you carefully strategise; study enemy movements, develop plans and send your team out in a synchronised, furious attack.

Brilliant graphics and absolutely compelling game dynamics are the hallmarks of this title, which every strategy gamer should experience - no question about that! And the multiplayer mode, which can host up to six players, adds even more

game time value to an already long and enjoyable title.

Thief II: The Metal Age

Enter the strange world of Thief II: The Metal Age. It is a world gripped by strange and dangerous changes. And, from its shadowy rooftops, the player must do everything needed to survive - including theft, assassination, infiltration and a host of other rather nasty activities. Thief II is billed as one of the greatest stealth first person titles of all time. The player must outwit an advanced AI through fifteen enormous missions which detail a very complex story line. Armed with a variety of tools, weapons and magical items, the player will be challenged to the utmost of their abilities - even including the challenges presented by a realistic weather system! Thief II: The Metal Age will prove an enjoyable and unique experience for both new comers and seasoned gamers alike. This is a true classic, and a game that everyone should experience.

Tomb Raider II

What is the secret of the dagger of Xian? The ancient Chinese believed that anyone plunging the mysterious weapon deep into their heart would gain unbelievable power. Yes, folks, it's time to go globe trotting with everyone's favourite collection of alluring pixels, Lara Croft. From the Great Wall of China to virtually everywhere else, Lara travels the world, crawling, diving, shooting, jumping, climbing, running and performing a host of other stunts and activities that make this game series famous, in a great variety of environments. Armed with her trusty weapons, a number of wardrobe changes and great athletic ability, this game is a massively exciting experience that winds through an intriguing plot. If you haven't played this title yet, you really should allow it to show off a great engine, brilliant dynamic, expansive settings, cool moves and brilliant weapons, all right there on your PC. Go on, you know you want to...

Tomb Raider III

Yes! A double fix for Lara Croft fans - see, Tomb Raider III has also been added to the Bargain Buy listing, meaning that you can get more of the delectable Brit babe for a great price. In search of four valuable artifacts made from the heart of a meteorite, this next installment of the Tomb Raider series sees a journey through five brilliant adventures, from India to London, from Antarctica to the mysterious Area 51 - all bursting with enemies, traps and puzzles to challenge every gamer. With new vehicles like quad bikes and kayaks, new weapons (including some really big guns) and a host of new moves, Lara can take on these adventures in any order that you decide. Add to this graphic enhancements and a great story, and I am sure that you'll agree - Tomb Raider III is a must-play title.

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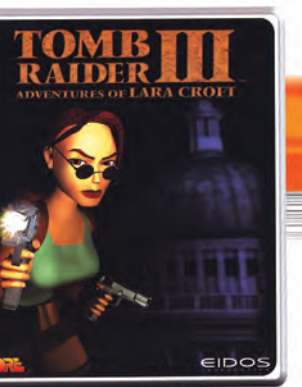
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ratchet & clank

Insomniac Games, the guys behind the excellent *Spyro the Dragon* on the PSone, have made the leap to next-generation consoles, and the result is *Ratchet & Clank*, yet another platform game, but with loads of fun and variety on offer.



Ratchet & Clank follows the story of a furry alien named Ratchet, and a runaway robot named (you guessed it) Clank, who happen to find themselves on a quest to rid the universe of evil corporate big wig Drek. Drek's race, the Blarg, come from a polluted, and ultimately dying planet, and his objective is to create a new planet for his race by harvesting chunks of pretty much every other planet around to build it. Clank, in fact, was produced by one of Drek's factories, however something went wrong causing Clank to be not only smaller than the robots comprising Drek's army, but also somewhat sentient, and thus, after learning of Drek's evil plan, Clank goes on the lamb, and ends up crash landing on Ratchet's home planet where the two meet and begin their quest. One of the most amusing

features of the game is the personality clash between the two protagonists. Ratchet is generally quite self-absorbed, and he'll never pass up the opportunity to make some cash or get some glory for himself, whereas Clank is lawful and logical, resulting in a number of amusing cut-scenes displaying the interaction

between the two of them. The game is set across a number of different levels, each taking place on a different planet, and although the order in which you visit the planets initially is rather linear, you can travel back to any world you've already visited at any time, which is particularly useful as along the way you'll be able to purchase upgrades and accessories for the dup, such as heli-packs and jetpacks, that allow you to reach areas that were inaccessible on your first visit to the world. Furthermore, each planet has a Gadgetron vendor machine, allowing you to stock up on ammo and new weapons, which have to be paid for in "bolts", which you generally acquire from crates or the carcasses of enemies, so earlier levels are also a good way to bolster the ol' bank account, considering enemies respawn when you return to a planet.

developer: insomniac games
 publisher: sony computer entertainment
 distributor: ster kinekor (011) 445 7900
 price: R699.00
 genre: platform action
 internet: www.ratchetandclankgadgets.com

Do you feel lucky, punk?!

Speaking of weapons, that's undoubtedly one of the most unique aspects of *Ratchet & Clank*. Ratchet's default weapon is a wrench, allowing you to perform melee combos, and it can also be thrown boomerang style to destroy enemies, however, as you progress through the game, new and more powerful weapons become available, provided you have the necessary dosh. Yes, now you too can experience the joys of releasing a horde of killer robots against your enemies using the "Glove of Doom"! Other weapons on offer include a blaster, flame thrower, RYNO (stands for Rip Ya a New One!), and even a suck cannon that sucks up smaller enemies and converts them into explosive ammunition. Furthermore, if you manage to find the 40 elusive Gold Bolts scattered throughout the game, you'll eventually be able to purchase super-powered versions of some of the weapons. The presence of so many weapons, as well as gadgets like the Swingshot, a souped-up sort of grappling hook, add immensely to the entertainment value of *Ratchet & Clank*, and you'll often find



▼ Whenever there is a problem, fire generally works as an effective solution...



▼ ... but if you don't have matches, try hitting things instead



yourself going out of your way just to accumulate enough bolts to buy the next cool weapon, and generally, you won't be disappointed. In terms of the play dynamic, Ratchet & Clank is, for the most part, standard platform fare, but with a few entertaining twists thrown in. For instance, in some areas you'll be forced to play as Clank, either because Ratchet's too big to fit somewhere, or since Clank doesn't have issues with space's lack of oxygen. Clank also gets to control his own army of mini-robots, which can be instructed to follow him or attack enemies, and are sometimes needed to open doors or barriers. There are also mini-games such as Hoverboard racing to keep you entertained,

but ultimately Ratchet & Clank is "yet another platform game". Nonetheless, although it's not groundbreaking at all, it's still a lot of fun, and that's what really counts. Large, varied levels with multiple objectives also help prevent Ratchet & Clank from becoming boring, as there's always plenty to do. The enemies are varied, each with different ranges and methods of attack, and although the AI is intended to be somewhat farcical (it's even possible to get your enemies to fight with each other), it's not always very challenging.

Is that real fur?

Visually, Ratchet & Clank is superb - the characters are well designed and animated, and the frame rate seems to never miss a beat, regardless of how much is happening on screen. Both the protagonists and their enemies are well detailed, and often humorous, and the landscapes in which the action takes place are colourful, and often breathtaking. The bosses too look absolutely amazing. Explosions in the distance, robots carrying chunks of trees around and whizzing hovercars in the city all add to the overall effect of brilliance displayed in Ratchet & Clank. The cut-scenes are also of an excellent standard, complete with visible expressions and emotions for the characters, often adding to the humour. In terms of sound, Ratchet & Clank once again succeeds. Each level has appropriate music, able to convey both the happy-go-lucky attitude of the game, as well as general eeriness when it's required. The sound effects are also very well done, with explosions sounding...

um, explosive, and the unmistakable clank (if you'll excuse the awful pun) of metal on metal is faithfully recreated. The voice acting is also excellent, with the voices perfectly suited to the characters of Ratchet and Clank, adding to the impact of the exceedingly well-written script.

Time to bolt

On the whole, Insomniac Games have proven that they certainly haven't lost their touch, and have once again risen to the occasion with their latest platform game. Ratchet & Clank manages to stay within the confines of the platform genre, without ever becoming tedious or frustrating. There are entertaining diversions, such as Hoverboarding and playing certain segments through with Clank alone, however the developers have done well not to overdo it with those sequences, and they've included enough variety in the way of gadgets, weapons and worlds to keep the player interested. Beautiful graphics and a zany yet sound storyline bring the world(s) of Ratchet & Clank to life. This is definitely one of the best platform games seen yet, and you owe it to yourself to check this one out!



REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1 Player	Vibration
349Kb Memory	Analog
PLUS	MINUS
Loads of fun	Another platform game
Great graphics	
Invisible load times	
AT A GLANCE	
Ratchet & Clank, despite essentially being another platform game, manages to break the stereotypical platform tedium with an exciting play dynamic, and tremendous variety, in terms of levels, weapons and gadgets. The witty storyline is complemented by exquisite graphics and great sound, not to mention the sheer size of the game. Not to be missed!	
score 93	



the getaway



developer: team soho
publisher: sony computer entertainment europe
distributor: Ster Kinekor (011) 445 7900
price: R699.00
genre: adult action adventure
internet: www.scee.com

An unexpected kidnapping. A brutal murder. A convenient frame-up. A powerful criminal wanting to take over the seedy underbelly of London society like a malignant cancer. A father whose hands are tied. Who said that life was simple?



making the game feel much more real and in your face. There is a certain realistic chaos to the game that just feels right. Of course, the lack of these things does not make playing the game any easier. In truth, this is one of the more challenging titles you will come across for the PlayStation 2.

If you are as ancient as some of us at NAG are, you may remember a time where games were cute, sweet little things that, while they maybe implied violence, were generally quite harmless. The Getaway is one more nail in the lid of that concept's coffin, though, because there really is nothing "nice" about this game. But, while it may not be nice, The Getaway is, in actual fact, a work of genius...

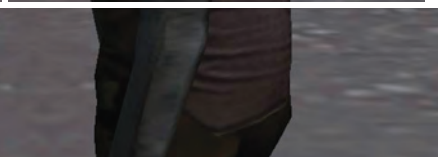
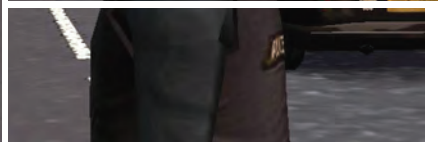
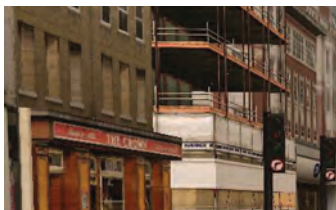
Right from the word go, you may think that you are watching a Guy Richie film, rather than playing a game. The title has the feel of movies like Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels and Snatch. Set in the seedy London Underworld, the film tells of a father who, framed with the murder of his own wife and threatened with the death of his kidnapped son, is forced to perform missions for a megalomaniacal crime boss. With a good mix of driving and shooting, The Getaway reminds one a little of titles like Driver... just before it points out where they went wrong.

The first thing the player will notice is the high grade graphics and brilliant voice acting within the game. Full of blood, guts and gratuitous use of the "f" word throughout its brilliantly scripted dialogue, The Getaway has a gritty, realistic feel. And this is further enhanced by the fact that the game is really stripped down in terms of its interface. You have no ammo count. You have no hit points. You have no sighting reticle. In fact, other than your skills, you have very little at all. This adds to the game, rather than taking away from it, in terms of

But, once you get used to the way things work (like judging your degree of injury by the bloodstains on your character, or counting your bullets, or watching for directional hints given by the car's indicators) the game becomes an engrossing and enthralling gaming experience.

This game takes a smart player to complete successfully. Run and gun tactics are a no-no. It is far too real for that. You need to know when to duck, when to dive and when to come out with guns blazing. There are, undoubtedly, members of the community that will find the violence and proliferation of foul language in the game extremely unsuitable for kids. They are right. That's why the game has been rated as "no persons under 18." So definitely don't buy this for your kids! And if you do, you only have yourself to blame.

The Getaway is a rare and unique title, a true masterpiece of the art of game development. It certainly rates as one of the top titles ever for the PlayStation 2.



REVIEWED BY
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1 Player	Vibration Analog

PLUS	MINUS
Brilliant graphics Great dialogue Very "real"	Tons of naughty words Very difficult Adults Only!

AT A GLANCE

The Getaway is a pinnacle of the gaming world. It is gritty, raw and tough. It allows the player access to the cutthroat world of the London criminal, complete with horrific language and gut-wrenching violence. This is what every game should be - fun, challenging, exciting, thought provoking and just plain brilliant! Not suitable for kids though.

score 90

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star wars: bounty hunter

developer: lucasarts
publisher: electronic arts
distributor: ea africa (011) 516 8300
price: R549.00
genre: action adventure
internet: www.lucasarts.com

Once again we stand over a hot PlayStation 2 with yet another Star Wars disc in the drive, all the usual Star Wars bits appear and disappear setting the scene for a truly revolutionary experience. Excited yet? Not really considering the poor track record of Star Wars games, but hang on a bit... this one is actually fun to play and doesn't have any long eared CGI in it. We love PlayStation Star Wars again! Hooray!

The story here bears a mention, not for being overly imaginative, but for sheer excellence in telling. Apart from the usual shameless license maltreatment and Star Wars legacy abuse the game features excellent video footage and sharp voice acting making the cut-scenes an engrossing way to pass the time. The backing story interlaces with the events following the

good. For starters the whole claiming of bounties as you play through the game is poorly handled and offers no real reward such as new weapons or extra moves - instead you'll accumulate credits to be used in the menu system to unlock bonus material. Even when you do identify and capture bounties the experience is unfulfilling as your intended targets rarely put up any kind of fight and simply stand there while you approach, tie up and neutralize them.

This poor handling of the bounty system results in a more focused approach to the other elements of the game - straight action and level negotiation. The action in the game is frantic, becoming more intense as you progress through the later levels - so full marks here. The levels themselves are well designed and 'fit' convincingly into the story and Star Wars universe, however, some of the levels can be a little frustrating at times as you keep repeatedly falling to your death because you strayed a few centimetres this way or that. Nothing bad can be said about the graphics or sound so we'll leave it at that.

Overall, in a game about bounty hunting there just isn't enough focus on this aspect of the action, what happens is the game boils down to a simple action shooter with optional bounty hunter bits tacked on here and there. The incentives for completing bounties and exploring every inch of the levels are extra goodies you can unlock such as game artwork, a full length comic and 'bloopers' from the superb video sequences. Now considering the high aggravation factor experienced while negotiating some of the levels these 'carrots' simply aren't sufficient to keep your interest level high enough to bother. Negatives aside, Bounty Hunter is still a good game that perhaps should have just gone under a different name.



Battle of Naboo from Episode One and besides using the setting doesn't stray too far into anything revolutionary or involve the movies too much - in a word, original. You play Jango Fett a bounty hunter who is after the ultimate bounty, a rogue Dark Jedi, the leader of a dangerous cult. This cult, the Bando Gora, has been causing enough trouble lately to be considered a threat to Darth Sidious and his evil plans... so they hire you. The idea, kill the leader of the cult and claim the ultimate bounty.

