

# NAG

NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE

PC | Xbox | GameCube | PlayStation | GBA

Hardcore Roundup: Mice | Freelancer | Hannibal  
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown | Call of Cthulhu  
Sim City 4 | Super Mario Sunshine  
Expanded Anime section

## H@RD@OR3 mouse



win



Lazy Gamer's  
Guide to...



**Demos**  
Action  
02.2.02 Super Strike  
Clash Masters

**Movies**  
Fantasy  
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers  
The Matrix Reloaded

**Patches**  
Soulcalibur II v1.2  
Resident Evil 4 v1.02  
012901 CD-ROM  
Pacheco v1.01.05

**Also...**  
Machinima 4 Action  
Machinima 4 Action  
C&G: Gamma Control Center  
Grand Theft Auto 2: The  
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March 2003

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March 2003 | Volume 5 Issue 12  
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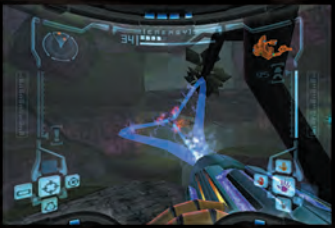
# METROID PRIME

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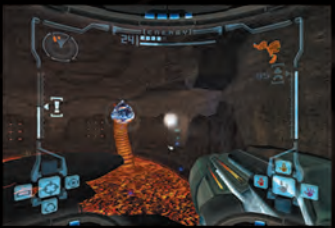
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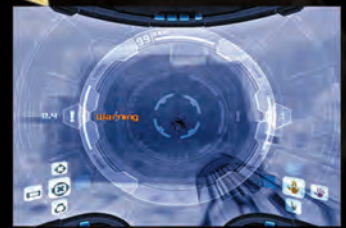
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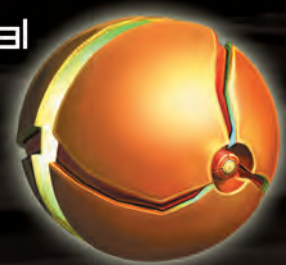


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# March NAG Cover CD

## DEMOS

Chain Reaction	4.1 MB
Enclave	190 MB
IGI 2 Covert Strike	138 MB

## MOVIES

Freelancer	10 MB
The Animatrix: Second Renaissance Part 1	141 MB
The Matrix Reloaded Trailer	23.9 MB

## PATCHES

Battlefield 1942 Patch v13.exe	47 MB
Morrowind Tribunal v1.4.1313	0.5 MB
Unreal Tournament 2003 v2186	12.8 MB
Warcraft III v1.05 Patch	7 MB

## MODIFICATIONS - ADD ONS

Age Of Mythology Media Player Skin [Windows XP]	1.5 MB
Command & Conquer Generals Combat Cards	1 MB
Unreal II Winamp 2 Skin	0.3 MB
Unreal Tournament 2003 Digital Extremes Bonus Pack	73 MB

## UTILITIES

InstallWatch Pro 2.5	3.7 MB
Pointifex II Demo	4.5MB
Quotes 2002	2 MB
RegCleaner	0.5 MB

## CHEATS

Cheatbook Database 2002 v2.0	5 MB
August Update	1 MB
September Update	1 MB
October Update	1 MB
November Update	1 MB
December Update	1 MB
January Update	1 MB
February Update	1 MB

Estimated Total: 673 MB

*We would like to thank  
the following companies  
for making the NAG  
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games



*We love you long time!*



**Integrity is a four letter word**

**The latest on game reviewers...**

Before I start this I guess I should say that none of the below applies to any of the NAG reviewers.

There - now that the compulsory disclaimer is in place I can start the slamming... [just kidding].

Lately there is a trend developing in the game reviewing discipline, an annoying trend that doesn't seem to be going away... I expect I can speak with some authority on this subject because **a.** I've been playing games for the last 22 years. **b.** I've been reading game reviews since game reviews were first written. **c.** As far as I can determine, I wrote the first game review [screenshots taken with a camera aimed at my Commodore Amiga monitor] in South Africa. **d.** I am now the Editor of an actual gaming magazine. **e.** I think I'm always right.

The trend I'm talking about here is the fact that everyone these days thinks they can be a game reviewer; sure, it's easy to express an opinion about something and put it across in an eloquent way, but being able to sprout an opinion about something without any experience or industry knowledge just doesn't cut the mustard.

I'm sure that at some point or another I've been guilty of committing a few of the problems below, I'm not perfect, I've just been lucky enough to learn from my mistakes.

**Glory Seekers** - this type will diligently play the game from beginning to end but they have an agenda, to slag off the game based on how popular it is and/or how much advertising the title has received all in the name of being resistant to marketing hype and making sure everyone knows it. Problem: Their loss of perspective isn't fair on the game being reviewed. Maturity is usually a problem.

**Cheaters** - The first thing they do when receiving a new title is to look for cheats, quickly finishing the game thinking all they need to do is pay a little special attention to the boss characters, the end-of-game weapon and the level design of the last mission. They then think this is enough to comment on the whole title. Problem: What you get here are inaccurate comments about the length of the game and how dull it is as well as how poor the artificial intelligence is.

**Jaded Gamers** - On the other side of the spectrum are the jaded gamers; nothing impresses these folks, all they can see is the negative side of

everything and have effectively turned their passion into a psychological problem because suddenly nothing is good anymore and life sucks.

Problem: Total focus on the negatives no matter how obscure or irrelevant.

**Plagiarizers** - this is the worst kind of writer, after spending a few minutes with a title they decide they hate it and then only play the game for a few hours after which they read a few other reviews of the same game and then proceed to write the review.

Problem: It usually takes a few reviews until you catch them.

**Clueless** - Next up are the those people who have no idea how to string a sentence together but have been playing games for years, their motivation is to get more games and they think that writing reviews is the way to do this.

Problem: Trying to sort out the English from the Greek can often bring a tear to the eye, especially when a deadline looms.

**Word Count Junkies** - These reviewers equate their worth on how many pages they'll be given for any specific games. Problem: Always trying to justify why a B-Grade title needs a three page review.

There are many other types but these all fall into sub-categories under the above examples. Anyway, no need to hammer the point to death - this is just something all gamers should be aware of next time they read a game review.

**Freelance writers...**

The response to our call for new writers has been overwhelming - we've already hired a few new scribes, Brett Hamilton, Tom Taylor and Iwan Pienaar. I'm busy going through all the other submissions but this process takes time... I will respond to your submission within the next month or two so hang tight - one way or another you'll get a response.

**Important notice:** if anyone out there is still waiting for a prize they've won in the magazine please contact [comp@nag.co.za](mailto:comp@nag.co.za) with your details so we can attend to it.

You might notice this issue hasn't got many big titles - it's been a very quite start to 2003. To compensate for this get the April issue - make sure you read the box entitled 'Next Month', there be juicy stuff there.

Michael James  
Editor

**Winners**

**Sim City 4**  
Christo J. v.Rensburg  
Kyle Lancaster  
Christopher Maynard  
Adrian du Toit  
DC Vermeulen

**MOA Spearhead Expansion**  
Naas Jordaan  
Dylan Timmerman  
Leon van der Linde  
Pierre Smit

**Battlefield 1942 Road To Rome**  
Roald Dickson  
Francois Prinsloo  
Roland Richartz  
Willem Pienaar

**CAPTION OF THE MONTH**

Come up with a funny caption for the image below and send it to [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) - subject: **March 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 salt and pepper shaker set, other times it might be a new gaming rig\*

\* Usually the table ornaments



'After a few drinks, the game of pin-the-tail-on-the-donkey started to get a little rough.' - Warren Sell

**Next Month**

The April issue is a big one, make sure you get it - April is our birthday month and inside this issue you'll find Unreal II, Command & Conquer: Generals plus a high-end graphic card round up. Impossible Creatures... Battlefield 1942: Road to Rome, our top 50 games for 2003, Mortal Combat, Buffy the Vampire Slayer on Xbox, like I need to go on...

The April issue will be on sale 3 April 2003

**January winner**



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# Geforce4



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nVidia Quadro4 900 XGL GPU  
128MB DDR Memory  
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# leTter of The momenT

Well done to the letter of the month winner - your Electronic Arts game and T-shirt will arrive shortly.



## Game 3... Cheats 9

People say games like GTA3 and Diablo are all good games, right? Now let me ask you (and all the readers out there) what is the point of making a game or even playing a game from scratch if you are going to use cheats? E.g. Diablo - You can use the duplicating cheat to double the currency that you possess, correct? Now the producers of the game want you to enjoy the game but at the same time make it a challenge. So if some person (and there are so many out there) goes around playing games and cracking them by using cheats then surely you can just say, "Wow, those cheats were great... I wonder what the game was like?" You defeat the purpose of having a challenging game. It's kind of like Myst but with cheats so that every puzzle you approach gets done automatically for you. Then you can run around like a prancing pony shouting "Whoopee Ding Dong I finished a game by just walking around... (wow)."

Hey I'm not saying that it's not fun using cheats but do it once you're done being serious. Games are cool (and so are fun cheats e.g. big heads) but do yourself a favour and finish it properly, it's far more satisfying.

Lama\_Man

*Ed: I like your point about cheating in adventure games, but you need to work on the whole whoopee ding dong thing.*

## shorts

### MTN - Mobile Mail

Hi there. My name is Herman and I'd like to know what's up with the posters?

Herman

*Ed: Hello Herman. I'm not sure what's up with the posters, but I am sure you're breaking some rule of the English language.*

### Vodacom SMS to email

I'm a gamer who (like most obsessed gamers) spends most of the time playing games or doing stuff on the PC, I was wondering if that is healthy?

-zing-

*Ed: As long as you don't overdo it, remember to take a break at least once every few days and remember to use a non-slip mouse mat at all times.*

## Question

I noticed that you guys got new PC's, in the December issue. I was wondering what you did with the old ones? Do you have to return them to your suppliers, or sell them on the black market etc.? Do you sell them to someone who would buy one, I am in desperate need of a decent gaming rig, I'm stuck with a Celeron. If you do sell them please let me know, or any other suggestions for getting a rig, I can't afford a new system.

Shwaa\_d

*Ed: I wish you had of said something sooner, we hauled those old machines to the dump just the other day and took turns throwing them off a cliff [well, a steep incline anyway].*

## A disturbing thought

Has anyone truly wondered why all the new generation consoles have the ability to go online? To make more money off the individual, but that one's obvious. There is something else... As I went through a very old NAG, I came across one of your old articles. It had to do with developers being able to release flawed (PC) games and then release a torrent of patches to try and make up for it. Now, as far as I know there haven't been any patches for PlayStation games, thus far anyway, due to the fact that you can't exactly patch a CD. However, with the promise of hard drives being added to the consoles of today along with Internet connectivity, will we witness the debut of terribly flawed console games flooding the market? Will we be forced to rectify the developer's mistakes by wasting even more money on top of what we paid for the game in the first place by having to download enormous patches? Granted, this becomes less of an issue with the introduction of faster speeds blah, blah, etc. but what of the person that can't afford broadband? What of the poor sods who rely on Internet cafés for their fix of online time? What will this do to traffic on sites? Perhaps you guys at NAG will be able to help out by replacing the cover CD with a DVD and adding a separate section that can run on consoles for patches and stuff should this dark day ever rear its ugly head and vomit all over the

general populace. Perhaps it's not at all possible but it is just a suggestion from a paranoid individual. Whatever the case, you guys rock and I can't wait to get my greasy little paws on the next issue!

Psyaside

*Ed: Good point. I expect there will always be the odd patch here and there for console titles but these will probably be cleverly disguised as extra missions, characters, etc. Console developers are a different breed to PC developers, they've never had the luxury of being able to patch their games and this has forced them to make very sure the final product is perfect. I doubt this standard will drop... much...*

## Multiplayer Mayhem

A question that's been bothering me for ages: why have MMORPG games been hailed as a new genre? They are nothing more than multiplayer only games, only much bigger and one has to pay monthly fees [just another way to pump more money out of us I think]. So can you please tell me what's so new about them? Gamers have been playing multiplayer games for years now. It's just that developers have now made them on a larger scale than ever before, and to some extent more interactive. Nothing really new to warrant it being called a new genre. So this brings me to another point: MMORPG's are slowly becoming the norm and the next standard to base games on. And more importantly they are responsible for the ultimate demise of single player games, which are slowly fading away into oblivion and probably never to be seen again. The majority of games mostly ship with a single player component [most of them laughable], but in disguise the multiplayer component is the real "beef" of just about any game on the market today. Games such as Medal of Honour [there are many examples] can be completed in a few hours at the most, which goes to show that single player isn't the real focus anymore, but it's the multiplayer aspect that everyone is concerned about. Don't get me wrong I don't have anything against multiplayer games it's just that developers are taking it a bit too far this time.

Although it's hard for me to admit it but MMORPG's are the thing of the future, and most developers are doing one or considering doing one. So in the end it's the gamers like me, I love single player games, that lose out in the end because of this so called "new genre" that is MMORPG games.

Banshee

*Ed: I get many letters each month from people bashing massively multiplayer online games - I'm guessing it's because of this countries atrocious bandwidth and lack of decent services such as Battle.net. What I wonder is would there be an attitude change if bandwidth was not the limitation it is? Don't spend too many sleepless nights worrying about the death of the single player game - remember the market can't endlessly support hundreds of these online worlds and eventually developers will switch focus back to the single player gamer... for we are many.*

## An untapped resource

Just another idea in the recent storm - why has there been no television advertising for games or gaming events? I see the occasional EA advert and recently one for Kingdom Hearts, but other than that... I mean, a few select bits of the Final Fantasy series cut-scenes might have boosted the game's sales. But no, instead we are forced to sit through asinine soap and nappy commercials while we wait for our programs to return. If suppliers and developers started using television as an advertising platform, I'd never use my mute button again! Would it be that expensive? I'm sure that Pampers didn't spend that much for putting two anal actors together pretending to be so damned amazed at what a diaper can do for an entire two and a half minutes! Why don't we have some jaw dropping, liver twisting, and spine ripping action being shown to us that might grab even more attention than the show we're currently watching? Surely it would be a worthwhile investment, wouldn't it?

Psyaside

*Ed: This topic was covered in last*



Ronnie Ho Hip sent us the 'MAG-LITE'



months letters (see 'Advertising' from Soulraider). Aside from the actual costs of putting the commercial together, fighting it on TV enough times for it to have an impact out there requires a fairly large budget.

### Final Say X

Concerning the originality crisis, I just thought I should put in Final Say X. The following statements should sound vastly familiar: "Remember how Quake's multiplayer used to rock, I wish we could have something like that nowadays" or "DOOM was the best game ever, why don't we see something original like that?" You get the picture? A few weeks ago we had a LAN Party, and after some WarCraft III and some Quake III (no UT2003 then) we didn't know what to do. One guy was busy playing DOOM (yes, the first one - he's an id fanatic) and someone else suggested we play that multiplayer. Unfortunately, we couldn't get DOOM running on all the PCs, but Quake (the first one) was also available. After editing some files to increase max players we were rolling - and I never thought we could have that much fun (damn, that rocket launcher is strong!). It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable LAN parties ever. We also revisited WarCraft II, GTA II and Red Alert. We played right up to 14h00 the next day. So what I can't understand is, players are moaning about how those old titles had rocked, but they're still rocking. Stop bitching and moaning and play them again - you won't regret it.

### Sent1n3L

**Ed:** Retro gaming is always fun, it's just a pity that all these Counter-Strike and Unreal players will never

really know the true joys of a Quake Deathmatch - that was hardcore. Send me an invite next time you have a Quake LAN.

### Movie idea - NAG the movie

I had an idea for NAG The Movie. It could be about a group of NAG employees who end up locked in a room and are forced to create a magazine monthly and play games [this sounds oddly familiar, Ed]. They start disobeying orders from this higher force and then escape into this virtual world called New Age Gaming with the help of a man called Napster. Anything is possible in this world and they plan to ram this world with the real world to destroy the higher force. But they have to face agents and dodge bullets and fireballs from dragons, ride on chocobos as the story involves them finding the golden ring which will complete this. However when they find the ring, the holder (the editor) is overwhelmed by the power and the group struggles to get this ring while falling under the pressures of not using it's power for evil since it has the power to alternate motives while battling the evil and dealing with emotional stress. It could have great special effects and a great ending where, when the two worlds (NAG world and real world) combine, it creates a chain of events which continue the story to the next movie.

**Ed:** This, and the next two letters, is what happens if you don't take a break from playing games every twenty minutes. What happens in

the next movie BTW? Do we all pull off our human suits and discover we're actually apes dressed as humans pretending to be humans who think we're apes thinking we're humans? The reality of a NAG movie would play out more like Tarantino meets Hitchcock.

### Gaming is an addiction

What will happen when developers run out of ideas for games? Will gamers be left without games? Will we resort to old games that were released 20 years ago? Will we hold a knife to the developer's neck and threaten to kill developers if no games are released within a specified time? Will gamers become savages? Is this addiction dangerous? Everyone seems to be saying that if you are addicted to something it is bad and it always turns your back on you. Sure, playing games starts out fun but soon you'll find yourself killing to get a new game. It's like drugs - you get high and then you cry for the next fix. I'm not saying we should not play games and all but we should start controlling our urges. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and all I can think about is loading the area where I saved in my last game. Have games cursed me or have I cursed myself? The time will soon come where we have to find an alternative for games. Like we did with caves, DOS and that TV show called Star Trek.

### Game idea - NAG the game

I had an idea about a game called NAG. In NAG you start a magazine company with a sarcastic editor, lazy staff and slow computers [sounds oddly familiar, Ed]. You have to mould it into a successful company with a sarcastic Ed. You can adjust the amount of reviews you want in your magazine, the paper quality, what goes on the CD's. It even goes deeper allowing you to adjust the screenshot numbers you want in your reviews. You'll have to

send your reviewers off to play games for a selected time and then they should come back and write a review. If they play too many games they tend to loose track and if they write too much they could end up underscoring the game. You have to also go into setting up the offices and deciding the price. You could end up with a great piece of work or great piece of disaster.

### Jeansy

### Dishwasher game

I just wanted to tell you that the dishwasher game concept was not serious and should not be viewed in such a manner either by you or other readers. It was just an example to show everybody that many original ideas still exist. I am currently coding a game in C++ however and I will release a demo at the end of this month. Would you put this game on your Cover CD? If you would I will continue development, otherwise I see no point in continuing. The game is a very original take on space blasters with RPG, trading and story elements thrown in and many completely original concepts.

### Pandemic

**Ed:** Umm, we do know that the dishwasher game wasn't really a serious concept, hey everyone? Hello...? Is this thing on?

## more shorts...

### Realism in the 21st Century

Are RTS games going to evolve so much that they're going to act as if we are really in the Gulf War or part of a squad where one shot kills you and a grenade that explodes five meters away turns half of your team mates to ash? Is this going to spoil the fun or are Governments going to use this as a covert-ops simulator? Lastly, are PC games just going to turn into simulators? I don't want anyone planning a hijack or armed robbery!

### Gallavan

**Ed:** I'm almost certain that somewhere out there someone will know what you're talking about.

### What to study

I'm starting Grade 12 this year and I'm planning on going to University afterwards. I was wondering if you would be able to tell me exactly what I have to study and where so that I will be able to work at a magazine like NAG one day.

### Barend

**Ed:** I guess you could start with journalism first, then move onto graphic design and then a few practical courses in putting a magazine together. Just studying a single line of thinking won't help you much these days - we need people who can do it all. Experience in handling the subject matter is also useful plus a little passion never hurts. This isn't a glamorous job unless you're me, and I'm pretty much thinking I can stretch this one out until I retire.

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] or  
**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.prophesy.co.za](http://www.prophesy.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.



# THE DOMAIN OF THE BASILISK

Since its release in 1999, Quake III Arena was the deathmatch game of choice among players and tournament organisers alike. The game owed a large part of its success to its action-based nature and speed, which made it highly enjoyable as well as having competitive potential. There was no attempt to overcomplicate or bring unnecessary strategy into the game, but rather it was celebrated for its mindless carnage. It was easy to learn, but difficult to master, and this meant the top players were never secure in their position, so the games never got boring. What also contributed to its popularity was the major focus that id Software put on the spectator aspect. It was not only the players who enjoyed their games - Quake 3 had the largest spectator following amongst all the other competitive games. From its concept, to its release, and all through its playable life, the game had been engineered for competition purposes. This is how the features we now take for granted were made standard.

## Throne of the DeathMatch Kingdom

The problem is, Quake III is reaching the end of its run. The game is four years old now, and support from tournaments and players is dwindling. This was most evident when the tournament games for the World Cyber Games 2003 were announced recently. Unreal Tournament 2003, StarCraft: BroodWar (ironically the same age as Quake III), Age of Mythology, FIFA 2003, Warcraft III, Counter-Strike and two console titles (yet to be named) appear on the list. Quake III does not. The Electronic Sports World Cup, to be held in France this year, also fails to feature Quake III. The same was true of the last Cyberathlete Professional League event in Dallas, USA, late last year. There are, of course, still certain international leagues and competitions running for it, but it seems the spotlight is fading fast. So, if Quake III is indeed dying out, what is going to replace it? The obvious answer is Unreal Tournament 2003, which has already been adopted by all three of the major international gaming bodies. The choice has thrilled some and enraged others, and generally caused a stir amongst the player communities world-wide, and especially here in South Africa. Due to the fact that South Africa is usually forced to follow international trends, whether we like it or not, the game is going to be featured heavily in this country as well. Unreal Tournament 2003, like Quake III, is aimed at the competitive multiplayer gamer, and is intended to be featured in gaming tournaments (in case you couldn't tell from its name). Does the game have the capacity to cope with the demands being made of it? Is it truly suited to this level of gaming? Will it be around next year, still going strong, or will it die out quickly from lack of player enthusiasm? With the imminent releases of DOOM III and Quake IV lurking just around the corner (relatively speaking of course), let's take a look and see if UT2K3 (as it is commonly abbreviated) has what it takes to hold onto its newfound position. UT2K3 is seen as somewhat of a bastard child of its predecessor, the original Unreal Tournament (UT), and the style of play in Quake III. This gives rise to a problem within the communities of both games. Either it is criticised as being too much like the original UT, or it is slated for being too different. I feel this is rather unfair on the game, since it is nothing like either. The only similarity between UT2K3 and the original UT is some of the weapons. Apart from that, the game plays more like Quake 1 than anything else! This comparison might sound ridiculous, but it's just as ridiculous to compare it to the original UT. It's a whole new game, and learning its intricacies and quirks will take time. Epic's biggest mistake was using the same name. In my opinion, the deathmatch feel of UT2K3 is unique and currently unrivalled. The major valid concern is, even though it is billed as a tournament game, UT2K3

lacks many of the crucial options. For example, there is no option to force player models, there is no default monochrome skin, demo recording is problematic, and spectating is difficult. To make matters worse, the major leagues (the CPL in particular) are currently running the game in a way that most consider to be downright stupid and restrictive on the players. There are mutators (modifications) available that fix nearly all of the abovementioned issues, but the tournament organisers have completely refused to use them, even while they have become a standard amongst the players. Medium detail settings (which knocks framerates heavily), weapon models on screen (personal preference, and also a framerate issue), field of vision set to 85 (where most players prefer 90-110), no console and no manual demo recording are some of the settings being enforced. The players, of course, were not consulted. Many of these regulations have been enforced by Epic themselves, and it makes one wonder if they have any idea at all about competitive play. It looks as if they don't actually want competitions to use their game. If this iron-grip, let's-all-go-play-Counter-Strike approach continues, it wouldn't surprise me if UT2K3 doesn't last the year. With these kinds of issues surrounding the game, it has to be pretty impressive to withstand them. So what's so special about UT2K3? To be direct, almost everything about the actual play dynamic is conducive to a competitive situation. It is fast, balanced, well-designed and action-packed. The element of map control is emphasised, which makes it strategic but not convoluted. There are so many nuances that they are being discovered all the time, which means player interest should be kept up for a while. Innovations like the shield cannon, dodge-jumping and wall-jumping make deathmatch as interesting as it's ever been. I would recommend that anyone keen on competing in the 1v1 game type starts taking UT2K3 seriously. If nothing else, it will no doubt be fully supported in South African tournaments.



## Gaming is good for you...

Researchers from Loyola University, Chicago, USA, have recently published the results of a study they carried out on gaming, and its effects on players. Using Counter-Strike as the main focus of the study, they observed players in their homes and under controlled conditions at the university, also reading logs of in-game chatting. Their findings state that games like Counter-Strike are as healthy as playing chess, serve to enhance mental,

emotional and psychological maturity, and nurture important social skills for use in real life. I'd like to remind everyone that I've been saying this publicly for a good two years now. In fact, most gamers I know figured it out long ago, yet it takes years of painstaking research to get the rest of the world to believe it. I am happy to see that the ridiculous trend of blaming the violence on computer games is finally being questioned

by the academics. However, there is one major problem with the study's findings: it blatantly states that Counter-Strike is good for you. Now we all know this is an absolute travesty of science, but I suppose I've only been saying Counter-Strike sucks since the later half of last year, so logic dictates it'll be another year and a half before the quacks prove me right again.



# clean-ups, quotes and constructions

## Quotes 2002



### A quote a day makes you look clever

One of my on/off hobbies in life is to collect quotes. I get these by letting people send them to me, and I lose them all every time I format because I don't know what to do with them. Of course, I could make myself look really clever and actually use them for something, or memorize them and use them as witty remarks whenever I get the chance, but I'm too lazy for the first and the second one sounds like work too. Of course, the beauty of software is to not make you work as much. That's not always the case, but in this instance, Quotes 2002 actually does do some of the work for you. It's a very simple premise. Quotes uses text files that are in its quotes directory. You simply select which of these files you want to use, and every time the program starts, it will grab a new quote. Since the app sits calmly in your task bar, every time you click on the icon, it gets a new quote. You can also set interval times when it should change itself. Of course, what makes this so special? Well, first off because it uses text files, it's very easy to add new quotes and even files. Just make a file and dump your quotes in there. Or add more quotes to any file in the directory. The more useful side of the app, though, is that it can change your Outlook or Outlook Express signature every time the quote changes. Quotes also allows you to add the current quote to your clipboard, or paste your clipboard content into a file as a new quote, though you'd have to use the right format for this to work well. Still, considering how small it is and how useful it is when it comes to making you seem clever, or simply just to add some food-for thought to your e-mail, it's very useful.

## Pointifex II



### Don't break your bridges

In the world of games, even on the PC, puzzle titles are rather rare. And even those that are released tend to focus more on action and fun than logic and patience. Of course, there are board games on the PC, but that's not quite what we mean here, is it? But when Pontifex was released a short while ago, it was quite different in that its graphics were purely functional, and the principle sound - build a bridge. Those who missed out on the first can try the improved Pontifex II, a tough puzzler of a game where knowing where to place what beam will get you through. Sounds easy, doesn't it?

At first it is. After all, there are only so many ways to build a stable and working bridge with two segments on a budget. But once you go beyond that, and you have more pieces suspended over the water, things get tricky. PII is there to appeal to the little engineer in you. It is based around the idea of distributing the weight of the bridge over the right amount of beams, both over and under, so that it stays in the air. This means building, testing, watching your bridge collapse, building, test, watching your bridge collapse again, swearing, building, testing, watching the bridge cave in again, cursing, closing the program, walking away,

coming back, trying again. Of course it's not for everyone, but it is the kind of game that will be overlooked by the masses and for a change is an actual challenge to your mind.

## RegCleaner



### A clean Registry is, well, clean

The Windows Registry is one of the most important components of your operating system, but it's probably the most abused. Users actually defrag more often than they look at their registry (that's not a lot at all), and programs tend to leave their garbage all over the place, ending up in a rather sluggish and bloated system.

The problem with the registry is that it's rather daunting. Making the wrong changes in your registry can result in the operating system not working at all, but this is the same as messing with files inside the Windows directory. The big difference, though, is that any registry change is real-time, and you can't undo it, except with a back-up. But sometimes the damage is so much that you can't even boot back in. These are worst-case scenarios, though.

Then there is the rather unfriendly Registry Editor that comes with Windows. Even though the version with XP and 2000 are significantly better than the older ones, they are still quite intimidating, and mean that anyone who just wants to do basic registry maintenance will be discouraged.

In comes RegCleaner. The program scans your registry and places it into four categories: File Types, New File, Shell Extension and Backups. The last entry simply lists backups you have made of the registry, and helps restore them. The rest, though, list the different aspects of the registry that you can safely delete. This makes it easy for you to go through the lists and see what you don't need, or have, anymore, and safely delete it.

RegCleaner isn't an editor, though - you can't add new elements to the registry. And when using the program, always make a back-up, since changes aren't reversible otherwise. Lastly, remember that toying with the registry can be dangerous, so it's at your own risk. If possible, get someone who's familiar with registry editing to help you out at first. RegCleaner, though, is one of the safest and easiest ways to go about your Registry.

## InstallWatch Pro



### Where did that app go?

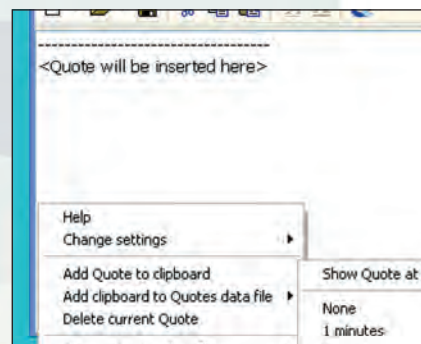
One of the problems with Windows is its poor uninstall feature. Sure, most programs uninstall seemingly fine, but they leave behind empty directories, and even worse, registry settings, unlinked DLLs and other things you'd never think of looking for. So for that you need something that can track the changes in your system install-wise.

InstallWatch Pro is one of the better free offerings in this field, and one of the most user and resource friendly. Simply put, you have the program run at startup, and it will monitor all installations you make.