Jet pack

Getting into the action in Bounty Hunter is quick and rewarding with a refined control system that makes quick hops with your jetpack a breeze, even shooting enemies while flying through the air is a simple matter of pressing a button and watching them die. Bounty Hunter features all the usual goodness you'd expect in a game like this, plenty of weapons, slick acrobatic moves, nasty enemies and more than enough exploration and adventure, but is plagued by a few problems that effectively nullify some of the

- ▲ Using the jet pack is as simple as brushing your teeth and gargling with salt water
- ▼ I've always wanted to pop one of these filthy creatures - right between the glowing bulbs



also available on GC

REVIEWED BY	
Michael "RedTide" James	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1 Player	Analog
8 MB Memory Card (50 KB)	Vibration Compatible
PLUS	MINUS
Excellent action bits	Not enough bounty hunting
Sharp control	Repetitive action
Stunning video sequences	Some frustrating levels
AT A GLANCE	
Star Wars Bounty Hunter is an excellent title that misses the mark a little by not focusing enough on the elements it should, like the hunting and claiming of bounties. Other than this it's solid and fun and gets a hearty pat on the back for some excellent video sequences.	
score 80	

hitman 2: silent assassin

developer: io interactive
 publisher: eidos
 distributor: ster kinakor (011) 445 7900
 price: R699.00
 genre: action adventure
 internet: www.eidos.com

It is difficult to change the nature of the beast. Sometimes we are meant for a purpose and, as dark as that purpose may be, there is no escaping it. No matter how we try to hide, it will surface, rising from the depths of our innermost selves - whether by desire or design...

At the end of Hitman: Codename 47, the "hero" of the tale ends his career as a cold blooded contract killer. This is where the next instalment of the game, developed by io interactive and distributed by Eidos begins. We find 47 living in an Italian monastery, working as a gardener and handyman and cared for by a friendly priest. But when the priest is taken by a mafia don, 47 takes the only course of action he can see - he recontacts the Agency, and once again picks up his .45 ballers... Hitman 2: Silent Assassin returns the player to the world of stealth and cold blooded killing that was first introduced to us in the first instalment of the title. And while the subject matter is still rather questionable (for our hero is a person who sees killing as a way of making a living, after all) this game is still among the best when it comes to thought provoking, challenging gaming. Once again, the player is required to use his wits. Take, for example, the first mission within the game, which requires the player to enter the mansion of the mafia don and assassinate him in an attempt to rescue the priest. In any other game, there would be a lot of shooting, much running, jumping, dodging and health kits to pick up. Hitman 2 doesn't work that way. The player has to make use of every resource available to him in the game - even if those resources are not very obvious. In other words, it is more of the same stuff - a revisit to the cunning game style first introduced to us in Hitman: Codename 47. If anything, the game has progressed to become more difficult. And the missions are certainly much more mentally demanding, with less room for error this time around. While this game is highly enjoyable, it is ostensibly a PC title. That doesn't mean that it performs poorly on the PlayStation 2, but the nature of the game, when applied to the nature of the PS2



▲ Olga's cooking was so utterly awful that her employer had no choice but to call in 47

controller, does not quite work as effectively on this console as it does on the PC. The controller is just not sensitive enough, no matter how you look at it. Because of this, a bit of leeway has been built into the title, by way of a basic aiming assistance and a few other little things like that. This, in my humble opinion, does go against the nature of the game, which requires a high level of precision from the player. Still, despite this, it is a highly enjoyable experience, whether on the PC or PS2. With great graphics, good sound that is actually helpful, comprehensive control functions and quite a number of new features, Hitman 2: Silent Assassin is a solid and excellent progression from the previous title. If you enjoy mental challenges within a game, then this is a title that you should not miss.



▼ With this cunning disguise, no one will recognise me - despite the bald head and barcode tattoo. The fools!



also available on PC

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "He fell on a scissors, honest" Pretorius	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1 Player	Analog Vibration compatible
PLUS	MINUS
Good graphics Thought provoking	Control issues Unforgiving
AT A GLANCE	
Return to the shady world of 47, a professional killer who has been forced out of retirement and picked up his fibre wire. Challenging, thought provoking and utterly brilliant, this title will thrill those that enjoy having to think about what they are doing - and think very carefully. Although this title really belongs on a PC, the PS2 version is still an enjoyable gaming experience.	
score 80	

red faction 2

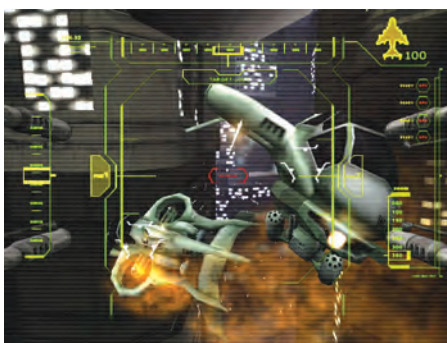
It seems that, as some wise person once remarked, the more things change, the more they stay the same. At least, that's what the people of the Red Faction universe must think. After their first liberation struggle, their chosen ruler, Sopot, becomes a tyrant. So, it is time once again, boys and girls, for the dogs of war to be loosed, and for revolution to rule the day...

Most people are of the opinion that first person shooters do not belong on consoles and, I must admit that, in most cases, I am inclined to agree. However, the first version of Red Faction was an exception to this... as is the follow up title, Red Faction 2. Developed by the software geniuses at Volition and published by THQ, Red Faction 2 once again returns the player to a setting ripped apart by the fires of revolution. As part of a crack military team turned renegades, the player must help overthrow the government. But who knows what secrets lurk in the hearts of men, and what betrayals wait along the way?

Like its predecessor, Red Faction 2 is an action packed game, full of explosions and gunfire, resplendent with geometry that can be blown up (and has to be, in many instances) and tons of smart enemies (who duck and dive and run for help when threatened.) However, a few more features have been added - like, for example, the player's team mates who, for once, are actually useful, smart and helpful. Many a time my fat was pulled out the fire by an observant AI character whacking an enemy creeping up behind me. As before, the game is very controller intensive. In other words, you will use every button on the controller. Count on it. This takes a little getting used to (and you're not gonna play this without a DualShock 2 or similar analog controller) but once you get into the swing of things, Red Faction 2 makes for an exhilarating game indeed. With a wide variety of weapons at your disposal and a somewhat non-linear mission set-up (meaning that there is more than one



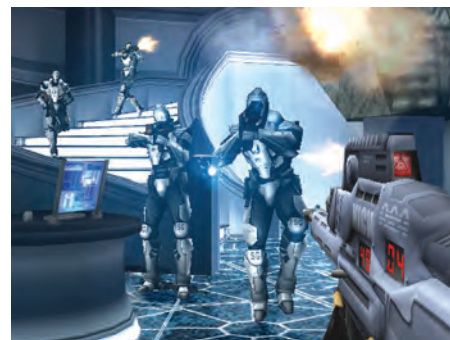
▲ It was at that moment that Harold realised that he might be ever so slightly out-gunned...



way to skin a cat within individual missions) the game offers the player many options... whether you prefer the big guns or like using dual small arms, everything is available to you, as long as you have the ammo. Additionally, the player will once again make use of vehicles, sometimes as a gunner and sometimes as a

primary pilot and gunner (in the case of one particularly impressive suit of mechanised battle armour.) Good graphics, challenging missions, great sound, a witty AI and an interesting story make Red Faction 2 a very fine game to play - not to mention an enjoyable multiplayer option. In fact, if more shooters like this came out for the PS2, less people would argue against the genre. But, then again, aiming in the game is difficult (in fact, the game is quite challenging overall.) To counter the slow speed of analog aiming, the game does grant the player a little leeway in terms of dead straight shooting. If you miss your target by a couple of

developer: volition
 publisher: thq
 distributor: ster kinekor 0111 445 7900
 price: R699.00
 genre: first person shooter
 internet: www.thq.com



inches, the game will compensate, in other words. This is something of a questionable practice - some may say that it makes the game too easy - but we do have to consider the medium in which the game is delivered. It is difficult to use your analog controller the way you would a keyboard and mouse set-up... Overall, a very worthwhile title. Give it a try if you like your action fast and furious.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1-4 Players	Analog Vibration compatible
PLUS	MINUS
Good graphics Smart AI Enthralling	Aiming compensation Linear at times
AT A GLANCE	
A great sequel that lives up to its predecessor, Red Faction 2 proves that first person shooters can work on consoles. With tons of action and a great number of vehicles and weapons to use, Red Faction 2 will provide the action gamer with many hours of fun, as well as a pretty good story to follow. Viva la Revolution!	
score 82	

kingdom hearts

developer: squaresoft
 publisher: square
 distributor: ster kinokor [011] 445 7900
 price: R699.00
 genre: adventure
 internet: www.kingdomhearts.com

Kingdom Hearts sees the unlikely pairing of console RPG heavyweight Square and animated film heavyweight Disney, in a game that, conceptually, seems utterly ridiculous, yet the result is an impressive adventure title that truly needs to be seen to be believed.



All bite, no bark? Kingdom Hearts is a far more adventure and combat orientated game than Square's famous Final Fantasy series, with all the action taking place in real time, and believe me, there's a ton of action on offer. The biggest problem I encountered with the game dynamic was the camera which, in trying to follow Sora around, often ends up stuck against a wall, or hiding the protagonist behind a myriad of enemies. However, the game's combat sequences are so fast paced and engrossing, that I often found myself forgetting about the camera flaws. Nonetheless, it becomes a persistent irritation, but there are, thankfully, controls to reposition the camera more suitably. As is to be expected from a Square game, each of your characters gains experience and levels, and learns new techniques and spells as the game progresses to keep things fresh and exciting, and additional XP can be gained by executing blocks and counter attacks during combat. Although the game's main story flow path is designed in a very linear fashion, there are nonetheless several side-quests and mini-games to keep you amused, all in traditional Square vein, as are the challenging boss fights.

Although the idea of Goofy and Squall Leonhart side by side seems nothing less than total absurdity, it has indeed been done. The story behind Kingdom Hearts is that a number of worlds between which the gateways were meant to remain eternally shut have become connected, and they are having their life forces sucked out one by one by a band of monsters known as the Heartless. You take on the role of Sora, a young lad from a remote island who sets out with his friends to explore his own world, but ends up on a quest, aided by Donald Duck and Goofy, to save the entire universe from unspeakable evil. Throughout the game, both Square's technological expertise and Disney's skilful humour become apparent, and you ultimately become so engrossed in the game that the pairing seems to be a match made in heaven.

▼ "Yes, I see it, it's over... Good lord, Goofy, you're speaking in Japanese!"



▼ Let me guess... Donald Duck's mummy, right?



▲ "No, Mr Purple Cape Guy, I don't know these weirdos... Never seen 'em before in my life. Honest"

Technicolor Graphically, Kingdom Hearts succeeds in recreating each Disney character, and his or her appropriate environment, perfectly. Facial textures, expressions and body language are all present, and add immensely to the depth of the characters. Even characters unique to Kingdom Hearts display nearly flawless design. The cut-scenes are wonderfully executed, and cause the sometimes silly story to remain constantly engrossing. In terms of sound, the effects and backing tracks in Kingdom Hearts aren't particularly bad, but the voice acting is



absolutely superb, coming from an all-star cast including the likes of Haley Joel Osment. **That's all, folks** Ultimately, Kingdom Hearts is certainly one of the most unique games ever created, and although Square and Disney appear to be a rather odd couple, their collaboration has produced an absolutely riveting title, which succeeds despite a few bothersome flaws such as the mischievous camera. Kingdom Hearts is a game that will please

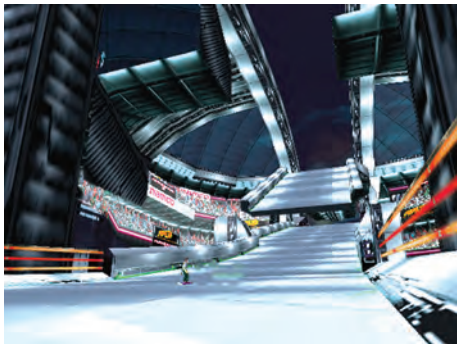
most players, be they fans of either Square or Disney (although it is a tad darker than most Disney productions), or even if they're just looking for an enjoyable RPG or adventure gaming experience.

REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1 Player 131 kb memory	Analog Vibration compatible
PLUS	MINUS
Unique Riveting Graphics	Sometimes frustrating
AT A GLANCE	
The unlikely pairing of Square and Disney in Kingdom Hearts is a success, creating a superbly entertaining adventure title sure to please fans of either company. Great graphics and an exciting play dynamic, complemented by amazing voice acting make this a sure winner, despite its flaws.	
score 91	

alpine racer 3

developer: namco
publisher: namco
distributor: ster kinekor [011] 445 7900
price: R699.00
genre: snowboarding simulator
internet: www.namco.com

In the world of extreme sports, a great many activities seem to gravitate towards pristine snowy slopes. In console gaming, a great many titles seem to gravitate towards extreme sports. But very few are capable of capturing the thrill and excitement properly, it seems...



Someone once said that "less is more." They obviously never played on the PlayStation 2. Take, for example, this latest title from developer Namco, called Alpine Racer 3. What I don't understand is this: when you have a powerful piece of hardware like the PS2 at your disposal, or any next generation console, for that matter, why not use it to its full potential? This view is one that Namco obviously does not share with me, because Alpine Racer 3 is, dare I say it, bad. Graphically, I have seen better games on the PS One, and the control system is so utterly simplified that the player gets completely bored half way through the first race. Basically, all you have to do as a player is steer your character. Oh, yes, and have them crouch down every now and then for a burst of speed. But otherwise, you are pretty much guaranteed to do nothing. The game even

performs tricks automatically - no player input required! Could this be the beginning of an entirely new breed of couch potato, too lazy to move their thumbs too much? Okay, not true. You have to buy better equipment too. Ooooh, I am shivering with excitement. Come on guys? What do you take us, the gaming public, for? Namco is a long standing developer with great amounts of skill. Why then do they produce a game that is, for all intents and purposes, boring as well as ugly? Did they rush development? It certainly looks like it. This game is the simple type of thing that three year olds are generally given to play - but these days, they'd probably get bored too. If you like your gaming to be just 2 degrees this side of "coma," then you'll find this game exciting. If the most tense thing you've ever played is Windows Solitaire, prepare for a thrill ride. If you like a good game with tons of action, great graphics, good music and general excitement, buy something else. This is a case where less is, very definitely, less.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Simple controls	Boring Ify graphics
score 45	

haven: call of the king

developer: traveller's tales
publisher: midway
distributor: ster kinekor [011] 445 7900
price: R699.00
genre: adventure
internet: www.havengame.com

Haven: Call of the King, the latest offering from Traveller's Tales, claims to be the adventure game to end all adventure games, offering a multitude of genres within a single game. Although it's not quite "all that and a bag of chips", it's still one of the better PS2 platform games currently available.

Haven: Call of the King sees you controlling a young slave, by the name of Haven, on a quest to (surprise, surprise) free the world from its evil oppressor. Essentially, Haven is a standard platform game, albeit a fast paced and frenetic one. It



does, however, attempt to integrate several other genres into its own play dynamic, so the tedium of the usual "run and fetch" quests is often relieved by a racing, shooting or puzzle mini-game. Haven is an epic game, set across over 40 "episodes", that sees you visiting towns, pyramids and even the depths of space. However, it is somewhat hampered by a few flaws. The mini-games are designed in a basic manner, so as not to alienate gamers unfamiliar with those genres. Furthermore, although the control system is generally smooth, it is difficult to perfectly co-ordinate Haven's moves, particularly when trying to



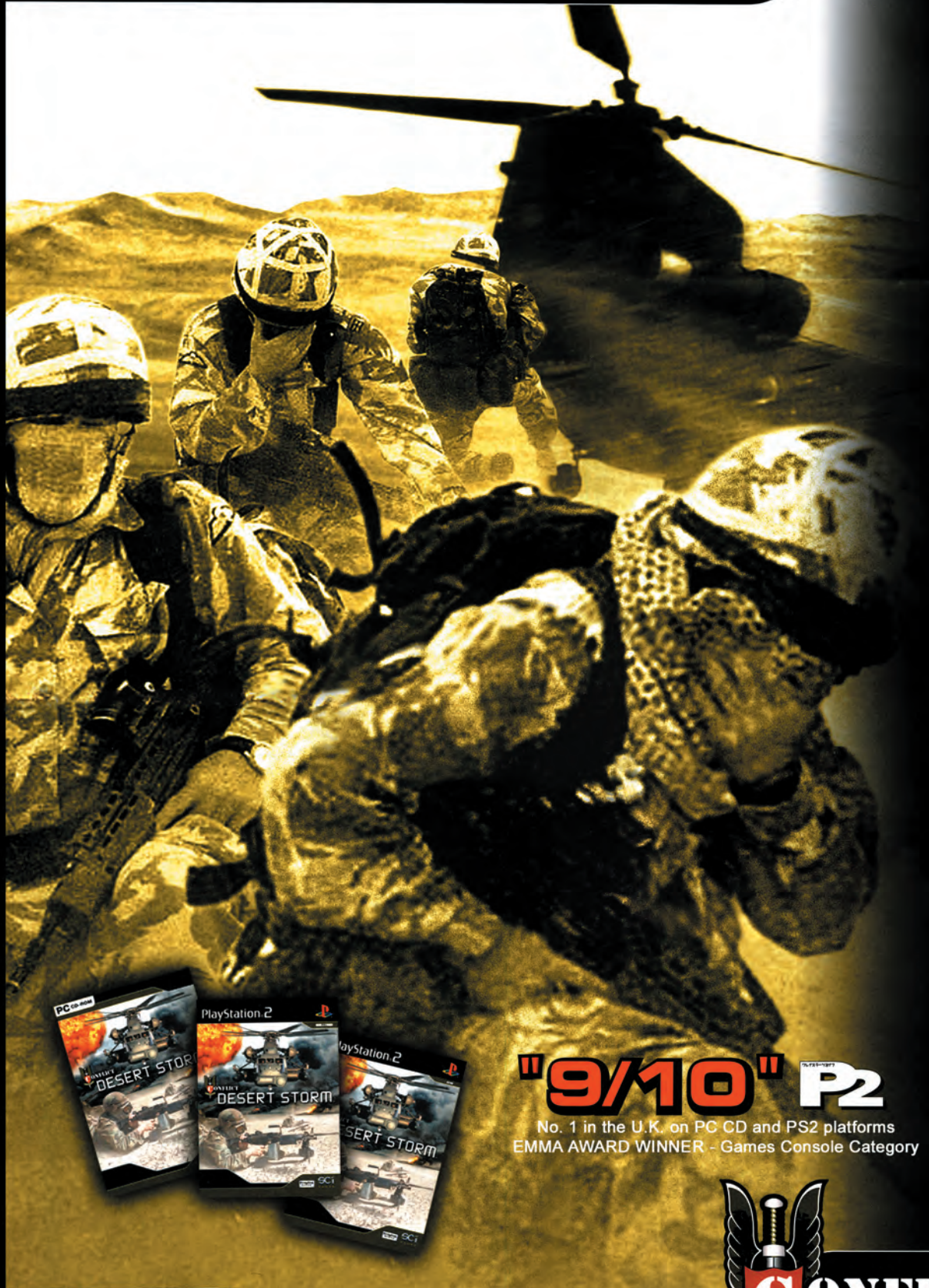
grab onto a ledge, and Haven's primary weapon is imprecise and frustrating. Haven's visuals are of an average standard, much environmental attention to detail serves to immerse the gamer in the world of Haven. The art on which the visuals are based, however, appears to have been mistranslated at times, leaving the game looking just plain strange, rather than its intended surreal look. The voice acting and sound effects are of a decent standard, but much of Haven's aural appeal comes from the soundtrack which displays moments of pure excellence. Ultimately, Haven: Call of the King seems somewhat over-ambitious, but is nonetheless a refreshingly unique addition to the PS2's platform arsenal, though you may want to try it before laying out the cash.



REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
PLUS	MINUS
No load times Innovative	Overdone at times Can be frustrating
score 72	

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ty the tasmanian tiger

I've never been to Australia. I doubt I'd visit it either. Why go to a foreign country if nothing is really foreign? Let's see, they speak some form of British English, they drink beer, love 4x4s, have ample spaces full of nothing and lots of sharks in the sea. We have all those too. Granted, they have things such as the Kangaroo, koala bear and platypus, but I don't care much for flying several thousand kilometers just to stare up at a small bear that's likely to try and urinate on me. No, siree.

Of course, if the Tasmanian Tiger still existed, I would, because they are cool. For one, they love surfer shorts. And another - they love boomerangs. Plus they hang around with other strange creatures unique to the Australian continent: talking Cockatoos, Ski-resort-owning koalas and insane, robot-building dinosaurs. Sure, these might be slightly inaccurate, but considering the aforementioned tiger is now extinct, I think it's fair to assume the best, don't you? Back to reality, Ty the Tasmanian Tiger is a new offering from Krome Studios, who have one other game under their belt: Sunny Garcia Surfing. Considering that that game doesn't ring any kind of bell, and with initial skepticism of this just being Jax & Daxter in Australia, I approached Ty carefully. And initially the game doesn't give up much of its charm. Of course, like any good beer, it saves the best for last. The principle is really simple - you have to recover relics that will rescue your ancestors and defeat the evil Dinosaur bent on destroying mammals. Getting the relics are easy - there is a machine for that. But you need to get powercells, called Thunder Eggs, to power the machine. Once you reach a quota, a relic is discovered, you face off a boss, and you get a new boomerang which will end up opening a new area for you. So it's the simple go-there-get-that approach. It doesn't



make for the gadgetry variance that Ratchet & Clank had, but its fun nonetheless. Ty wins on three crucial places, though, that make it a really fun game. Firstly, it's done really well with a lot of style. The developers went well into Australian outback culture, even to the point that Dunny's (outhouses) are your respawn spots, not to mention great sounds and soundtracks. Secondly, it's quite varied, both in location and play dynamic. Getting thunder eggs range from the standard get-all-the-gems approach to mini-games and racing challenges, and you'll travel to swamps, the outback, jungles, and even snow-bound mountains to get these gems and tasks. Lastly, it's highly playable, though I'm reluctant to give the developers this point, since it's not a new system. Kudos, though to Ty's boomerangs. One of the key changes that occur throughout the game are the boomerangs you get. Certain 'rangs work better against certain enemies, and their own usefulness depends on what they can do. You have the stock standard set that are great for throwing at enemy critters and grabbing them on the

developer: krome studios
 publisher: electronic arts
 distributor: ea africa [011] 516 8300
 price: R 449.00
 genre: platform
 internet: http://ty.ea.com

return. Then you'd get the likes of Aquarangs (for underwater), Zoomerangs (they allow you to zoom sniper-style on an enemy) and even Flamerangs, which can set things alight. Every now and then you'll get a new set, though they don't add any overall complexity



▼ Down here in Australia, we chase chicks a lot...



▼ It looks like the bugs of the Outback are bigger than most, mate



to the game. Still, they change things a bit, and they are fun to use - nothing quite gives you the satisfaction of lading in-between a group of lizards and disposing of them through quick flicks of your Tasmanian Tiger wrists.

Another catchy side to the game has to be the soundtrack. It's mostly a looping affair of cutesy tracks



▲ "Look, mate, quit jawin' and tell me if you know the way to Melbourne or not..."



▲ Hey, wait a minute! I thought Jonah Lomu lived in New Zealand...



▲ "Oh yeah? Well, I'm gonna clobber you with my 'rangs and stuff you down the dunny, you green freak!"

that is bound to annoy anyone in the room - except the person playing. I'm not sure what kind of outback voodoo this is (or if you get Outback Voodoo either), but as you play the game, you get to really enjoy the songs. Each area has its own looping backtrack, themed to where you are. The whole variation in the sounds and locations save the game from being really mundane, as do the quirky characters you'll meet. Every zone has a few new people to get acquainted with, all of them truly Australian, and all based on some sort of Aussie wildlife that would make a beer-guzzling outback mum all warm and fuzzy inside (though that might just be the beer itself).

Ty is a blast, but it doesn't reach the complexity of its peers. There is no real puzzle-solving involved, and you spend most of your time simply collecting things, herding creatures or defeating enemies. Doing this might vary, though - one area has you riding atop a huge bushpig, another demands a lot of swimming underwater, and the ice level is full of frozen rivers to slide down. But it's less brain and more persistence that gets you through an area. Still, the game's friendly and happy nature manages that you never get frustrated (though fellow office workers threatened me with death if they had to hear the soundtrack one more time - but you can't get enough of it while playing. Send flowers to my wake, please). Of course, part of the frustration is mainly thanks to the obviousness of the game.

There are info boards to trigger at any important point, and the map you can access will give you the locations of tasks that need to be done in a level. There's also health and extra lives galore, so you're not overly careful in your conduct when approaching hordes of big lizard men or storming at stone pillars atop your bush pig. Also, you don't need to collect all the possible thunder eggs - just enough for the quota, which goes up with every new area that you open up. This is much more forgiving, because I simply

found some tasks either impossible or too annoying to complete. It might be as simple as not finding all the gems on a level, but it's not really fun having to look for these things, especially in harder-to-navigate stages such as the underwater one.

Control-wise Ty doesn't fail, but it fails to impress. You have the standard movement, camera, attack, jump and special-attack options. There's also a button to move the camera behind Ty and one to aim at enemies. These are easy to master, and you won't really find the game throwing you in very tight spots - it's as laid back as the theme it's based on. There are some frustrating puzzles, but nothing that really challenges you. If you don't manage something, you can just leave for another area and try again later. Usually this is the best approach, since most of the time you simply missed something straight-forward.

I'd have to nitpick for any real problems, but I'd have to mention that controlling Ty under water could be easier. The developers also opted to camouflage crystals - for instance on a snow level they'd be blue - making them rather hard to spot. And the mini-games are mostly too easy and fast to complete. You'll spend most of your time hunting the said crystals.

I'm not declaring Ty bad. It's great in that it's well done, long and challenging, and is definitely worth your time if you like 3D platformers. But don't expect it to blow your mind if you've already played the likes of Ratchet & Clank. It's not fast-paced either, making this more Spyro and less Crash Bandicoot. If you haven't noticed yet, I reference quite a few games from the same genre, because once you strip out Ty's Australian heritage, there's little that differentiates it from its peers. It's definitely aimed at a younger audience, but the cartoon-style and casual feel-good nature of the game will appeal to anyone, even lunatics who fantasize about cattle.



also available on
PS2

REVIEWED BY

James "Dunny" Francis

REQUIRED

1 Player
1 Memory block

CONTROLLER SUPPORT

PLUS

Fun
Long
Not frustrating

MINUS

Nothing new

AT A GLANCE

Ty doesn't arrive with much new, except his own charm and an Australian feel. With that, he doesn't have any nasty surprises either, and delivers on what it is: a 3D platformer of get-them-gems proportions. Nothing memorable, but great while you play it.

score 77

007 nightfire

developer: eurocom entertainment
publisher: electronic arts
distributor: ea africa (011) 516 8300
price: R449.00
genre: first person shooter
internet: www.ea.com

A piece of useless information I picked up during my long, hard schedule of watching TV, is that James Bond drinks a weak Martini. See, a Martini is stirred with a special spoon so not to break the ice, but shake it and the ice melts faster, thus making it weaker. Of course, if your job includes racing down snow-laden roads chased by gun-crazy terrorists, I suppose you'd be forgiven not to opt for Tequila bodyshots instead.

One of life's biggest lessons is to realize that there simply are people out there who don't like James Bond. Try as hard as we might, these people don't seem to be suffering from any kind of mind-control or disease or vitamin deficiency. They simply don't like the man, and we'll have to live with that. For the rest of us, though, there will always be Bond, Martini, one-liners, Bond girls, Bond movies and, of course, Bond games. Considering all that, Bond has had quite good luck with the virtual arena so far, compared to the likes of Star Wars and Star Trek at least, but that doesn't say much.

▼ Why does he always get to go to all the cool parties?



He's definitely had some appalling titles, but those are quickly forgotten once you play the likes of the N64 Goldeneye, which everyone tells me is fab. I wouldn't know, since I never played it, and that might make me less qualified to review Nightfire in its GameCube incarnation, because there is no doubt that's the obvious comparison.

Off the bat, Nightfire is not based on any Bond movie. Instead, it's a stand-alone mission in the life of our favourite double-oh agent as he has to stop yet another madman-with-too-much-money from destroying the world. Sadly, for some reason this also means that no-one from the movie gave their voices, even though Pierce Brosnan is obviously Bond in this game.

Your mission is to investigate, and eventually stop, Raphael Drake, a European industrialist who has bigger plans afoot. To do this will require a lot of shooting, driving, flying and gadgeting. Oh yes, there is action aplenty in the life of a super spy, and these range from running around an office block, shooting darts into guards to taking out Japanese mobsters at an estate in

the Far East. Throw in maybe screaming down snowy mountain slopes on the back of an armoured snowmobile (complete with mounted machine gun, of course) and racing your Austin Martin V12 Vanquish down the streets of Paris (missiles come standard), and you're in the British Playboy Agent zone.

As you can see, gameplay is varied enough. The game is chapter based, and once one is finished, another unlocks. Depending on how well and fast you finish a chapter, you get awarded points, and subsequently medallions that open up

new skins, weapons and other goodies. Of course, I'm not one for award-driven affairs - I'm here to play Bond, and there's plenty of that to go around. Most of the game is reliant on FPS mode, and strangely the console versions of Nightfire come across much better than the PC title, which shows that you should never port a game to the platform where its genre is the strongest. In fact, as far as that goes, Nightfire won't stand up against the likes of RTCW or Half-Life on the PC, but on the console its rock solid, thanks to its more arcade-styled action.

Two downsides come to mind, though. The enemy AI is really stupid, and since the game allows for Auto-aim, it's not hard at all to dispose of the hordes of thugs that come your way. This results into a far too short game. Some chapters are over in a matter of minutes, and most levels are downright too easy. The developers also force you to finish a chapter, else you can't save your progress, which means you'll be done in a few hours anyway. Still, it looks great, is authentically Bond (bar the voice-acting), and really makes you feel like the uber-agent we all deserve to be...

also available on PS2

REVIEWED BY	
James "Weasels Galore" Francis	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1 - 4 Players	
2 Memory blocks	
PLUS	MINUS
It's Bond!	Short
Varied gameplay	Dumb AI
Great visuals	Non-original voices
AT A GLANCE	
Bond comes to the GameCube, and it's a fun and intense ride, though not a very long one, thanks to rather short levels and stupid enemy AI. Still, it will stand up to most any Bond game or movie, and deserve its spot in the Bond mythsos.	
score 72	

▼ "It is cold out here, Meester Bond. What say we go inside and have some hot chocolate?"