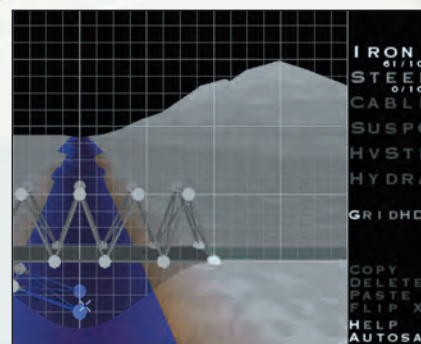
Then when you want to uninstall something, simply open up InstallWatch and tell it to get rid of the program. The difference here to the normal Windows uninstaller is that InstallWatch takes a snapshot of your system, or parts of your system, and then compares this to older versions, easily identifying what new elements have been added by a program. This means it can easily track down changes in your system and work from there.

The program has a few shortcomings, such as not living in your taskbar, but these issues can be fixed later. Be sure to consult the help-file, though, to really get to grips with the Interface and features.

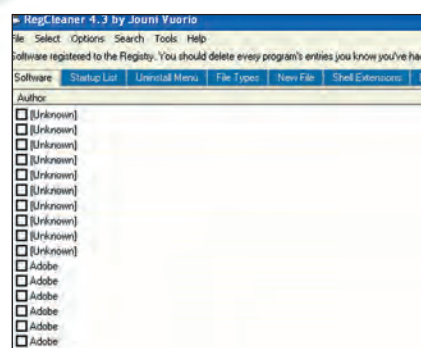
Quotes 2002



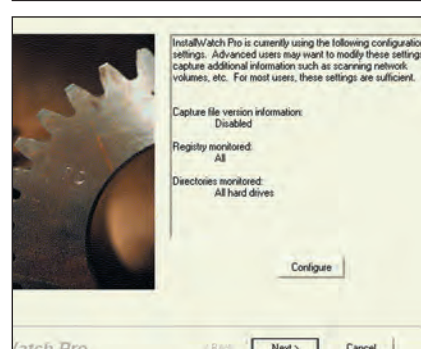
Pontifex II



RegCleaner



Installwatch Pro





# players behaving badly

There are a number of bad habits that players might develop that can cause problems for a role playing group - both the game master and the players. This issue we will take a closer look at those problems, and how they might be dealt with. However, bad role playing habits are a bit like drug addiction - no-one will admit to having a problem.

Anyway, what follows is a list of the six most common badly behaved gamers, along with some advice on how to deal with them:

## 1. The Power Gamer

**The problem:** Every group has one of these guys. In fact, this is probably the most common misbehaviour within the role playing fraternity. This is the guy who, after having carefully balanced his character to squeeze every ounce of advantage out of it, tries to dominate the group by being the hero. He has to be smarter, faster, stronger, more agile and better looking than any other character, whether PC or NPC. He will gloat and grin in annoying ways when he manages to dominate game play, and will sulk and moan when he can't.

**The solution:** The power gamer is nothing more than a school yard bully. What he needs is to be shown that role playing is not about being the best, but about doing the best with what you have. Discuss the problem with him or, at worst, give him a pre-generated character to use (although you will have to do this with the whole group.) At dead worst, kick him out of your group. These guys are no fun to have around.

## 2. The Tweedles

**The problem:** The tweedles almost always appear in groups. These guys sit at the far end of the table, and constantly giggle, tickle each other, crack weak jokes, make stupid puns and make a general nuisance of themselves. This is annoying, but the biggest problem is that these guys (or guy, because they sometimes do appear on their own) are more effective at shattering a carefully constructed atmosphere than a hammer hitting a mirror. Particularly when they get a little nervous (like in a good horror session).

**The solution:** Tell them to shut up. As often as you have to. If they come as a pair, separate them. Tell them to shut up again. If the problem persists, kick 'em out of the group.

## 3. The Rule Quoter

**The problem:** This is my least favourite kind of scum. This guy has read the rules book fifteen times, and can quote verbatim from any page. He knows the rules backwards, and will always be willing to "helpfully" point out when an error has been made by the GM. That's ok if you're playing Scrabble, but role playing is not about rules - in fact, almost every rule book states that the rules are merely guidelines.

**The solution:** Play a system that the swine has never heard of. And if he buys a copy of the rules, organize to have it destroyed. Or kick him out of the group.

## 4. The Socialiser

**The problem:** This guy comes to role playing sessions not to play, but to chat and socialize with his friends. Role playing is social, yes, but no-one cares about your week at work during a game session. This person's constant and inane chatter during a session is distracting and utterly annoying.

**The solution:** Allow your players a period of socializing before the game starts - this will hopefully get all the chit chat out of his system. Alternatively, kick him out of the group.

## 5. The Dozer

**The problem:** Another one of my favourites. This is the guy who is in a dream world, does not pay attention, and generally asks about events and details that resolved themselves ages ago. His constant back tracking requests slow the game down and generally annoy people.

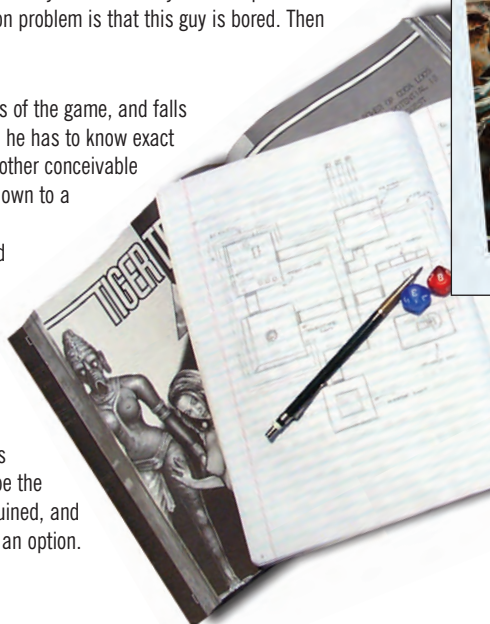
**The solution:** Try to involve the player in the game more than they will voluntarily do. Set up situations in which the player is important, because the most common problem is that this guy is bored. Then again, you could always kick him out of the group.

## 6. The Strategy Gamer

**The problem:** This is the chap who lives for the combat bits of the game, and falls asleep at every other time. And when combat rolls around, he has to know exact distances, angles, elevations, muzzle velocities and every other conceivable detail that does nothing more than slow the game's pace down to a crawl.

**The solution:** Explain to him what role playing is about, and elaborate on the fact that it is not a strategy war game. Then again, you could always kick him out of the group.

Whenever you want to take action to reform (or remove) a misbehaving player, always consult the rest of the group. Remember, players can be hard to come by, so think things through before booting someone out - this should always be the last resort. On the other hand, if your enjoyment is being ruined, and there is no other solution, removing the offensive player is an option.



new age gaming

## call of cthulhu

### review

One of the most popular role playing game titles is destined to become a major PC game title, so we thought it would be apt to bring you the low-down on the book that started it all: Call of Cthulhu.

Based on the writings of Howard Phillip Lovecraft (largely considered to be the father of modern literary horror) the Call of Cthulhu role playing game takes the players into a world where ancient, horrific terrors from beyond our solar system wait for the stars to align, at which time they will rise up and destroy the world. But just because they are sleeping doesn't mean that they are inactive. Cults and madmen devoted to them can be found lurking everywhere... This game is a prime example of a great role playing game. It requires players to be resourceful, smart and inquisitive, as well as knowing their own limitations. There is not a whole lot of combat in this game, preferring rather to delve into the psychology of horror rather than the effectiveness of a gun.

Call of Cthulhu offers three well detailed time periods (1890's, 1920's and present day) and the core rule book has a wealth of information... it is all the GM will need to successfully run the game.

However, there are very good source books available for Call of Cthulhu, including the independently published Delta Green series - which adds a healthy dose of conspiracy theory and paranoia to the modern day setting. In this supplement, the players take the part of government agents investigating the Cthulhu Mythos as part of a highly secret and illegal organization bent on ending government dealings with aliens. Very X-Files indeed, and absolutely wonderful.

Overall, this game is the king of horror role playing, and a title that every gamer should try!



### REVIEWED BY

Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

### PLUS

Easy to play  
One core book  
Excellent setting

### MINUS

Players may have difficulty in relating to certain period settings

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*Enjoyment Matters*



# 100% Otaku the NaG Anime paGe

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...

## Websites:

[www.theanimatrix.com](http://www.theanimatrix.com)

[whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com](http://whatisthematrix.warnerbros.com)

by anton lines



## what is the animatrix?

In 1999, *The Matrix* revolutionised the world of action films, introducing brand new concepts in cinematography, action choreography, and story evolution. What many people do not know, is that *The Matrix* borrowed, almost without exception, all of its techniques from anime. The most famous sequence is the market chase scene, which was taken directly out of *Ghost in the Shell*. Another easy-to-spot example is where Morpheus jumps from one building to another, cracking the roof tiles as he lands. This has been done for aeons in many different animes.

It is only fitting that, eventually, *The Matrix* returns to the medium it originated from. Three years in development, *The Animatrix* is a series of short animated films, directed by several celebrated Japanese directors. The most famous names on the project include Square, the producers of *Final Fantasy*, and Shinichiro Watanabe, the director of *Cowboy Bebop*. The episodes are set in *The Matrix* universe, and contain official story elements you won't see in any of the movies. The Wachowski Brothers, (writer-directors of *The Matrix*) have worked closely with the anime crews to ensure the final product stays true to *The Matrix*'s vision. In order to experience the story in its entirety, one will need to see all three *Matrix* films, play *Enter The Matrix* (the game), and watch *The Animatrix*. *The Animatrix* also sees a definite emphasis on the use of Computer Generated Imagery, together with conventional drawing styles. There will be 9 episodes, each between six and sixteen minutes long. Episode one, "The Second Renaissance, part 1" has already been released, and is featured on this month's cover CD. The following three are due for release, one per month, over the next three months.



## Rurouni Kenshin

**Genre:** Historical Drama  
**Year:** 1996  
**Producer:** Sony  
**Format:** Series & Movie  
**Episodes:** 95 + 6 OVAs and 1 Movie  
**Language:** English / Japanese with English subtitles  
**Availability:** Common

Concept	10
Story	9
Characters	10
Animation	7
Translation	7
Total Score (out of 100)	96

During the Bakamatsu period in Japanese history (a time of political upheaval where the old Edo Dynasty gave way to the more modern Meiji Era), two violent factions fought for the leadership of the country. Much of the success of the Ishin Shishi party, the eventual victors who brought about the Meiji Era, depended on the legendary assassin known as Hitokiri Battousai. His sword was responsible for countless deaths of opposing party members and many lives saved in his own party, but near the end of the period, he disappeared without a word. Ten years later, a murderer calling himself the Hitokiri Battousai shows up in Tokyo, using the Kamiya Kasshin style of swordfighting. Kaoru Kamiya, the owner of the Kamiya Dojo and instructor of the style, sets out to clear her sword school's name, by trying to catch the Battousai. Instead, she stumbles upon a drifter (rurouni), mistaking him for the man she is out to capture. The rurouni, whose name is Kenshin, carries a sakabatou (reversed sword, blunt edge facing forwards) and appears to be a total pacifist. However, when the real killer shows up, Kenshin handles himself extra-ordinarily well. It seems the rurouni is more than he appears to be.

While *Rurouni Kenshin* is a fictional piece, the setting is historically correct, and the story is based on actual events and people. It is an epic account of the life of Japan's greatest swordsman who vowed never to kill again after relinquishing his position as the master assassin of the Ishin Shishi party. Spanning three "separate" series (past, present and future), and a movie, almost every part of Kenshin's life is covered, from his early childhood, right up to old age.

As one would expect, this show has a lot to do with swordfighting, as Kenshin's past has a tendency to catch up with him. However, it also places heavy importance on the people in his life, and thus character development is strong. While the concept is not particularly imaginative, it is undoubtedly the best "hero" scenario ever devised in

anime, appealing to a large, varied audience. The story, as one would expect from an epic of this nature, is long and detailed. It is fairly straightforward, but executed perfectly, holding the audience's attention all the way through. There is an appropriate mix of comedy, action and drama. The earlier, more light-hearted episodes progress to the more serious part of the story later on. A very real sense of emotion is conveyed through the characters and the theme of fate, which is thankfully handled with subtlety.

The animation is particularly impressive, especially in the two OVA series, where the fight sequences are meticulously choreographed, and absolutely no animation "shortcuts" are taken. During the bulk of the series, however, there is the odd kawaii ("cute" style) scene and the infamous lined backgrounds, but they are mostly steered clear of during the action sequences.

*Rurouni Kenshin* is epic in every sense of the word, and you will not often see such a massive scale in story and, indeed, setting. Anyone who even remotely calls themselves an anime fan should have seen this, and if not, should be making a very conscientious effort to do so as soon as possible.





## Who is Black Blade?

Take a group of dedicated Anime "Otaku" who are sick and tired of the state of anime in this country and you get Black Blade - we are dedicated to bringing the very best in anime to the South African public.

[www.blackblade.za.net](http://www.blackblade.za.net)



## boerewors and chopsticks anime in south africa

### Well where do I begin?

Anime is still a rarity in this country, the problem is that good anime has never really been introduced to the South African public. During the apartheid years strict censorship, sanctions and a gross misunderstanding of anime prevented it from entering our country, however a few animes targeted at a younger audience slipped through.

I bet you didn't know that Maya the bee or "MITSUBACHI MAA YA NO BOKEN" as it was known in Japan was an anime? Thundercats, Robotech (alright I know you knew that one), Voltron, Kimba the white lion as well as Heidi girl of the alps (a Miyazaki) were all of Japanese origin. In the years since a few more have managed to make it to our screens - Samurai Pizza Cats showed a few years ago, and now you can catch DragonBall Z, Pokemon and Medabots on TV; these unfortunately are all what we at Black Blade call mediocre or even bad examples of anime. Also all of the above mentioned anime is aimed at a younger audience which unfortunately puts alot of people who would usually love anime off, bad X-rated hentai such as Urotsukidoji and LA Blue Girl (imported by sex shops) also add to the bad image anime has received in this country. We at Black Blade would like to give all of you skeptics out there another chance, visit our webpage [www.blackblade.za.net](http://www.blackblade.za.net) and find out what anime is really all about.

Serpent

And for those who don't know what an otaku is, well, a basic explanation would go as follows...

There are really two types of otaku, Japanese and Western. We are more familiar with the western use of the word, which has the far lighter meaning of an anime fan who may or may not be interested in the Japanese language and culture and is into certain otaku-related activities. The Japanese version of the word, contrary to popular opinion, does not necessarily have anything to do with anime at all, and is an unsavoury term describing an overly, even worryingly obsessed fan of something or other. For more detail, you can read the "Meaning of Otaku" rant on Black Blade's website [www.blackblade.za.net](http://www.blackblade.za.net).

### A Definition

## Newbie Top Five

### Series:

- 1) Trigun
- 2) Ranma 1/2
- 2) Tenchi Muyo
- 3) Escaflowne
- 4) Hand Maid May
- 5) 3x3 eyes

Black Blade put this particular top five anime series list together with the anime newbie in mind. When a person is roped into watching an anime for the first time, it could well be an experience that converts them into fledgling otaku or turns them from anime altogether. As in real life, first impressions last. We firmly believe that these series, selected from the hundreds that we've watched, have the most universal appeal and provide a sample of some of the content to be found in general anime. With the vast amount of freely available information about these series, they are quite easy to get into and leave the viewer with more of an idea about what kind of anime they would like to see more of. Each series provides a solid, rewarding story that is different enough to interest, but not alienate newcomers. Like a gateway drug, they lead to bigger things - one might start off with an episode of Ranma 1/2 every other day, but before you know it, you've already moved past Kimagure Orange Road laced with side splitting episodes of Kareshi Kanojou no Jijou and you're doing seven episodes of Love Hina a day. The anime movies list that we put together represents the kind of things that might interest an anime fan as they grow into anime. Starting with Ninja Scroll, which is just so watchable on any level, one might then move to something like Blood, The Last Vampire for the sheer experience that it is and then progress to something like the heavy, but rewarding Kaze no Tani No Nausicaa when they're ready to be captivated by animated storytelling at its best.

KnightGainax

As you know, finding anime in South Africa is a rather tough task. We would therefore like to request that any business dealing with anime on a commercial basis please contact the magazine [ed@nag.co.za](mailto:ed@nag.co.za) so that we may enlighten our readers as to your existence.



# the LAZY GAMER'S guide to a midi PC case

Instead of showing off some marvelous technology that a bunch of Venusians dropped off on the way to Mars, we decided to take a look at a PC case that's starting to do the rounds at local LANS, just because it's so gosh-darnit sexy...

### At the top

Out of the way of grubby fingers and making the case look like a large phaser, at the top you'll find one standard power button. Right behind it? Your reset button! Great, except when you reach over to plug something in and accidentally brush over it.

### The Handle

Why is this the perfect LAN case? Well, apart from the fact that you can lunge it at people who just sniped you from a camping position, the handle is quite handy to lug it around, since you just *had* to put ten SCSI drives in at once.



### The models

You can get this case in several colours, including Gun-metal gray and this shade of blue. The case comes in three and four bay variants, and ships with a 300W power supply, all for around R 320 from Proton Technologies (011 486 0748). A cheaper version is available minus the power supply.

### Our Model

Note that we don't have to use sexy models to sell magazines... just some arbitrary guy is fine.

### USB tray

It's perhaps not something to make a big song and dance about, since very good MIDI case ought to have it, but the front tray can be USB and Sound enabled for an easy R15. That means no more leaning to the back and trying to find the USB port in the dark. Or buy a desk lamp for R130. You decide!

### In Pieces!

Why are we pimping a PC case, of all things, this month? Well, for one, you can take it apart without the Editor having a seizure, so we're happy. It also means you can mod this case with ease, since it's a breeze to strip to pieces. Just don't be like us - remember where the screws are. And by screws we mean a whole shebang of them. This thing is sturdy...





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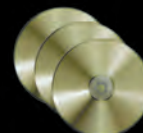
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**D**avid Hadassin is one of the figureheads local gamers in South Africa would love to know better. He is the man behind the

Sony PlayStation brand at Ster Kinekor, and he knows the comings and goings of the world's biggest console right here in South Africa. We sat down with him and found out what PS2 owners can expect this year.

Off the bat, David wanted to remind us that the gaming world is an ever changing one, and that you shouldn't think things stay as they are. "If you look at the industries of the world, I think what people don't understand about the PlayStation is that even though it is part of the Sony Corporation, and Sony has been around for a long time, PlayStation as a business is just over six years old." David said, "And even though a lot has happened in that six years, I think the consumer must realize that there are a lot of changes happening in the industry. For instance, if you said six years ago that Sony would be the leading console manufacturer, people would have laughed at you, thinking Sega and Nintendo would be at the forefront."

That is very true, especially when you consider that the PlayStation 2 and Gameboy Advance has individually sold at numbers that were unheard of six years ago. Earlier this year the PlayStation 2 hit the record-breaking 50-million unit mark, making it the second-most sold platform ever (first remains the significantly cheaper Gameboy Advance, but handhelds vs. consoles truly is a apples/oranges comparison). Of course, the market doesn't consist out of these two only. Last year Nintendo and Microsoft both launched their behemoth consoles. David was eager to offer his view, "Although there's been a lot going on, and it's good that there is competition about in the likes of Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube, I think their massive launches worldwide have given more credibility to the PlayStation 2, and increased the unit sales. For instance, when the two did launch last year, the PS2 sales started to double at a faster rate."

It is undeniable that despite regarding the two-year head start, the PlayStation 2 is a phenomenal seller. Part of the reason for that is because of games. The PS2 catalogue currently has over 1,500 available.

How much of that is relevant to the local market?

"When we launched, we had some of our retailers say we launched too many titles. But we launched a lot of these titles simply because we wanted to give the consumer a choice." He enthused, "Not all of those titles are going to reach the top of the charts. Ster Kinekor represents Sony, with their hardware and software, but we also represent the lion's share of the third parties. So other than EA and one or

# PS2 2 K 3



two other small companies, we represent all third party companies in South Africa. " There are several big names here worth mentioning. Some of the bigger second parties include Namco, Disney and SquareSoft, though all three of these have, or are building, pretty solid multi-platform legacies. David also mentioned that there are exclusives coming from the likes of Midway, Konami, Codemasters, Activision, Ubi Soft, THQ and Eidos, to name a few.

"In our deals with these companies, we will bring in all their titles. Even if it's a small title, we will just bring in fewer units, so they might not be available at all retailers. But we will bring in every single title that these companies release. There will always be a level of availability."

One of the key problems with the PlayStation, and actually any console title available locally, is the steep price of the games. Contrary to popular opinion, console games aren't expensive because of the distributors taking bigger cuts. It's related to the traditional royalty system that console manufacturers use to make money. Of course, justified or not, R 600+ for a game is a bigger hit on the average gamer's pocket. Luckily Ster Kinekor Home Entertainment has an answer.

"[One of the things] that we are pushing heavily is the Platinum series, thanks to the range's affordability." says David, "Platinum is also about availability at a better price for a better game. There are retailers and companies who bring in something they call the Value series. Now these are games that haven't gone platinum, but they've instead marked them down themselves. In many cases that can be a bad experience for a new PlayStation buyer." He illustrates a very valid point. If a newbie saved up for a PlayStation 2, and then can only afford something cheap, he might opt for a Value game. One of the big differences between a first party budget game and anything else is that before you can reach Platinum status on any console, you need to have sold more than a million units. So if you buy Platinum, you're guaranteed a good game. Not so with Value. And before you know it the new gamer has resorted to using his PS2 as a DVD machine, because he found the game to be rubbish.

"We plan to roll out a TV campaign later this year to push Platinum. Although we did a very good launch, and we got a lot of the series out there, every month or two there is the odd new game. Unfortunately there are not twenty new releases a month, because of the million-mark restriction, but there are about a dozen a year on the PSX and at least fifteen a year on the PlayStation 2. For instance, Grand Theft Auto 3 will be going platinum in the next few months. So it's important for us to get the message across, and we will be spending a lot of money

## where's vice city

Looking for Grand Theft Auto III: Vice City? Unfortunately the game's local release was delayed due to some legal snag regarding local copyright of some of the music (don't you just love red tape?). But this topic is obviously close to Ster's heart (since they brought it up first), and the game will arrive ASAP - within the next two months. By that time, chances are good that the original Grand Theft Auto 3 would have reached the Platinum series.

## playstation 2 in sa

One of the bigger mysteries regarding the PlayStation 2 locally is exactly how successful it is. David explains gleefully, "We had a slow start when we launched initially, but we've grown in leaps and bounds." The current figures are quite impressive. At the moment there are over 80,000 installed bases in the country, and by the end of the year Ster Kinekor plans to have over 120,000. Backed with all the premium titles and the Platinum budget series, that's not such an unrealistic target.

on Platinum. We're not trying to detract from full-priced games and brand-new releases, but there are a lot of consumers who can't afford R600 on a new game, but can afford R229 to R349 on a new Platinum game."

### EyeToy?

Of course, budget isn't the only area out there for the PlayStation 2, as David already mentioned. They have a few things up their sleeve, including the interesting-sounding EyeToy.

"Even though we have to be the custodian of the hardware, software, as in the games, pays the bills because there are very small margins for both the retailers and the distributor, being Ster Kinekor, on the hardware."

"The other big event in the next year is EyeToy. Basically [it] is a peripheral mixed with a game. Once you buy the game and peripheral, you obviously don't need to buy the EyeToy again. It's a camera, made by

Sony for the PlayStation 2, that stands pointing at you, and it interacts with the game. I don't know the exact technology involved yet, but it interacts you with the game. So, for instance, the game is a beat-em-up game, you will be standing there with no other peripheral but the camera pointing at you. You'll see yourself in the game, and if you punch, you'll see yourself punch on the screen."

In essence, EyeToy is a new way that Sony has found to boost user interaction with games. Obviously, though, this is pretty new and rather experimental technology, which is probably why it's been very quiet, but this is Sony and not some small start-up company. At first, the only games that will support EyeToy are those specifically made by Sony for the hardware, but you can almost always tip your hat towards first party games. Not to mention that if the concept works well, it means a bigger range of second and third-party developers might get into the act. Can you imagine running around Liberty City, mugging pedestrians, or creeping around a military base to stop another Metal Gear operation? The good news is that EyeToy won't cost more than R50 or so than a current game, and that comes bundled with a title. If it sounds intriguing and you want one, you'll have to wait until July for the launch. But to push promotion, one of the things planned is to modify the PS2 IDU stands (the promotion console stands you tend to see in shops) to carry the EyeToy, so keep an eye out for that [sigh, Ed].

EyeToy is obviously something David is very excited about: "I think what is exciting about EyeToy is that it will re-energize the whole aspect of what games have to offer."

### Online Gaming

Onto online gaming, which is a growing market overseas. Ever since people were able to plug their Dreamcasts into a phone socket and play Phantasy Star Online, the modern console online revolution started. It's been muted since then, until Sony released the PS2 broadband adapter (and bundled the PS2 version of Phantasy Star with the PS2 harddrive) and

Microsoft released the very popular Live Kit, which sold over 150,000 units in the first few days of its launch in the US.

Online console play means broadband, though, and even though we have ADSL locally, is it going to happen anytime soon?

"One of the big things happening overseas at the moment in consoles is online gaming. It's [the PS2 broadband adapter] already been launched in Japan and the US very successfully, and it is being launched in Europe by about June." The warning was quickly added, though: "I don't think it will

come here soon. Although we have ADSL, which is broadband facility, I think we eventually will have to talk a deal with Telkom on it. I also don't think that with the cost of ADSL at the moment that it's viable. It's still too expensive.

"It [online] is not an immediate strategy because we're not interested in it. As much as when HP launches a new product, they launch in South Africa as well; if I had a PS3, I'd launch it right now. It's different - the problem locally is that even though we have the broadband facilities and we have come a long way, we're not quite there compared to the US and UK. So it's not because of capabilities either - it's not as if the PlayStation 2 we sell locally can't do it."

## platinum titles

**So what can you get for your buck if you go platinum? Here are some of the picks of the best from the series...**

**Devil May Cry**  
Become Dante, the legendary demon hunter in one of the surprise hits of 2001...

**Dead or Alive 2**  
One of the PS2 launch titles, DOA 2 made Tekken eat its fist with great graphics and really smooth gameplay.

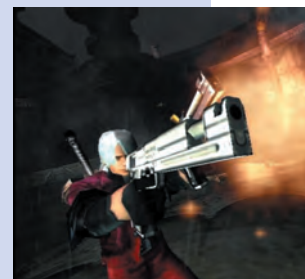
**Gran Turismo 3**  
The best racer ever made. Ever. Period. 'nuff said.

**Jak and Daxter**  
One of the best platformers of 2002, if leaping around in 3D is your game, you should own this already.

**Max Payne**  
Playing Max Payne is like playing a John Woo movie. Do you think Bullet Time started with The Matrix? Think again...

**Resident Evil: Veronica X**  
The creepiest game series since Alone in the Dark arrived on the PlayStation 2, zombies and shotguns included.

**Grand Theft Auto 3**  
Who needs scruples, morals or even a sense of decency when you can be the worst criminal of Liberty City, in the best game of 2002?



▲ Beat Freak involves moving the upper half of the body and posing in 70s style dance moves using the EyeToy



## Player of the Month

**The\_Basilisk** - What was your first gaming experience? Did it all start with Tribes 2?

**TheRoDent** - I started playing games on a 4.77 Mhz XT. I think King's Quest was the first, and then Spacewars. After that, Doom I and Doom II, mostly over serial cables. Then I sort of got stuck into work, and didn't play games for years. GoReFeST introduced me to Tribes 2, and I have been hooked ever since.

**The\_Basilisk** - They say there are no heroes in Tribes 2, but surely individual performance still makes a difference?

**TheRoDent** - There are no heroes. Flag cappers are normally highly regarded ("capture the flag" is the most common game type), but a good capper is entirely useless without co-ordinated heavy offense. Because Tribes 2 allows for the deployment of automated static defenses, it's not so easy to go 'cowboy capping'.

**The\_Basilisk** - Could you explain your involvement in the "dual processor" bug fix?

**TheRoDent** - Well, Tribes 2 has been plagued with patch problems. The final Dynamix patch didn't work on dual processor machines, due to an oversight in the coding. I managed to reverse-engineer the game a bit, and found the function call that fixed game tick timing on dual processor machines. The Americans were rather happy, as was the European community.

**The\_Basilisk** - How long will people be playing (competitive) Tribes 2 as we know it?

**TheRoDent** - People are still playing competitive Tribes 1, and the game is well over 8

### profile

**Name:**  
Roelf Diedericks

**Clan:**  
The Masters

**Nick:**  
TheRoDent

**Games:**  
Tribes 2

**Age:**  
30

**Quote:**  
"You're just another body to me, baby."

**Occupation:**  
Internet Architect



### Achievements:

- \* Instrumental in correcting the game's "dual processor" bug, world-wide.
- \* 2nd place at the first Gamers Gate event in 2002 (The Masters)
- \* 1st place at Worfaire preliminaries 2002 (The Masters)
- \* 1st place at the second Gamers Gate event in 2002 (The Masters)
- \* Currently running the Tribes2.za.net website
- \* Hosted servers on Tribes2.za.net at a time when they were desperately needed.

years old now. Player support is always an issue, but I believe that with a community as friendly and helpful as the Tribes 2 community, that shouldn't be a problem.

**The\_Basilisk** - What do you think is in store for you as a gamer in the future?

**TheRoDent** - I've always been a tinkerer. Tribes 2 has allowed me to tinker a lot, and get really involved in the online gaming community. I see myself continuing along this road, perhaps playing less competitively and focusing more on game development and community growth.

G8Keeper Gaming cc. (G8Keeper) is proud to announce their first independent project - a South African attempt at a Southern hemisphere record  
[www.1000manLAN.co.za](http://www.1000manLAN.co.za)

26 - 28 April 2003, Airforce Base Waterkloof, Centurion, South Africa

### The Beginning ...

Despite all the good intentions and plans expressed last year, we've seen a very slow start to gaming events in the new year in South Africa, with the Australians beating us to the first 1000-man LAN event in the Southern hemisphere.