▼ Using his fountain pen sniper rifle and telescopic cell phone, Bond finishes off yet another enemy



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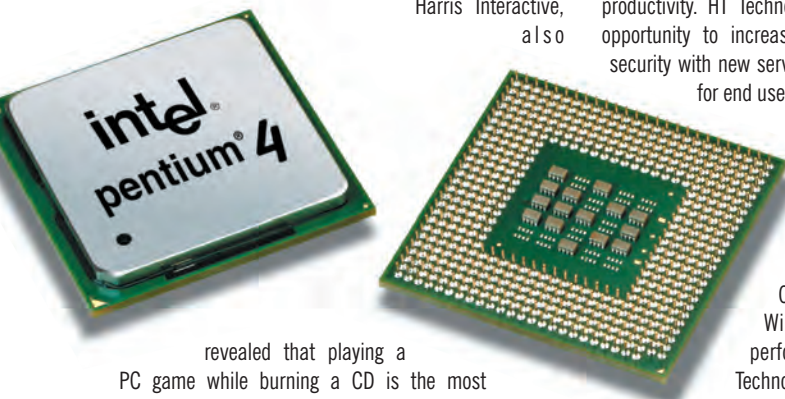
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"Just as people multitask to get more done, we expect our PCs to do the same," said Louis Burns, vice president and general manager of Intel's Desktop Platforms Group. "Hyper-Threading Technology is a breakthrough computing innovation that helps consumers and business people accomplish more in less time."

More than 75 percent of computer users say they multitask at least occasionally or frequently on their computers, according to a recent survey sponsored by Intel. The survey, fielded by Harris Interactive, also



revealed that playing a PC game while burning a CD is the most popular multitasking combination. Nearly 50 percent of people owning a PC that is three or more years old said they do not trust their older computers to handle more than one high-powered task at a time. PCs supporting HT Technology and based on the Pentium 4 processor at 3.06 GHz are available immediately from leading computer makers worldwide. Computer shoppers can identify these PCs by the "HT" insignia on the Pentium 4 processor logo.

What is Hyper-Threading Technology?

HT Technology brings increased performance to

computer users in two ways: using multithreaded software or using software in a multitasking environment. Software applications that have been written to use multiple pieces of code called "threads" view the Pentium 4 processor at 3.06 GHz with HT Technology as two processors. HT Technology allows the processor to work on two separate threads at the same time rather than one at a time. In addition, applications can benefit in a multitasking environment - operating two or more different software programs at the same time - when run under operating systems such as Windows XP or Linux. Both ways add up to extra performance and less waiting for the computer user.

Helps Consumers With Digital Video and Audio Editing

The latest high-performance PCs allow for powerful digital creativity, fast online gaming and flexible

Hyper-Threading Technology Allows Software to "See" Two Processors Instead of One

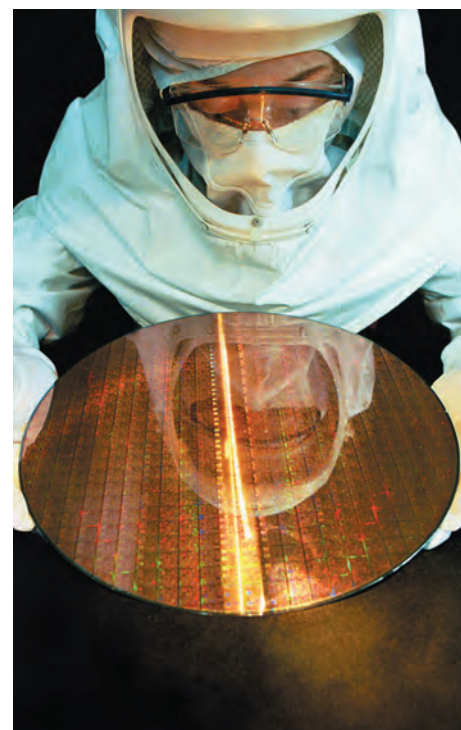
multitasking. Pentium 4 processor based-systems using HT Technology can remain responsive to the touch while processing tasks in the background. For example, end users can play a realistic PC game while transferring a family photo album onto a DVD, or burn a music CD while editing home movies. Mixing music and editing video at the same time is 21 percent faster with this new technology vs. a 3.06 GHz Pentium 4 processor-based system without HT Technology.

Lets Business Users Get More Done

Systems based on the new Pentium 4 processor at 3.06 GHz increase business computing efficiency and boost productivity. HT Technology provides IT managers the opportunity to increase infrastructure efficiency and security with new services while minimizing disruption for end users. Background applications such as continuous virus scanning, encryption, or compression can be run simultaneously without loss of responsiveness. For example, compressing an Outlook folder while running WinZip saw a 35 percent performance boost with HT Technology enabled. Adobe Photoshop can run 21 percent faster while running a McAfee virus scan.

Systems based on the Pentium 4 processor at 3.06 GHz supporting HT Technology are available now*. Intel is also shipping boxed Intel Pentium 4 processors up to 3.06 GHz to Intel authorized distributors for system integrators worldwide.

* Hyper-Threading Technology requires a computer system with an Intel Pentium 4 processor at 3.06 GHz or higher, a chipset and BIOS that utilize this technology, and an operating system that includes optimizations for this technology. Performance will vary depending on the specific hardware and software you use.



[above] 3 Gigahertz Pentium 4 Processor

An Intel technician holds a 12-inch wafer that contains hundreds of 3 GHz Pentium 4 processors. The processors are the first to operate at the speed of three billion cycles per second. They also include a performance-enhancing innovation called Hyper-Threading Technology, which allows a processor to handle multiple "threads," or streams of work, simultaneously. Intel estimates that HT Technology can improve a personal computer's performance by 25 percent.

Who says you can't buy love.....

Wingman Force 3D

Feel the action in your games. This low cost, force feedback joystick lets you feel weapon recoils, explosions, and much more. The space-saving design takes up minimal room on your desktop. Includes a twist handle for convenient rudder control.



R799.00

Mouseman Dual Optical

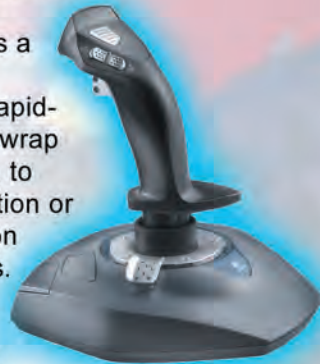
This optical mouse delivers twice the precision as other optical mice. Two sensors work seamlessly to calculate surface microstructures while a patented microprocessor synthesizes this information in real time. The result? A faster, more accurate, and smoother performance on a variety of surfaces.



R499.00

Wingman Attack2

Entry-level joystick with new, modern design for more performance. WingMan® Attack™ 2 provides a versatile grip handle with five programmable buttons and a rapid-fire trigger. You can choose to wrap your thumb around the handle, to hold on tight during intense action or to position it on top of the action buttons to quickly fire weapons.



R299.00

Wingman Formula GP

Precision-engineered for speed and control. This low cost racing wheel lets you experience the thrills of driving a racecar. The custom designed wheel shape includes rubber hand grips for superior comfort and precise steering control.



R499.00

Wingman Extrem Digital 3D

Digital response and control mean fast, accurate, deadly play. This cool design features the new Logitech handle, so efficient you have to try to believe. The twist capability gives this stick 3D capability. The rapid fire trigger, one 8 way hat switch and 4 programmable buttons intelligently placed on the handle will increase your efficiency in the heat of battle.



R399.00

Wingman Formula Force GP

Feel what really happens on the racetrack. This low cost, force feedback steering wheel lets you feel the road, bumps, walls, and crashes. The custom designed wheel shape includes rubber hand grips for premium comfort and precise steering control. Two wheel-mounted gear shifters allow for fast gear changes while staying in control.



R999.00

All prices including VAT Prices exclude delivery

All prices subject to final approval

Logitech Cordless Playstation Controller

Play where you want with 2.4GHz Cordless Freedom and have no cords to trip over. 2.4 GHz Radio Frequency, 50-hour battery life, 17-foot range with no cords to trip over, 8 way pressure sensitive D-pad, Vibration Feedback, Digital, Analog and Driving modes, Analog buttons. Use up to 8 gamepads in the same room with no interference. Works with games for PlayStation™ PSone™ and PlayStation 2

R999.00



Logitech Driving Force

Feel the new level of driving realism in GRAN TURISMO™ 3 A-spec and other driving games that support Logitech® Force Feedback. This newest force feedback steering wheel lets you feel the road, car handling, bumps, walls, and crashes like never before. The wheel has rubber hand grips for premium comfort and precise steering control.

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Logitech Z-540

The Logitech Z540 enhances the PC gaming experience through a revolutionary subwoofer design delivering twice the bass energy of similar systems. The 5-piece system utilizes patented M3D for realistic surround sound. Innovative satellites stand on desk or mount on the wall and provide silky smooth mid and high frequencies.

R1199.00



Logitech Z-560

Logitech's THX® certified Z560 is a 4.1 surround sound system providing 400 watts of awesome power for PC games, music and DVDs. The brute force subwoofer design delivers huge, room-thumping bass while the revolutionary satellite drivers enhance mid and high-range tones. Feel as if you're right in the middle of it.

R3799.00



Pre Book Now, Available Soon!

Logitech MOMO Racing Force

Turbocharge your performance with the authentic MOMO® racing wheel. Designed by racing professionals, the full rubber wheel, stick shifter, foot pedals and force-feedback technology give you the realistic racing experience you're looking for. Includes two paddle shifters, six programmable buttons, and realistic gas and brake pedals to put you in full control.

R1499.00



Logitech Cordless Freedom Joystick

Experience the freedom and eliminate the clutter. This revolutionary cordless joystick uses Logitech's 2.4 GHz Cordless Freedom technology to deliver reliable, lag-free performance. The innovative design features an aluminium trigger and throttle and a heavy rubber base.

R999.00



Logitech Z-680

Logitech's Z-680 is a breathtaking THX-certified 5.1 surround sound speaker system. Using Dolby® Digital and DTS® hardware decoding for true 5.1 digital sound, the Z-680 speaker system pounds out 450 watts of RMS power for PCs, video game consoles, and more. Includes a digital SoundTouch control centre for precise control. 2-year guarantee.

R6499.00



To order or pre book contact us on

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Innovation in Game Controllers

A behind the scenes chat

A local company recently designed and released a steering wheel/analog pad for the PlayStation 2. The Deeziltrax M2 Racer controller has just hit the market after years of development and research, and we sat down with Arthur Bitzounis the controller designer and Graham Leech, who keeps the business side in order, alongside Michael Levy from local distributor MFP.

Q So this is a completely locally designed controller? It's not imported from anywhere else?

Arthur: No, not at all. It's a completely South African innovation, designed locally. The manufacturing was done in the Far East, in China.

Q The controller is designed for the PSOne and PS2. Has it been to Sony yet for their stamp of approval?

Arthur: No, not yet, but that is one of the things we are planning to approach down the line. It's particularly important for International distribution, which is something we are currently working on.

Q Why the PlayStation 2, instead of the GameCube, Xbox or PC?

Arthur: Well, obviously we're targeting the bigger chunk of the console gaming market. The PlayStation 2 is far ahead of the rest - they sold over 6 million units worldwide in Christmas alone, so it made more sense to go for that market.

Q The controller is distinctly for driving games. What made you go for this genre?

Arthur: We wanted to create something that was a combination of both a standard design pad and at the same time a driving pad. The standard racing controller is already pricy, and then to get another standard controller just adds to the cost. This is far more effective.

Graham: If you look at the games out there, there is a very large market penetration for racing games than with most genres on the consoles, especially when you look at titles such as Gran Turismo 3 and the Need for Speed games. And you have devices that either clip onto a table, or you need to use the standard controller. To innovate upon the standard controller is quite a tough area. But in the area of racing controllers, there is a whole lot that can be brought to your standard pad. So what Arthur's done is take features from your big

steering wheel controller and place it into a smaller, hand-held device.

Arthur: The downside of the dual analog controllers are the analog sticks. These are great for most games, but when it comes to steering, you need to hold down the one stick with your thumb and steer left and right and sometimes the other one is to accelerate. Either way, it doesn't really deliver a true steering feeling.

Q Have you guys field tested it amongst gamers?

Michael: We've tested it internally - inside MFP, especially amongst the gamers in the staff. We've also given it to some professionals in the local gaming industry, and the feedback has been very positive.

Q When working on this controller, did you have a look at the ranges of other peripheral manufacturers, such as Mad Katz? Was there any influence from such third-party developers?

Arthur: Well, obviously the third party manufacturers out there who have a long standing in the market, such as Mad Katz, bank on their name as a sales point. We've had a look at the other products - I've done extensive traveling to shows such as

E3 and ECTS - and they still focus more on normal controllers and big steering wheels. There have been some products along the line of a smaller steering controller, but once again they follow the route of a radio-control type, which is a trigger-based single-hand device. Its fine and you steer with the other hand, but to steer you're moving your finger forward and backwards, yet your car is moving left and right.

Graham: A lot of the innovation we've seen has been very limited, and what we've done is establish a local



entity, so that we can release the controller in South Africa and make a mark on the industry, under the name of DeezilTrax. Off-shore, though, we are licensing the technology out, so if a company uses the technology, their logo would appear on the controller.

Q This controller is aimed at the PSOne and PlayStation 2. Do you have plans to release versions for the other platforms?

Graham: Yes, we've already had discussions with the Xbox people [Microsoft] in our visit to ECTS and disclosed our product to them. They thought it was quite innovative. The good thing is that we don't need to have a game slot, which a lot of other gamepads need. It's as simple as changing the IC and some electronics, and the controller would be Xbox-ready.

Q Are you guys going to focus on racing controllers, or is this the beginning of a bigger market, with more ideas?

Graham: In South Africa we are licensed to bring in other overseas products as well. We are, for example, licensed to bring in the Williams racing wheel. There are other products we plan to bring in as well. One is a

skateboard/snowboard simulator, which is similar to the ones you'd see on arcade machines. So we're looking beyond just releasing our own designed product.

Q Where is it available right now?

Michael: At the moment it's in Pick n' Pay and Look & Listen. We are obviously also negotiating with other retailers to get the controller onto their shelves.

Q How do you perceive the local gaming market? It's been growing well for the past year or so. Where do you see it going?

Graham: The local gaming market is really under-developed. If you look at the market, you get the retailer, you get the distributors and so on. But there isn't a joint effort to develop the local gaming market in South Africa - everyone seems to work more in an ad hoc process.

One exposure we've enjoyed was through Electronic Arts, thanks to collaboration with MFP, to help with penetration into the market. Because the more boxes that are out there, the more games are sold and the more accessories and controllers are bought by the end-user.

That's really what we want - we are very young and very new to this market, but we want to bring in key products that will help develop the local market.

Q What about a PC version?

Arthur: There is a plan for a PC version. When I first designed the controller, the immediate next platform was PC. In fact, the thoughts were on the PC from the start. It's just that we haven't gotten there because of certain priorities.

Q Any plans for enhanced versions/cordless versions?

Arthur: To do a cordless version, we'd definitely have to go to a radio frequency. Those are expensive - you're talking about controllers that come to the market and retail for around a thousand rand, which is not very affordable.

Graham: The thing is we have access to all those technologies. The more important thing was to focus on a product that will be profitable for us at the time. Of course, you can't build a company image on just one controller.

There are more controllers coming out this

year that we've developed, so that will give us a range feel. If this controller goes into a mark 2 release, changing the design and features a bit, that could include a cordless version.

Q What else makes the controller unique?

Arthur: Well, as you can see on the box, it caters for a desktop function, for your lap or to be held as a standard controller, which none of the other controllers cater for. So I believe it's a high-impact innovation.

Graham: It means that you can use the controller in various ways - in your hands, on your lap - whatever's more comfortable for you. Other bigger racing-style controllers expect to be clamped to a table or held with your legs - this is a more lateral approach.

Q From concept to now, what time period are we looking at? How long did it take for this controller to see the light of day?

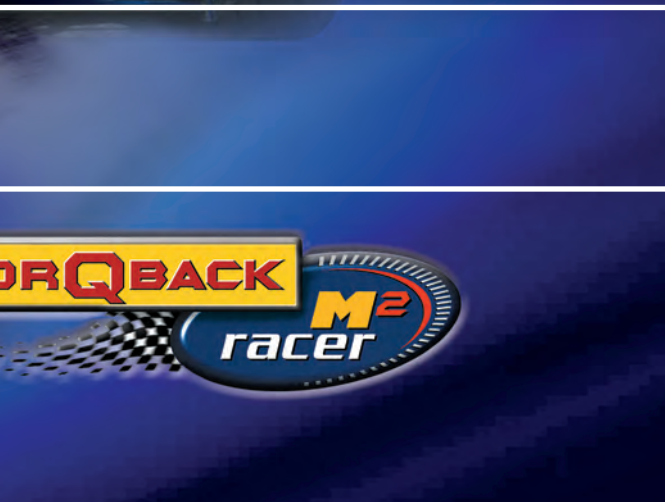
Arthur: Well, my involvement started back in 1995, when I traveled around and started looking at the controller market. I come from an industrial-design background and these concepts always interested me. So I have been prototyping and making concepts. So we're looking at before mould status of about 2 years or so of research and development. From there on it's been about a year of tweaking and refining the design, getting investment and distribution, getting the packaging designed. So you can say around three and a half years of development.

Graham: That wasn't only the design of the product, though. That includes building the infrastructure for future controllers. See, you have to build a stable of products. The market does churn.

You have twenty-four, maybe thirty six, months and then that device will not look as it does today - it will look very different.

Arthur: By May this year we hope to release another very cutting-edge product, which already has provisional patent status. But we'll reveal more on that once the time is right.

The Deeziltrax M2 Racer is a completely local design aimed at the PlayStation and PlayStation 2 markets. For our impressions on it, read the review on the next page.



M2 RACER

deeziltrax m2 racer

Well, here's a first! It seems that South Africa is becoming more and more prominent within the electronic entertainment industry, with various projects on the go at the moment. One of these projects is the M2 Racer, the first locally designed controller for the PlayStation and PlayStation 2.

Ostensibly for use with driving simulators, the first thing that strikes one about the M2 Racer is the large steering "wheel" control... but more about that later. Johannesburg based Deeziltrax make some pretty big claims about their product and, for the most part, they are certainly headed in the right direction. Specialisation in controllers may seem a little questionable, but when one considers the amount of driving games available, their popularity and, of course, the fact that no one has created the perfect console steering wheel yet, the M2 Racer appears to be a very promising product. I have to say that this is probably the most sturdily constructed controller I have ever come across. Made out of hard wearing plastic and non slip rubber, this controller would probably stand up to anything that was thrown at it - figuratively and literally. It is fitted with the standard digital PS controls - four front buttons, four shoulder buttons and a d-pad - as well as the two

controls that make it different: a large analog steering control, and an analog throttle roller. Additionally (which you can't see) the device contains Torqback vibration motors to add to the gaming experience. The M2 Racer is, as a steering device, relatively small. As a console controller, it is utterly enormous, and sits a little uncomfortably in the hands.



Two non slip rubber pads near the bottom of the controller help

with comfort, and the digital

buttons are well placed for standard play. Of course, steering with this device while using it as a hand held item is incredibly tricky, especially for those with small hands. However, a non-slip base allows for easy desk-top or lap-top use, freeing the user's hands up for all those finicky twists and turns. This is good because, although you can steer using your thumb, it's a bit

tough trying to get to grips with the controller when you don't use your whole hand.

Although this controller is definitely a step in the right direction, it does have a few problems, which are largely due to the controller's overall design. The first problem is one that will lead to much frustration for those players who like ultimate vehicular control. As I said before, steering with the thumb is tricky, and not quite as accurate as it could be. But this is the only way the player will be able to access the shoulder buttons, which are the most common buttons used in driving sims for gear changes. If you use the device as a desk-top or lap-top controller, getting to those buttons without weird hand contortions is next to impossible. The next hiccup is the steering wheel's sensitivity. The wheel has a massive central dead zone, followed by a sensitive steering zone on either side of it. This means that, until you get utterly used to it, wild steering is going to be a problem.

Overall, this is a great idea. A little work on recalibrating the steering wheel, as well as a possible repositioning of certain buttons in future models wouldn't hurt, but for the most part, the size of the unit is its real bonus - no more bulky steering devices to worry about, now that the Deeziltrax M2 Racer is around!

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Price	Size
Great idea	Button placement
Strong	Needs refinement

SUPPLIED BY: MFP [011] 723 1800
PRICE: R 350.00
INTERNET: www.deeziltrax.com

logitech z-680 speakers

The Z-680 is the top of the range of Logitech's new speaker range aimed at the home market. To dabble in some press release lingo, it's aimed at the average Joe who wants more bang for his buck, and to be able to use it on anything.

That's pretty much what the Z-680 does. It comes with Dolby 5.1 and THX support, as well as more connectors than you can shake a baton at. The set allows you to plug in via COAX, Standard speaker jacks and a digital connection. This also means you can plug it into pretty much anything that can push out a note without having to take a breath.



The Z-680's claim to fame is that you can plug it into your PC, DVD player and PlayStation 2. Considering everything on that list can take advantage of Dolby technology at some level, it's a good feature. The system pushes out a good 450 watts of sound, and comes with the standard 5 surround speakers, as well as a large sub woofer. The design is built around said woofer, and everything extends from it, including a nifty

and stylish display unit with the volume and general sound settings.

Style was also a buzzword while designing the set and this is most obvious in the speaker stands, made of steel and easily wall-mountable. The set also has its own remote, though I'd think they'd make this a bit bigger.

The only problem I have with the set is the manual, which is really below par to the rest of the system. It has most of the info you need, but it's as alluring as a liquidizer manual, and printed on cheaper paper. Still, you're likely to throw that aside and fiddle with the system instead - it's simple enough to work with.

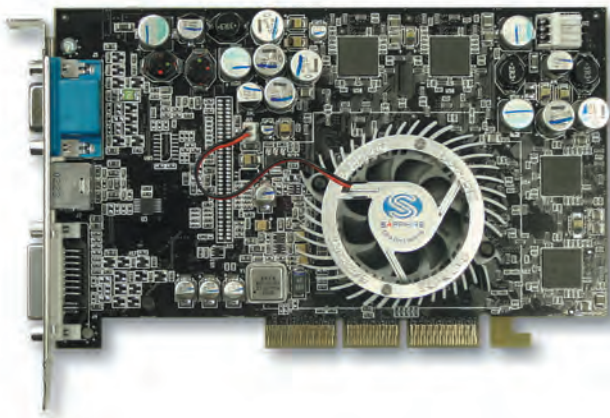
REVIEWED BY	
James "Decibel" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
User friendly design	Shoddy manual
Wall mountable stands	Average remote
Supports multiple inputs	

SUPPLIED BY: Workgroup [011] 203 9100
PRICE: R 4999.00
INTERNET: www.logitech.com

sapphire radeon 9700 pro

Put on your goggles and get ready to scream down the highway of graphic superdom. All you need is a new Radeon 9700 Pro, the games to push it, and the hardware to back it up. While you read this, I'm filling in my upgrade requisition form.

Off the bat - I'm an ATI fan. I've always seen them as the underdogs of the graphics card wars, though technically I'm wrong since ATI runs ahead of the rest, thanks to its strong footing in the business and OEM markets. But they don't make bad cards. ATI's problems have always been thanks to the notoriously bad drivers, where nVidia still keeps an edge over everyone else. All of this came to a boil when ATI released the 8500, and got a really bad response - not because they had a bad card so much as not having the drivers to back it. What to do? Well, you could simply release better drivers (easier said than done) or you could go the high road and produce a better card, with drivers to back it. This came in



the form of the R300 technology and the Catalyst drivers. R300 being the core technology behind the 9700 Pro, which was used to power the Quake 3 E3 demo and debuted to very happy gamers at QuakeCon 2002. ATI quickly re-established themselves into the market, thanks to some snappy engineering and more solid drivers. Finally someone caught on...

Sapphire, on the other hand, have been away for a while making ATI OEM cards, but they've decided to head back into the retail market with a powerful debut, namely the 9700 cards. As far as I know, they have the 9700 in their catalogue, and of course the 9700 Pro. The Pro can carry up to 256 mb of Ram, though the model we tested came with the more standard 128 Mb DDR.

The card looks stock standard to the traditional 9700 Pro, except that Sapphire opted for more efficient cooling technology for the card - very important considering the performance this baby is capable of. The card supports output to two monitors. On the back is the standard VGA-out, a DVI-I high definition port and a S-Video port. You're also supplied with a DVI-I to VGA converter

dongle, an S-Video to Composite converter, an S-Video cable and a Composite cable. In short, it's pretty easy to expand your desktop to another PC monitor or a standard television.

The card also ships with PowerDVD XP as well as the drivers, though I strongly recommend getting the latest drivers.

Now to the technical. The 9700 Pro is the most powerful card on the market. It beats its competition hands down. In the case of the GeForce 4, it's because the Pro was developed afterwards, and in the case of the Matrox Parhelia, the Pro has better architecture. In fact, on paper the Parhelia should compete, but in practice it's a slow performer. The 9700 Pro has a pixel fillrate of 2,600 million pixels per second compared to the GF4's 1,200 and a texel fillrate of 2,600 to the 2,400 of the nVidia. But the more important attributes are that it's ready-built for DirectX 9, and it uses version 2.0 for its Pixel Shaders, making use of smaller and more efficient sub-routines. Though the Parhelia

was first with four Vertex Shader pipelines, the Pro has a far better triangle engine, actually giving throughput that takes advantage of the extra pipelines. In a nutshell, it's fast.

If you were in the market for a new graphics card, the 9700 Pro should be an

obvious choice, since it's most prepared for future games, and it will carry over well with multiple upgrades. It supports x8 AGP, and comes at a competitive price. The problem with the newer cards in general, though, is that unless you have the hardware to truly back it, you won't see mind-blowing performance. The card can be over-clocked, but once again, since it has so much power on its standard settings, you won't see any difference unless you have the machine hardware to back it up. At least with this card you eliminate any graphics bottleneck on your system. It's a good buy, but if you want a performance boost, and you are still mucking around in the low 1 GHz area of the pond, it won't give you a huge boost.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Pixelate" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Powerful Long term investment DirectX 9 compliant	No advantage on slow machines

SUPPLIED BY: Sapphire Technology [011] 362 8878
PRICE: R 5289.00
INTERNET: www.sapphiretech.com

logitech usb headset 30

There are times when headphones are absolutely essential. Like when you're at a LAN, or your mom is complaining about the music you're listening to, or if you want to enhance the effects of stereo by having a direct sound injection right into the ears.

Whatever the reason, every gamer needs a good set of headphones. And thanks to Logitech, those masters of the peripheral market, a new set of headphones, perfect for the gamer, have become available.

The Premium Stereo USB Headset 30 has all the components you might expect, and a few more as a bonus. A microphone is included with the headset, which can be positioned away from the mouth through a swivel arm. The microphone can be swiveled almost 360 degrees, allowing it to be positioned on either side of the headphones. This allows the player to set up the headphones with the cord (which can be invasive) on either side (adjusting the stereo swap as necessary).

The biggest feature of these headphones lies in the fact that they are a USB device. This means two things - first of all, only one plug is required to work both the headphones and microphone. Secondly, the advanced USB audio streaming system used by the headphones makes for very clear sound delivery, which is important, after all.

Situated on the cord is an inline volume control, which uses rubberised buttons rather than a slider or wheel control, and also includes a microphone mute button. This control is also fitted with a belt clip at the rear, which is very handy to, for example, help keep the cord out of your way.

With a frequency response of 20 to 20 000 Hz, the sound delivery from the speakers is exceptional, while the microphone responds from 100 to 16 000 Hz, and has a noise cancellation system that cuts out unwanted background noise - perfect for multiplayer plotting.

Of course, one of the most important factors of headsets is comfort, not to mention design. This headset is very comfortable, with simply lovely ear cushions, allowing for hours of comfortable use. Additionally, unlike one might expect from a headset that provides such good performance, the unit is very compact, and is solidly constructed, as well as beautifully designed. They also fit on virtually any size head, with an easily adjusted and non slip sizing system.

Gone are the days of bulky headphones, invasive cords and volume control difficulties. With the Premium Stereo USB Headset 30 from Logitech, all your game sound requirements are easily (and neatly) taken care of.



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Comfortable Single USB plug Great sound	Price

SUPPLIED BY: Workgroup [011] 203 9100
PRICE: R 699.00
INTERNET: www.logitech.com

intel pentium 4 3.06 GHz hyper-threading processor

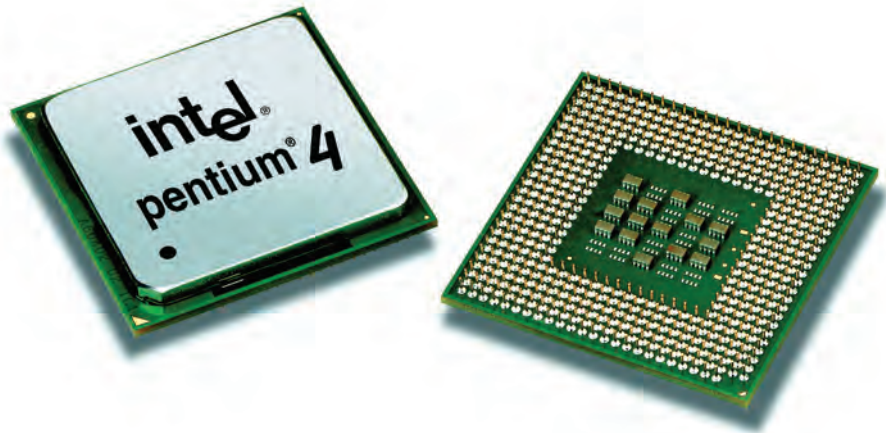


After a lot of hype and marketing, Intel's Hyper Threading processor has finally reached the shores of South Africa, albeit in limited supply. I was fortunate enough to be one of the first to receive one of their new Pentium 4 3.06 GHz processors for testing from Axiz.

The Pentium 4 3.06 GHz processor not only features the highest clock frequency to date but is also the first processor to ship with Intel's new performance enhancing Hyper Threading technology. Hyper Threading allows SMP enabled Operating Systems such as Windows XP and Linux to see the new Pentium 4 processors as two logical processors, each capable of executing its own code. This is not to be confused with multiple physical processors and unlike true SMP, where different programs can be run on different processors, Hyper Threading technology allows multi-threaded applications to make more efficient use of processor resources and allows them to execute threads in parallel. This makes the new Pentium 4 3.06 GHz ideal for multitasking environments. According to Intel, Hyper Threading can increase machine performance by up to 20%, but this is only under ideal conditions and general PC users will only see slight performance gains if any at all. The reason most desktop users will see little or no performance gains lies in the fact that very few applications are multi-threaded, with most being single threaded. Only top end applications such as Visual Studio .NET, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Premiere are multi-threaded due to their demanding nature when it comes to processing. As such Hyper Threading is truly suited for high end processing applications such as audio/video encoding, 3D CAM/CAD and graphical work. In some scenarios Hyper Threading might actually even decrease system performance, but the situations where this occurs is few and far between and not really a big issue since the decrease in performance is only marginal at most.