Between 11th and 12th of January 2003, the Melbourne-based "Shafted LAN", drew an attendance of approximately 1040 PC's (final number to be confirmed). Although their record has yet to be ratified, G8Keeper have chosen to rise to the occasion and beat that record before it even hits the books.

### The Event ...

Following in everyone else's footsteps would make a boring ride for our first trip, so we've decided to take the scenic route and let the whole of South African see what gaming is all about.

The initial vision G8Keeper had for this event was simply a massive gaming LAN, with 1000 gamers bringing their PC's to a hangar or warehouse. It has now evolved into an event larger than anything ever seen to date in PC gaming in South Africa.

With the approval of the Waterkloof Air Force Base, and the 28th Squadron, the 1000manLAN event has been extended 6000m<sup>2</sup> of floor space, and will now include an IT exhibition where players and spectators can catch up on the latest technology available from our sponsors and partners, and purchase new toys, upgrades or additions for their PC's. Should any of the gamers or visitors need a break from the intense action of the games, a viewing area will be set up and some alternative entertainment will be available.

Africa Militaire, seen at Waterkloof Airforce Base at the

[www.1000manlan.co.za](http://www.1000manlan.co.za)



hugely successful Africa Aerospace and Defence show in September 2002, will be bringing their own displays, games and competitions to the expo area to show their interests in plastic modelling, war gaming, military model railroading, and associated PC gaming.

### The Games ...

We have retained the "bring your own computer" (BYOC) format, and invite South Africa's elite clans to attend the competition which has 500 to 600 seats reserved. The "free-for-all" section - expected at every event - will have an additional 500 to 600 seats reserved. A section seating 150 will be kept for development and underprivileged children to receive introductions to PC's and PC gaming through Siyandiza (the Air Force development program) and the charities we are assisting. Games planned for the competition include: Counter-Strike, Unreal Tournament 2003, Tribes 2, WarCraft III, and Quake 3 Arena. Additional games can be added if there is enough interest expressed through votes during registration, and through e-mail to [info@1000manlan.co.za](mailto:info@1000manlan.co.za).

The gaming community is an extended family, and such an event would not be complete without the "Grandparents", "cousins" and "kiddies" attending. G8Keeper extends formal invitations to join in the event to: the GLSA, Mayhem, Chaos, Gamers Gate, Langames, and Two Worlds LAN and ALL gaming communities and online service providers in South Africa.

The invitation is to bring your crew and sponsored

teams to the event. Make block bookings and we will let you advertise your services and teams at the event. We want to show everyone how you support SA PC gaming and what you have to offer to the public at large. It is only through your support and enthusiasm that PC gaming has become such an enormous source of entertainment and enjoyment across the country.

### Giving back ...

G8Keeper is happy to announce that we will be giving a percentage of our income from ticket sales on the day, or donations of computer equipment to: Cotlands - Cotlands exists to meet the needs of babies and pre-school children who are abandoned, abused, neglected or who require specialised and palliative care ([www.cotlands.co.za](http://www.cotlands.co.za)) Siyandiza - or "We are Flying" is a South African Air Force development initiative whereby Air Force personnel visit schools and other training institutions as part of a personnel recruitment drive ([www.freewebs.com/siyandiza/](http://www.freewebs.com/siyandiza/)).

Bring your friends, bring your family, bring your PC and help us build a new future for PC gaming in South Africa.

Regular updates on the event are available at [www.1000manlan.co.za](http://www.1000manlan.co.za), and the G8Keeper website is available at [www.g8keeper.co.za](http://www.g8keeper.co.za).

For queries related to the event, please e-mail [info@1000manlan.co.za](mailto:info@1000manlan.co.za).



## Are you in the "zone"?

After all the events planned for this year I am going to have to learn the new I33t language everyone seems to use when playing. So, here goes...  
**F1r3 1n th3 h0l3!!! (Fr33 proceeds to flashbang his entire team and... himself... shooting frantically he kills every last one of them)**  
**Ok... Perhaps I should leave the I33t talk to those who are in the zone, so to speak :)**

By the time you read this, the first C&C Generals event would have come and gone. My only hope at this point in time is that the forums spoke highly of it and that the green shimmer on your cheeks is due to your envy at not being invited... Not to worry though, there are still two more events and you could crack the nod for! All you need to do is visit the Gamers Gate website, answer one simple question and mail your answer to us as soon as you can. We will draw the names of 50 people and if your name is drawn, send you an invite! The winner of each of the three Command & Conquer Generals LAN Parties will receive a Palm Zire handheld computer worth an estimated R8000-00, courtesy of Electronic Arts, a 12-month subscription to NAG Magazine worth an estimated R14 000 000, courtesy New Age Gaming and a free autoberth into the Gamers Gate Carousel competitive event worth an estimated 22.558 cents, which will be held at the end of May 2003.

### Nintendo, GameCube...

Gamers Gate proudly brings you a Console competition! Yes, you read correctly! Nintendo and Gamers Gate present you with an awesome opportunity to show off your console skills. This is a nationwide competition and will be held during the month of March.

How does this tickle your fancy...?

Four, one-day competitions held at the following venues:

1. The Gateway Shopping Centre, Durban
2. Eastgate Shopping Centre, Gauteng
3. Menlyn Park Shopping Centre, Pretoria
4. Canal Walk Shopping Centre, Cape Town

Each event will be held on a Saturday and will run throughout the day. At the end of each event one winner will be announced who will then qualify for the final event set for the 5th of April 2003 in a bid to crown the ultimate Console Gamer of SA.

I hope you are reading intently at this point in time...? Because, this is where things really become interesting...

The two winners from Durban and Cape Town will be flown up to Johannesburg courtesy of

STA Travel and then all four winners will be chauffeured in a limousine to Monte Casino in Fourways, Sandton! Red carpet treatment all the way! The four finalists will battle it out for top honours in a gruelling match that will be displayed on four big screens for all the spectators. The ultimate winner will be crowned South Africa's top console player for 2003 and receive a ticket to Los Angeles, California! The lucky winner will be a V.I.P. guest of Nintendo and join thousands of people at the E3 show in America!

E3, for those of you that don't know, is an annual show held exclusively for press and distributors around the globe that showcases all the latest hardware and software for the gaming industry.

In other words, this is where games such as DOOM III and Quake IV will be showcased. It is also the place where you would most likely see the new Lara Croft model... I am talking about the real girl, in the flesh! Oh, yes... you can see for yourself how big her guns are!

Keep checking the Gamers Gate website for updates regarding this exciting competition. Well done to Nintendo for providing SA with an awesome competition the console gamers of South Africa can be proud of!!

By the way, the winner will be required to get an autographed photo kissing Mario. :)

### Final thoughts...

Check out [www.gamersgate.co.za](http://www.gamersgate.co.za) now, and enter the monthly competitions to stand in line to win some really cool prizes from our sponsors. Submit your suggestions to us, we read and reply to every mail. After all... Gamers Gate is there for you, the gamer...

It seems we are getting very close to seeing SA's first official Counter-Strike sponsored clan! More details regarding this will be posted on the site during the next few weeks.

Stay well

**Len aka Fr33**

[len@gamersgate.co.za](mailto:len@gamersgate.co.za)

[www.gamersgate.co.za](http://www.gamersgate.co.za)

*Is that a grenade in your pocket? I33t boy!!*

February was a blast with a rather strange mix of games. Mayhem saw every thing from Delta Force Black Hawk Down, to Tribes 2 in mass, and even bass fishing. When you got bored of that you could join Storm, Jay, Mullet and the rest for 18 holes in Tiger Woods Golf.

### LEAGUE NEWS:

The second Mayhem Off-line league event took place on the 8th of February. While the event ran rather well, all at Mayhem agree that we could do better. So over the next few months, we are going to be working on a lot of things to make your Mayhem experience more enjoyable and smoother. Though the event did not run as smooth as expected, the staff were able to catch up and finish on time. This is something that Mayhem is starting to get very well known for. Mayhem, masters of catching up time.

### League results for February:

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
Evolve 2 - 64	ACC - 60	PF - 28	CHKNHD - 18
7e - 46	BHB A - 41	HZO R - 28	AE - 16
Evolve 1 - 44	CF A - 37	KAN B - 22	RGC - 16
DC I - 40	GI Agro - 28	MIST - 10	TBA - 11
FX - 36	KAN A - 21	CR - 10	KMA A - 6
DC A - 26	CF B - 0	BHB B - 8	KMA B - 0

### Overall Standings:

GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4
Evolve 2 - 101	ACC - 84	HZO R - 68	AE - 46
7e - 87	BHB A - 62	PF - 58	TBA - 43
Evolve 1 - 82	CF A - 54	MIST - 29	RGC - 41
DC I - 81	GI Agro - 38	BHB B - 28	CHKNHD - 36
DC A - 77	KAN A - 25	KAN B - 22	KMA A - 17
FX - 63	CF B - 10	CR - 21	KMA B - 0

For more info and results please refer to [www.mayhem.co.za](http://www.mayhem.co.za).

We often get asked how we survive running league events. The trick is to watch CHKNHD. While CHKNHD only play for pure fun, they are a must to watch. They don't care about winning; their only goal is to kill the one member that's left to play for another team. As long as they kill him they are happy. ([www.chknhd.za.net](http://www.chknhd.za.net) "there is no fire like friendly fire").

For more info on this as well as the Tribes 2 events check out [www.mayhem.co.za](http://www.mayhem.co.za).

### LAN GEAR:

This is more for LAN organisers. As PC's are becoming bigger and meaner they are drawing more and more power. The cost of 17", 19" and 21" monitors coming down is not helping this either. We are expecting to see more power failures at big LANs in future. We are currently working on several distribution designs to help solve this problem. If you are a LAN organiser and are running into power problems, feel free to contact us. We are more than happy to help find a solution to cater for your needs.

### DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- 1 March - Funky Cow PTA
- 8 March - Monthly Link Day PTA
- 15 March - Mayhem Off-line Counter-Strike League
- 22 March - Mayhem Open LAN.

Vapour[SOD]  
[vapour@mayhem.co.za](mailto:vapour@mayhem.co.za)  
[www.mayhem.co.za](http://www.mayhem.co.za)



▼ Turkish [NOT Another HotDog]



▼ Nightmare scores



▼ A bit more skin colour on the side and the bikini will be gone



◀ Oops! This part goes on top, sorry Brett!

## Who's who of Gaming

After all the talk in the town about what is happening around the gaming scene, I felt it the right thing to do to tell you who is who in the gaming community and where everyone fits in. This list is by no means complete and some names are basically non-existent this year, but it should still be mentioned to make you guys aware of what is happening. I hope the rumors will come to an end, but I am a realist, everyone loves to gossip like old wives over a cup of tea.

Last month I told you all about the reason why most of the events are up here, and due to no fault of yours (the gamer or the potential organiser), most of the gaming organizations that are involved with the sponsors, are up here too. The big names like GLSA, Gamers Gate and Mayhem is on the tip of everyone's lips when thinking about bigger events in South Africa, but people referring to the next Worfaire don't really know what Worfaire is other than a synonym for a BFE (Big ... Event, not to be confused with BFG). If during the course of this column you feel someone is excluded, please mail me a company profile and I will be sure to rectify the mistake somewhere along the line. I will make it as objective and unbiased as I possibly can be considering I am including LanGames.co.za in this list.

GLSA is the Gamers League of South Africa, one of the 2 major competitive gaming event organisations in South Africa, headed up by Warren Steven before he left late last year and now in the hands of Brett Hamilton. Brett being the man in charge of GLSA at this point in time is not actively working under the GLSA banner this year and has formed K-Sports, where the K stands for Nightmare (Brett's Alias/Nickname). Brett, who has been active in all spheres of the online and offline gaming community, believes that we need to see a structured league system countrywide, so look out for details of that. Over the past few years many people have been involved in GLSA, amongst them Len Nery,

Lauren Das Neves, Leonard Diamond and Lance Tegner to name a few.

Worfaire isn't an organization; it's an event name. People hold GLSA synonymous with Worfaire because it's hosted by GLSA but in effect Worfaire is a very well known brand amongst the gaming community. This brand name is the first thing people think of when they think of a gaming competition. Rightly so, it is a great event that needs the recognition and what it has done for the gaming arena in South Africa.

Gamers Gate was started off by Len Nery early in 2002 with the intention of promoting and furthering gaming in SA. Having made a name for themselves with The Carousel events, Gamers Gate is currently affiliated with The CPL in the USA and LigArena in France, with their intention this year being to send SA players over to compete at these events with the assistance of local sponsors.

Mayhem LAN started round about the same time as LanGames started and it is still one of the major LANs in South Africa. Danie Venter (Wasp!!!! as we know him), the owner of the company that started Mayhem, together with Ryan (vapour), Riaan (PsyChicken) and Raimond (String-Ray), have made one of the smoothest running LANs we have seen anywhere. Mayhem's reputation for hosting precise, and organized LANs for the GLSA and Gamers Gate as well as their own Counter-Strike offline league is commendable (though people would argue that it's probably Ryan's big mouth that got them there). Mayhem started off small but you can expect anything from between 100-250 people at their hall in Boksburg on a fortnightly basis.

LanGames, where to start. It was started as a simple idea one holiday out of annoyance that I (TadMadLad) [isn't it TadMadDad now? Ed] didn't have any LANs to go to. HORROR. Yes, I thought to myself that places like LanParty didn't focus on any other country but their own

and no one ever knew about our events, though mostly smaller than foreign LANs, we still had very nice LANs. Another reason was that when we went to big events, which was our only focus during the year, no one even knew about the 100s of LANs all across the country that happen every weekend of the year. "Why wait for the big events when we can have fun on our own in-between" I thought. Enough about LanGames, you know where it is, and we know where the LANs are, objective reached. LanGames, hosted by Blackdot IT Solutions, does not generate any cash from any events advertised on the site (I am poor, send money). This site has and will always be free to anyone and endeavors to be unbiased towards anyone advertising their event on the site.

G8Keeper is an organization like Mayhem. They also assisted at the GLSA's Worfaire and the Gamers Gate's Carousel events and plan to host LANs as regularly as Mayhem. Looking forward to hearing from G8keeper.

Currently, the organisations listed above work together on a certain level and everyone has an understanding of what is needed for hosting major events. In a perfect world we would see everyone always agreeing with the way forward but most of the organisations more or less have your best interest in mind when they host these events. None of these people are going to be driving flashy sports cars from the money they make, though 1 or 2 have made good amounts of money in the past at the expense of gaming, but the organisations involved today do not have any greedy intentions in mind (or they don't do it at anyone's expense). I say this of course with the information I know so don't hold me accountable for anyone who might all of a sudden give the gaming community the middle finger and run away with our money.

**TadMadLad**  
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[www.langames.co.za](http://www.langames.co.za)

## Evolve

"We AiM to please."

Some may remember the Counter-Strike team Art in Motion, formed by ex-members of Damage Control. In a recent development, AiM has joined forces with Evolve, a gaming team also committed to professionalism and strong management. Evolve is now made up of 12 players (in 2 teams) and 2 management staff, and currently has the strongest Counter-Strike line-up in the country. Last year's Worfaire champions and third-place finishers form the core players. I spoke with the team's leader, Warren "Storm" Steven, formerly of the clan GamersInc. "Evolve offers the current South African CS champions the opportunity to develop, while the management works on their wellbeing. This can only be good for them and the emergence of SA as a competitive gaming powerhouse," he says. "We have been running our teams like this for some time now. The only thing missing was sponsorship, so we've been working towards this for a while."



## An insight on how to host a LAN, with all the fiddly bits in between Part 1

"Seize the moment, for else the moment will pass into the shadows of history leaving nothing but ifs".

The tragic death of your second cousin's long lost great grandmother worked well to make your great escape from the daily crowd. Now it's only you and the one that occupies your every moment away from the responsibilities of reality. Your pale white cheeks produce a faint dimple as your mouth curls with the thought of the infallible strategy that you have perfected through long caffeine nights staring into the gentle blue radiation of your tool to world domination.

Your most beloved limited edition special import Lian Li is tenderly secured between goose feather pillows on the back seat. The safety belt snaps secure your most precious cargo. The boot keeps safe your sleeping bag, cooler bag, several emergency spares and the required network cable and power leads. From the passenger seat your 21-inch monster reflects with an ugly grey your loving glance. Your excitement soon starts to dwindle as the agonising sounds of a pc being subjected to a dirt road full of potholes carefully disguised with water, echoes painfully through the car. After several "eishh", "oh my word", "I think it's that way" and several other dead end directions, you finally arrive at the venue with your newly modded case. A few spare parts tingle as you make your way up the slippery steps. So you reckon loosing 3 hours due to bad directions, scratching your paint job on the case and acquiring a dozen new rattles in your car will all be worth it once you get your first frag . . .

To your horror your table is a door suspended between 2 chairs, you have to take turns to use the few chairs that are available, your network consists of a coax ring extended by salvaged telephone cables and your power lead is only 25 m too short. You start to ask around and nobody has even heard of the game you want to play. You spend the weekend reconfiguring windows, finding all the cool icons stashed away in system files, and praying for forgiveness from your lovely wife about lying on the death of a beloved.

Maybe this is an extreme version of a bad LAN, but unfortunately this is a very real problem that most of us have experienced with few variations from the scenario. So you decide to host a LAN that actually contains enough uptime of power to finish a 15-minute Quake session. But where do you start?

In light of the lack of Dummies Guide for Hosting LAN's, I will try and cover this topic to the best of my abilities, sharing experience gained from walking this treacherous road. This guide is intended for the fairly new or uninitiated in the LAN scene. It may even contain a few ideas for those that are well versed in this arena. To ensure proper comprehension for all the readers, I will start with the basics and progress to D-day.

What is a LAN? LAN refers to local area network, which implies pc's networked together in close vicinity. For

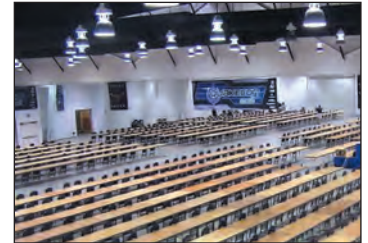
gamers a LAN represents the opportunity to share software, video clips, games, and utilities. Most importantly it allows them to test their skill in the multiplayer environment that some of the games offer. Thus the artificial intelligence of the computer is replaced by the uncanny human desire to triumph.

LAN's come in all sizes. I consider a small LAN to be less than 15 people. This will typically be a LAN you and a few buddies organise in the garage. This type of LAN can be accomplished fairly easily without any major consideration of power issues or network topologies. Less than 50 people is a fairly medium LAN. In this instance you will be forced to get some sort of commercial venue, not very big, similar to a church hall. (Keep in mind that the Pope might object to your gothic graphics and violent killing sprees that form the basis of many games.) A large LAN accommodates up to 200 people and will require some extensive planning. These types of LAN's should only be considered when you have hosted a few smaller LAN's. Although the concept seems fairly simple on paper, and even more so in the fertile grounds of your imagination, it is only experience that will ensure that both you and your guests have a great day LANning, taking the unforeseen in your stride. Massive LAN's that cater for more than 500 gamers are scarce in SA, and fall outside of my expertise. An example of this type of event is the World Cyber Games in Korea, which is the Olympic Games version of gaming.

Before you decide on the size of the LAN that you wish to host, it may be a good idea to decide on the type of LAN that will suite your abilities and cater for your specific community. Being a gamer I've attended a few LAN's, and very soon got the message that there are LAN's and then there are LAN's. You get the old school type of LAN. This LAN is based in the spirit of "by the community, for the community" in the name of fun. A venue is supplied as well as chairs and tables, the rest of the requirements are made to work by everybody contributing what they have. A small hub here, a multi plug there, some basic knowledge and lots of patience. A private LAN on the other hand is normally held at home for a few close friends, no advertising, no entrance fee involved here, (maybe a six pack and the charcoal). Public LAN's are normally organised to some extent as well as advertised. These types of LAN's draw



▲ Garage Lan



▲ Quakecon 2002 BYOC

gamers old and new, known and unknown. An entrance fee is usually charged to cover hall expenses. The competition LAN is normally organised by an organiser with sponsors and a few good prizes to draw the more competitive gamers. This type of LAN may not be the best type of LAN to attempt on your first try. There are so many complicating factors, and the mood is generally less forgiving in the case of anything not meeting expectations. You will also get your dedicated game LAN's where only one game or game type is accommodated. Another type of LAN is the boot camp LAN's. Generally these types of LAN's are alive with spirit and very accommodating. This is due to the fact that gamers teach other gamers the intricacies of a specific type of game, in order to expand the acceptance and participation in this specific game. Anime LAN's also appear on occasion, and cater specifically for enjoying, sharing and conversing about the fantastical world of this art form.

Some of you might wonder what all the fuss about LAN's are in the first place. Why not just play online, let someone else do all the dirty work? This can be very costly if you have to take into consideration your dial-up costs, (ISDN, telephone line, etc), the required hardware and your service provider. Some neighbourhoods do not even offer the infrastructure required for fast connections. Poor connections relate to high ping and degrade your gaming experience. Some find the impersonal nature of sitting in your little room fragging someone in Iceland, incomparable to the awesome spirit at LAN's. Gamers shouting to one another from across the hall. The facial expressions of intense concentration, as mouth and tongue help to frag! Priceless! Attitude seems to dwindle as you share indulging in low vitamin fatty enriched sustenance. Cheating is also less prevalent at LAN's due to possible confrontation.

Unfortunately space has gotten the better of me, so I will leave you with the following - Decide on what type of LAN you want to host for how many people. Next issue we will tackle some of the soft issues when considering hosting LAN's.

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## K-Sports the new dawn of competitive gaming?

There has been talk for some time now about the possibility of gaming becoming a professional sport in South Africa, but up until now the prospects have been rather uncertain. For many, the idea was too far-fetched, and playing games for a living seemed ridiculous. Sponsors have so far been reluctant at best, and most of those that have shown their support have been tentative, often not living up to promises, and sometimes even withdrawing from events entirely. Other concerns were that the market was too small to make advertising feasible, and that there weren't enough publicity opportunities, i.e. not enough competitions. For the gamers themselves, there are currently far too few prize-money-offering events, and a "sponsorship" usually consists of nothing more than a free t-shirt.

All that is hopefully about to change, with the emergence of K-Sports, a competitive gaming-oriented company founded by Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton, former GLSA operations director and WorFAIRe tournament director. He has also acted as manager for the South African World Cyber Games team in 2001 and 2002. The idea for the company was formed in the 1995/1996 gaming "season" when Brett started out as a player, before moving on to a competitive organisation. K-Sports itself was formed during the World Cyber Games last year. "The top players got me thinking on how I could improve the quality of gaming in South Africa," says Brett.

K-Sports will start off by running a professional gaming league system from a permanent LAN venue, starting in the next month or so. By the time this article goes to print, all the paperwork should be finalized, and the league ready to go. A major sponsor has already been confirmed for the league, along with prize money and other benefits. The Counter-Strike teams, for example, will be competing for a clan sponsorship from LG Electronics at the first league event. K-Sports is affiliated with Gamers Gate, and the top league players will automatically receive autoberths into the final day of the Gamers Gate competitions. There is also a possibility that Gamers Gate and K-Sports will be sending the competition winners to compete in the Electronic Sports World Cup, to be held in France from the 8th to the 13th of July this year.

The league will be run from a brand new gaming venue near Fourways in the north of Gauteng, close to the N1 Highway. The venue, billed to become the "hub of offline gaming in Gauteng", is owned by a K-Sports sponsor, featuring offices, a gaming area and internet capabilities. It will be open from Tuesday to Saturday every week. Initial estimates predict the league will cost R120 to R150 per player per month, and the BYOC (Bring Your Own Computer) area will cost R25 per night to play.

Supported games will be: Counter-Strike, Unreal Tournament 2003 and WarCraft III. Other possibilities include Quake III Arena, Command & Conquer: Generals, and others depending on player demand. If the league is successful, it will be run in Cape Town and Durban as well. For registrations, "The Professional league will be invite-only," Brett explains. "There will be other (amateur) leagues via web registration. It will all depend on demand. K-Sports will be very flexible in meeting gamers' demands."

Aside from being featured in New Age Gaming Magazine, the SASstream.net website and on Replay Television, K-Sport's primary promotional vehicle will be its very own professional gaming team - T6. Named after a room number that the SA team used while at the WCG in Korea last year, T6 was founded by Daniel "Gandalf" van Flymen, when his previous teammates from clan Damage Control left to form the team AiM (Art in Motion). Now boasting several big names, and some new talent, T6 is looking to compete at the highest level in Counter-Strike and Quake 3 (and Unreal Tournament 2003 in the near future). T6 partnered with K-Sports and is now the country's first professional gaming team. The rest of their current line-up consists of Stephen "Ph4ntom" Cloete, James "ShadowlorD" Cloete, Chris "sWoop" Barter, Brendan "NeXuS\_HorizoN" Thompson, David "Machaven" Olivier and Clayton "Destroyer" Nieuwenhuizen. The team's publicity is being handled by Chris "Illuzion" Boward. The team is fully managed by Brett and Michelle Hamilton.

By being involved with a team on this level K-Sports hopes to set the stage for other companies to step in and sponsor gaming teams. "SA has no truly professional teams yet, but I can see that changing as sponsors realise the opportunities," says Brett. His players will start off with certain benefits. "They will receive a package that's incentive-based, like matching (doubling) prize winnings at events. K-Sports also tries to cover as many of their expenses as possible, so competition entrance fees will be paid." When asked about the possibility of gaming salaries, Brett replies, "Most definitely, yes. I see the top 5% of gamers making some sort of salary in the near future. I would love T6 to be a paid team within the next 5 to 6 months. We would also look at taking the guys on a gaming tour of the USA or Australia."

As with any bold venture, support from the public will be crucial to K-Sports' success. "I'm hoping that gamers out there love gaming as much as I do, and will be excited to participate in our events," says Brett.

**For more information, contact Brett by email at [brett@ksports.co.za](mailto:brett@ksports.co.za), or visit the K-Sports website at [www.ksports.co.za](http://www.ksports.co.za).**

## Phantom Gaming



**So, you think South Africa is the only place in Africa that plays Counter-Strike? Think again! South African players will soon see players out of African countries such as Swaziland grace us with their presence and skills.**

Open your cupboards with all the old school books in and haul out that Geography book you never returned...

The hub for gamers in Swaziland is situated in the Manzini region and heading up this gaming center is Thomas Bastock aka Smoke T.

Here's a guy who had the vision to open a portal for gamers by starting up Swaziland's first gaming organisation and calling it Phantom Internet and Gaming Caffe.

Thomas has surrounded himself with truly gifted players such as Zweli Motsa - TWIZM. Zweli is the team captain and the inspiration to many young players in Swaziland. He is known for his ability to play any game and master it, it seems he is a natural.

**Other members of the team are:**  
Matembo Kanduzo - Sanctimony  
Mabuya Magagula - Mabz  
Frank Zigira - ZeDevil  
Ricardo Do Couto - McNasty  
Gcina Magagula - Neo

Unfortunately, the only other large gaming community in Swaziland is situated in Mbabane (the capital). Luring Mbabane gamers is Thomas's biggest challenge because they are quite a distance away. It would be a big help if Mbabane would open their own club or internet café. Right now, Thomas hunts down the small home LAN groups and offers these young players an opportunity to test their skills against the more ardent players from Phantom Internet Caffe.

Right now they play Counter-Strike 75 % of the time, and are working really hard to get their guys ship shape. Thomas is currently arranging a Counter-Strike tournament for the end of March where he is hoping to get all the potential Swaziland gamers together to seek out the highest skills. His ultimate goal this year is to send the winning team to South Africa to compete at this year's Gamers Gate event in May 2003. Who knows...? Swaziland may land up taking top honours in May and by doing so, be sent to France by Gamers Gate to compete at this year's Ligarena.

If there are potential sponsors out there reading this, Swaziland needs your help!  
Here are some contact details:  
Thomas Bastock: +268 6080029  
Phantom Gaming Club: +268 5060353  
Alternatively mail [len@gamersgate.co.za](mailto:len@gamersgate.co.za) for more information.

It goes without saying that this initiative from Phantom Internet Caffe has the full support and backing of Gamers Gate, New Age Gaming Magazine and South Africa at large!

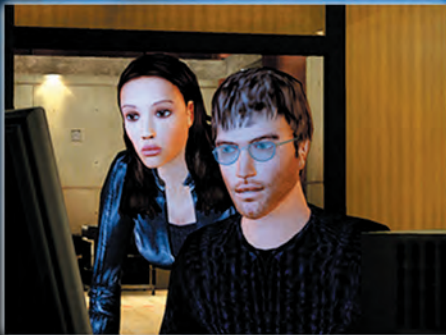


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**DARK ANGEL**



PlayStation®2





**/ Warcraft III: the frozen throne**



Fans of WarCraft III will be delighted to discover that Blizzard Entertainment have announced an expansion for WarCraft III, titled The Frozen Throne, scheduled for release around the middle of the year. Some limited information about the nature of this add-on has been made public. The roles and fates of Arthas in his Death Knight incarnation and Illidan were left deliberately open-ended in the original title, and in The Frozen Throne their long-term ambitions will become apparent. Both characters will be en route to the Iccerown glacier in the continent of Northrend to hatch some nefarious plot regarding Ner'zhul, the incorporeal Lich King. The campaigns will once again be race oriented, starting with the Night Elves, progressing to the Human Alliance and culminating with the Undead Scourge. Apparently, the Orcish Horde's campaign will be a separate story. Needless to say, the expansion pack will feature new units and heroes. Examples include the Human Alliance's Blood Mage, an elven spellcasting hero that will complement the Archmage, and the Blood Elf Spell Breaker, a unit that will be able to steal spell effects from enemy units and bestow them upon comrades. New tilesets will also be added, including a rain-forest setting that will include totally amphibious creeps. The campaign editor is also being upgraded, and among its new features is the ability for factors to be remembered across missions, so that it will now be possible for players to adventure in one map, then be required to go to another map, for example to retrieve an item, then return to the original map and carry on. Support for cut-scene and voiceover creation is also being added. Looks like an excellent game is set to become even better soon!

**/ Greyhawk**



Following their highly successful D&D title Neverwinter Nights, Atari have announced that development of Greyhawk: The Temple of Elemental Evil has begun at Troika, the creators of Arcanum. The game will make full use of the 3rd Edition D&D rule-set, and will feature party-based adventuring and a turn-based combat engine to more accurately recreate D&D encounters. It will be based on the first adventure released for Advanced Dungeons and Dragons back in 1985, starting with a rescue mission that leads to the uncovering of a sinister plot. The game is scheduled for release late this year.



**/ Pirates of the burning sea**

Flying Lab Software have put development of their upcoming strategy title Delta Green on hold in order to focus on a massively multiplayer online role-playing game called Pirates of the Burning Sea. This game will be set in the 18th Century, and will be unusual in the fact that servers will be limited to around 3000 players. The reason for this is that reputation will play a large role in this game, and limiting the population will ensure that players can make names for themselves. Valve's Steam technology will enable automatic downloading of new game content, and future updates will include additional careers and real estate acquisition options. Pirates of the Burning Sea is scheduled for release late this year.

**/ Indiana jones and the emperor's tomb**

Brawling combat has been added to the Indiana Jones game dynamic, supplementing Indy's trademark pistol and whip, and will include the use of improvised weapons picked up from the environment. Other game features that are expected to recreate the cinematographic drama of Indiana Jones will include rickshaw chases and naval battles.



**/ Men of valor: vietnam**



Sierra's 2015, the development studio behind Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, are working on a historical first-person shooter titled Men of Valor: Vietnam. The game will use the latest version of the Unreal engine. Players will assume the role of soldiers in the Vietnam War, and will have the option of playing from a number of perspectives, including the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. Non-player characters will support players, and among the list of multiplayer modes is a co-operative campaign option. Men of Valor: Vietnam will appear on PC and Xbox next year.

**/ Apocalyptica**



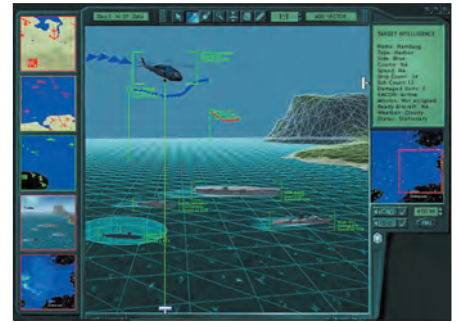
Konami are working on Apocalyptica, a third-person action game for the PC. Apocalyptica's basic premise is that, in the future, Earth has become the battleground for the forces of Heaven and Hell, and humanity has scattered across the Universe. Players will take on the role of a fanatically religious but technologically advanced soldier on a quest to cleanse Earth of the demonic presence. Several multiplayer modes are being planned, including a co-operative campaign option.

### / Port royale



**Port Royale** will present players with a late-Renaissance naval challenge. Starting out as common sailors (with unique and customisable skill-sets) aboard a ship, players will rise in status to command ships and running companies. Many approaches to the game will be available, including trade, treasure hunting and piracy. Ultimately, it is the player's goal to become the governor of a port city, running all aspects of that city's navy. Four nations will be available to choose from - England, Spain, France and the Netherlands, and the action can take place in any of four time periods, each with its attendant political climate. Port Royale should be available soon after you read this.

### / Harpoon 4



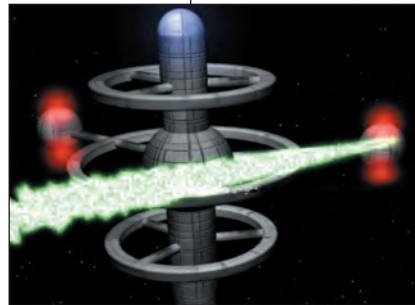
**Ubi Soft** have contracted **Ultimation Inc** to develop **Harpoon 4**, a naval combat simulator set in the Northern European region. The geography is being recreated using satellite imagery, and the game will feature faithfully recreated naval vessels, aircraft and submarines. Harpoon 4 will include a comprehensive editor allowing players to design virtually any kind of object for use in the game. This titled is expected to be complete in March.

### / Jurassic park: operation genesis



This upcoming title will fall into the world-builder genre, allowing players to create a Jurassic theme park - that is to say, a tourist attraction based on dinosaurs. When ready, the game will be available on PC, Xbox and PlayStation 2.

### / Polaris project



The **Polaris Project** will be a first-person action adventure title that will cast the player as head of security at a space station that is a technology research centre. The force headquartered here acts as a peace-keeping police force protecting the

interests of human colonisation. The staff stationed here are now engaged in a project of a controversial nature, and it is up to the player to protect it and, no doubt, become embroiled in some intrigue.

### / Horse racing manager



**Bigben Interactive** are planning to publish **Horse Racing Manager**, a title under development at Cyanide. The game will bring to life the sport of horse racing, and will allow players to assume the role of owner, breeder, trainer, jockey or gambler. Each mode will present a distinctly different play dynamic. The game should be available by the middle of the year.

### / Restricted area



**Master Creating**, of Germany, are currently at work on **Restricted Area**, an action-based computer role-playing game that they claim will combine a game dynamic similar to that of **Diablo II** with elements usually associated with tactical shooters. The game is scheduled for release late this year. For more information, visit [www.restricted-area.net](http://www.restricted-area.net)

### / Neocron add-on



**CDV's Neocron**, released last November, is the first massively multiplayer online first-person shooter. Now the company have announced plans to release a free add-on in April, titled **Beyond the Dome of York**. The expansion will contain a new city and numerous other enhancements, mainly new geographical features.



# International Release Dates

TITLE	GENRE	RELEASE DATE
1503 A.D. - The New World	Strategy	Mar 4
Bombberman	Puzzle	Mar 4
Freelancer	Simulation	Mar 4
Frogger Classic	Puzzle	Mar 4
IL-2 Sturmovik: The Forgotten Battles	Simulation	Mar 4
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	Adventure	Mar 4
The Omega Stone	Adventure	Mar 5
BloodRayne	Action	Mar 14
Cold Zero: The Last Stand	Action	Mar 14
Curse of Atlantis: Thorgal's Quest	Adventure	Mar 14
Enclave	Action	Mar 14
Gothic II	Role-Playing	Mar 14
Grom	Adventure	Mar 14
Heath: The Unchosen Path	Role-Playing	Mar 14
High Heat Major League Baseball 2004	Sports	Mar 14
Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis	Strategy	Mar 14
Praetorians	Strategy	Mar 14
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	Action	Mar 17
New World Order	Action	Mar 17
PlanetSide	Action	Mar 18
Pro Race Driver	Driving	Mar 18
Snapshot! Paparazzi	Adventure	Mar 18
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield	Action	Mar 18
Vietcong	Action	Mar 18
Bandits: Phoenix Rising	Action	Mar 24
Darkfall	Role-Playing	Mar 24
Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Action	Mar 24
Devastation	Action	Mar 25
EVE: The Second Genesis	Role-Playing	Mar 25
Galactic Civilizations	Strategy	Mar 25
Hannibal	Adventure	Mar 25
Inquisition	Action	Mar 25
Knight Rider	Driving	Mar 25
KnightShift	Strategy	Mar 25
Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide	Role-Playing	Mar 25
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Action	Mar 25
Red Faction II	Action	Mar 25
Red Shark	Action	Mar 25
Shadowbane	Role-Playing	Mar 25
Warrior Kings: Battles	Strategy	Mar 25
Blitzkrieg	Strategy	Mar 28
Casino, Inc.	Strategy	Mar 28
Championship Manager 4	Sports	Mar 28
Enigma: Rising Tide	Simulation	Mar 28
Midnight Club II	Driving	Mar 28

## / The sims superstar



Electronic Arts has announced that the next expansion pack for The Sims, titled The Sims Superstar, will be released in May. Characters can become celebrities and players will be able to control their Sims at work in Studio Town. There will

be television and movie lots, spa locations, recording studios and fashion facilities. A staff of characters, such as butlers, masseuses and even sushi chefs, will assist players' Sims in retaining their superstardom, examples of which include being a movie star, rock icon or perhaps even a supermodel. It's not all fun being a pop idol, fashionista or a movie icon, as you need to deal with the glare of the paparazzi, the adoration of groupies, and the freakiness of an obsessed fan or two. Keep an eye on the official website for more information <http://thesims.ea.com/>

## / Blizzard to release new figurines



Blizzard Entertainment has confirmed that it will release four series of action figures based on the WarCraft, StarCraft, and Diablo series of games. The figures, which will be made available mid year, are between 5.6 inches and 8.5 inches in height, and they feature an average of 14 points of articulation. They are expected to retail for approximately \$11.99 to \$12.99 each and will apparently be available at better software and toy stores worldwide (no word yet on whether we will be able to purchase them here in SA, however if all else fails go to [www.blizzard.com](http://www.blizzard.com)).

# PC Charts

### INCREDIBLE CONNECTION

1	Sim City 4	Electronic Arts
2	The Sims Unleashed	Electronic Arts
3	Sims Deluxe	Electronic Arts
4	The Sims	Electronic Arts
5	WarCraft III	Vivendi
6	Harry Potter 2	Electronic Arts
7	NFS Hot Pursuit 2	Electronic Arts
8	Lord of the Rings	Vivendi
9	Battlefield 1942	Electronic Arts
10	Age of Empires Collectors	Microsoft
11	Age of Mythology	Microsoft
12	MS Flight Sim Pro 2002	Microsoft
13	Diablo II Lord of Destruction	Vivendi
14	Soldier of Fortune II	MegaRom
15	Half Life Platinum	Vivendi
16	Zoo Tycoon	Microsoft
17	Worms Battlepack	MegaRom
18	MOH: Allied Assault	Electronic Arts
19	Operation Flashpoint	MegaRom
20	Empire Earth	Vivendi

Web Scores	Sim City 4	Project Nomads	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003
How NAG reviews compare to internet site reviews			
NAG /100	78	60	75
<a href="http://www.gamespy.com">www.gamespy.com</a> /100	75	57	92
<a href="http://www.gamespot.com">www.gamespot.com</a> /10	8.1	6.7	9.1
<a href="http://www.pc.ign.com">www.pc.ign.com</a> /10	9.2	6.3	9

### TRAIN SIMULATOR ADD-ONS

Two new add-ons for Microsoft Train Simulator are in development at Aerosoft, to be published by Strategy First within the next two months. The first is Heidi Express, and has to do with railroads in the Swiss Alps. The second, High Speed Trains, focuses on the ten best-known express trains of the past century.

### FLIGHT SIMULATOR ADD-ONS

Later this year Strategy First will publish four add-ons for Microsoft Flight Simulator developed by Just Flight. Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and The Dam Busters will deal with historical World War II engagements, while World Airliners and World Airports will deal with civilian aviation of the present day.

### VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

Deep Red are currently developing Vegas: Make It Big, a strategy building game set in Las Vegas that will have players designing and building every aspect of a casino. Needless to say, the game will make use of full 3D, and will be published by Empire Interactive around mid-year.

### THE PRUDE BRIGADE STRIKES AGAIN!

Henk Krol, editor of a Dutch gay newspaper, is protesting against Runing With Scissors's upcoming title Postal 2, and is lobbying the powers-that-be in The Netherlands to ban its sale in that country. Krol has taken offence at the fact that the game will allow the killing of homosexuals, despite the fact that any person-entity can be killed in the game and the fact that it is apparently possible to play the game without killing anyone. The designers have stated that the game's content is in know way politically motivated, albeit by no means politically correct!

### ACTIVISION'S UPCOMING TITLES

Activision have several development projects on the go at the moment. A sequel to Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast is rumoured to be in development at Raven Software and is expected to be released late this year or early next year. Other projects include a game based on the Pitfall Harry franchise, a Disney skateboarding game using the Tony Hawk's Pro Skater engine and a sequel to Street Hoops, to be released sometime next year. Later this year will also see the release of Soldier of Fortune II on the Xbox.

### HITMAN FRANCHISE GROWS

Hitman 3 is in the works at IO Interactive, and should be ready in just over a year. Eidos are apparently also looking to sell film rights for the Hitman property to interested Hollywood studios.

### SCRAPLAND

Mercury Steam Entertainment are at work on Scrapland, a 3D sci-fi game set in a gigantic robotic city. The game will feature action and high speed aerial combat, as well as an open-ended design system allowing players to create characters and spaceships to suit their tastes. LAN and Internet multiplayer modes will be available. Scrapland should be ready next year.

### FFXI EXPANSION

Square's massively multiplayer online role-playing game Final Fantasy XI is set to get an add-on pack, called Vision of Siraat. The expansion will include new characters, areas, jobs, quests and summons, and will be released on 17 April.

### A VEGETARIAN GAME?

Veggie Games, of Canada, have announced their upcoming 3D action-adventure game Steer Madness. Assuming the role of a bovine destined for the abattoir but which manages to escape, players will embark on a story that is unusual in that it boasts alternative possible plots. The theme of the game is environmentally minded, and the content is non-violent. Steer Madness is expected to hit retail late this year.

### PATRON SAINT OF THE INTERNET

Bizarre as it may seem, it was probably inevitable. Just as almost every other walk of life has its patron saint in the Catholic religion, the church is now seeking a patron saint for the Internet. Was this quest for divine protection inspired by spam, viruses and slow connections, perhaps? A web-site, [www.santiebeati.it](http://www.santiebeati.it), has been set up to accept votes, from which six nominees will be chosen and presented to the Vatican for a final verdict.

### GLYPSE

New game studio Sojourn Developments are busy with Glympse, a massively multiplayer online role-playing game set for release late next year. The game will be unusual in that it won't require players to fight in order to progress - pacifistic characters will be entirely possible. The in-game quests will consist of a mix of developer-driven, randomly generated and player-created ones. Havok's physics engine will be used to portray the movement of characters, objects and land and air vehicles.



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- Lo Ping Beech

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/ Final fantasy x-2



In an unusual break from tradition, Square are hard at work on a sequel to their popular title Final Fantasy X. X-2 takes place two years after the conclusion of its predecessor, and the world is changing. Many characters from FFX will reappear in FFX-2, and many of them have undergone changes in their lives, as is to be expected after a two-year period. Many new characters will also be introduced. Fans of FFX should note that while that game was Tidus's story, this sequel deals primarily with Yuna. The most drastic change from Final Fantasy X's play dynamic is the new "active mode" combat system, rather than FFX's turn-based system. Final Fantasy X-2 also features a new job system. As yet, no release date has been hinted at by Square. Neither is there any concrete information about Square's upcoming GameCube-exclusive Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicle.

/ I, gladiator



Following the great success of the film Gladiator, Acclaim's Manchester studio is at work on an action game inspired by this theme. Set in the year 106 AD, this game's story will revolve around a slave's rise in the gladiatorial arenas of old Rome. A number of fighting styles will be featured, and the action promises to be heated and intense. Characters will be able to improve their skills and attributes in the campaign mode, progressing through ever tougher challenges. I, Gladiator is scheduled for release late this year on the Xbox, PS2 and GameCube consoles.

/ Speed kings



Climax London are at work developing Acclaim's upcoming Speed Kings. This motorcycle racing game is unusual in that it will require much weaving through traffic, as well as the ability to slide the bike under truck trailers and the like. It will feature 22 bikes modeled after real-world bikes, as well as a real-time damage system. Speed Kings is expected to be ready in May for the Xbox, PS2 and GameCube.

/ Nam : tour of duty



A first-person action based on the combat in the Vietnam War is in development for the Xbox, GameCube and PlayStation 2. In Nam: Tour of Duty the player will command an entire platoon of infantry soldiers in battle through a recreated account of the 1968 Tet Offensive.

/ The x-files: resist or serve



Vivendi Universal Games and Fox Interactive have announced The X-Files: Resist or Serve. Featuring ghosts, paranormal phenomena and an alien plot to colonise planet Earth, much of this game's content is being developed by the creators of the TV show, and will include voiceovers from the actors involved in the series, as well as a musical score by the original composers and story lines by the series's script-writers. The X-Files: Resist or Serve will be available toward the end of the year on Xbox and PlayStation 2.

/ Dungeons & dragons heroes



Heuristic Park have acquired the rights to produce Dungeons & Dragons Heroes for the Xbox. The title, which is expected to be released in late June, will be classed as a RPG-fighter, blending elements of role-playing and beat-'em-up games. D&D Heroes will offer four characters to choose from, the Fighter, Wizard, Cleric and Rogue, and will make use of the Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition rule-set, both in terms of character abilities, spells and weapons, and with regards to monsters that will be encountered during the course of the adventure.

**THE LEGEND OF ZELDA**

Why is Zelda the best selling game of all time?

Find out this April...

NINTENDO GAMECUBE



### HUNTER: THE RECKONING WAYWARD

Interplay and Vivendi Universal Games have signed an agreement for the development of a new World of Darkness (White Wolf) adventure game for the PlayStation 2. Under development at High Voltage Software and titled Hunter: The Reckoning Wayward, it is the sequel to Hunter: The Reckoning, and revisits the haunted town of Ashcroft, where a new supernatural evil is manifesting.

### RED FACTION II FOR MAJOR PLATFORMS

THQ are releasing PC, Xbox and GameCube versions of their PS2 hit Red Faction II in March. The GameCube version of this first-person shooter is being developed by THQ's Cranky Games studio, while the PC and Xbox versions are in the works at THQ's Outrage Games. The new incarnations will feature several minor technical enhancements over the PS2 version.

### NIGHTMARE CREATURES

Ubi Soft have acquired the development and publishing rights for the Nightmare Creatures franchise. Next year will see the release of Nightmare Creatures 3: Angel of Darkness on multiple console platforms, in which the heroine investigates a mystery in 18th-century Prague. To aid her in her quest, she is able to merge with her raven familiar at night.

### STAR TREK SHATTERED UNIVERSE

TDK Mediactive have contracted StarSphere to develop Star Trek Shattered Universe for the PlayStation 2, a space combat simulator based on the sinister mirror universe seen in Star Trek: The Original Series.

### METROID MOVIE ON ITS WAY

The creators of American Pie and Final Destination have acquired the film rights for Nintendo's Metroid series. The producers are currently looking for script-writers and a director for the project.

### GAMECUBE SUCCESSOR IN THE WORKS

Nintendo have formally announced that they are busy developing the successor to the GameCube, and are gearing up to release it in 2005, in direct opposition to Microsoft and Sony, even though the two latter companies have stated 2006 as the most likely release date for their products. Nintendo's approach differs from that of the other two giants in that they are not looking at an integrated home entertainment system with a strong online bias.

### STER KINEKOR ANNOUNCES NATIONAL SALES MANAGER

Ster Kinekor Interactive, local distributors of Sony PlayStation products has appointed Melanie Castle-Peyper as their National Sales Manager. Hailing from a 5 year stint in the cellular industry, Melanie's goal is to drive consumer awareness and increase sales and profitability on the PlayStation brand.

### URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER

Silicon Dreams are working on Acclaim's upcoming Urban Freestyle Soccer. With a heavy emphasis on show tricks, this game will offer five play modes and will feature 16 teams from around the world. The game will be released on Xbox, GameCube and PlayStation 2 toward the end of the year.

### UNITY

Lionhead Studios and Jeff Minter's Llamasoft are co-operating on a GameCube game titled Unity. Llamasoft are undertaking the development, but have free access to Lionhead's resources. No publishing scheduling information or the like is available as yet.

### ALIAS FOR CONSOLES

The popular television show Alias will come to life late this year on all current gaming consoles. Acclaim's Cheltenham studio is developing a third-person adventure game that will involve high-tech weapons, combat, stealth, espionage and time-based missions.

### PITFALL HARRY

Activision's classic Pitfall property will soon be resurrected on PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube. Staying true to its origins, Pitfall Harry will be a platform adventure requiring quick reflexes and familiarity with many moves and adventuring gear that the intrepid explorer and treasure-hunter Harry has at his disposal. A variety of environments and obstacles will be on offer, as well as numerous puzzles and traps.

### BAD BOYS

Empire Interactive have acquired video game rights to the film Bad Boys and the upcoming film Bad Boys II. The first of these games will be released around Christmas, to coincide with the launch of Bad Boys II on the big screen, and will be available on PC, PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube.



And this time make sure you  
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### IL-2 STURMOVIK: THE FORGOTTEN BATTLES [March]

The expansion includes new campaigns set in the Finnish and Hungarian fronts. New single and multiplayer missions as well as several new playable and AI controlled Russian, German and British aircraft have also been added.

For further information please contact MegaRom Interactive (Pty) Ltd.  
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# Web Scores

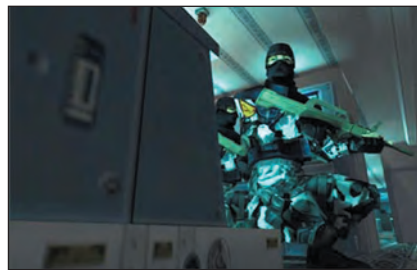
How NAG reviews compare to internet site reviews

	Tekken 4 [PS2]	Tony Hawks Pro Skater 4 [PS2]	Mario Party 4 [GC]	Super Mario Sunshine [GC]	SSX Tricky [Xbox]	Metroid Fusion [GBA]
NAG /100	80	78	90	92	82	82
www.gamespy.com /100	71	96	75	94	n/r	88
www.ign.com /10	9	9.3	6.9	9.4	9	9.5
www.gamespot.com /10	8.4	9.5	7.2	8	8.8	8.6

# International Release Dates

TITLE	PLATFORM	GENRE	RELEASE
Chaos Legion	PS2	Adventure	Mar 4
ChopLifter: Crisis Shield	PS2	Simulation	Mar 4
Falcone: Into the Maelstrom	Xbox	Action	Mar 4
Grand Prix Challenge	PS2	Driving	Mar 4
Group S Challenge	Xbox	Sports	Mar 4
Jackie Chan Adventures	PS2	Action	Mar 4
Mercedes-Benz World Racing	Xbox	Driving	Mar 4
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	PS2	Adventure	Mar 4
Murakumo	Xbox	Action	Mar 4
Rally Championship	GC	Driving	Mar 4
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	GC   GBA	Action	Mar 4
Sniper: Path of Vengeance	Xbox	Action	Mar 4
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	PS2	Action	Mar 4
The Lost	PS2	Adventure	Mar 4
Demon Hunter	GBA	Role-Playing	Mar 11
Dragon's Lair 3D	PS2	Adventure	Mar 11
Final Fantasy X-2	PS2	Role-Playing	Mar 11
Fishing Live Online	Xbox	Sports	Mar 11
GT Advance 3: Pro Concept Racing	GBA	Driving	Mar 11
MLB 2004	PS2	Sports	Mar 11
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Xbox	Action	Mar 11
Mega Man & Bass	GBA	Action	Mar 11
Micro Machines	PS2   GC	Driving	Mar 11
My Street	PS2	Puzzle	Mar 11
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Xbox	Role-Playing	Mar 11
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	GC	Driving	Mar 11
Red Faction II	GC	Action	Mar 11
Sega Rally Championship	GBA	Driving	Mar 11
Sonic Advance 2	GBA	Action	Mar 11
TransWorld Surf: Next Wave	GC	Sports	Mar 11
Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution	PS2	Action	Mar 11
WWE Crush Hour	GC	Action	Mar 11
World Series Baseball 2K3	PS2   Xbox	Sports	Mar 11
World Soccer Winning Eleven 5	PS2	Sports	Mar 11
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	PS2	Action	Mar 11
Aero Elite Combat Academy	PS2	Simulation	Mar 11
Barbarian	Xbox	Action	Mar 18
Batman: Dark Tomorrow	GC   Xbox	Action	Mar 18

## / Ice nine



An upcoming first-person action game, Ice Nine, is on its way to the PlayStation 2. This game will let players assume the role of a CIA agent out to foil a global plot involving a computer virus that can spread through virtually any electronic medium. The game will feature combat, as well as stealth aspects and elements of adventure games.

## / Shadow of the sun



British game studio HotHead Studios are at work on a first-person action game titled Shadow of the Sun. This game's story revolves around a vampire who has been imprisoned for centuries by the vampire council, and now manages to escape. Players will gain vampiric abilities during the course of the game, and will have access to various weapons. No release specifics are known as yet.

SOon the time will come for all to face their inner demons.

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www.PLAYSTATION.CO.ZA PlayStation 2



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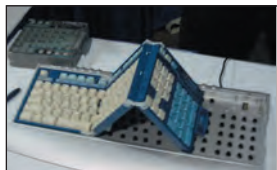
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/ Ideazon zboard



**Ideazon have** revived an old concept in use with 16-bit computers such as the Commodore-64 and Spectrum of yesteryear. Games for those computers often included keyboard overlays indicating the various hot-keys. Ideazon's Zboard is a replacement keyboard using standard and USB connectors, which can be fitted with interchangeable keys. Each key-set is designed for a specific game, and is decorated with motifs appropriate to the game in question. Currently available are Medal of Honor and Age of Mythology Zboards, though Civilization, Unreal 2, Madden 2003 and Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness models are on their way.



/ Kyocera 7135 hybrid phone/pda

**This is** the company's first colour screen hybrid phone/PDA with a flip-phone design. The unit features a standard dial-pad as opposed to a mini-keyboard, an expansion slot for additional memory, a 65000-colour touch screen and a built-in MP3 player. [www.kyocera.com](http://www.kyocera.com)

/ Pyramat



**Gaming gear** comes in all shapes and sizes it seems, and the Pyramat PM300 unit is no exception. Basically it is a mat made out of black vinyl with green plastic trim, which you roll out, lay down on and live the experience. The Pyramat is designed for games heavy on audio and sound effects (for example Quake III or Rez) and works by connecting the audio jacks of any next-generation console, television, stereo, DVD player, MP3 player or CD player to the unit. It comes with a 4" woofer, 25v Watt amplifier, adjustable bass control, and a hand remote and will work in conjunction with your current sound system to give you the ultimate stereo sound experience. It ships in a variety of colours and models - more info can be found at [www.pyramat.com](http://www.pyramat.com)

/ Gainward power pack



**Gainward have** launched their Power Pack Ultra/750-8X XP 128MB Golden Sample FireWire graphics adapter. The card makes use of nVidia's GeForce4

Ti4800se graphics processor and carries a VGA connector, a DVI connector and internal and external video-in and video-out ports. The package includes bundled video editing and DVD and MP3 playback software.

/ BenQ 15" lcd monitors



**BenQ have** released a range of low-cost (relatively) 15" LCD monitors that feature 1024x768 resolution, 0.297mm pixel size, 250 cd/ml brightness, 350:1 contrast, 25 ms response time and 100° vertical and 120° horizontal viewing angle. The units weigh just over 3kg and will be available in white or black. Local pricing can, at this point, only be guessed at, but is expected to be at least R3500.

/ NVIDIA personal cinema



**This product** from the graphics giant allows a computer to become a powerful video editing and recording tool. It makes use of the GeForce4 MX440 chipset and handles various video formats both for input and output. It features numerous user-friendly options, including a well-designed remote control and snapshot TV channel browsing capabilities. Bundled with the package is software including Ulead's DVD MovieFactory 2 and VideoStudio 6, which provide great functionality for editing and burning DVD movies. Also included are NVIDIA's NVDVD players, which allow DVD playback and MP3 and photo library management.

/ Case logic action series



**Case Logic**, makers of high quality CD and DVD carry-cases, have teamed up with three extreme-sports legends, namely skateboarder Tony Hawk, BMX rider Dave Mirra and snowboarder Shaun Palmer, to create a range of carry cases for gaming, music, digital cameras, notebook computers and miscellaneous wireless technology. Each of the thirty three products in the Action Sports Signature Series will be available in three distinct styles, reflecting one of the three associated athletes.

/ New console

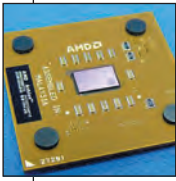


**A company** by the name of Infinium Labs is developing a high performance gaming console called the Phantom. Infinium claim that their product will outperform the PlayStation 2, the Xbox and the GameCube, and they will have a prototype ready in March; the final product is scheduled for release in December. The console will make heavy use of broadband connectivity, allowing features such as online patching and upgrading of software, game rentals and games on demand, as well as the ability for users to try demo versions before purchasing online. If you're curious, visit [www.infiniumlabs.com](http://www.infiniumlabs.com)



/ Athlon mp 2600+

/ RainbowStation



**AMD** have announced the Athlon MP 2600+, a CPU for dual-processor systems that will find its prime application in the server sector. The numbers: 2.133 GHz clock, 266 MHz FSB, 128 kB level 1 cache, 256 kB level 2 cache, core voltage of 1.65V, maximum energy consumption of 60W, process technology - 0.13 micron. Older products in this range will enjoy price drops upon introduction of the MP 2600+.



**Sony** have launched a commemorative limited-edition line of coloured metallic PlayStation 2 consoles. These are available in Astral Blue, Metallic Silver, Super Red, Light Yellow and Snow White, and their included accessories are coloured to match. The units are, however, more expensive than regular PS2s retailing for \$314.99 on [www.us.playstation.com/purchase/ps2\\_le/](http://www.us.playstation.com/purchase/ps2_le/)

### DIY POSTAGE STAMPS

In Britain, the Royal Mail are about to start trials on a system whereby it will be possible to buy postage stamps online and print them on a printer. The idea is that this should increase the convenience of mailing. The option will be made available for users to attach their own logo to stamps they print. At this point, the biggest hurdle that the developers are facing is the potential for fraud, and thus security options are being investigated.

### SA COMPANY LICENCES TECHNOLOGY TO USA

A local (South African) company by the name of Deeziltrax recently launched the M2 Racer Controller for use with PlayStation and PlayStation 2. This product made such a favourable impression that Nuby Technology Company, based in the USA, have approached Deeziltrax and signed an agreement to distribute the M2 Racer Controller in leading American consumer electronics outlets. Nuby are a major manufacturer and distributor of accessories and peripherals for all leading next generation console systems, including PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube. For further information contact Deeziltrax Pty Ltd on (011) 704 6486.