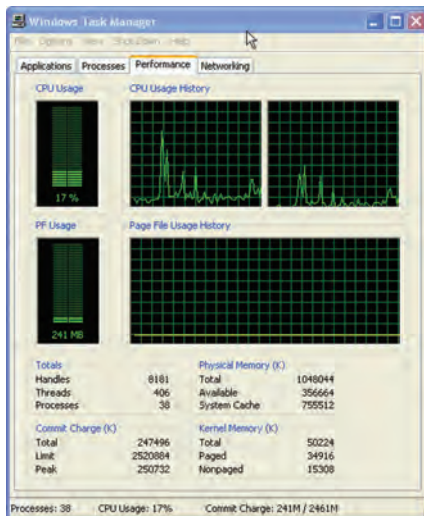
While only "industrial" strength applications use multi-threading at the moment, things are looking up, for gamers in particular. Intel is pushing Hyper Threading hard and has already released optimized compilers for programmers, and game developers have already started integrating multi-threading into their products. Unfortunately we won't see a large majority of games making use of Hyper Threading right now, but in a couple of months you should see the large majority of developers supporting the new technology. If there is one thing that Intel is a master at it is getting programmers to support their technologies.

While the Pentium 4 3.06 GHz is the first to ship with Hyper Threading technology enabled, there is some speculation that previous Pentium 4 processors with a 533 MHz front side bus



already have Hyper Threading included on the die, the technology is however not enabled and this leads one to wonder if Intel will enable it on these processors in the future. These speculations have no concrete evidence yet and I will keep you updated should Intel decide to throw a surprise our way.

For those interested in getting a Pentium 4 with Hyper Threading technology, something to keep in mind is that you will most likely need a new motherboard. While the 3.06 GHz processor with Hyper Threading disabled might run fine on slightly older motherboards - to get Hyper Threading to work you will need a motherboard with either an 845PE based chipset for DDR Memory or a 850E chipset for RAMBUS Memory. The drawback



▲ Task manager showing two processors

Benchmarks

Common Details:

Windows XP Professional,
1024 MB 333 MHz DDR Memory,
Gigabyte Radeon 9700 Pro,
ATI Catalyst 2.8 Drivers,
DirectX 8.1,
2 x Maxtor 120 GB 7200 RPM Drives in RAID 0 Configuration

Quake 3 Arena

Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Enabled) - 361.3 FPS
Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Disabled) - 366.9 FPS
Pentium 4 2.8 GHz - 347.2 FPS

Details - 1024x768, 32-bit, Normal, DEMO001

3D Mark 2001 SE (Build 330)

Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Enabled) - 15626 3D Marks
Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Disabled) - 15603 3D Marks
Pentium 4 2.8 GHz - 15258 3D Marks

Details - 1024x768, 32-bit

SiSoft Sandra 2002 SP1

(Direct from www.tomshardware.com)

CPU Dhrystone Benchmarks

Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Enabled) - 5832
Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Disabled) - 3835
Pentium 4 2.8 GHz - 3500

CPU Whetstone Benchmarks

Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Enabled) - 7724
Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Disabled) - 7009
Pentium 4 2.8 GHz - 6186

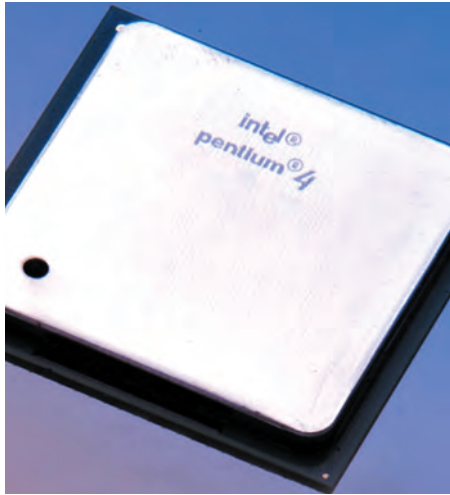
Multimedia MMX Benchmarks

Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Enabled) - 21730
Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Disabled) - 15282
Pentium 4 2.8 GHz - 13954

Multimedia SSE2/SSE/3DNow! Benchmarks

Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Enabled) - 14376
Pentium 4 3.06 GHz (HT Disabled) - 12313
Pentium 4 2.8 GHz - 11249

is that these chipsets still only support 4x AGP and in the case of the 845PE chipset - only 333 MHz DDR Memory. Revised chipsets are slated for release in the first quarter of this year and should support the new 8x AGP standard as well as 400 MHz DDR Memory. From a pure performance viewpoint the Pentium 4 3.06 GHz is as fast as lightning and features at the top of lists on benchmarks run all over the globe. From our



Quake 3 Arena and 3D Mark 2001 benchmarks you can however see that Hyper Threading is doing little for OpenGL and DirectX games right now. Something I will however state, although how you would go about benchmarking it I have no idea, is that applications being launched seem to open a lot faster with Hyper Threading enabled. I am talking about scenarios where you already have an application open for example Photoshop and then decide to launch Outlook for example - on my older machine (even the 2.8 GHz) Outlook always took its sweet time opening up and could take up to 5+ seconds. On the 3.06 GHz with Hyper Threading enabled it opens up almost immediately. Prior to getting my hands on the 3.06 GHz I had the fortune of playing around with a 2.8 GHz and found something interesting. While the 2.8 GHz only ships with an aluminum heatsink the 3.06 GHz ships with a copper heatsink. The fan speed on the 3.06 GHz also seems to be self adjusting and while it is as quiet as a whisper in the morning, averaging roughly 3000 RPM, come afternoon the thing can wail like a banshee when it reaches speeds in excess of 6000 RPM. From monitoring the temperature it looks like the heatsink tries to maintain a steady 40 degrees Celsius. If you do decide to get yourself a top of the range Pentium 4 3.06 GHz processor I would highly recommend you try and find a

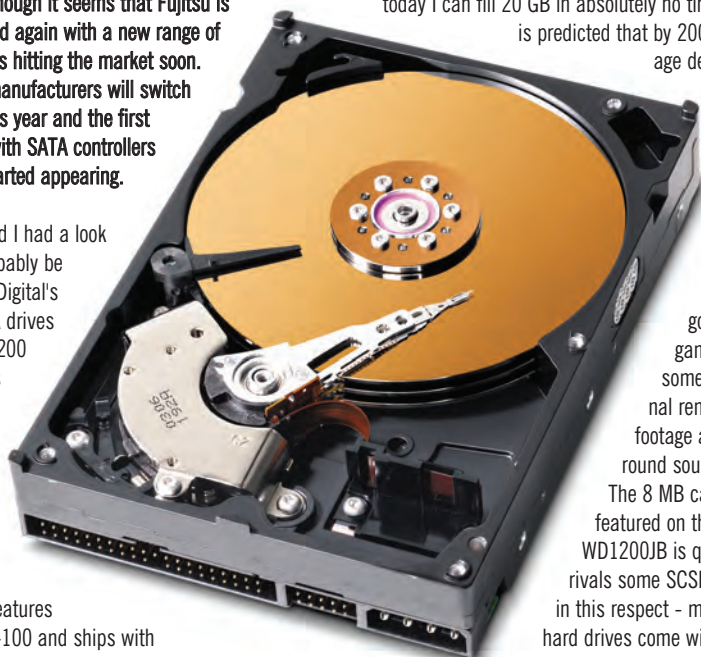
heatsink with a quieter fan, trust me it will be a lot less annoying than the whine you will hear just after lunch. Intel's Hyper Threading processors are still relatively new in the market and there are few applications that make use of multiple processors or multiple threads. Over the next year we will start seeing more applications and game developers making use of the technology which could give a significant boost of speed to the Intel platform. Unfortunately right now HT gives little real world performance boosts unless you are working with video editing or similar processor intensive applications that are already SMP enabled. The Pentium 4 3.06 GHz is however the fastest processor in the Intel camp at the moment and while the price, clocking in at an estimated R7712.00, might scare some consumers it is definitely worth the purchase if you can afford it. It is a great solution for those of us that are sick of the problems that VIA based AMD systems seem to have all the time. Intel offers exceptional speed, innovative technology and rock solid compatibility. Now if Intel will only drop their price on their processors a little more.

REVIEWED BY	
Leonard "DarkSkies" Diamond	
SUPPLIED BY: Axiz [011] 237 7000	
PRICE: R7712.00	
INTERNET: www.axiz.co.za	

western digital caviar wd1200 jb hard drive

Over the last couple of years we have seen a consolidation of ATA manufacturers like Seagate taking over Connor and Maxtor taking over Quantum. Currently the only manufacturers of ATA drives are Maxtor, IBM and Western Digital, with Fujitsu dropping ATA manufacturing in 2001, although it seems that Fujitsu is climbing onboard again with a new range of Serial ATA drives hitting the market soon. Most of these manufacturers will switch over to SATA this year and the first motherboards with SATA controllers have already started appearing.

With this in mind I had a look at what will probably be one of Western Digital's last Parallel ATA drives the Caviar WD1200 JB hard drive as the Serial ATA standard takes hold this year. The drive comes in a 120 GB configuration and features support for ATA-100 and ships with an 8 MB cache buffer. The drive operates at 7200 RPM putting it in the high end sector of the IDE



hard drive market and gives it exceptional average seek times and transfer rates.

A 120 GB might sound like a lot today, but I remember two years ago I was sitting with 20 GB and couldn't fathom what I would put on it to use all the space; today I can fill 20 GB in absolutely no time at all. It

is predicted that by 2005 the average desktop user

will have 500 GB of hard drive space, let's just hope we put it to

good use with games featuring some phenomenal rendered footage and 5.1 surround sound.

The 8 MB cache buffer featured on the WD1200JB is quite big and rivals some SCSI hard drives in this respect - most SCSI hard drives come with a 8 MB or 16 MB cache buffer. The larger buffer allows for improved file

access reading speeds and the drive should do well in moderate data servers where files are continuously accessed.

On a downbeat note, I should mention that all hard drive manufacturers dropped their warranties a couple of months ago from 2-3 years to only 1 year. This has taken effect across the board and all hard drives, no matter who manufactures it now only has a 12-month warranty. Personally I feel that consumers are being done in with the sudden drop, but unfortunately there is nothing you can do about it. This being said the WD1200JB and all 8 MB cache Western Digital hard drives, however, still ship with a three year warranty and makes buying a Western Digital hard drive from Drive Control a great buy and an affordable one at that. Overall the Western Digital Caviar WD1200JB is quite a decent drive to have. It has ample storage space, a nice sized buffer, is reasonably quiet in its operation and features very good transfer rates. If you are in the market for a new Parallel ATA hard drive you would do well to go with the WD1200.

REVIEWED BY	
Leonard "DarkSkies" Diamond	
PLUS	MINUS
Large capacity 8 MB Cache buffer Good transfer speeds	No ATA-133 support

SUPPLIED BY: Drive Control [011] 887 - 8927
PRICE: R 1824.00
INTERNET: www.westerndigital.com

editing for unreal tournament 2003

chapter two - shedding some light

Right, here we are, ready to get back to the old level grindstone with our second installment of NAG's UT2K3 editing guide. As promised, we are going to look at multiple rooms, lighting and static meshes this time around, as well as maybe a few other things. If you missed the first chapter, you better get the January issue, because it's all forward here - no retrospectives allowed...

Thus far, we have learned how to make a basic room, texture it, and add a simple light. We have also been able to enter that room, and take a look around - and I am sure you will agree with me when I say that it leaves a lot to be desired. First off, it's just one room which, no matter how big, does not make for much of a frag fest. Next, the lighting looks dodgy. No argument there. And lastly, it just lacks the detail of all those brilliant levels that you have experienced within the

game. These are the three main issues we are going to tackle this month, plus maybe a few more, if space allows.

Breaking down the walls

Okay, so we need a little room to maneuver here. Well, that's simple enough. To create another room, all you need to do is follow the exact procedures we used to create our first room (see January issue.) Simple enough. To make a passage that will connect the two rooms together, we follow the exact same procedure, making sure that our brush dimensions (which you get to by right clicking on the brush button, remember?) are just right, and placing the brush where we want it before performing our subtraction. Easy peasy, to quote a particularly annoying cooking show host.

But there are a few pitfalls here... well, actually only one. And this may seem rather obvious, but I am taking the immediate assumption that there are at least one

or two idiots out there, so I am going to say it anyway... make sure that your passage position (or any room position, for that matter) is spot on before you click that subtract button. Use all three of your construction views (top, front and side) to make sure that it is exactly where you want it to be before hitting the subtract button - the sides of the brush must be touching (not overlapping) existing structures, the level must be right, and all that kind of stuff. Trust me, you would rather do things right the first time around. Sure, you can hit the undo function, but it may result in a few stability issues, especially for those still using Windows 98.

There are quick ways to copy textures around the level (using some kind of CTRL here, SHIFT there jig) but I personally believe that "slowly slowly catchee monkey" is the way to go, and

deletion

Added the wrong thing? Don't like the shape of a room? Simply highlight it in one of your non-orthographic views and hit the delete key. Or right click and select delete. Simple. However, try to avoid deleting shapes. Problems may arise...

prefer to select each texture as the need arises. I feel that this avoids unnecessary problems, and seeing as this is really my tutorial, that's the way it's gonna be. So, take the time to make sure you have your textures placed just right - nothing screams quite like poor texture usage.

Some character

As we can see, making extra rooms is easy. But what about if you want to alter the shape of the room, so that it is not quite a boring old rectangle? Enter the "Add" function. Pretty much the opposite of the subtract function, the add function allows us to "refill" spaces previously carved out, according to the shape of the brush we use. Just place the brush where you want it, hit "add", and a new shape is added to the whole (cutting away empty space). Simple, and effective. We can use this function for a myriad of reasons: split levels, stairs, walkways, strange shapes in rooms, whatever. Try a few experiments with it. You should notice the usefulness of addition right away.

Of course, subtraction can also be used to create strangely shaped rooms - try putting indentations in your wall, for example, by lining up a small brush shape and subtracting it.

These are the beginning elements of adding a unique character to our level. The whole concept here can be termed the structure. There are two more elements that give the whole a unique feel; lighting and static meshes.

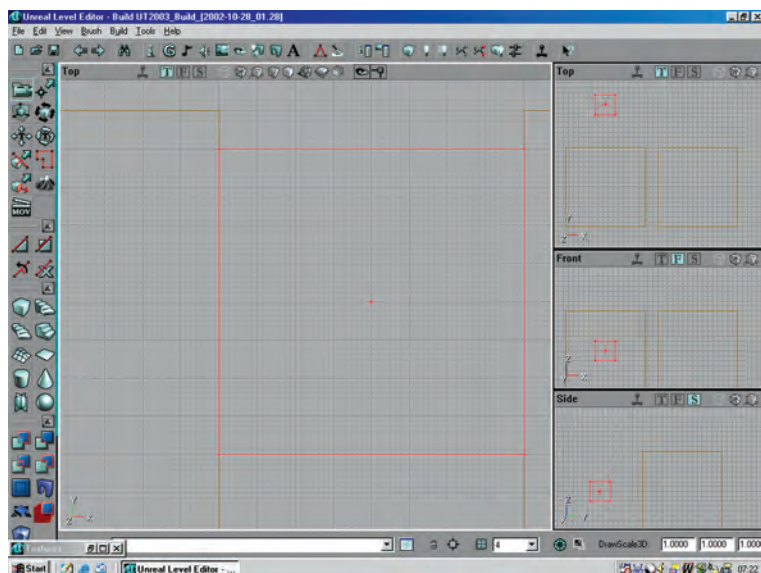
Coloured balls and Christmas lights.