### NVIDIA MAY ABANDON FX

Unofficial reports have it that nVidia may discontinue the GeForce FX. The NV-31 GeForce FX MX and the NV-34 GeForce FX Go will go ahead, but the NV-35 will become the flagship model. The NV-31 should be hitting the market as you read this, while the NV-34 and NV-35 should see the light of day in June.

### S3 CHALLENGE NVIDIA AND ATI

S3 have announced their upcoming Delta Chrome graphics card. These cards carry specifications comparable to those of offerings from the current graphics leaders, nVidia and ATI, but will be available at a fraction of the price. The cards will be HDTV compatible, and actually exceed the DirectX 9 specification. Delta Chrome will be available toward mid-year.

### WESTERN DIGITAL 10,000 RPM SERIAL ATA HARD DRIVE

Western Digital have announced that it is entering the enterprise hard drive market with an Enterprise Serial ATA (ESATA) product called WD Raptor. The new hard drive offers system builders and storage vendors enterprise-class specifications: 1.2 million hours MTBF (Mean Time Between Failure), 10,000 RPM, 5.2 milliseconds (ms) average seek time and a five-year warranty. Serial ATA (SATA) is a new interface technology that offers storage providers and customers the critical reliability, availability, scalability and performance attributes that enterprise environments demand. Combined with a SATA interface, Western Digital designed a new, enterprise-class mechanical platform for the WD Raptor hard drive to meet the 24x7 demands of the enterprise environment. With its WD Raptor, Western Digital applies its high-volume design and manufacturing principles and economies of scale from its ATA business to an enterprise-class platform. The result is an ESATA hard drive with a significant cost advantage over SCSI devices. The WD Raptor hard drive enables storage vendors and system builders, from large to small, to minimize their customers' storage hardware costs, while not sacrificing reliability, data integrity or performance. Shipping this month, the WD Raptor hard drive is expected to sell for approximately 30 percent less than competing SCSI hard drives. Initially, the hard drive will be available in a 36 GB capacity. In addition to its 5.2 ms average seek time, 10,000 RPM, 1.2 million hours MTBF and five-year warranty, data throughput is 150 MB/second from the SATA interface. The performance roadmap for SATA extends up to 600 MB/second, ensuring a reliable standard for storage providers and customers in the years ahead. [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com).

# DELTA FORCE BLACK HAWK DOWN

**Take control of air and ground vehicles**

**Open fire from vehicle mounted weapons**

**Engage the enemy in close quarters battle**

**Utilize an arsenal of authentic weapons**

**New AI system that enables enemies to intelligently track the player**



## DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN [April]

Set in Somalia in 1993, Delta Force – Black Hawk Down is based upon and around the Operation Restore Hope and Task Force Ranger campaigns and follows members of the elite Delta Force and US Army Rangers as they participate in a number of daring raids against the oppressive Somali warlords in and around Mogadishu.

For further information please contact MegaRom Interactive (Pty) Ltd.  
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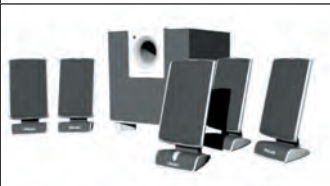
/ Creative's sound factories

**Creative Labs** recently launched the MegaWorks THX 6.1 650 speaker system, which delivers 600 Watts of "burst power" through a powered subwoofer and six mini-cube satellites. Being the only THX 6.1 system currently around, it is predictably expensive. The THX 6.1 650 adds a rear centre channel that enhances the realism of the sound field the system produces. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that there are few sources of six-channel sound out on the market, the system



can translate standard stereo into six-channel format, emulating the experience well. Creative's Audigy 2 sound card is one of the few on the market that can provide six-channel sound. Another upcoming treat from Creative is their I-Trigue 2.1 3300 system, which features a stylish design and is ideal for more portable applications.

/ Philips acoustic fusion speakers



**Philips have** managed to overcome the problem of most flat speakers, namely that their sound doesn't carry far and the frequency response range is narrow. As a result, they are marketing a range of PC speakers, the Acoustic Fusion Speakers. The first model, the Acoustic Fusion 310, features two six-watt satellites and a 20-watt wooden subwoofer, and is intended primarily for the PC

owner who uses his machine mainly for stereo music. For gamers there is the Acoustic Fusion 610. Sharing many of the same features as the 310, this model offers surround sound and a lot more power. This 5.1 system is capable of reproducing Dolby and EAX surround effects. It features five 20-watt satellites and an eight-inch side-firing 100-watt subwoofer, as well as a variety of input options and a wireless remote control. Both models will be available in a couple of months.

/ Wireless ps2 adapter



**Saitek have** released an elegant wireless controller solution for the PlayStation 2. Called the Saitek With Out Wires, or WOW, it consists of a unit that connects to the console and another one that connects to the controllers. The two are linked by radio. This means that any controller that will fit the PS2 can be connected to the system and used virtually wirelessly. The base unit can recharge battery packs while in use, and recharges batteries faster than the remote unit consumes them. Response times are unaffected, and interference effects negligible to a range of around 6 metres, though the unit functions out to 9 metres.

/ Nokia's revolutionary n-gage



**Nokia have** unveiled their N-Gage handheld gaming deck. The unit is a revolutionary blend of hand-held gaming unit, FM radio receiver, MP3 player, PDA, email station and mobile phone. In addition to GSM connectivity, it also sports Bluetooth, allowing multiplayer gaming for up to at least four players in a short- or long-range context. Normal phone (GSM) functionality also means that game content and software upgrades can be downloaded directly into the unit. Somewhat smaller than a Game Boy Advance, the N-Gage features a 176x208 screen capable of up to 4096 colours and is powered by a 104 MHz StrongARM processor. The unit's battery supplies 200 hours of standby time, 4 hours of talk time or 6 hours of gaming time. N-Gage games will initially be available on 8MB MultiMedia Cards, supplemented by downloadable content. A number of leading third-party developers have committed to developing titles for the N-Gage, including Activision, Eidos and Sega. Electronic Arts and Capcom are rumoured to be interested as well. Existing franchises that will be implemented include the likes of Sonic, Sega Rally and Tomb Raider. N-Gage's launch has been scheduled for just before the Christmas season. For more information, visit [www.n-gage.com/n-gage/home.html](http://www.n-gage.com/n-gage/home.html).

/ Solar powered



**Gemini Industries** have been releasing some intriguing gaming peripherals. Their Solar Pak XP for the Game Boy Advance is a solution to this unit's infamous lighting problem. The unit can be exposed to the sun to charge up, then provides additional lighting for the screen for a period of time equal to the charge period by means of two LEDs on each side. The Total Control Pad is a PlayStation 2 controller that features a built-in audio amplifier, as well as a headphone jack and a DVD remote control jack. Other products in Gemini's range include Retractable Cord Controllers for PSOne, PS2, Xbox and GameCube, and the PSOne Arcade Controller, an arcade-style joystick-and-buttons set. [www.gemini-usa.com](http://www.gemini-usa.com)

/ New power mac range



**Power Macs** remain insanely specified in comparison to average PC configurations. The high-end models feature dual 1.42GHz PowerPC G4 processors, 120GB hard disk drives, 4X DVD recorder, FireWire800, built-in 56K modem, 54Mbps AirPort Extreme and Bluetooth. Memory ranges from 512MB to 2GB DDR333 SDRAM, and graphical options include GeForce4 Titanium and Radeon 9000 Pro. The new displays are respectable 20.1" Cinema Displays. With the introduction of these new monsters, older models' pricing has been adjusted accordingly. Needless to say, the new models will not come cheap!

### PORTABLE XBOX?

Bill Gates has been quoted as saying that it will take at least three years for a portable version of the Xbox gaming console to be developed.

### STREAMING MEDIA FOR PS2

Sony have announced that they plan to promote streaming media around the home using the PlayStation 2. No specifics were divulged.

### MAN BEATING MACHINE - THIS TIME!

Chess grandmaster Gary Kasparov is faring much better against Deep Junior than he did against Deep Blue last year. Deep Junior's Israeli-built program was designed to produce confusing skirmishes, which should have made Kasparov's life difficult, but the grandmaster forwent the more cautious "anti-computer" strategies and instead opted for a full-out assault. The first game took 27 moves over a period of three hours and 40 minutes. The entire match consists of six games and carries a purse of a million US dollars.

### TOP INTERNET CAFE OPENS

A man by the name of Tsering Gyaltsen Sherpa will be opening the highest Internet café in the world - at the Khumbu glacier on Mount Everest! The café will be located at an altitude of 5300 metres and will make use of a wireless transmitter that will cost around R10000 per use. The site will serve climbers' expeditions, as well as the few local inhabitants, and the proceeds will be invested into the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee, who clean up the mountain after climbers. The site opens in March.

### MICROSOFT WINDOWS SUPPORT SCHEDULE

As of 31 December last year, Microsoft has ended all support for Windows 95 and NT3.5x; offline support for these ended over a year ago. Offline support for Windows 98, 98 SE and NT4 will end in June, while online support will continue for a year thereafter. Windows Me will enjoy offline support until December next year, with online help ending the customary year thereafter.

### GEMINI PS2 COMMAND POST

Gemini's upcoming PlayStation 2 Command Post will organise the chaos that inevitably surrounds a gaming console system in a central entertainment area, such as a lounge. It will boast a built-in four-port audio and video switcher with "smart detection", which is to say it will automatically detect the port that is carrying the signal. Also included in the specifications is an RF modulator for owners of older television sets, a four-player multi-tap and a slide-out storage unit that holds a dozen DVDs or PS2 games and two memory cards. Topping it off are a mobile widescreen featuring two headphone jacks and a DVD remote control that doesn't require a memory card to play movies. One could almost say that no PlayStation 2 will be complete without a Gemini Command Post!

### THE CAPTAIN'S CHAIR

Pyramat are selling a fold-up gaming recliner chair, called the PM300i. It boasts a three-speaker sound system fed by a 50-Watt amplifier and a variety of inputs, and features a carry handle that allows it to be carried with ease. It is sturdy but comfortable, padded with nylon-wrapped high-density foam, and carries three mesh pockets for storing games and various gaming peripherals. Included in the package are an AC adapter, a 3m RCA cable and a remote control. ERP \$149

### INFLATABLE SPEAKERS!

Some time ago, Ellula introduced two lines of inflatable flat multimedia speakers, the C-2 and the Revo. Now they have expanded this range with the release of the HotAir Subwoofer System. This 35-Watt system consists of a traditional subwoofer carrying the control panel and two inflatable satellite speakers. Ellula's speaker ranges are available in a selection of colours and styling options.

### SPOT THE MICROCHIP!

Last month we covered Microsoft's upcoming plans to bring PDA technology to various hand-held (and smaller) devices. Since then, Microsoft have named the new technology Smart Personal Objects Technology, or Spot for short. This platform will allow a huge variety of information types to be received by small devices over an FM radio band that the company has dubbed DirectBand. One of the first uses for this technique will be the synchronisation of wristwatches to atomic clocks, and several leading time-piece manufacturers have jumped on the bandwagon. Other information that these watches will be able to receive will include traffic and weather reports, financials and news, as well as automatic switching to relevant time zones when travelling. Microsoft are also supplying a version of their operating system, called CE .NET, for use with a number of personal video players about to hit the market from various leading electronics manufacturers. One of the more bizarre projected applications for Spot is in the form of intelligent fridge magnets, which will be able to receive menus from local take-away restaurants and various other bits of information.

**IGI-2**  
COVERT STRIKE

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



**IGI2 - Covert Strike [March]**

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.

For further information please contact MegaRom Interactive (Pty) Ltd.  
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# freelancer beta code

If you consider that playing games is an escape from reality into a world where anything is possible then what could be better than jumping into a spaceship and exploring a virtual universe in a space flight, combat and trading simulation. A universe where you can make money so you can buy a better spaceship with bigger guns, a universe where you battle the bad guys or, if you choose, become one yourself. If you're sitting there thinking - no, I actually prefer collecting giant bananas so I can get past the

monkey master on level four then perhaps you should move along and read something else. If you enjoy science fiction and gaming then Freelancer represents the ultimate fantasy scenario, the only thing missing is the holographic stripper on deck C... but hang on... I'm sure you can buy those new projectors on Lave for 3 890 credits?

There is often much debate concerning anything that claims to be the first of anything, some of these claims



Some of the missions in Freelancer stipulate that you not only destroy the bad guy but also whatever he was carrying... in this case medicine for granny!



are, by their nature, irrefutable, such as, who was the first man on the moon... okay bad example there but to get to the point - in the case of computer gaming and genres, if anyone ever asks you what game started the whole space trading simulation genre you can say without any doubt that it was Elite. The idea for Elite was conceived way back in 1982 [see box out somewhere in this article]



Bob lights a fart in the airlock

## The game that started it all

In 1982 David Braben and Ian Bell started writing a game called 'Elite'. In Elite the player starts the game on a space station with a basic Cobra MKIII space craft, and a paltry 100 Credits. It is then up to the player to survive in a hostile galaxy containing traders, pirates, police, bounty hunters, and an elusive alien race. The player could earn money in many ways, including, for example, taking food from an agricultural world to an industrial world, and bringing machinery back on the return journey. Besides playing it safe in the trade lanes, players could also choose to become pirates and earn their money illegally or perhaps even do a little of both. Elite set many firsts, and was the first genuine 3D game on home computers. Even now, many years after its release it is still fondly remembered and earned many awards, 'probably the best computer game



ever' - The Times, December 1988 - the game went on to sell around 1,000,000 units. Currently there is a project on the cook over at Frontier Developments [www.frontier.co.uk] called Elite 4, there's an interesting FAQ posted there that says a lot about nothing. Go and have a look, it might be the next big thing in this genre in a few years time.

by Moral Minority





and besides starting the great space combat and trading genre, Elite was also the first true 3D game on home computers. Elite is where it all started and now, 21 years later, we have Freelancer the latest game in this intriguing genre.

### The weight of the universe

Freelancer is an important game. It's important because it's the next big space trading combat simulation. It's important because the creative talent behind the game was also responsible, in part, for the impressive Wing Commander series. It's important because Freelancer is trying out a new unified interface and spaceship control system. It's important because if people don't buy into this game there might not be another one on such an epic scale anytime soon and that's enough to make any fan of this genre cry like a baby.

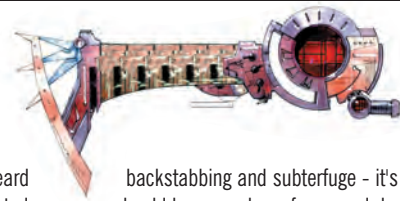
### Digital Anvil

**D**igital Anvil was founded in early 1997 by Chris Roberts, Erin Roberts and Tony Zurovec and a team of about 30 people - most of whom joined DA from Origin. They initially worked on four very ambitious games: Freelancer, Starlancer, Conquest and Loose Cannon. Starlancer was released in 2000, Conquest was released (via another publisher) in 2001, Loose Cannon is currently under development by

Sinister Games and Freelancer has just gone gold. Digital Anvil Studios is also working on a very exciting new Xbox game called "Brute Force" that is headed up by industry veterans Bill Baldwin and Erin Roberts. They also released a movie: Chris Roberts directed "Wing Commander (based on his game series) during his tenure at Digital Anvil.



For those poor souls out there who have never heard of Wing Commander or Privateer [another celebrated game in this genre] or even the famous Elite, let's take this paragraph to fill in the cracks and patch up the blanks. Freelancer is a typical space trading and combat simulation game. Initially you climb into a basic spaceship and travel about a limited stretch of space in search of fame, fortune and a better pilot ranking. Driving all this along is an intriguing story that steers players into missions that must be completed before advancing up a level and you want to up your level because you can then buy better equipment and other interesting goodies. Story aside, the game is open enough that you can ignore the set missions and get on with the solitary business of making credits - these credits allow you to buy new weapons or even a better ship so you can travel to the more obscure and dangerous parts of the Freelancer universe and trade and fight there. The making of credits is a simple choice, take on freelance missions to eliminate bad guys or trade in goods between systems. This formula of making money and then upgrading your ship and weapons is the reason why these kinds of games are so addictive. There are always bigger guns and faster ships to buy somewhere and the only things you need to get your hands on these items are time and skill. To expand a little on the story, Freelancer is set in a war torn future Earth. This nasty war, a story told with exceptional flair is left behind when four 'sleeper' ships from each nationality with cryogenically frozen colonists are sent to the Sirius system for a second chance. Almost 800 years later the ships arrive and the colonists begin rebuilding their civilization and culture. These four different nationalities are represented in the game by way of larger sectors of control, Liberty space for example is owned by the Americas, Bretonia, the United Kingdom, Rheinland, German and Kusari, the Japanese. As you can imagine humanity can never just get along with each other and this tenuous new frontier has already started to crack under the strain. This is the backdrop - enter your character, Trent. The story is well told and features all the elements you'd expect including alien artefacts, nefarious characters, entanglements with the law and a good deal of

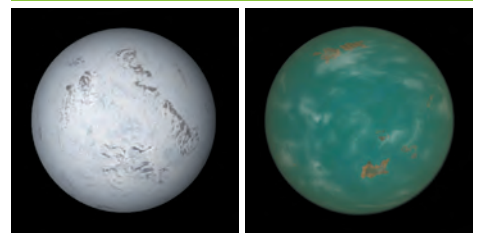


backstabbing and subterfuge - it's entertaining and should keep you busy for a good deal of time.

### In space everyone can see you picking your nose

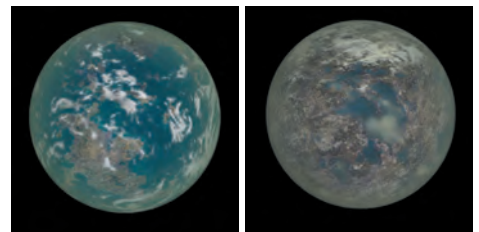
The backup systems surrounding the above core play dynamic are of the highest quality and instead of droning on about how great the graphics engine is we'll rather cut this text a little short and put a few more screen shots here and there. The important things to know are the engine looks fantastic and plays smoothly even on slightly older systems. The physics engine dictating the control and space flight experience are spot on and coupled with a new slick control system makes the game really easy to play as controlling the

### Some of the planets in Liberty Space



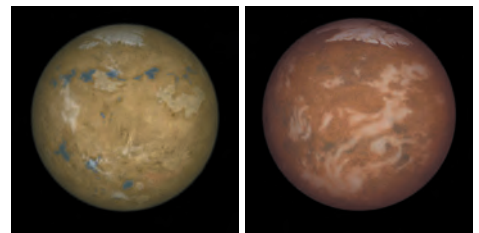
California Minor

Los Angeles



Denver

Manhattan



Houston

Pittsburg

### Star Control to Major Bob



**C**onsidering the amount of information exchange surrounding the choice of control in Freelancer I think it's prudent to explain the whole thing as clearly as my English permits here. Give this a quick read - it's important that you don't condemn Freelancer based purely on a preconceived notion that a spaceship controlled by a mouse is for kids or amateurs. Here follows a description of how it used to work and how it works now.

**The current** control set-up mimics the basic functions of a joystick, I'll loosely adapt the official word on this, as we all know if you push a joystick in a direction your vessel will move in that direction - push the stick forward and the nose of the craft will drop, pull back on the stick and the nose lifts. In addition to this, the further you push the joystick in a particular direction the faster or slower this sequence of events happens. That's joystick control.

**In Freelancer** moving your mouse in a particular direction results in the spaceship moving in that direction and depending on the distance you move your mouse cursor from the centre on the screen the faster this change of direction occurs. That's mouse control.

**See, simple,** and other than holding a big stick with shiny buttons on it there's very little difference.

To further complicate matters or simplify them [you decide], the developers have included two different types of mouse control, 'Free Flight' is one of them and works like this: If you hold in your left mouse button your spaceship behaves according to the mouse control system described above - the right mouse button fires the weapons. Releasing the left mouse button returns the player to 'Interface Mode' which allows access to your various HUD elements such as selecting waypoints, reading mission information and chatting with other vessels. 'Mouse Flight' is the second form of control and here players must tap the spacebar to enter this mode, now, any movement of the mouse results in your spaceship moving in that direction [naturally in this mode you don't have to hold in the left mouse button] - it's largely the same thing except for the spacebar pressing.

Personally I found the 'Free Flight' control model much more flexible and easy to use, but that's **just me.**





▼ Robots don't barter very well...



▼ In space not all space stations look like the Death Star - some look exactly like ice cubes in fact...



actual spaceship is usually the last thing on your mind, freeing you up to concentrate on killing bad guys. This reduced complexity mainlines through the game and while some hardcore players would prefer a tougher, more challenging simulation with a myriad of keys to learn and a complex navigational system to master, most other players just want to have fun and enjoy the experience.

Aside from the obvious excellent in-flight graphics the artists have also done an exceptional job on the rest of the game, each of the different factions has their own distinct identity and feel. The different locations are well designed and you'll find yourself completely taken in by the game's convincing atmosphere.

Freelancers sound is equally impressive - all the different sound effects linked to weapon fire are well handled. One weak area is the voice acting, which sounds a little artificial, especially the overly polite nature of everyone you meet in Liberty Space. I was expecting a little harshness here and there but in space it seems everyone wants to be your friend - perhaps this will change as

you explore other areas of the game.

### Control Freak

For fans that have been following the game there has been much debate and argument about the designer's decision to make the game mouse driven. In a recent interview with Freelancer Designer, Jorg Neumann, he outlined the reasons for the switch to mouse driven control for a spaceship... if you read between all the marketing stuff he was probably told to say it seems that Microsoft feel that it'll be easier to sell the game to the millions of casual gamers who own mice as opposed to the hundreds of thousands that own joysticks. My opinion, why not just include joystick support anyway and hide it away from the buffoons under an advanced tab on a menu somewhere? You can argue this point backwards and forwards all day, one especially good point is that, who is to say that all spaceships will be controlled by a joystick, just because we've all seen Star Wars and know that military jet fighters use joysticks does this mean the humble joystick will still be the primary point of input a thousand years from now - I think not. Humanity will probably figure out that you only have to have a neural input node somewhere on your spaceship that enables you to fly by thought - a naturally more efficient form of input.

But the point here is the mouse driven control system for this game works wonderfully and while hardcore pilots might feel a little cheated or disappointed that they can't use their R 1000+ joystick in a game made to test R 1000+ joysticks, the mouse control system works exactly the same way as a joystick does, it just doesn't look as cool as it could if you used a joystick - you hero you! :)

### Wrapping this up

Yes, it's an amazing looking and playing game, Freelancer promises to bring us a dose of what we've been waiting for. It seems that every gaming generation has one great space trading and combat simulation to brag about and Freelancer looks like the business for the Windows generation.





powerful  
compact  
silent  
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style



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**The Shuttle SN41G2**

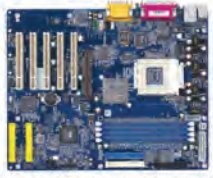
"A hardware lover's dream come true 1/27/2003

(Taipei, Taiwan - January 24, 2003) Lost Circuits, not known for pulling punches or otherwise being nice to manufacturers, has declared the Shuttle **SN41G2** XPC "a hardware lover's dream come true." Its impressive stability and performance to its excellent built-in multimedia feature set, delighted and impressed the site's reviewer.

OverCLOCKer said. "The Shuttle **SN41G2** is the first nForce2 box that provides the best AMD experience to date."

T-Break said "...an excellent product - Shuttle have got it perfect for the AMD crowd. "

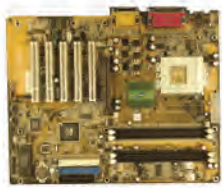
The Tech Report said "..the best XPC yet"



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UDMA 100/133 or 2 S-ATA from HPT372 to support  
RAID Function ITE 8705F Realtek ALC650 six channel  
audio; Supports 5.1 Speakers, 10/100 LAN, 5 x PCI, 6 x  
USB2.0, Multiplier, 10/100 Fast Ethernet, 1 x Serial, 1 x  
AGP V2. IrDa, SPDIF In/Out, Built in 2MB Flash ROM



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PC1600/2100/2700, 2 x UDMA 100/133  
IDE Ports from VT8235, Onboard I/O - ITE  
8705F, Realtek ALC650 6 channel audio  
Built in 2MB Flash ROM



**Shuttle AK32A AMD Motherboard:**  
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168-Pin SDRAM DIMM Slots, 2 x UDMA  
66/100 Ports from VT8233, Winbond  
83697HF, AC97 Two Channel Audio, 1 x  
AGP V1.0/2.0 2X/4X, 5 x PCI, 6 x USB1.1,  
2 x Serial Ports, IrDa Overlocking - Voltage,  
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# tropico 2: pirate cove

"Pieces of eight, pieces of eight." "Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of rum." "Land ahoy!" Yes, it's a game about pirates. Actually, it's a sequel but with plenty of differences. Tropicco received a good deal of critical acclaim on its release. Based on solid ideas, it was fleshed out with plush graphics and a certain amount of originality. With the sequel due in April 2003, Derek dela Fuente met up with US Game's Designer, Bill Spieth, from developer Frog City, responsible for Tropicco 2: Pirate Cove (T2: PC), to find out more.

Poptop, which is owned by Take2Games, produced and developed Tropicco but this time around there is a completely new development team working on the sequel. After two years on the original title it was merely a case of not wanting to work on the sequel, so, presented with a new concept, with many similarities to the original game, Frog City was selected to move the Tropicco brand forward. Bill was eager to concisely give the low down on what

made T2: PC different from the original title. "Basically both are 'builder games', where the main way you work on your environment, improve your status, is by building. That in turn encourages your people to do things, rather than selecting and directing them, you construct things and they react. Your success is gauged on how well you meet their needs whilst satisfying

**developer:** frog city  
**publisher:** gathering of developers  
**distributor:** megarom [011] 805 7303  
**release date:** q2 2003  
**genre:** management  
**internet:** www.frogcity.com

them. In that way both games are the same. In Tropicco, when you built up an economy, as a Caribbean dictator, you were building it up primarily to sell products - whether it was rum, corn or whatever, whilst earning money with your exports. T2: PC does a 'kind of reverse on that. The player maintains their wealth not by production of materials, but by plundering

**"Take Blackbeard, Anne Bonny and a host of other buccaneers through a campaign spanning 100 years of piracy in the Caribbean."**



▲ Well, that's what it's all about, really, now isn't it?

▲ Batman had a bat-cave, therefore Skull McBride needs similar, appropriate lodgings...

# blitzkrieg

CDV is known for quality war strategy titles and Blitzkrieg looks like it will continue this trend. Derek dela Fuente hooked up with Mike Allenson, spokesperson for the project, to get the details on this upcoming PC title.

CDV's says: 'Blitzkrieg is the fine art of strategy, but with more finesse! Dissect your enemy with surgical precision, halt the enemy's advance with strategic tank and air assaults, and maintain your offensive momentum. Command German, Soviet or Allied troops who, if commanded well, will gain experience and fight more effectively over the course of the war. Progress through the game is rewarded via access to the latest warfare technology, so strategic guile is recommended. Accept the challenge and launch your assault, and remember... Attack is the best form of defence.' A superb looking war strategy game is on offer and to get to this point the team started off the project with a full week of lectures by a well-known military historian in Moscow. He then joined the team full time in order to ensure that every detail in the game was historically accurate. Add to that a large bookcase that is filled to bursting point with WWII books in Russian and English, as well as frequent movie nights watching documentary and feature films."

The player assumes the role of commanding officer - starting out at the rank of Major. Your main objective is to lead your troops and units to victory throughout the historical chapter missions that make up your campaign. The more you fight the more promotions and medals you garner for yourself, and your troops and units will gain experience and follow you from mission to mission, like an RPG, so that the more you play, the easier the main missions will be to complete. Another great advantage of employing an RPG-like advancement system is that you'll never play the same game twice.

Blitzkrieg has many noteworthy features and the team consider graphics to be one of their greatest strengths and they spent a lot of time making sure that the locations are not only beautiful, but historically accurate too. Since Blitzkrieg covers the Eastern and Western European fronts, as well as the North African campaigns, they modelled desert, forest and city





merchants on the high seas and bringing the victims back to the island as captive workers. In addition, the pirate characters show a great deal of individual personality, so that the player has a vested interest in the characters' well being.

### My friend the pirate

"In the original game your people were your citizens - in T2: PC there are two classes of people and there are ways to turn one class into the other. Looking at your island you will find pirates and captives and you will treat them very differently. The pirates, your allies, plunder bringing back gold and are evil like you. The captives work for you and are captured/kidnapped by your pirates. You will want to keep them resigned to being your captives. The more afraid they are, the more they will work for you. You must also be aware that they could try to escape, so you must understand your captive policy and how well you are faring and what your pirate policy is - and how you are doing. You could try to strike a balance but pirates, and hence you, the player, are a nasty bunch so it'll be very hard to be

nice. Although the period was a historically bloodthirsty time, we have deliberately kept the violence down to a minimum. Your captives will obviously try to make an

occasional run for it, only to be pursued by one of your pirates. You will have no control over what happens, merely being able to view the, almost inevitable, outcome. And your captives won't be going back to work! One way of keeping your captives in check, apart from bunging them in a stockade, is to place effigies at strategic points to scare them into behaving."

In T2: PC, being a pirate gives a great deal of depth to different ways of playing the pirate. There are lots of different features that exist in the game that will allow you to do that job better. One thing you must remember is you are always the Pirate and can't play the game as a sugar planter or a merchant this time.



making it to an island where you meet buccaneers who love beer. The whole initial starting plot is creating a brewery and taverns to drink in to ensure the buccaneers are happy. This task will take the player 10 minutes to play and is designed to familiarise and introduce the player to some important concepts for the game. Success will unlock the next plot, which will be more involved, with more tasks and requirements to earn gold, whilst learning more concepts. The campaign is linear comprising around 15 episodes with unfolding stories starting in 1660, ending 1730!

### Wood on this

Surprisingly, Tropic 2: Pirate Cove will only have one resource - lumber. Okay, there is gold (or plunder as it's known within the game) but it's used for paying your pirates. Everything is built from wood and all your buildings will look completely different as they are upgraded. An example: your initial 'house' will be a simple tent, but upgrade to the next level and your roof is an old boat. Keep improving your residence and you'll end up with something which makes Buckingham Palace look like a shed! In all, there will be seven stages of building with around 70 'objects' to construct. Bear in mind though, that your chosen island can become overcrowded and 'over resourced' so the need to ensure a good supply of wood is paramount. Tropic 2: Pirate Cove builds on the witty addictive play of Tropic, whilst adding new innovations and changes to the rules. In effect, you get rich pirating the goods other people have made whilst also finding and keeping the captives too. Keeping the island economy moving along nicely falls largely to them. The default pirates are characters you'll spend time developing, as you build up mean fighting crews with specialties in boarding, cannon fire and harassment with muskets. Look out for the review sometime later this year.



Tropic didn't have a campaign mode whereas the sequel does. The team wanted a story element to the game. Now you enter a name every time you start a campaign. The first episode, and the beginning story, starts you off as a labourer who has escaped from a plantation and decides to become a pirate. You have an ally who knows a little navigation and together you steal a ship. You end up

locations, as well as different weather schemes including spring, summer and winter. Each battle, from the Invasion of Finland to the Siege of Tobruk to the Diadem operation at Anzio, is set on a map that not only approximates the actual landscape in which these battles took place, but also adds to the whole atmosphere of the game. There are over 200 different types of 3D units in Blitzkrieg, including tanks, artillery, rocket launchers, APCs, jeeps and aircraft.

When starting, the player is given the historical background of the current mission in order to help advance through the campaign. The player is then given the option of playing that mission right away with regular forces, or playing different random missions with different difficulty levels before completing this main mission. There are a few benefits to this unique way of playing, one of them is a truly unlimited number of random maps, meaning that you can play 16 missions and finish a campaign or play a hundred (or more) to finish the same campaign - each time the

experience will be different. The second is that your units and troops gain experience and upgraded weaponry to carry forward into the next missions, and the third is earning different medals and getting promoted to higher ranks.

Multiplayer has several different modes, such as 1 on 1 and team vs. team as well as various victory conditions, such as capture the flag, destroy all opponents and special objective missions where one side is charged to defend while another must attack and hold the same territory. Blitzkrieg will support up to 16 players and you'll be able to play through GameSpy as well as over a LAN.

The Mission Editor lets you open and edit any map from the game, generate random maps or make your own. In addition to this you can link your maps and missions together into entire campaigns, complete with background and objective texts to give that finishing touch. Next up is the Resource Editor that lets you right into the resource files and lets you change or add to practically anything in the game, including textures, landscapes, troops and units, sounds and much more!



developer: cdv  
 publisher: cdv  
 distributor: wwe [011] 462 0150  
 release date: q2 2003  
 genre: real time strategy  
 internet: www.cdv.com



developer: zuxxez entertainment  
 publisher: tba  
 distributor: tba  
 release date: q1 2003  
 genre: rts / rpg  
 internet: www.knightshift.com

Founded in 2000, ZUXXEZ AG acquired the games division of the former TopWare Interactive, as well as its award-winning development team Reality Pump known worldwide for products like Earth 2150 and World War III... and also now developer of KnightShift. With many superb games waiting to be signed by big publishers (where the majority of the products go), their last game, going to Eidos, ZUXXEZ were eager to meet up with Derek dela Fuente, who spoke with Tim Wilson (TW), Localisation Director from ZUXXEZ and Dirk P. Hassinger (DPH), Executive Producer of KnightShift.

Reality Pump's track record includes: Earth 2140 (Interplay) - Earth 2150 trilogy (SSI, Ubi Soft, SFI) - World War III: Black Gold (JoWood) and Frontline Attack: War over Europe (Eidos). The team's main area of experience is in creating the latest 3D-Engine technologies and in well-balanced and challenging RTS single player campaigns. They have now combined all of this experience with some adventure and RPG elements to create a very addictive gaming experience. Although not especially targeted as a game that stretches the technology envelope with stylised graphics and clever effects, it will certainly please many PC gamers who like a bit of 'wow' in their games. The proprietary engine supports the latest technology of third generation graphic adapters/cards. In co-operation with ATI and Matrox the team has developed so far unseen effects on per pixel shaders, like animated water, which mirrors the whole surroundings. The partially motion captured animated characters are displayed using individual bone systems. So far everyone who has seen the game is really impressed by the graphics. A list of all the technical engine features is available on the game website.

#### Tall tale

The background of the story is an old Slavic fairy tale of princes, princesses, heroic characters, dragons, monsters, hungry wolves, witches and wizards and the struggle of good over evil. For the player that means primarily, following the story line, which is divided into

three campaigns and over 30 missions, which will allow you to liberate your Principality from a vile and diabolical necromancer and fire breathing dragon. Other objectives include completing various tasks, which are invariably connected to the continuity of the story line.

Some of the stranger aspects of the game were cleared up by Tim Wilson: "What's so weird about cows and who said the game was serious? Many games have some sort of resource, whether it is money, coal or gold mines, belief or little blue things that go 'squeak'. In this case the economy is based on milk, produced by cows grazing contentedly on the pasture. To optimise the production of this 'white gold' the player must look after his bovine friends in that they must be sent to graze on fresh grass while one meadow regenerates and must be milked in cowsheds. As for serious, this game has been designed from the beginning to be playable by young and old. There are many amusing dialogues and figures in the game enhancing the fun factor and the suspense."

DPH: "The main idea was to create a game in a beautiful living world full of magic. KnightShift should be easy to get into and be challenging to play. Instead of commanding hundreds of units and looking after complicated research and resource chains, the game contains only the most wanted features of both RTS and RPG games combined in a unique way.

KnightShift does not want to beat Wizardry 8 in complexity and does not aim to have more unit types and buildings than Age of Mythology - but KnightShift looks better and is generally a lot more addictive." You start the game by playing the Prince. After being conjured back from the Nexus, he has to learn to walk, equip himself with sword and shield, learn to fight and then solve several quests to get back his equipment. At the end of the first mission he should look and be equipped like a real prince and is ready to meet his most loyal subjects. With a growing party and increasing experience he goes through the land, builds up and defends villages, and fights to regain his lost throne. The player starts with very simple equipment and has to train his characters and equip them during

all three campaigns. Without an in-game tutorial, the team believe it is far more intuitive for the player to learn as they progress. TW: "All characters gain experience and develop their skills throughout the game, from our Prince and hero to the lowliest cow, increasing combat skills and stamina in battle or productivity in the pasture. All characters also 'level up' making them increasingly valuable to the player. I can also say that from my own experience of the game, from the earliest development stages to the current beta version, the

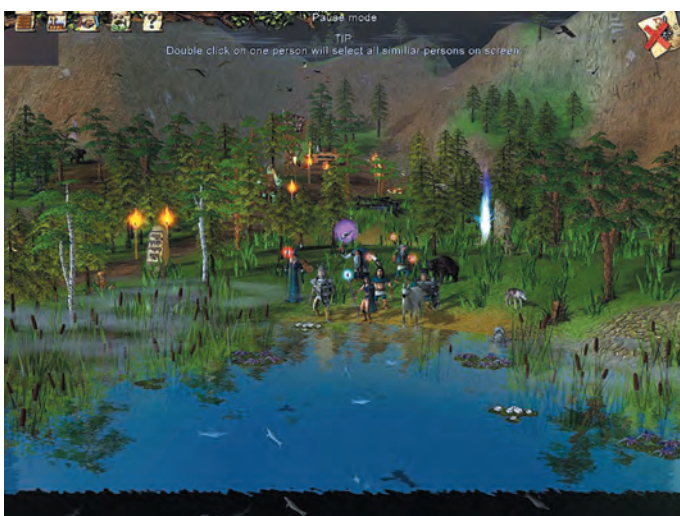
player becomes quite attached to his heroes (and cows) adding an extra something to the time spent in front of the PC."

This is a compelling game that is user friendly and is a real change in direction for the team who have focused heavily on war and sci-fi titles in the past. Although reluctant to tell me who the publisher was, they did say it was a big name.

This is a very unusual looking but extremely novel title that should not be overlooked.



▼ Well, it certainly does look pretty, now doesn't it?







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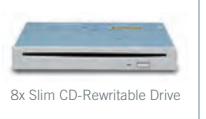


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# robin hood: defender of the crown

**developer:** cinemaware  
**publisher:** cinemaware  
**distributor:** tba  
**release date:** q2 2003  
**genre:** adventure  
**internet:** www.cinemaware.com

Older gamers [who you calling old? Ed] will be able to think back a good 12 years and reminisce about the great Cinemaware titles that were released by Mirrorsoft. The publisher disappeared for 10 years and re-invented itself, along with some of their older titles, which they brought into the 21st century! One great title was Defender of the Crown on the Amiga that melded action with strategy, topped with some great graphics. Cinemaware has improved and modified Defender of the Crown but can they sell big numbers and recreate that excitement that

came with every new Cinemaware game? Derek dela Fuente quizzed Morgan Gray, Lead Designer with the team creating this new experience.

*Who are the people behind the game and what kind of cross over is there from the original game in both game play and input?*

Our CEO and Co-Founder is Lars Fuhrken-Batista. I don't think there is a bigger Cinemaware fan out there. Sean Vesce is our second Co-Founder and serves as the game's Director. Both Lars and Sean have worked together before on titles such as Mechwarrior 2, and Interstate 76. Noor Khawaja is our Technical Director and was responsible for a large portion of our game engine (Cinemattech). Morgan Gray is our Lead Game Designer, and John Chowanec serves as our Producer. The team consists of around 20 very dedicated people. Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown is very similar to the original game. Both feature the same basic design

formula. That is having a strategic play dynamic foundation that allows the player to launch into focused action sequences which can both positively or negatively impact the strategic situations the player finds himself in. Like the original, the game features numerous locales, special events, and is very dynamic. Each time you play the game your experience will be different.

*I remember the original Defender of the Crown on the Amiga. The game concept appears to be the same but how have you fleshed out the ideas, especially say the action segments, as they were really single press implementation for actions. How involved is the sword fencing and jousting and can you detail what the action elements are?*

The original game provided us with a solid design foundation to begin the process of modernizing the play dynamic. Everything in the original game has either been significantly enhanced, or completely redesigned to bring it up to date with the current games out there. Cinemaware was known for innovation in both play dynamic and presentation, and I think that we are continuing that tradition today. We've upped the graphic



▲ Medieval real estate sales generally took the form of long sieges and flaming pitch...



▼ Sir Puddle realised too late into the tournament that he only packed his plastic practice lances





ante significantly in every area, from the map and interface to the actual 3D in-game presentation. We've taken the rather simple elements of the original and added more depth and richness, while at the same time not sacrificing accessibility. Each action sequence scales in difficulty and depth, and goes beyond 'pressing a single button'.

The featured action sequences include Sword Fighting, Jousting, first person Archery raids, Castle Sieges (the catapults return!), and Open Field Combat (battles between armies).

Sword Fighting now features multiple opponents, linked combination moves, the ability to defend and reverse enemy attacks. Jousting is now broken down into several rounds of competition, with each round offering the winner more impressive prizes. The goal has always been to increase the depth of play of the original while retaining the spirit of it. I believe we have achieved this.

*With the game being on PS2 and PC how focused are you on the PC? If PC is strategy and console is action, do both formats offer a generic blend?*

Actually both the PS2 and PC versions have the same basic mix of action and strategy. Other than visual presentation, at the moment both versions will feature the same play dynamic. There will be minor changes to take into account the unique control schemes available on the different platforms, as well as improved graphics on the more high-end formats like the PC. We will also try to include some surprises in the PC version.

*How are the arcade bits placed in the game to ensure continuity and not just being there to add the 'action bit'? Explain the mix and style of the game and who you are aiming it at?*

We refer to the arcade bits as Action Sequences. They are fully integrated into the strategy portion of the



game. Instead of just being tacked on, each Action Sequence is triggered by an action on the player's or enemy AI's part. Essentially what happens is the player decides on a course of action, say generating more gold. He would then enter into an action sequence that allows him to carry out that course of action, such as a Sword Fighting raid. His success at the Action Sequence would reward him with more Gold, which he could then use to increase his army size, build up the strength of his defences, purchase a new stronghold, and so on.

We set out from the start to make the game for Cinemaware fans! We know that many have been out there waiting for a new CW release for years. Feedback from them has been fantastic. Also, we received a large amount of encouragement from people who have never played a Cinemaware game before. We believe in the end the game will strongly appeal to people who enjoy RPG, strategy and action-adventure games.

*Can you explain the strategic and important elements in the game?*

From a strategy point of view the game bears a very close resemblance to the classic board game Risk. The core of the game contains a light strategy spine, which focuses primarily on army management, territory acquisition and defence. There are numerous random and dynamic settings that are affected each time the player plays the game which will help ensure that every play through of the game is unique.

Each of the action sequences serves to help the player expand his influence upon England. Sword Fighting for example allows you to raid enemies, thus increasing your treasury, Castle Sieges allow you to attack enemy

castles, etc. Certain players will be more partial to certain sequences, so they can use their skill at these sequences to further the game forward. An example would be a player that is very good at Jousting holding tournaments often so that he could win land without the need to use his army.

Also the battles between armies contain a number of strategic possibilities. Each unit has strengths and weakness, and each can be used in a unique way to really alter the flow of battle.

So as you can see there are many types of strategies available for players to explore. The great thing about DotC is that it is a very open ended type of game, and the player can choose how he wants to mould his own experience through the game.

*What skills does Robin have and how does he utilize his band of men? How does the essence of Robin work or is it more about the name adding to the brand?*

Robin is highly skilled with the bow and arrow. This will allow him to stage ambushes that let him do such things as free prisoners eager to join his cause, and to raid the enemy caravans for gold. As a natural leader Robin serves as the foundation to the player's party of characters. It is through Robin that the story is told, and it is through Robin that the player orders his party members to perform tasks.

Although it is true that Robin Hood is a very recognizable name, I think that didn't have much to do with our decision to feature him. As you may recall Robin Hood was one of the first characters the player meets in the original Defender of the Crown. Robin was always there to offer you help if things got too hard. When we started talking about how it would be fun to remake Defender of the Crown we immediately began to think of how cool it would be to tell the story through Robin's eyes. Things just really came together after that.

*Is there resource management in the game and how does it work?*

Resource management plays a very small role in the game. There is only one major resource - Gold. Gold is used primarily to purchase troops to increase the





effectiveness of the player's army and defence units. Gold can also be used to build and/or upgrade strongholds to increase the defence of the player's owned counties. The focus of Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown is more about action, strategy and drama rather than extensive resource management.

*Would you elaborate on unique special events and multiple goals - also what you feel is unique?*

Robin Hood: DOTC contains numerous Special Events that randomly occur during the course of the game. Some of these events are simple story promoting messages; others affect the player's armies (men falling ill) or income (poor harvest). Certain events require that the player be successful in an action sequence in order to complete them (going into Sword

Fighting to save a lovely maiden, for example). Beyond Special Events many play dynamic aspects are very non-linear. The game features several goals. The gamer will have to remove Prince John from power before they can complete the game - that is required to see the ending. Our ending, however, will be constructed of multiple vignettes that will be strung together based upon goals completed. For instance, if the player removed Prince John and decided not to pay the ransom for King Richard they will be presented with an ending that depicts the removal of Prince John and then might cut to Richard rotting in a prison cell. There are 4 possible goals, which will allow the player

multiple endings. If the player does complete all 4 goals they will be presented with a special ending. The most unique aspect of the game is that it's a mix of action sequences and strategic military play that is



unlike any of the other games on the market. Each game will start with six generals battling for control of the different territories of England. Robin and Prince John will occupy two of the six slots, and the other four will be filled from a pool of 8-12 Lords.

*Please explain what you have to do and how clever and devious the player has to be?*

Basically the player has to strategize his conquest of England. At every turn the player is

faced with choices: Do I continue my military campaign at the risk of overstressing my resources? Do I begin to raid and harass the enemy lords? What sort of army composition do I need to siege that castle? The drama of the game stems from the problems the player faces, and how he chooses to deal with them. In DotC, the player is constantly having to make decisions that can affect the outcome of the game and the story.

*What kind of units will you have and can you explain how the units work? Will units you capture also become yours to use and with each land gain do you become that much more powerful and do you have to pick your*

*assigned target with care?*

There are three melee unit types (Peasants, Footmen, Knights) and two missile unit types (Archers, Catapults). The player controls his army by selecting various units to command. Through the course of the game the player gains access to three different melee (ground) units, and two different missile units. Ground units are targeted at the enemy by sending them down 'channels', or paths. There are up to three channels present during a battle. These channels are two-way paths that bridge the gap between the player and enemy battle lines. When melee units collide along the path, it sparks an engagement. When units engage they both make an attack against each other. If neither succeeds in wiping out the others attack they are both repulsed. If one of the attacks is destroyed the victorious melee unit continues along the channel towards the enemy lines. Missile units are unique in that they target specific units, as opposed to colliding with enemy forces along the channels. When melee units or missile attacks collide with the enemy's frontlines they deliver devastating attacks.

*What are the special characters in the game and what do they do?*

Special Characters serve two basic functions - they further the storyline of the game, and give the player access to choices or abilities that he does not normally possess. Maid Marian is a special character who plays a big role in the overall storyline (obviously). Marian, through her connections in the royal courts, gives the player the ability to spy on rival Lords. Friar Tuck gives the player the ability to free King Richard, and to win the support of the people of England.

*Summarize the ethos of the game in a few sentences.*

Heroes Live Forever! The storyline ethos can be described simply as: Man rises to the call of a country in need of a hero. From a play dynamic standpoint the overall ethos for this game (and all CW games) was to give the player as full and varied an experience as possible while at the same time providing a solid foundation that ties everything together. It's very much a player-directed game in that the player really determines how they achieve the game's goals.







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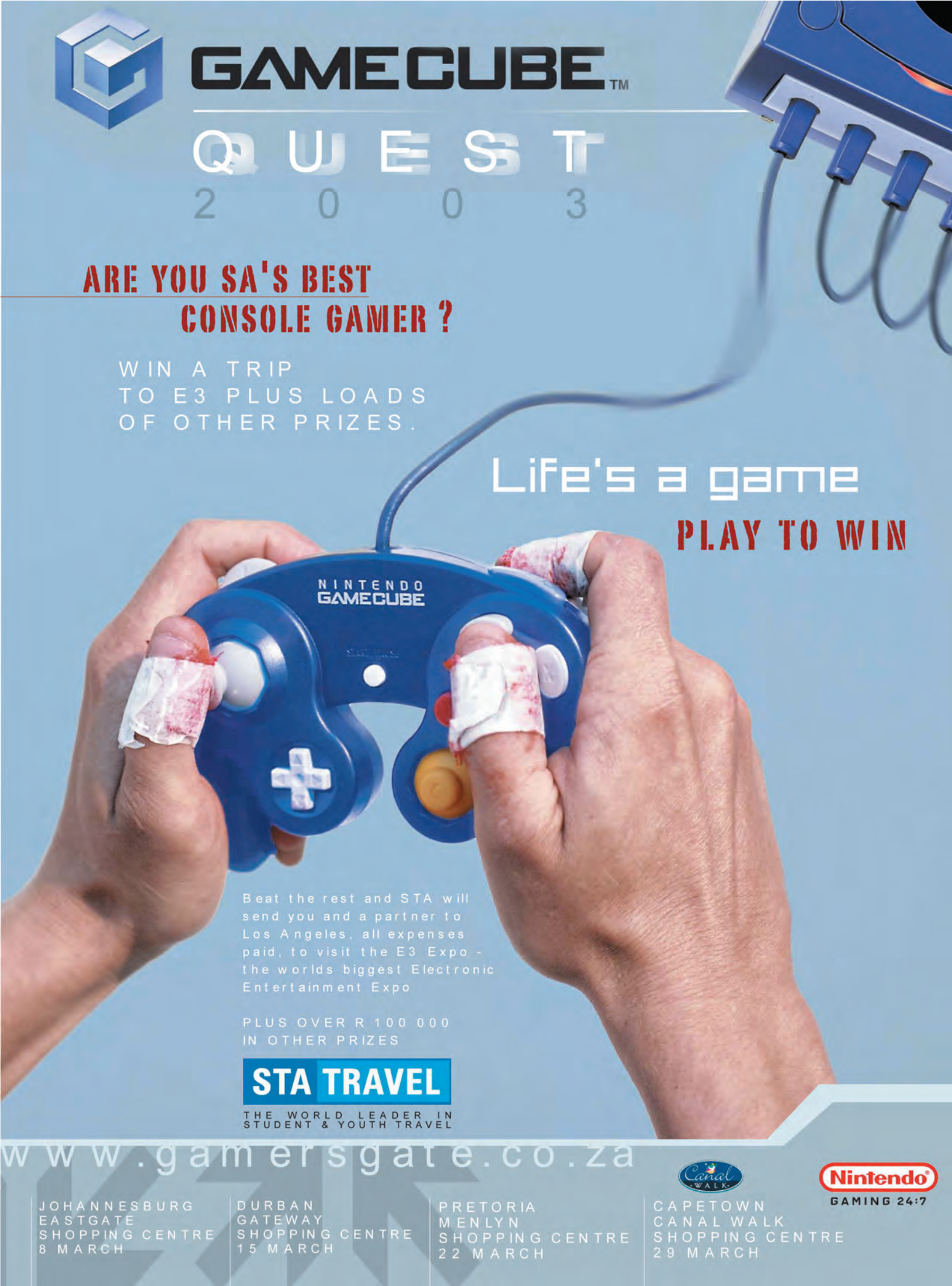
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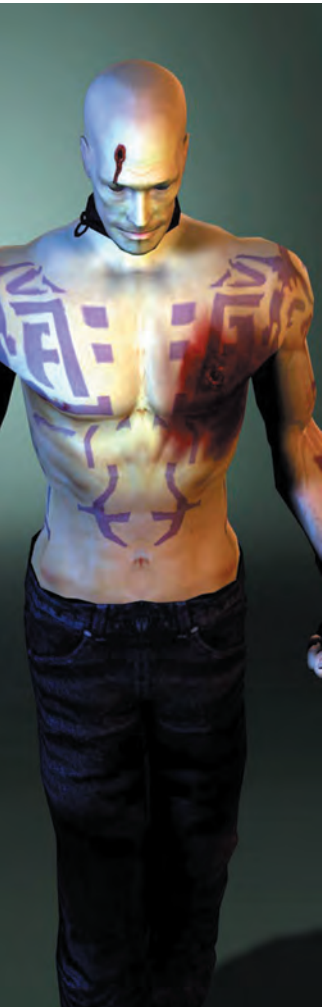
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# call of cthulhu: dark corners of the earth

Headfirst Productions is a close-knit UK development team headed by industry veteran, Mike Woodruffe, whose experience goes way back to the Commodore 64 days. From the earliest 8 bit days right up to the present Mike has been involved with many successful and innovative games. With the adventure tag being the one familiar factor throughout, their next title is more than adventure with a mix of many exciting genres, as became apparent when Derek dela Fuente met up with Mike.



Headfirst Productions is rare in the games development industry in that they don't make any racing, fighting or sports games (at least not yet), neither do they specialise in conversions of other peoples games to different formats. Headfirst is striving to create new and innovative games rather than sticking purely with tried and tested formulae, and is only interested in developing polished triple A titles. Whilst developing Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners it would have been easier for them to mimic the established survival horror mechanics of Resident Evil or Silent Hill, or create an FPS

clone in a Cthulhu environment along the lines of Half Life. But Headfirst decided that the richness of the license deserved something special, so they've taken the best bits from both of these genres and blended them into a new game experience - obviously adding a lot of their personal innovations, such as the sanity system and a HUD-less screen. Having acquired the Call of Cthulhu RPG license - what does this offer in terms of creating a game, ideas, and resources to both Headfirst and the gaming public? "The Cthulhu license is a double-edged sword in some ways, as on the one hand we are dealing with material that is very precious to a great number of people, but at the same time there is a wealth of excellent source material for game design. The popularity of the franchise alone is obviously valuable, as it will generate interest purely off the name, especially considering that there is a large crossover between Cthulhu fans and game players. However, the real rewards are reaped in the game design process as the Cthulhu Mythos provides characters, maps, locations, history and plenty of monsters - this gives the designers a massive head start. Obviously compromises need to be made for playability, as specific elements of Call of Cthulhu would not work well in a computer game." Dark Corners is based around a H.P. Lovecraft tale (a name that will mean a lot to avid readers) but that does not mean the creation of the concept was an easy one or even based on other people's ideas for Headfirst already had some of their own concepts in development in conjunction with external licenses. The

developer: headfirst productions  
 publisher: tba  
 distributor: tba  
 release date: mid 2003  
 genre: first person shooter / adventure  
 internet: www.callofctulhu.co.uk

influence of H.P. Lovecraft on modern day horror is impressive, with most polls only ranking Stephen King higher in authors' work that people most want to see in a computer game. The reasons for his popularity, aside from being a pioneer in horror writing, was the power of suggestion in his works and the resultant atmosphere he was able to build. His writings have inspired many people to expand on the mythology he created, the Cthulhu Mythos is now massive - with supplementary material spanning a vast array of locations and time periods. His influences are stamped all over various computer games, whether deliberately or otherwise, including Doom, Alone in the Dark, and Resident Evil. For Dark Corners they have chosen to concentrate mainly on the one setting, inspired by the Lovecraft tale 'Shadow Over Innsmouth', and really focus on bringing this location and its characters to life.

Mike gave a short overview of the game's story and what the main task will be. "Without giving too much away, the player takes on the role of Jack Walters, an ex-cop turned Private Investigator, whose life is

▼ Arkham Asylum - Lovecraft's vision of psychiatric hell painstakingly recreated...



▼ Why do killers never wash the blood off of their hands before trying to get away with it?



▼ The Gauteng shooting gallery...





changed after an encounter with the Mythos. He has a burning need to find out more about the dark secrets of the universe and his own past, which results in him only taking cases that he believes have a Mythos connection. To this end, when he is asked to visit Innsmouth, an ancient seaport in Massachusetts, a little research uncovers rumours of strange creatures and unholy rituals, of the town's unexplained prosperity, and the recent disappearances of several people in the area. He takes the case to find out what happened to a young grocery clerk called Brian Burnham. During the course of the game the player will not only uncover the secret history of Innsmouth, but also find out about the horrors of his own past."

Asked how pivotal the storyline was and how did the team add play elements, puzzles that will intrigue and challenge, brought a concise answer from Mike.

"I'm sure there are entire books and articles written on this subject. As our game is more than just a shooter, it is not possible to hide poor narrative behind continual action sequences. The game is all about recreating the eerie atmosphere of the Lovecraft tale and uncovering

▼ Red Crayolas and padded cells... the joys of Lovecraft...



▼ Blowing away a hybrid scumbag...



the Secrets of Innsmouth, the way this unfolds to the player is pivotal to enjoying the experience so the storyline is vital. In terms of designing all the elements that make up the gameplay on Dark Corners, we have a formalised internal process for ensuring consistency and quality control across the entire game."

"What we are trying to do with Cthulhu is to build atmosphere through the game. It's not all about what the player sees. We want the player to be on edge throughout the game, paranoid about what might be lurking around corners. We are achieving this through what the player does not see, as well as the monsters the player may encounter. Many games try to achieve horror by throwing monsters at the player... but once you've seen every creature in the game there's nothing left to scare you. The player in Cthulhu will be watched, plagued by characters disappearing into the shadows. Another technique we are using is to make the player

feel defenceless. Most horror films will force the main characters into situations where they cannot possibly hope to defeat their enemy, and then present them with a glimmer of hope and an opportunity to survive. It's this feeling of despair we want the player to feel when they are being chased by monsters armed only with their own cunning."

State of the art games, ones with the 'wow' factor come complete with zillions of onscreen effects and a specification list of weird sounding words to convey new graphical innovations. It goes without saying that Call of Cthulhu has a superb 3D engine and effects but Mike conveyed some very professional points. "Many of our innovations have been gameplay oriented rather than technology; the player has no HUD, no sights, a sophisticated damage system, and the player interacts with the scenery using IK arms. The sanity system is of course a significant innovation, the

## the characters

### Jack Walters

Jack left the Police in 1919 and started a successful Private Investigations company. Strong and determined, Jack has made a good physical recovery following the events that took place in that derelict Massachusetts house, but he is still haunted by nightmares and strange visions which seem to draw him to Innsmouth.

### Brian Burnham

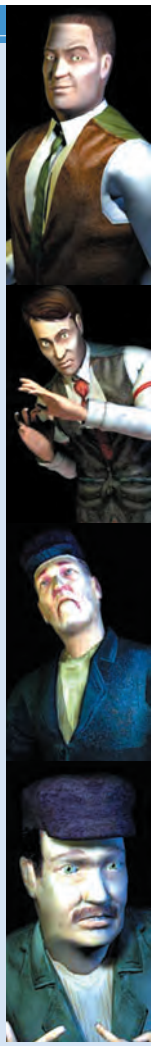
It is Brian's disappearance that initially brings Jack to Innsmouth as he attempts to locate and rescue him from wherever he is being held. A bit of a tearaway, Brian was forced to shape up by his parents and Minister, and was changing for the better before his sudden disappearance.

### Zadok Allen

Old Zadok has lived in Innsmouth for all of his 96 years and he knows exactly what is happening to the town. Unfortunately, his love of the bottle has clouded his memory somewhat, but he can still give Jack a load of helpful information about the powerful Marsh family and their connections with the Deep Ones.