If we think of our basic room structure using the analogy of an undecorated Christmas tree, then the lights are the blinking, flickering globes we use for decoration, and static meshes are the baubles we hang from the branches (tinsel is made up of emitters, but that's for a later chapter). In fact, lights and static meshes go hand in hand to a certain degree, because static meshes can add explanations for your lighting, as you will see later.

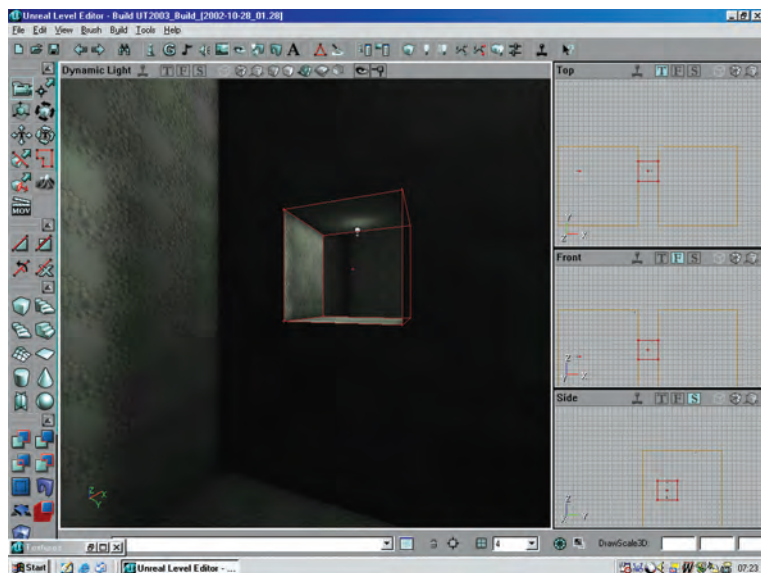
First of all, what are "static meshes" anyway? Lights are obvious, but what are these thingies? Quite simply, static meshes are pre-made shapes that you can import into your map to serve a number of purposes. Primarily for decoration, static meshes can also be used for elevators, walkways and, surprise surprise, light fittings. Now before you get all huffy and say that

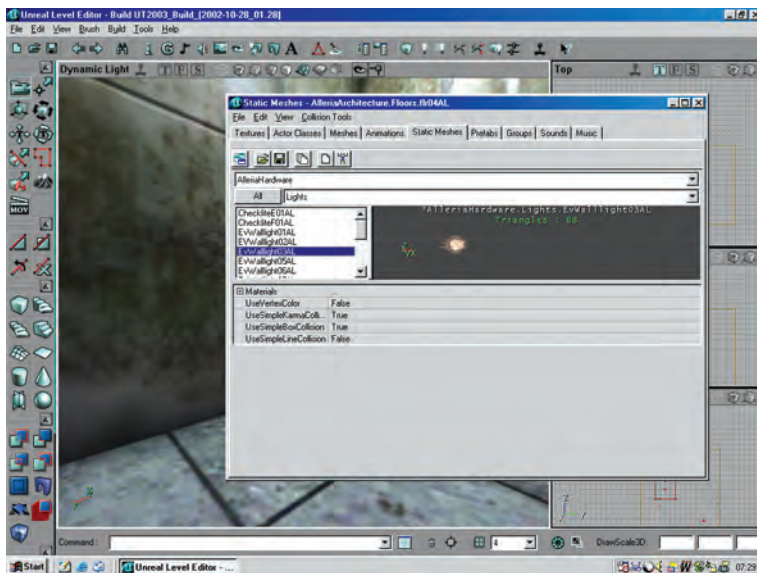
lighting

Getting lighting right can be quite a challenge. Before you decide on a lighting effect, rather go into the game preview and check it out than just relying on the orthographic view. It takes a bit more time, but will have better results. In time, you will learn exactly which setting does what. In the meantime, though, changing the settings makes for a good learning curve.

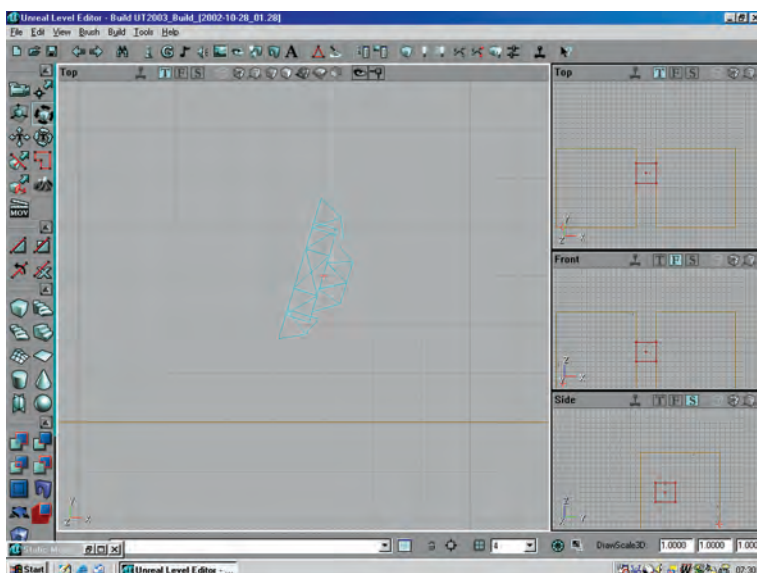


Correct brush placement is vital before adding or subtracting. Although the placement may look perfect in one view (as above) the actual positioning has to be checked in all views to avoid embarrassing mishaps (below)

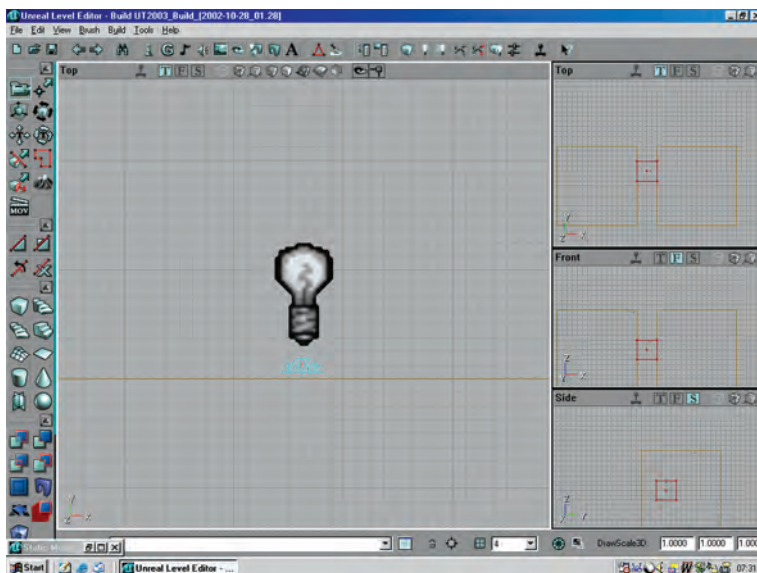




▲ When selecting a static mesh for use, you will have a small preview window showing you the mesh. To navigate this window, use the same controls that you would to navigate in the Orthographic view



▲ ▼ Once the light is correctly rotated and positioned (above) before putting in the light. Positioning the light source is very important - the static mesh itself does not emit light. Place the light correctly, as below



you don't wanna use premade stuff in your levels, here are three arguments that might change your mind. First off, it takes a hell of a long time to build a level, without the aggravation of having to build every little element of it yourself. Next, there are a wide variety of static meshes available, and a little investigation will reveal that repetition is rarely a problem. Lastly, using static meshes basically streamlines your level, allowing it to run better - the game uses their geometry far more effectively.

So, let's begin by placing a light fitting somewhere in one of our rooms, and applying a light to it. The first thing you'll want to do is bring up the Static Mesh browser, either by clicking on the button at the top of the interface (button 8, according to the January issue) or by selecting the appropriate tab in the same dialogue box.

Here you will have to load the appropriate pack of static meshes, just as you did with textures. Let's go with alleriahardware. Where the textures displayed a drop down list of texture locations, you now have a drop down list of static mesh types. Select "lights" and scroll down until you find ewalllight03aL. Make sure you highlight the name.

other brushes

There are several other shapes available to you in the creation process. Stairs, cones, spheres and cylinders, to name a few, are all at your disposal. Using them is exactly like using a cube brush, in terms of entering settings, although some of the settings may differ. My philosophy is that experimentation is the best teacher, so why not try a few of the other shapes on for size.

rotation

Using the actor rotate button is really simple. Highlight the brush, choose the tool, and hold down to rotate it with your mouse. A little experimentation won't hurt here - a LMB hold for rotation will move the object along one axis, while a RMB hold will rotate it along another. Also, the view in which you rotate also affects the direction. Try it out to get used to it. Any brush, including static meshes, can be rotated in this way.

add or subtract

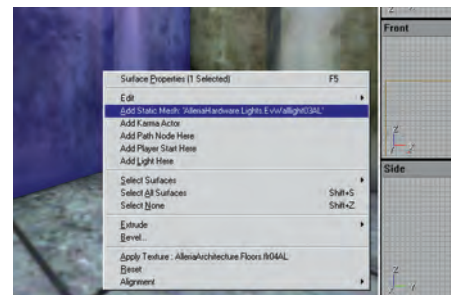
Making interesting room shapes can be done either by adding shapes into existing rooms, or by creatively subtracting different shapes in close proximity. The right way to do it is... well, there isn't really one. Use whichever method you prefer! Remember that, in non-orthographic views, subtracted areas are yellow, and added areas are blue.

You can now minimise the dialogue box. Right click (in any view, although the orthographic view is probably best) on one of the viewports, and select the entry that reads "add ewalllight03aL" from the pop-up menu. You will see a new shape added to the display (purple by default in non-orthographic views). Place the new shape where you want it and hey, presto, you have a light fitting. Right click in front of the fitting, and choose "add light." That familiar light bulb icon will appear, and you can reposition it to just in front of the light fitting. Pay attention here... too far away, and it won't look like the light is coming from the fitting. Too close, and the fitting may eclipse the light, resulting in problems.

We can now adjust the light's settings by selecting Actor Properties and adjusting the light colour option. Here we can set both colour and brightness (the higher the number, the brighter the light).

There is a lot more we can do with lighting, but we have run out of space, and will have to cover that a bit later.

Try a few lighting techniques, and play around with a few static meshes. See how the meshes affect the lighting in the room. Also, why not try adding a few new shape brushes to your level? Until next time, when we will be looking at movers, pickups and a few more static mesh tricks (among other things) - happy building!



www.landoverbaptist.org
Church say as Church does?
 If you are easily offended, love fundamentalist churches, or are just in the role of spoiling fun for the rest of us, ignore the site. If you aren't a fan or fundamentalist churches, feel its fine sleeping in on Sundays and see The Onion as one of civilization's finest creations, get to this site already. It's meant to offend, and oddly it might end up offending the wrong people more. See, the Landover Baptist church is not real, but the site really makes it seem as if it is. In fact, if it weren't for the parody copyright at the end of each page, the site won't give you any kind of clue. Instead, you'll have to decide whether articles that say Lord of the Rings is a

homosexual, Satanist movie are true. Or maybe you'll want to find out about the new UT mod where you have to defend the church against attacking zealots. How about the banned book of the month, or maybe head over to the shop and buy those filthy infidels an Unbeliever t-shirt. The LandOver Baptist site is one of the best parody sites on the web, and that means it will end up offending a lot of people, so don't blame us if you don't like it. Or send me an Unbeliever t-shirt instead!
www.fairplay-campaign.co.uk
Are we paying too much?
 A lot of people out there feel that we are paying too much for our games. And when you consider that most

games set you back more than a music CD or a movie ticket, then maybe there is cause for concern, especially with triple-A titles such as WarCraft III selling for around \$60. In fact, there is no real price regulation body, so it's quite possible that the industry is overcharging for its games. That's where the controversial Fairplay campaign comes in. Appearing a few months back, it sure has sparked a wave of debate all over the gaming world as people argue whether the industry is too bloated and thus charging more to stay afloat amongst numerous bad development risks. Of course, this has very little to do with the average South African gamer, since we pay much less than most countries. Still, it is a noteworthy argument that's bound to impact on games in the

bookmarks

www.onlineconversion.com

So exactly how many meters go into 10 feet? How much is a gallon and a half? If I have 6 ounces, how much is that really? Thanks to some parts of the world still insisting on using the Imperial system, the rest of the smart people need to suffer a bit. That's where this conversion site becomes very useful.

www.sinfest.net

Still one of the best reads on the web. Once you start, you can't stop!

spybot.eon.net.au

Another spybot killer designed to rid your system from spyware. Not as freshly designed as ADWare, but useful nonetheless.

www.alterfin.com/dominique/index.html

A strange 'interface' where you tweak a, well, face. Interesting waste of time, though.

www.millan.net/funp/80/nomilk.html

What's to say? It's just cute!

homepage.mac.com/happywaffle/enterprise.html

What's considered the two of the biggest signs of adult geekdom? Star Trek and Legos, of course. But how do you make your own Enterprise ship out of the Danish plastic blocks? Watch this guy...

http://www.designmethod.com/bling/v4/bling_04.html

You have a PC, and you have a Mac case. But how will you get the PC inside the Mac case, and make sure it will work? It's not as easy as it sounds, but this site at least shows what's involved.

by Jarred Krombein

**MINORITY REPORT - NU METRO**

Can the man go wrong? After so many years in the industry you would think the steam was starting to dissipate. In fact it looks like its only starting to boil. Minority Report is Steven Spielberg's latest Sci-Fi extravaganza and lives up to everything that we have come to expect from this director. Brilliant storytelling, new age special effects and a storyline as fresh and original as just baked bread. To describe the movie will make it sound confusing (then again what Spielberg movie doesn't). But really if you concentrate and let the movie take you into its own little world, you will not be confused.

For many years Washington DC has been crime free thanks to new technology that identifies a killer before he commits the crime. All is happy and hunky dory until the chief of the "PreCrime" unit is accused of a future murder. He now has 36 hours to discover who and why he is going to murder and who is setting him up. The DVD is packed with special features to compliment the movies brilliance. We have theatrical trailers, from story to screen featurette, deconstructing Minority Report, The stunts of Minority Report, and so much more. Minority Report is a race against time kind of movie that will leave you hanging onto the edge of your seat. Brilliance at it's best.

**BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM - STER KINEKOR**

When it comes to sport I am the first to run in the opposite direction, so for me to sit and watch a sports movie, you must just know how good it has to be. When it first came out on the big screen the only thing it had going for it was that it had the name "Beckham" in the title. A name that will make all the soccer fans run out and buy out the entire cinema room so they can share the spot with their hero alone. What people found was that there was no David Beckham in the movie, but the movie was really good and funny and so the word spread like wildfire and Bend It Like Beckham became one of those movies that cost nothing to make and earned a fortune, and good for them, they deserve it. The film follows the life of a young girl, Jess, who love's soccer. She can play like the best and as the title describes, bends it like Beckham. There is just one problem; her parents are not quite on the information highway when it comes to knowing what their daughter is up to. They have bigger plans for her, in the way of getting her married and learning to cook those special husband dinners. But this is the 2000's, what child listens or does what her parents want her to? So it is up to Jess to sneak around and prove herself before her parents find out what she is up to. The movie is great, the DVD is disappointing; the only special features on the disk are deleted scenes and directors commentary. Both provide no real point of entertainment or interesting viewing. Bend It like Beckham is a refreshing light fluffy pastry of a movie. It's nothing special but really goes down well.

**BLADE 2 - NU METRO**

When approaching sequels, I am usually very wary. Especially when it's a horror sequel. The film makers make a truck load of money on the first film and then bring out a second to try and make the same money, only this time the film is utter nonsense but we run to see it hoping to see another brilliant film like the first. 9 times out of 10 this is the case. Blade 2 thankfully is not part of this equation. Having said that, Blade 2 falls into a trap that all other sequels fall into. That is the first film was original and we were surprised at what was given to us, the second film comes along and we now know what to expect and how things are going to work (See Scream, I Know What You Did Last Summer, The Mummy for further examples). This does not mean that the movie is bad, its just like riding a roller coaster, the first time is exciting and a thrill ride into the unknown, we loved it so much we went on it again, and loved it just as much, but we knew where the twists and turns were. Blade 2 continues the everlasting fight against evil vampires. The world is now threatened by a new and deadlier breed of super Vampire. Now Blade has to join up with the Bloodpack, a team of vampires made up of his sworn enemies. It's now time to kill this new breed at all costs and Blade is up against nothing he has ever seen before. The DVD offers us a nice little package of extra features. Two different commentaries by the director and producer and then by the writer and Wesley Snipes, production workshop, deleted and alternate scenes and promotional material. Blade 2 will be a good addition to your collection and is a sequel that can stand on its own next to its original counterpart.

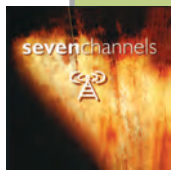
**THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO - STER KINEKOR**

The only reason I saw this film was because I owed my wife a choice in what we were going to watch, and the Count Of Monte Cristo was her choice. Sluggishly I put the disk into the machine and dragged myself to the couch to spend the next two hours totally bored and hoping to fall asleep as quickly as possible. Now have I become predictable, as I'm sure you know the outcome of this evening! Yes I enjoyed the film, in fact I loved the film. I found it fast paced and highly entertaining. The period piece did not disrupt me and I got swept up in the backstabbing and revenge that is the Count Of Monte Cristo. When Edmond is betrayed by his friend and wrongly imprisoned, his life in prison becomes consumed by thoughts of revenge. After a miraculous escape he transforms himself into the mysterious and wealthy Count Of Monte Cristo. He infiltrates the French Nobility and starts to put his plan of revenge into action. This is really the story in a nutshell and you have to see it to get the full passionate tale of The Count. On a different note I hate it when the cover of the disk does not tell you what special features are included as you would think there are none and leave the film on the shelf for another that may have features, but this movie has more than it's fair share and they include, deleted scenes, sword fight choreography, audio commentary, and a multi angle sword fight sequence. The Count of Monte Cristo is really a film that should be on the top of your list and one that can even have a place on your collector's shelf. It will not disappoint even the hardest of viewers.

**DRAGONFLY - STER KINEKOR**

Poor Kevin Costner, once a major player, now a player trying to be major. Lately no matter what he is in it turns into a flop. Is he cursed or is he desperate for anything that will earn him a bit of money? Luckily Dragonfly just scrapes past the desperate point and comes out at a 'not so bad, glad I waited till video to see it' kind of movie. Not even the presence of Kathy Bates can turn it into a must see or even a would like to see. The film is slated as a "suspense-filled thriller", more a drama than a thriller if you ask me. When Costners wife dies tragically, mysterious events, moving objects and communication from patients who have experienced near death experiences, show signs that his dearly departed wife is trying to contact him from the beyond. The film is really nothing more than this and delves into life and the meaning it holds. Its one of those one track films that stays on its subject and never lets go, like a rabid dog and its pray, and both experiences are pretty hurtful. The DVD special features include trailers for two other movies, spotlight on location, and deleted scenes. Dragonfly deserves to be watched at least once and then set free to fly away and never be remembered.

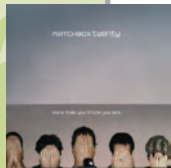
by Walt Pretorius

**Channels | Seven**

Every now and then a band comes along that just grabs you by the... well, that really kicks you in the... oh, damn, you know what I mean. This is one such band. There is a wonderfully refreshing reprise of the rock movement these days, with a number of very good rock bands releasing albums of late. Seven is such a band, offering the listener a brilliant collection of songs with influences that range from hard sleaze right through to modern grunge and college rock. This is a rock tour de force from a band that definitely has, in my opinion, quite a future. **(ASP)**

**Soundstate | Sono**

Sono may be a little known act, but that doesn't make the music any less good than it is. The influences here are varied and sometimes less than obvious. With a sometimes housey, sometimes trancey approach, quite watered down and mixed with a nostalgic homage to the electronic music of the eighties, the music produced by this act is rather unusual, but incredibly accessible at the same time. Try to think of it as very light trance meeting Alphaville. The vocal style may take a bit of getting used to. In fact, the whole experience may be a little strange at first, but there is a hypnotic quality that makes this stuff rather entertaining. Definitely above average. **(Universal)**

**More Than You Think You Are | Matchbox Twenty**

Once again, this super group can be relied on to deliver the goods. There is no doubt that Matchbox Twenty is one of the greatest bands around today. Their unusual blend of pop and rock is perfectly complemented by the vocal styling of their phenomenal singer, Rob Thomas. Together they have created an album that, as the next step for this band, seems the most logical. More Than You Think You Are is a perfect follow on from the work that this band has produced before, with 12 (just too few) tracks of excellent quality. This is one that everyone should listen to, at least once. **(Gallo)**

**Slicker Than Your Average | Craig David**

With his mixture of hip hop (the really light, wannabe kind) and R&B, Craig David comes across as something of a pansy. Sorry, but it had to be said. That aside, though, you cannot take away from the fact that he is talented. Perhaps not quite as talented as he might think, though, because his ego certainly does seem to be bigger than it should be. Slicker Than Your Average is an album that ranges from a few good tracks through to a number of tracks that don't really warrant mentioning. In fact, the album isn't really slicker than anything at all. However, you should give it a listen, because every now and then a piece of musical brilliance just leaps out at you... **(Gallo)**

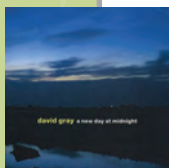
**Under Construction | Missy Elliott**

Missy Elliott is arrogant, rude, shallow, foul mouthed, offensive and downright nasty. Which, when added all together, makes her a damn fine hip-hop artist. And she is back with a new album, one that holds a lot of meaning for her, if the hype is to be believed. However, the songs still seem to have little meaning beyond promiscuity and aggressive behaviour. Then again, these are the staples of hip-hop, so I guess one can't say too much about that. For all her bad points, Missy Elliott is a brilliant artist. She performs at the top of her ability, and is one of the best hip-hop artists around. **(Gallo)**

**Songs In A Minor | Alicia Keys**

There is very little that can be said about Alicia Keys that hasn't been said already. Already well on her way to true diva status (not this new use of the word, but the actual meaning of the term, folks) Alicia is possessed of an incredibly powerful voice and a vast amount of talent, both vocally and as a musician. If you consider the fact that, with a very few exceptions, every track on this album was written and arranged by her, as well as the majority of the instruments played by her, you may be impressed. Now listen to it, and be prepared to be very impressed. Very impressed indeed.

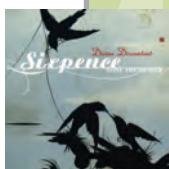
Oh, yes, did I forget to mention the bonus remix cd? **(BMG)**

**A New Day At Midnight | David Gray**

Every era has a voice and, while some may think that one of those voices may come out of a boy band, it probably won't - with the notable exception of Robbie Williams, of course. However, he is not alone in the running - David Gray is an artist that consistently performs well and is well received by listeners. But while Williams may range widely, fans of Gray know that they can expect laid back, smooth sound, soothing rather than jarring. This latest album, A New Day At Midnight, is no different. It is soothing and sentimental, bittersweet and very, very good. **(Gallo)**

**Die Another Day Soundtrack | Various Artists**

In my defence: I love Madonna. But there is no way that the song she performed for the new Bond sound track comes anywhere close to even the worst previous Bond theme. It's awful, and the person that chose to use it should be shot. However, the remix of the Bond theme by master Paul Oakenfold is a work of utter genius - an absolutely incredible interpretation of one of the world's most recognized pieces of music. For the rest, this album is a typical sound track, with mostly instrumental pieces included. However, these are different from what you might expect. There is a fusion of old orchestral and modern dance on this album which brings a new edge to the Bond genre, and makes for very interesting listening. Probably for music lovers only, although some of the Bond special features and galleries on this enhanced CD will thrill Bond fans. **(Gallo)**

**Divine Discontent | Sixpence None The Richer**

The biggest surprise on this album is the cover that this band performs of Don't Dream It's Over. Other than that, don't expect any surprises. Of course, this isn't necessarily a bad thing, because when bands like Six Pence None The Richer perform at their usual level, it's a pretty damned good performance! This is really nothing more than typical pop - typical, that is, of the slightly left of field movement of pop that is very much in vogue at the moment. Reminiscent of bands like the Cardigans, Six Pence None The Richer have their own unique style none the less, with great vocals flowing over catchy rhythms. **(Gallo)**

PRIEST AND SHRYKE ARE EMBROILED IN AN ON-LINE BATTLE...



Priest: Hah! Headshot! Kiss my @\$\$, you stupid (*\$%#\$@*#\$#@!\$)

Shryke: Um, what?

Priest: You @\$\$, you !@#!@\$!\$. You know, why do they even allow !#!#!@ noobs like you onto the server? @!#!@ off already.

Shryke: Sheesh, foul language and leet speak - what a foul combination. Incidentally, do you own this server? And I don't mean in that stupid leet way, I am talking about actual legalities here...

Priest: Hey, look at the score: 210 to -34. I own your ass! I have more right to be on this server, so if you don't like it, get the @#\$@ off!

[Priest starts pasting "n00b!" repeatedly]

Shryke: Um, excuse me, but this is a public server, isn't it? We don't have to compete for the right to be on here, now do we?

Priest: Get off! Take your lame @\$\$ game tactics with you! You @&@#*\$&\$! If you can't take the heat, get off the server!

Shryke: It's not the heat, fool, it's the pointless abuse.

Priest: It's not pointless. It would be but you happen to SUCK.

[Priest pastes "Shryke SUCKS!" repeatedly]

[Shryke leans over and punches Priest in the mouth.]

Shryke: Don't forget that we work in the same office, dweeb. I sometimes think you just go online to play games with the pure intention of showing off your skills at foul language to likeminded idiots who think it's big to shoot their mouths off...

Priest: Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS! Shryke SUCKS!

Shryke: Listen, mate, if you want to prove your worth, do it in the real world. Online deprecation does not make you anything more than a sad loser with the social skills of a deceased wombat.

Priest: Hmm, good point.

[Priest walks over to Shryke and tells him he sucks]

Shryke: You have the right to think whatever you want, man, but abusing someone in public is something totally different. Do you know that it is, technically, illegal?

Priest: Only if I were to insult an actual person. But considering you play like a n00b, not to mention this anal retentive stance over swearing. You are attacking my freedom of speech!

Shryke: Oh, for pity sake. I am not &^#*&^*% anal about swearing, fool! I happen to think that foul language is very expressive. But there is no need to prove yourself by abusing people. THAT'S my point, in case you missed it. And as far as freedom of speech, well, you have that, sure. But you don't have the right to trash me.

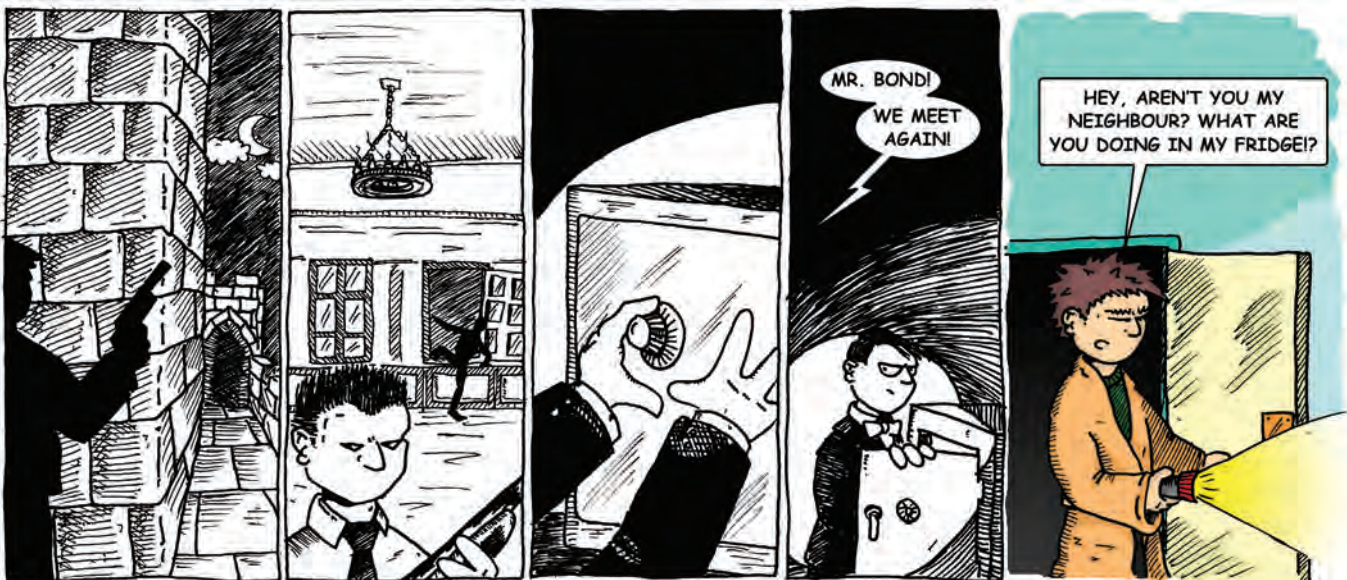
Priest: Now if you only said that I'm a !@!# of a !@#!@ who doesn't know anal from a !@#@! if it hit me with a !%%#\$ in the back of a ^&&%^\$ - it would have been more to the point, and more universally appreciated and understood, wouldn't it? I mean, people just get bored halfway though your sentences and start thinking about other things.

Shryke: Fine. You're a !@!# of a !@#!@ who doesn't know anal from a !@#@! if it hit me with a !%%#\$ in the back of a ^&&%^\$.

Priest: There, don't you feel better now?

Shryke: No. [Shryke throws Priest to the floor, kneels on his chest and pop-rivets his mouth closed.] Now I feel better.

[Priest headshots Shryke, making it 211 to -34]





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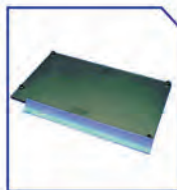
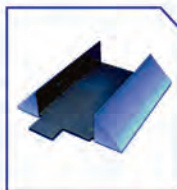
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