### Thomas Waite

Mr Waite is a pure human who runs the town's hardware store. He was forced to take a hybrid wife, and they produced a daughter who is yet to show signs of the taint. His wife, driven insane by her transformation into Deep One, is locked away in the attic of his house to prevent her from doing harm to their daughter.



player has no information reflecting their current sanity levels apart from the insanity effects that roll in with varying intensity as the player becomes more and more insane. We have added flocking AI systems and leaves blowing through streets, settling in piles to bring the scenery to life. We also have a fantastic rain system to add a little atmosphere to certain levels. In terms of utilising hardware, the original concept for Cthulhu was to make the game available to everyone without the need for the best graphics card on the market. We have tried to innovate without discriminating against the people with less able hardware. However, as features such as bump mapping and pixel shading are becoming more common, we have started to include support for these."

Put on the spot and asked about his favourite place in the game Mike spoke of the refinery, in which the player encounters the Shogoth. This has a real sense of despair for the player, as Jack must flee for his life through the eerie corridors and machinery of the dilapidated 1920s building.

With so many incidents and confrontations on offer, along with rich characters and dialogue, Headfirst is looking to make their entry with this title mid 2003 and with the team already working on a sequel the future looks very buoyant for this UK development team.



## hannibal

**Hannibal Lecter is back... but this time in a PC shooter/investigative title full of intrigue. French developer Arxel Tribe has the enviable task of designing this game based around the essence of the film - but can they achieve the same excitement and nail biting tension that gripped movie-goers? Derek dela Fuente spoke with various members of the team to find out more.**

Hannibal the game is, of course, an official license. Such a product could not have been developed without the consent of Universal, the title owner company. "The plot widely depicts the events relayed in Scott's movie. But a movie's got rules, which are far different from a video game. We've consequently had to create a huge adaptation from the movie. As far as I can assess, the result is both faithful to the original plot but out of line enough to be appreciated as brand new."

The player takes on the role of Special Agent Clarice Starling in this first person shooter, which has you hunting down the world's most brutal serial killer. It is action-packed with ideas which bring gamers into a world of ritual murders, sinister plots and constant anguish.

French developers are known for conveying, or trying to bring, emotions into a game and this is no exception, but this time the story does help with their designs. On offer is the 'anxiety' ratio which lets you feel Clarice's fear and stress. The realistic 'gun draw' system also has a direct impact on your opponent's behaviour and the advanced A.I. and group behaviour brings a scary realism to the chase. Using their 3D Jupiter engine, Hannibal puts you right on the trail of a ruthless, cold-blooded killer.

During the game, the player will have to deal with Clarice's 'anxiety' by closely watching an anxiety meter. Her anxiety will increase according to several factors: her level of injury, reprimands from her hierarchy in the case of police blunders or by actions that get her closer to Hannibal's philosophy, to name only a few examples. The anxiety system causes changes to the general environment. Conversely, the player will 'feel' what Clarice feels under anxiety - distance distortions in real time like vertigo, faces of non-player characters will seem more aggressive, the music will turn frightening and a few other features will throw the player deeper and deeper into the paranoia. Of course, the higher the level of anxiety the stronger the consequences will be and the more the player will be on the verge of blundering.

Thankfully any gamers not au fait with Hannibal have no need to have been introduced to 'Lecter's world' in any way to play the game. Even if you've never been told about Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter, the plot and game design are made in such a manner you can fully enjoy the story and action. It was very important for the development team that the game should be an autonomous product. "In spite of this, many references and allusions spread throughout the



game are specially designed for Thomas Harris' fans and could be appreciated only by those who have previously watched the movies and/or read the books depicting Lecter's saga."

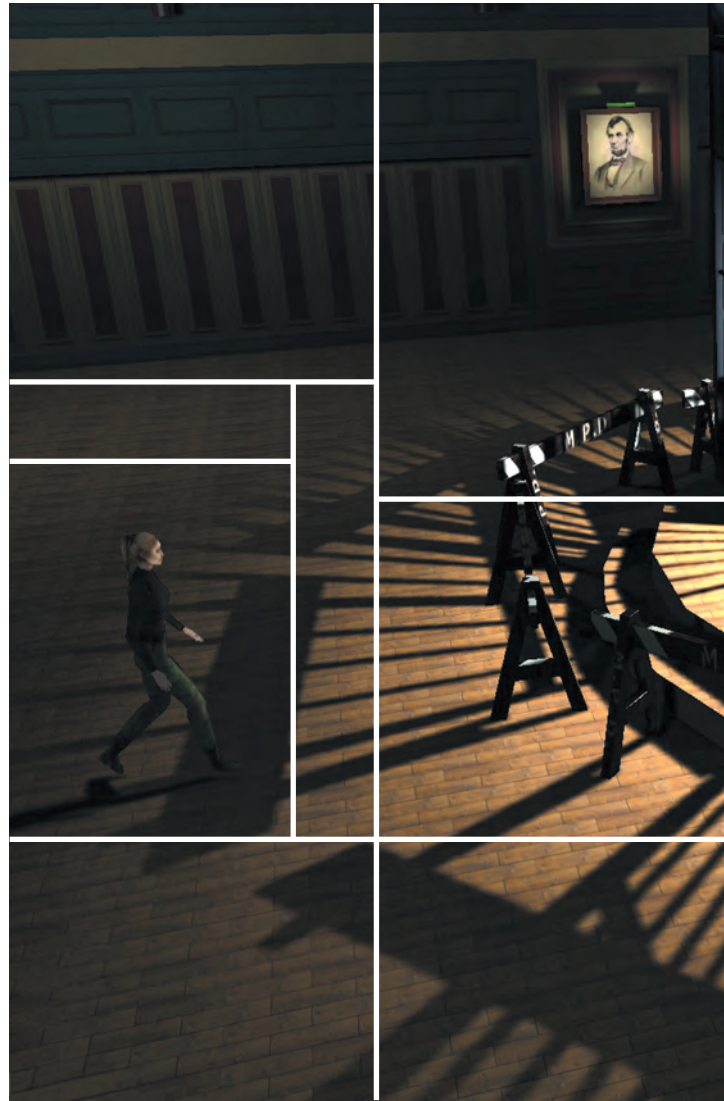
I let a member of the team explain the scenario and setting for the game.

"Well! Here you touch the heart of the problem, one could say! To roughly sum up (we have a script of about four hundred pages!), the playable character is Clarice Starling, a special FBI agent mainly characterised by her devotion to justice and independence of mind. The tense relationships she gets into with her hierarchy definitely turn amiss when she takes charge of investigating crimes possibly perpetrated by a serial killer at large: the well known cannibal psychoanalyst, Hannibal Lecter. Several sub plots then mix up to drag Clarice precisely where she always refused to go - straight to the hidden part of her own spirit! As you can guess, the main plot (tracking down Hannibal Lecter) is but an excuse. Due to his exceptional cleverness and elaborated personal philosophy, we are inclined to consider Lecter more as a potential mentor for Clarice than as a mere criminal. That's where the real challenge of the game could be - 'will you be strong enough to resist the terribly appealing seduction of a monster?'"

The game slightly differs from the book regarding the locations. In the novel and screenplay, Clarice stays in the US and investigates via Internet and the VICAP network (an international police reserved web site) while a very important part of the story takes place in Florence, where Lecter lives under a false identity. The team decided to alter some minor elements of Harris's plot to allow Clarice to investigate in the streets of one of the most impressive and magnificent cities in the world. "We absolutely wanted to make the most of the mysterious Florentine ambiance (the game occurs in winter and Florence is at the time foggy and still luminous). That is why the second half of the game occurs in Italy. Once Clarice comes to Florence, she does not return to the U.S." Almost throughout the entire game,

your contact is Jack Crawford, the director of the FBI Behavioural Science Department. Crawford has known Clarice for a long time and appreciates her Righteousness and honesty. He is himself a kind of desperate knight - willing in certain ways to give up the fight for justice, for the next generation of FBI men are interested only in power. Crawford is nevertheless the main moral reference in Clarice's life... until another 'candidate' suddenly appears...

This game, being a shooter, will give the player access to a diversified arsenal but the team decided to restrain the choice of weapons. About 10 different guns and sub machine guns will be available. With this license



developer: arxel tribe  
publisher: strategy first  
distributor: tba  
release date: autumn 2003  
genre: fps adventure  
internet: www.arxeltribe.com



and character, it would have been irrelevant to directly focus on the weaponry. "Weapons are tools in the hands of Clarice. They do not fascinate her. She only uses them!"

Since you embody a FBI agent with morality you're not supposed to kill anyone unless you're directly and lethally threatened. If you forget this simple rule, you pay the consequence: your stress increases, you shake and shame alters your perception of reality... In other terms, the more you kill people, the more vulnerable you become! Of course, some elements (specific medical items or actions) can help you to regain control, but acting tough is extremely dangerous in this

game. In fact it could be possible to finish the game without killing more than about five foes.

Hannibal the game offers a cross over in a number of game genres but primarily it's all about action. With a 3D engine created for the game and plenty of innovative ideas, this should meet the mark with a large fan base of gamers.



▲ Bobby-Joe liked proving his self worth by beating up homeless people



▼ Taking a hostage is a bit pointless when there is no one to bargain with...







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**NAG Editors Choice**  
 This game or product is the pick of the bunch for the month as it has that special something which makes it stand out from the rest.



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 Games which score over 90% are given this award. The ultimate achievement for a game. It represents an automatic purchase if you enjoy the type of game on offer.



**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.

**Super Mario Sunshine [GCN]**

"Sunshine is a stunner from the word go, and to date the most graphically impressive game I've seen on the GameCube."

James Francis

**92%**



**Mario Party 4 [GCN]**

"Get three of your friends, get drunk, load up Mario Party 4 and you'll have to anticipate a few fistfights."

James Francis

**90%**



**NAG Review Rigs supplied by:**

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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



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# a different kind of animal...



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# sim city 4

Cities are, essentially, carefully balanced urban ecosystems, where industry, business and residential concerns mix in careful symbiosis, balanced and effectively working together for the greater good of all involved. At least, that is the ideal situation. But building a city, making sure that everything runs smoothly and carrying it forward into a prosperous and rewarding future is not quite as simple as it may sound - in fact, it is a path fraught with challenges that could foil even the greatest urban strategist...

I fondly recall the first time I played Sim City. The brilliance of the title lay in its management potential, even way back then, and it thrilled me to watch my city grow from the ground up, becoming a hive of activity. In my god-like top down perspective I shaped the lives of thousands of imaginary people, creating a symbiotic virtual anthill in which everything had its place, where everyone had their function. From small beginnings I watched it grow bigger and bigger, until finally it hummed along like a carefully tuned machine. Yes,

▼ Grabbing a few donkeys and rats from your local farmyard and filling them all under the heading zoo seems to keep the locals happy



▼ Turn your city into a set from a Tommy Lee Jones movie with the click of a mouse button...



those were the days...

Since the first incarnation of Maxis' Sim City, a lot has changed - both in the game and in the real world. The real world influence was, obviously, the increase in technology, which allowed additional titles in the Sim City range to become flashier, more complex and much more engrossing. But, within the company responsible for this game, things changed too. More ambitious goals were set and, one day, someone came up with the sleeper hit that still averages amazing sales - The Sims. Based on the Sim City premise, The Sims allowed the player to control the lives of virtual people living within the Simnation. The game performed better than anyone could have guessed, becoming one of the best selling PC titles of all time. Expansion upon expansion followed, and the world of The Sims kept growing bigger and bigger. Sim City, however (the game that started it all) seemed to all but disappear. With fans disillusioned by Sim City 3000, the title seemed to hit an all time low and, for a while, seemed to disappear entirely.

And then, like a bolt out of the blue, Sim City 4 arrived.

I would like to state, at this point, something that may not be incredibly obvious to the reader. Reviewing sequels can be very tough. See, when you get a new game, you can go on about this feature and that, and expound the virtues of a title never seen before.

However, when you have a series of titles and the latest one arrives in your in-tray as a review title, the whole thing changes a bit, because now you cannot really talk about the "newness" of the title, or the originality of the concept. Now you can only talk about what has changed, and filling the pages with good content becomes considerably more difficult. There is an exception to this general principle however. This happens when a game has changed so much that, despite being a concept we have seen before, we might as well be looking at a

developer: maxis  
 publisher: electronic arts  
 distributor: ea africa (011) 516 8300  
 price: R 239.95  
 genre: city management  
 internet: www.eagames.com

## the last resort

One of the best loved activities undertaken by slightly sadistic city builders would have to be the incitement of disasters. Sim City 4 has a lot to offer the crueller mayors out there, with a myriad of disasters including lightning, volcanoes, tornadoes, meteors and giant robot attacks.



new title. Sim City 4 falls somewhere between the two cases, as I shall explain.

The basic concept of the title is totally unchanged. Establish a city, watch it expand while you manage it, and try everything in your power not to go bankrupt. In fact, the way you play the game is little changed too.





Construct roads, demarcate zones for development, supply utilities like power and water, and generally try to keep the populace happy and paying taxes. What has changed, however, and what makes the game rather "new", is the overall approach to the title, both in overall playing style and in its creation. It is not enough to make a player go "wow, this is so different," but it certainly is there for all to see, and helps inject a good dose of originality into a title that was, quite honestly, lagging behind.

The biggest difference - as well as the most noticeable - is the introduction of a sort of "global approach." See,

in the past, the player could build a city in a certain area, and would be able to trade with neighbouring cities controlled by the computer AI. Now, however, things have achieved a much grander scale. Instead of being supplied with a little bit of land, the player is now given a truckload of space. This is not for one city, however, but rather for several - all of which can be built by the player, and controlled accordingly. This "region" concept opens up a whole lot of opportunity for the player, in terms of city function and trading possibilities, simply because the player can now directly control the flow of trade within the entire

region. In other words, a whole new level of macro-management has been added to the game, allowing the player to build a much more powerful and engrossing "empire" of cities, rather than just managing one. Sure, you can only really deal with one city at a time, but the game does allow the player to broaden his approach. The concern is no longer a single city's success, but the success of a large number of cities within a region. These regions (sort of like neighbourhoods in The Sims) can either be created by the player from scratch, using the game's rather fun and very impressive geographic modelling tools, or be selected from a very limited number of pre-generated regions, shipping with the game.

Beyond this concept, there is little new within the game. The micro-management of each city is still incredibly complicated, the Sims still complain, and there is still never enough money to do what you want when you want it. Yet there are some original bits within the nitty gritty of running the city that



▼ Sim City 4 - living and dead



## sim city evolution

The title series has been around for more than a decade and has, from the word go, been extremely popular amongst management fans. We could wax lyrical about the way that the game has grown and changed over the years, but quite frankly, the best way to see how the game itself has changed is visually. So here, in this series of screen shots, we track the evolution of Sim City, from the original top down version through to the 3D high detail isometric game we experience today.



▲ Sim City - 1989



▲ Sim City 2000 - 1993



▲ Sim City 3000 - 1999





are new. The first one is the influence of the Sims title range on the game. Players can now see Sims walking around, and can see items from The Sims range in the game. Additionally, Sims characters can be imported into the game, given new places to live, and can be observed. That's it, though - any interaction with the Sims is halted right there, turning My Sims mode (as it is called) into little but a more complicated information gathering service. Your Sims will tell you all about their lives but, other than macrocosmically, there is little you can do to affect them. You might be able to improve traffic in an area, or help improve safety, but you can't tell your Sim to move or find a better job. This portion

of the game is a little over-hyped, and fails to deliver much satisfaction. It is window dressing that does very little to enhance the title and is, in that, rather disappointing.

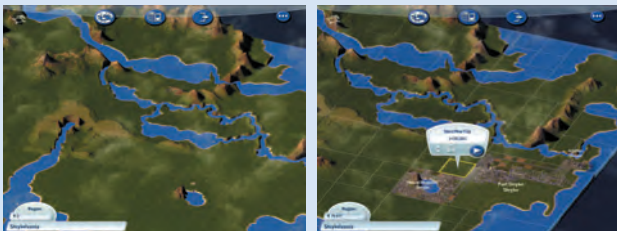
One aspect that is really great has been built into the basic functions of the title. Possibly the most annoying aspect of previous Sim City titles was the construction of roads. You had to count out grid squares and try to space your roads as accurately as possible, so that your land would be effectively used. Now, though, when you designate zones (whether industrial, commercial or residential) the game inserts roads at appropriate intervals automatically, leaving only major roads for the

player to build. This saves a hell of a lot of time and aggravation.

Utilities are also simpler. Electricity is channelled by roads in this version, meaning that the player only has to connect powerlines to the first major road to get juice flowing to the whole city. Water is also simpler to distribute. Although you still have to lay out the city's major plumbing, water pipes now influence a larger area, meaning that less pipes need to be laid. This, too,

### the growth of a region

Here we see the beautiful region called Shrykelvania, resplendent with proud mountains, beautiful forests, plentiful water and, above all, abundant, unused space. From this small beginning, cities begin growing as the needs of the population demand, turning the area into a powerful human endeavour.



In Sim City 4, the regional map allows the player to create his own geography and populate it with a large number of cities all under his control. These cities exist in a careful balance, buying and selling goods and services from each other to help create a perfect society in which the Sims of the Simnation can exist.

### adding personality

The Sims seems to have had quite an influence on the title that spawned it. In fact, The Sims and signs of their presence can be felt everywhere in Sim City 4. They can be seen walking on the streets, going about their daily lives and performing other activities one would expect from city dwellers. Additionally, furniture and the like from the Sims series can be seen in the gardens of Sim City dwellers. This tie in has resulted in a novel feature within the game. Called My Sims mode, the game allows the player to introduce Sims characters saved on their hard drives into their city. These Sims can be observed from a distance as they report the condition of their daily lives. Although not as interactive as it could be, My Sims mode certainly does add personality (and individuality) to any faceless city scape.

### a chat with maxis

#### Has the hugely successful Sims series had any influence on SimCity 4?

It absolutely has. There are lessons we have learned in developing the Sims that were very applicable to what we were doing in SimCity 4. The most obvious example of that is the user interface, which shows strong influences from The Sims. In addition, there are areas where we tried to personalize the game in the way that The Sims has been very successful. The MySim feature is the best example of that. All of the additional character animations that we added speak to that as well.

#### Is the SimCity team the same as The Sims team, or are certain key people moved around from project to project?

Because we are a relatively small studio, we commonly have team members frequently switching teams. There are a number of people on the SimCity team that have spent some time either working on the core product for The Sims or on one of the expansion packs.

#### What prompted the decision to change the format of the game from a single city basis to a regional, multiple city game?

There were a lot of things that influenced the decision to include region play. In SimCity 3000 you could create neighbour deals with fictional neighboring cities. That naturally led to players wondering what those cities looked like. Region play allows you to not only look at those previously mysterious cities, but also define them. We were also very intrigued with the notion of customizing cities in ways that you simply could not do in previous versions. It was a desire of ours to let people develop a bedroom community or an industrial wasteland. Region play delivers on that goal.

#### The use of Sims characters within SimCity 4 (MySims mode) - is this a precursor to the long awaited SimsVille? What is the status of SimsVille at the moment?

There are currently no plans to release SimsVille, but there are many design lessons that we learned from having worked on it. Some of those lessons are reflected in the design for MySim, but the impetus for the MySim feature came more from The Sims than SimsVille.

#### Is Sim City 4 the pinnacle of the series, or can we expect another SimCity title in future?

We have thousands of ideas for how we'd like to improve SimCity. Although we have not officially announced anything, rest assured that you have not seen the last of the SimCity franchise.

#### Are there any plans for an online SimCity title?

There are no plans that we have announced.

#### What would, in the view of the Maxis Team, the ultimate Sim reality be?

I think every member of the team would have a different answer to that question. For my money, I'm excited at the notion of making SimCity so immersive that the player will be able to feel what it's like to live in the city that they have created. I

want to be able to wander the streets and go into the stores that have developed in my city. And I want to continue to have more flexibility in the kinds of cities I can create.

#### From a technology point of view what, in your opinion, is the most significant advancement made in this game?

From a technology point of view I would have to say it is in our 3D engine. There is an amazing amount of detail that is pushed around by this engine - it does things I've never seen any other game do. Without it we would not be able to edit terrain the way we can in order to have houses developed on slopes, cars drive over hills and bridges, see fireworks and tornados, and view thousands of buildings and hundreds of thousands of objects displayed in the world simultaneously.

#### Are there any plans for an expansion or expansions like your other popular franchise?

We haven't made any announcements.

#### Do you think we'll ever see the day when it would be possible to take your virtual character into a city from his house and explore it building and perhaps having a bite to eat at a fast food restaurant owned and run by another player sitting on the other side of the world?

I'm convinced of it. I have no idea when that will be, but it will happen.

#### What is your biggest regret about SimCity 4 [in the development phase]?

I have no major regrets. There are things we could have done better, but we'll fix them.

#### What was your most significant achievement during the development phase of the game?

The thing that most sticks out in my mind was the first time that I could link cities together and play the region game. I thought it would be pretty cool. I had no idea it would be as much fun as it turned out to be.

#### What sort of real world research was undertaken during the making of SimCity 4?

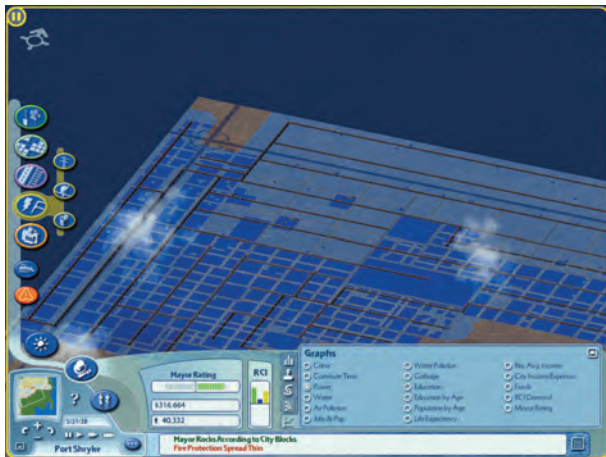
Well, our lead designer (Joseph Knight) has a degree in architecture and urban planning from MIT, so you could say that all of the research he did in earning that degree applies to the development of SimCity. We have a library of books on urban planning that we constantly refer to. And sometimes it's useful to go on field trips or simple walks around other cities to get inspiration.

#### Where does the name Maxis come from?

Will would know the real answer to this, but I had heard that it came during a very early morning meeting they had when they were deciding on the name. The time was 6am (Maxis is six am backwards). I had also heard that the half-moon logo came from a stain on the meeting room table from a coffee mug. PB says this is true.








saves a lot of aggravation. Playing the game has certainly not become any simpler. In fact, the micro-management of this title is very complex, making it possibly the most challenging Sim City title ever. And, in this case, you can read "challenging" as frustrating. Making a city work is almost impossible, although the direct control that the player has over neighbour cities and the trade between cities does help. It is a very finicky balancing act of taxation, funding and growth that the player has to perform in this title. Additionally there are no difficulty settings within the game.

Every city starts at a certain financial level, with no option to change. However, the areas designated for cities within the region vary in size. It is easier to run a smaller city more successfully than a larger one, so there is a sort of option for challenge rating. The overall presentation of the package is much improved, with new 3D graphics that allow for an amazing range of zooming, as well as tons of in-game animations (like buildings being constructed, Sims walking the streets and so on) and a greater variety of buildings. The sound is also improved, as well as the overall interface (which has been simplified in some respects

and complicated in others). Sim City 4 is a good title, but it does rely a lot on flash initially. While the player may be blown away by the game at first, it does soon become apparent that it is not the perfect title it pretends to be. The game does have a number of problems (although not really in the field of performance) that players may find annoying. Still, it is highly addictive and great fun to play. Fans will appreciate the new aspects of the game, while those new to the series will be thrilled by the challenges it offers.

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**REVIEWED BY**  
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 500 MHz	Pentium 4 1 GHz
128 MB RAM	256 MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	16 x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Accelerator	32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
1 GB HDD	1 GB HDD
<b>PLUS</b>	<b>MINUS</b>
Nice graphics	Very tough
Region system	Poor Sims mode
In-game improvements	Frustrating

**AT A GLANCE**

A nice next step in the Sim City series, Sim City 4 takes the player back to the world of city creations. Although it does have a bunch of nice new features, Sim City 4 is not quite as brilliant as first implied. However, it is a complex, challenging and enjoyable game none the less, and will provide the player with hours of city building and management.

**score 78**





# scrabble 2003 edition

**developer:** ubi soft  
**publisher:** ubi soft  
**distributor:** megarom [011] 805 7303  
**price:** R249.00  
**genre:** word game  
**internet:** www.ubi.com/

**Not all games are about blazing guns and brilliant military strategies. Not all games are about managing a multi-million rand corporation, or running a successful city. Some games are about flexing the muscle between your ears, and they can be as challenging, rewarding and stimulating as any other...**

For a very long time, the board game Scrabble has been a popular and enjoyable word based game. A game board, a number of lettered tiles and a quick mind are all that is required for this game - and now you don't even need the board or the tiles. Just your PC...

Scrabble as a computer game may seem like something you buy your parents but, while this certainly would not be a bad idea, it will prove stimulating and fun for anyone who has an interest in quick witted word based puzzling. Ah, I hear the collective groans of a bunch of school-going gamers who have no interest in any stimulation beyond a blazing mini-gun and flying giblets, but this certainly is a game that deserves a try. You will learn something - which is never a bad thing.

This is not the first incarnation of computer based scrabble from Ubi Soft. In fact, a previous version of the game proved fairly popular - until everyone playing it found out that it was a miserable cheat of a title.

Even the tamest of computer based opponents was able to whip the best of word game players as the title tended to give the player nasty letters to work with. This has, thankfully, been changed in the Scrabble 2003 Edition, with the game being far more reasonable in terms of playing ability. For those of you who don't know, Scrabble is played on a "checkered" style board, on which letters are placed to form words in a crossword style arrangement. The bigger the words (and the rarer the letters) the more score the player generates. These scores are also modified by different squares on the game board, like triple word scores or double letter scores. But the computer version of this popular game takes things a little further. Featuring several game modes like Scrabble and Conundrum, as well as a great LAN multiplayer mode (and multiplayer on the same PC, of course) the game has a different kind of word based challenge for any taste. Also, it modifies the game of Scrabble itself by introducing a variable board size to the game. Reading the letters section of this magazine, one would think that gamers would flock to this kind of

challenge - they all claim to be so intelligent, after all. But you probably will not find too many people rushing out to buy this title. This is a rather sad thing, because Scrabble 2003 really is a great challenge for the mind, rather than the reactions and co-ordination.

This game does not include brilliant graphics (although they are crisp and clear and have variable view angles) or compelling game dynamics - and it certainly contains no explosions or flying lead. But it is a brilliant challenge bound to provide hours of fun for anyone who loves the English language (or whichever version language they desire to use within the game.)

No, I have not gone soft in the head. Quite the opposite, in fact. Not every challenge is about a fast trigger finger, and Scrabble 2003, with it's variable difficulty level and variety of word based games, goes a long way to prove that. Go ahead, give it a try - unless you are afraid of finding out how poor your vocabulary actually is!



▲ I'm telling you, AAAAEGIORRSM is a word!



computer version of this popular game takes things a little further. Featuring several game modes like Scrabble and Conundrum, as well as a great LAN multiplayer mode (and multiplayer on the same PC, of course) the game has a different kind of word based challenge for any taste. Also, it modifies the game of Scrabble itself by introducing a variable board size to the game. Reading the letters section of this magazine, one would think that gamers would flock to this kind of



▲ Isn't BEGORTI an Italian pasta dish? I'm sure it might be...

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REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium II 400 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
350 MB HDD	350 MB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Good challenge	No big explosions
Low specifications	May prove how dumb you really are
Doesn't cheat	
AT A GLANCE	
Scrabble has always been a popular board game, and the computer version will probably prove popular with old and young alike. Although you won't get to shoot anything in this title, you will get to test your word power - a very underrated skill these days. A variety of word games are provided to challenge even the most capable word smith.	
<b>score 68</b>	





WIN



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We've got 3 copies each of these two games to give away courtesy of MegaRom

WIN



Give us the name of the lead character in Splinter Cell

Entries to reach us by the end of March 2003  
Send your answers and personal information to:  
COMP@NAG.CO.ZA: Subject: Splinter or TOCA  
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



# project nomads

In a dark future where humans have taken to the skies for their survival, few dare to oppose the power of the dreaded Sentinels and their mighty fleet of war planes. But desperate times call for desperate measures, and in this world of futuristic myth and technological magic, it is up to you to bring justice to those who deserve it - whatever form that justice may take.


CDV's Project Nomads is a game that you're either going to love, or you're going to hate. There doesn't seem to be much middle ground on that matter. Perhaps, though, when you review games for a living like me, you are capable of finding a middle ground in even the most unlikely circumstances. I have managed to find that middle ground for this title and, I must say, that it has left me rather indifferent. This title can be summed up, quite simply, as a game that has a great concept behind it, but is somewhat

lacking in the final mix. In the game, humanity inhabits strange floating "islands." These islands are converted by some (basically ne'er-do-wells known as nomads) into giant flying fortresses, which they use in the fight against the evil overlords known as the Sentinels. The game is part third person adventure and part third person combat, as the player has to rush around, gathering bits to improve their flying fortress, as well as battle off the agents of the Sentinels. This leads to one of the features about the game that you will either enjoy, or you will absolutely hate. A flying fortress is a one man (or woman) show. If you want that gun over there to fire, then you have to get behind the controls of that specific gun and blast away. If you want the whole island to move, you have to activate the navigational beacons from the control tower yourself. Basically, this can be great, interactive fun - juggling all these tasks while you try to stay alive - or it can be a colossal pain in the posterior. It depends on what blows your skirt up in terms of gaming. However, the layout of the various items on the island is up to you, and buildings can be moved around - so you can plan some strategy before all hell breaks loose, which it generally does. The planes that you will eventually be able to build also require you, as the player, to control them. Basically, it's a massive balancing act, with questionable enjoyment value. You may choose one of three characters to complete the single player campaign, or you may enter into a rather fun multiplayer game... in

developer: radon labs  
 publisher: cdv  
 distributor: wwe [011] 462 0150  
 price: R 299  
 genre: action adventure  
 internet: www.project-nomads.com

which you know that, at least, your opponent has his hands as full as you do! Graphically this game isn't bad, but I have seen better. The sound, too, is not stunning, but I have heard a whole lot worse. The really poor part of this title lies in the controls. Moving your character is a finicky business, and the lack of strafing ability makes for tough times when battling on foot. I have played worse games, and I have played better. In my humble opinion, Project Nomads is rather average. There may be improvements if we ever see a sequel, but for now the title is nothing more than a little tepid.

**also on Xbox**

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**REVIEWED BY**  
 Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 450 MHz	Pentium III 1 GHz
64 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
32 MB D3D Video Accelerator	64 MB D3D Video Accelerator
850 MB HDD	850 MB HDD

PLUS	MINUS
Great concept	Average
Challenging	Dodgy controls

**AT A GLANCE**

What might have been a great game has become a mediocre balancing act in which the player has their hands so full there is no time left to enjoy the game!

This futuristic third person adventure and shooter may thrill some, but others will be left cold. It is fun, but it is not a game that should not be missed.

**score 60**



▲ The best way to deal with giant bugs is, obviously, the most explosive option available

▶ This little Dragonfly plane may look wimpy, but it deals out brilliant damage





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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



# star trek: starfleet command III

**developer:** taldren  
**publisher:** activision  
**distributor:** tba  
**price:** \$ 44.99 [±R 374.00][excluding shipping]  
**genre:** starship simulator  
**internet:** www.st-sfc3.com

Activision continue a franchise that allows players to immerse themselves in the Star Trek universe at the controls of huge and lethal starships...

Starfleet Command introduced a new brand of computer gaming, particularly for Star Trek fans. The game allowed the player to assume the captain's chair in a Star Trek starship and rather than direct the course of flight and combat in flight simulator style, it required the player to issue orders to various crew members responsible for various facets of the ship's functions and well-being. The second incarnation of the game extended functionality somewhat and greatly enhanced the graphics, and enhanced the role of ship's officers. This third iteration is, sadly, exactly that - a repetition not only of the theme, but also of the basic game dynamic.

Needless to say, the technical aspects of the game have been enhanced. Unfortunately, however, it seems this is pretty much as far as the initiative went - better graphics and more spectacular special effects, but the overall game dynamic is unchanged. This is both a good thing and a bad thing. Granted, it makes for

continuity and familiarity for veterans of the game. On the other hand, it doesn't offer much that is new, barring the new story line. This, of course, was crucial to the game's chances of survival!

For those of you not familiar with this title, the above criticism is of no real concern, as the game is a pleasure to play. As a commander in one of the major star empires of the Star Trek: The Next Generation universe, it is your duty to answer various calls and undertake numerous missions to further your race's agendas. To do this, you are provided with a starship and a crew. Both of these elements can be upgraded, in some game modes, by the expenditure of prestige points, which are earned in successful engagements. Each officer is charged with a specific station, so you have a weapons officer, a science officer, navigation, helm and so forth. Officers have differing levels of experience, and have physical attributes such as health, so they can be injured in combat - this is a serious situation, as a virtually untrained rookie will fill in during the interim.

In order to wage successful space war, it is necessary to be fully familiar with the ship's capabilities. Weapons are mounted on various hardpoints, each with an associated arc of fire, unless it's a rotary weapon.

The ship is equipped with shuttles for harassment tactics and the deployment of marines in boarding operations, a standard mine-layer and a tractor beam. Various other equipment options depend largely on what race you are currently playing - the Federation, the Klingons or the Romulans. In multiplayer, it is also possible to play as the Borg.

The only major new feature in Starfleet Command III is

Dynaverse 3. This is a massively multiplayer online system that runs the abovementioned four star empires on a continuous basis. Players join one of the four factions and their successes and failures influence the course of the overall, long-term campaign. Dynaverse 3 sees large-scale engagements taking place with numerous starships on each side, each captained by a human player. This feature may be the one that makes Starfleet Command III worthwhile for anyone who hasn't already invested in one of its predecessors.



▲ What's a Star Trek title if you can't take on the Borg?



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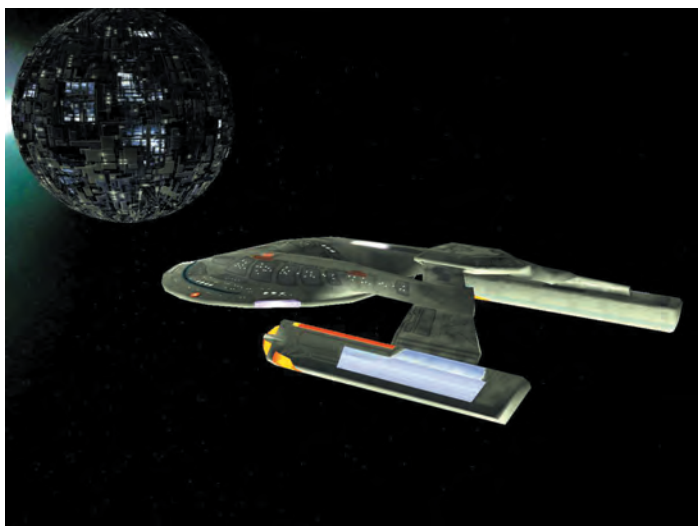
all games reviewed on rectron machines

REVIEWED BY	
Alex "R.A.V.E.N." Jelagin	
MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 450 MHz	Pentium 4 1 GHz
128 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
4 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
16 MB D3D Video Card	32 MB D3D Video Card
650 MB HDD	650 MB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Excellent graphics	Unoriginal

**AT A GLANCE**

Although this game moves an existing game franchise forward in terms of technology, it does little to further it in terms of innovation or new ideas. Essentially, if you like either of its predecessors and absolutely need to play the same game with better graphics, or if you enjoyed the precursors but don't have them, feel free to get this one. Otherwise, stay well clear.

**score 70**



▲ Hang on a bit... I thought this was supposed to be in Star Wars?





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# tiger woods pga tour 2003

The past five years have seen the PC golf genre experience a power struggle between the upstart Tiger Woods brand of Electronic Arts and the venerable Microsoft Links franchise. It seems that Tiger Woods is giving gamers something that Links cannot

emulate yet, namely attitude.

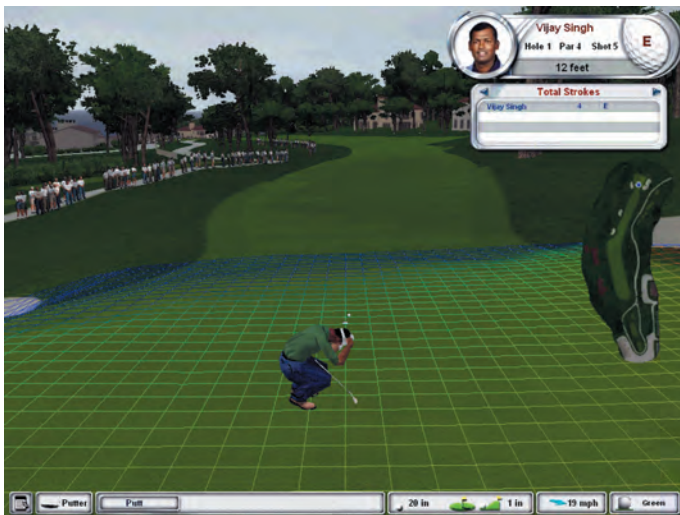
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003 arrived on our shores in November last year, coinciding with the release of Links 2003 (any coincidence?). Included in this latest offering are the 2003 Course Utilities and the 2003 Course Architect. However, before you can play the game you need to get it

developer: headgate studios  
 publisher: electronic arts  
 distributor: ea africa (011) 516 8300  
 price: R299.00  
 genre: sport simulator  
 internet: www.easports.com

range of playing conditions and styles and are all meticulously recreated. Included as part of its 18 modes of play, Tiger Woods features a Skill Zone practice course that fulfils the same purpose as our local Vodacom World of Golf. The 2003 Course Utilities allows for the deletion of any of the installed courses, resetting course statistics and importing PGA Championship Golf 2000 and Tiger Woods 2001 courses. Unfortunately, you will have to download new library files to be able to convert Tiger



▲ Leonard attempting to bounce the ball off of Monty's head



▲ I wish I didn't have that burrito for lunch



Woods 2002 courses. This is annoying since EA could have included these files with the game (perhaps they need the traffic to their web site?). Arguably the best feature added to golf titles recently is that of course design. After all, why should Counter-Strike and Unreal players have all the fun in designing mods? The 2003 Course Architect includes a

installed first. I battled for several hours trying to run through the installation without getting any read/write errors from the CDs. Seeing that Tiger Woods ships on three CDs it does make for a lengthy exercise in patience. It's therefore a tribute to the quality of the game that my frustrations disappeared almost as soon as I started playing. One of the several new features of Tiger Woods is a career mode that allows the player to create his/her own golfer and take him/her from amateur to master status by competing in tournaments to earn money. This prize money can be used to give the player new shot types and upgrade the golfer's skills in several areas that range from driving accuracy to putting. Of course no golf game would be complete without a good selection of courses and Tiger Woods is no different. The number of courses has doubled to twelve from previous versions. These courses include favourites such as TPC at Sawgrass and Bay Hill Club & Lodge. It also features a newcomer to the franchise in St. Andrews. The courses offer the player a

career mode that I believe is one of the best available. However, should you wish to adopt a more creative approach in designing your course, you can disable the wizard and let your imagination run free. Consider yourself warned though since this is not for the faint-hearted and the amount of options can be intimidating for the new, aspiring course architect. While niggling technical and graphic issues see Tiger Woods missing out on classic status, it does reflect the work EA is putting in towards knocking Links off its high perch in the market. The career mode and skills competitions against PGA Tour professionals offer the gamer something more than just playing conventional golf and should see it satisfy serious golfers and weekend hacks alike.

also on PS2 | GC

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REVIEWED BY  
Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium II 333 MHz	Pentium III 700 MHz
64 MB RAM	128 MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
4 MB Video Card	32 MB T&L Video Accelerator
820 MB HDD	1 GB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
Endorsed by PGA Tour	Installation issues
Career mode	Graphic problems
Fun game modes	Slow loading times
AT A GLANCE	
While it's not flawless, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003 offers gamers enough new features to warrant buying yet another golf title.	

score 75



# elder scrolls 3: tribunal

**developer:** bethesda softworks  
**publisher:** ubisoft  
**distributor:** megarom (011) 805 7303  
**price:** R 229.00  
**genre:** rpg adventure  
**internet:** www.elderscrolls.com

**Morrowind: Tribunal, an expansion to the game Morrowind has been on the shelves since December. The expansion increases the size of the Morrowind world and adds a plethora of new weapons, spells and armour. Of course there are also a couple of user interface and play dynamic improvements included as well, the most important to my mind being the new journal system, which I think every fan of the game will be thrilled about.**

Unlike most expansions Morrowind: Tribunal is an "in-line" expansion, meaning that you don't have to finish the original to partake in the quests of the expansion. It is however advisable that your character is level 45 or higher before you try your hand at the new areas added in Tribunal. I tried to take my level 32 character to explore the expansion areas and got thoroughly trounced. So unless you have a character that is roughly level 45 I wouldn't suggest getting the expansion just yet - first get your character to the right level (which should take 100+ hours of play) and then get the expansion. This way you can truly enjoy what the expansion has to offer.

The main feature of Tribunal is that it expands the already humongous world of Morrowind by adding the

ancient capital city of Mournhold with roughly 30 hours of extra play with all the new quests, depending on your level. Higher level characters will find that they can easily cruise through the quests in less than 20 hours.

The city of Mournhold is majestic in size and includes a lot of underground areas such as sewers and dungeons to be explored as well. The goddess Almalexia and god Sotha Sil make an appearance in the expansion as they try and regain lost power and threaten the very existence of Morrowind with their plots and schemes. You also find yourself investigating the death of the former King while in Mournhold, and for some reason the King's assassin seems to have taken an interest in your early departure from the realm of the living. During your adventures you will also be able to explore the

mysterious Clockwork City of Sotha Sil, something which I enjoyed a bit more than the city of Mournhold. These are just a few of the highlights of some of the quests that you will encounter while exploring the city of Mournhold and I don't want to spoil your fun by giving away too much. Of course Tribunal does bring a lot more than just some new scenery and quests to the fray and includes an updated Journal system, with the ability to sort quests more easily, as well as the ability to hire Mercenaries and Pack Animals. While I did like the new quest sorting mechanism I have to say that the AI or path finding of

## the next expansion

Fans of the game will be interested to know that there is yet another expansion on the horizon for this popular game which will add an extra land with new creatures as well as an interesting storyline involving werewolves. Morrowind: Bloodmoon is scheduled to ship this May. For more information on the expansion you can visit [www.morrowind.com](http://www.morrowind.com) where you can also check out some of the screenshots of the upcoming expansion.

Mercenaries and Pack Animals leave a lot to be desired. They constantly get stuck across wilderness areas and after a while it becomes a royal pain in the butt to go back and try and get them unstuck.

Another interesting new feature is the ability to attach notes to the map, something I valued more than anything else in the expansion since I tend to get lost quite easily on the map and constantly forget important areas I wish

to return to at a later stage.

Graphically I would have to say that the expansion is just as gorgeous as the original game and Bethesda has used the NetImmerse engine to its full potential. I only wish the game performed better on a 3 GHz Pentium 4 with a Radeon 9700 Pro, which I consider to be a top end machine. At 1024x768 the game still struggles at times when you enter complex scenes.

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REVIEWED BY

Leonard "DarkSkies" Diamond

MINIMUM RIG	RECOMMENDED RIG
Pentium III 500 MHz	Pentium III 800 MHz
128 MB RAM	256MB RAM
8 x CD ROM	8 x CD ROM
16MB D3D Video Accelerator	32MB D3D Video Accelerator
1 GB HDD	1 GB HDD
PLUS	MINUS
"In-line" expansion	Dodgy AI
Nice graphics	

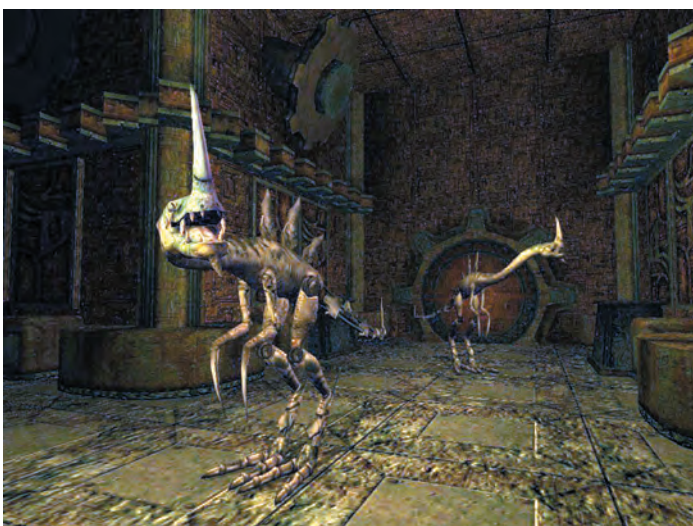
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AT A GLANCE

Tribunal adds quite a bit to the game with a new city, vast dungeons and of course the new Journal system. It is however for upper level characters only. Taking all of this into consideration I would have to say that the expansion is a definite for fans of the Elder Scrolls series.

---

score 80



▲ The toxic spill near the local KFC resulted in some interesting new variants...



▲ "Sorry, excuse me... can you point me to the nearest monster infested, treasure filled dungeon?"



# tekken 4

**developer:** namco  
**publisher:** namco  
**distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445 7900  
**price:** R779.00  
**genre:** fighting  
**internet:** www.tekken-4.com

Namco's Tekken series has arguably been the top of the pile for console gamers in terms of fighting games for a very long while indeed.

However, with stiff competition from the likes of Virtua Fighter 4 and Dead or Alive, Tekken's position is starting to look a little vulnerable. Namco fight back with the latest Tekken instalment, but is it enough?

Storylines have never played a very big part in fighting games, but since developers nonetheless insist on including them, I'm obligated to fill you in, despite how ridiculous it is. Kazuya Mishima, son of Heihachi, has been resurrected after his father threw him into a volcano in a display that lends new meaning to the phrase "tough love". Upon learning of his son's return, Heihachi realises the need to devise a plan to draw him out into the open, as he still has need of Kazuya's "devil gene" in order to make himself even more powerful, and thus he announces the King of Iron Fist Tournament 4, with his own financial empire, the Mishima Zaibatsu, as the main prize. Kazuya realises that the tournament is a trap, but being as bent on revenge as he is (being thrown into a volcano by your dad will do that to you), he decides to enter anyway, in the hopes of finally being able to lay some serious hurting down on his



old man. Of course, news of the tournament attracts most of the other familiar Tekken faces, including Paul, Hwoarang, King, Jin and all the rest, each with their own agendas and motives for trying to win the tournament. Playing through the story mode, at the start of each character's "campaign", a series of still images, accompanied by narrative, bring the player up to date with that particular character's story, and after completing the 8 or 9 fights involved in the story mode, you are rewarded with a visually stunning cut-scene, but one still gets the unshakeable feeling that the story is just there because it has to be, and that Namco have put as little effort into it as they can reasonably expect to get away with. Nonetheless, Tekken has never claimed to be about anything other than fighting, and in that respect Tekken 4 lives up to its heritage.

### Stuck between a rock and a hard place

Although the play dynamic of Tekken 4 remains virtually unchanged from its predecessors, meaning that veterans of the series will find it easy to jump right in, one of the biggest modifications from earlier games comes in the form of the stages in which the fights take place. No longer are the two combatants given free reign over a seemingly infinite strip of outdoor terrain, this time each location has its own physical boundaries, such as walls or

fences, as well as other objects such as statues or parking-lot style pillars against which you can force your opponent, before pummeling the living daylight's out of him. Needless to say, a combo performed on an opponent who is pinned to a wall has devastating effects, effectively meaning that the different locations can now be actively integrated into one's strategy, adding another dimension to most confrontations. There are certain problems with difficult-to-break combos that see you trapped against walls, however there is a new selection of "position change" moves available, including pushes and complete position switches between the two characters. Also, certain levels have sections with variable height, further altering the standard fighting game play dynamic. Tekken 4 also boasts three new characters, including a boxer, Steve, a Vale Tudo expert, Marduk, as well as Christie who uses the Capoeira style, although she plays exactly as Eddy Gordo in prior Tekken games. This, however, is compensated for by Jin Kazama, who has adopted a new fighting style in order to further distance himself from his despicable grandfather. On the whole, the game has a more balanced feel to it than ever, and no character is overly powerful (excluding those players who use Dark Side cheese tactics), and now most characters also have reversals and counters at their disposals, so most of the



▲ After the vase throwing incident, the domestic dispute turned nasty...



▲ After not getting a window seat, Frank took out his frustration on the flight attendant





inconsistencies of Tekken 3 have been ironed out.

**Black and blue**

Certainly, one of the most noticeable improvements in Tekken 4 comes in the way of graphics, an area of the Tekken series that Namco have consistently improved upon since the original game. Although certain animations still look strangely stiff and unnatural, the

characters are all beautifully detailed, right down to facial expressions, and look more realistic than ever. The different levels also look incredible, with amazing special effects such as rippling water, and realistic background objects. One of my favourite examples has to be the bar fight stage, where the fighters are enclosed by a ring of unruly patrons. If you try hard enough, you can even knock a few drunks down by launching a well-aimed opponent at them!

Furthermore, Tekken 4 is one of the first PS2 games to boast Progressive Scan support, so those owning a state of the art TV will be able to appreciate the graphical excellence of the game even more. In terms of sound, the score is really mediocre - there are very few moments at which the soundtrack really stands out, and although it will never annoy you terribly, you're bound to find yourself ignoring it for the most part. The sound effects, however, are all convincing, and the voice acting, though it plays a relatively small part, is quite well done in the story mode, and the few comments that the characters do make feel appropriate.



▲ So busy trying to impress the chicks on the beach, they didn't notice that there were no chicks after all



▲ "And THIS is for those ugly green shorts..."

**How would you like that served?**

In addition to the already-discussed story mode, Tekken 4 features the standard fare of arcade and versus modes, as well as a team battle mode (each player selects a team of however many characters,

and the first one to have all their characters defeated loses), a practice mode in which you can learn and practice your character's moves, a training mode in which you need to perform a certain number of moves within a specified time, and a Tekken Force mode. Those who have played Tekken 3 will be familiar with the concept of Tekken Force mode, which is a sort of side-scrolling fighting affair, reminiscent of Double Dragon back in the old days, where you find yourself facing off against multiple enemies at once, across four different levels, after which you are rewarded with a new arena to fight in. Speaking of unlockable goodies, Tekken 4 once again does its predecessors proud, offering additional characters and stages to unlock, through repeated play in each mode, so if your favourite Tekken 3 character appears to be missing from the line up, after completing the game a sufficient number of times, they may just be unlocked. Unfortunately, though, there is no tag mode present in Tekken 4. It needs to be said that although Tekken 4 is a very solid fighting game, it truly offers very little in the way of revolution from its predecessors, and those who aren't die-hard fans of the series may not find it a worthwhile investment. Furthermore, those who have not played Tekken before, may find they prefer the fighting style employed in the more "realistic" Virtua Fighter 4, or the more arcade orientated Dead or Alive games. Nonetheless, it is a solid title and is sure to please fans of the series.

REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
REQUIRED	CONTROLLER SUPPORT
1-2 Players 69Kb memory	Analog DualShock 2
PLUS	MINUS
Great graphics Entertaining Balanced	Too similar to Tekken 3 No tag mode
AT A GLANCE	
Tekken 4 is undoubtedly one of the better fighting titles currently available, with excellent graphics and enough replay value to keep most people busy for a long while. However, there are no tremendous changes from prior titles. Fighting game newcomers, Tekken fans, and those looking for a solid fighting title, won't be disappointed though.	
<b>score 80</b>	





# the simpsons skateboarding

**developer:** code monkeys  
**publisher:** fox interactive  
**distributor:** ea africa [011] 516 8300  
**price:** R 350.00  
**genre:** skate simulator  
**internet:** www.eagames.com

Springfield will never be the same again - skateboard fever has gripped the town, and everyone from the irrepressible Bart to his mild mannered mother Marge have started shredding the streets. But is this a game that can be taken seriously, or is it just another example of blatant licence exploitation?

It actually surprises me that this game took so long to come out. We all know that Bart Simpson is a keen skateboarder... it seems logical that a title such as this would have hit the shelves ages ago. Anyway, whatever. It's here now, and fans will no doubt flock to it like so many flies to road-kill.

When compared to other skating titles, The Simpsons Skateboarding is a relatively easy game to play. The tricks are easy enough to pull off, and the controls are rather forgiving. But, then again,

this isn't a title particularly aimed at skate board sim fans. Rather, it is aimed at Simpsons fans who want to experience their favourite characters doing something different.

With a host of characters to play and unlock (each of whom have their strengths and weaknesses) and a large number of environments to "shred", The Simpsons Skateboarding is an enjoyable and light hearted game. Don't expect too much of a skating challenge here - this is rather more about fun than pulling the most amazing stunts. However, the game can get complicated, and its basis in other, "mission" style skating title makes for something more of a challenge than one might initially expect. It's good fun, and features all the characters and voices we have come to know and, depending on mental stability, love.



**REVIEWED BY**

Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

**PLUS**

Recognisable  
Light hearted  
Simple

**MINUS**

Not a serious skate game

**score 70**

# wrc II extreme

**developer:** evolution studios  
**publisher:** scee  
**distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445 7900  
**price:** R 699.00  
**genre:** rally simulator  
**internet:** www.scee.com

There are, within the broad category of "driving simulators," a number of classes that the player could come across. Of these, rally driving simulators have proven to be one of the most popular sub-genres around. But so often the games themselves just don't have that certain something that sets them above the rest...

WRC II Extreme is a very well named game - at least the extreme part is. This is a rally game that stands head and shoulders above the majority of its competitors and, with a few notable exceptions, could be classed way above most everything we have seen before.

One of the things (and this may sound a little strange to most) that impressed me the most with this title was the fact that your car isn't restricted to the road - especially not in collisions. Take a spill, and you could go flying. Sure, there have been other games like this, but they are few and far between. This element, combined with a very good physics model and realistic cars, makes the game stand out even more, and makes for a great gaming experience.

Is it the best rally sim ever? Probably not, but it certainly does perform well against its competition.

The game does have a few problems - the biggest of which being the fact that you cannot create a personalised rally driver. Of course this doesn't mean that it's a bad title. It's just a bit sad in that respect. Otherwise the controls are responsive, the graphics are good and (possibly for the first time ever) the navigator prompts are clear and useful, rather than just annoying.

Overall, this game is long and challenging, and will provide the player with many hours of addictive and action packed rallying fun.



**REVIEWED BY**

Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

**PLUS**

Nice graphics  
Great control

**MINUS**

Unoriginal

**score 77**





# wwe smackdown: shut your mouth!

**developer:** yuke's  
**publisher:** thq  
**distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445 7900  
**price:** R 699.00  
**genre:** fighting / wrestling  
**internet:** www.thq.com

THQ are back, with the fourth incarnation of their Smackdown series, and it certainly is a step in the right direction, getting more things right than wrong, and it also delivers heavily on the entertainment side, yet there are still a few aspects that could do with some improvement.



THQ, somewhat infamous for their WCW titles in the early days, have almost got the wrestling game scene pegged. The latest Smackdown game expands on the season concept, introduced in the earlier Smackdown titles, with an almost interesting storyline (if you can forgive some truly heinous translation errors in the dialogue), with several championship belts to chase, and more than a handful of feuds to get involved with. Add to this about a million different match styles available, which is admittedly overwhelming, and all sorts of inanimate objects with which to pummel your opponent, and you've got a pretty decent game on your hands. Undoubtedly, one of the most important features to most prospective players is the Create-a-Wrestler mode, and you'll be glad to know that that particular area of the game has been noticeably beefed up, allowing you to fine tune virtually every aspect of your created Superstar. Unfortunately, the control system still uses a single button grapple system, drastically reducing the number of potential moves available to the characters, and it's a system that appears to work on random rather than specific timing, so newcomers to the series will have to take some time to become accustomed to it, however those familiar with the series will feel comfortable with it. Graphically, WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth is a mixed bag, offering spectacular looking arenas and backstage areas, though the wrestlers lack a degree of detail, and somehow their personalities are lost in the visual translation, and an engine revision is starting to look necessary before the release of the next



game. Aurally, theme tunes and sound effects are present, though the commentary features very little in the game, which may actually be a blessing, based on the quality of commentary in prior games, however it would be nice to see some more depth to it in the next incarnation of the series. On the whole, though, WWE Smackdown: Shut Your Mouth is sure to provide a great deal of entertainment to wrestling fans and even to those who don't consider themselves partial to the so-called "sport".

REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
PLUS	MINUS
Entertaining Good season mode	Outdated graphics
<b>score 80</b>	

# x-men: next dimension

**developer:** paradox development  
**publisher:** activation  
**distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445 7900  
**price:** R 599.00  
**genre:** fighting  
**internet:** www.activation.com

Paradox and Activision, creators of the mediocre yet incredibly popular X-men Mutant Academy series on the PSone, have finally brought the heroic band of mutants to the PS2, and although it's not quite on a par with some higher profile fighting brands, it certainly is a decent effort, doing justice to the franchise.

X-men: Next Dimension sees you taking on the roles of several members of both Professor X's X-men, as well as Magneto's Brotherhood in an effort to put an end to Bastion's treacherous plans to rid the world of mutants. Surprisingly, Next Dimension's story mode does, in fact, have a story to tell, broken up into several cut-scenes separated by groups of four or five fights, and before the start of each "block" of fights, you are given a choice as to which character you wish to use for that part of the game, tremendously reducing the tedium normally associated with story modes, however it also means that if you have a favourite character, you may not be able to use that character throughout the entire game. On the whole, the story mode plot is surprisingly solid, a refreshing change for a fighting game. In addition to the story mode, Next Dimension also offers the mandatory arcade and versus modes, as well as a survival mode (see how many foes you can defeat with only a single health-bar), in addition to a practice mode in which you can learn the moves and practice creating your own devastating combinations. However, it needs to be said that although Next Dimension is a solid fighting title, it is geared more towards X-men fans than fighting game enthusiasts, and thus the control system is at times irresponsible, and the characters tremendously unbalanced. Graphically, X-men: Next Dimension boasts several multi-floored stages and excellent effects, though some moves appear to miss by a mile, yet still somehow connect, and the character animations leave a lot to be desired at times. The soundtrack to X-men: Next Dimension is well done, with average voice acting, however the sound effects do seem somewhat dodgy. Ultimately, Next Dimension will certainly please X-men fans, however followers of other fighting game series may find they need to put too much time in to seriously enjoy X-men, and even then it lacks the depth of games such as Virtua Fighter 4 and Tekken 4.



REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
PLUS	MINUS
Will please X-men fans Good story mode	Not as in-depth as it could have been Graphical bugs
<b>score 69</b>	





# tony hawk's pro skater 4

**developer:** neversoft  
**publisher:** activision  
**distributor:** ster kinekor (011) 445 7900  
**price:** R 599.00  
**genre:** skate board simulator  
**internet:** www.activision.com

You can just never be sure what to expect with long running licence titles. Some of them just keeping getting better and better, while others get worse and worse. Some even get better before they get worse, or maybe get worse before they get better. Confused yet? I am.

Pro Skater Tony Hawk is one of those sort-of household names that means achievement, and the series of skate boarding simulators that bears his name is no different. Now, with the release of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, the series undergoes yet another major test to see if it lives up to the name that has been established by previous versions of the game. The verdict? It does. In fact, it exceeds anything we have seen before from this title, even though there really is nothing new here. The major difference that players will notice is that level timing occurs differently. Individual missions have their own time limits, but a player not doing any missions can tool around the skate park area for as long as he likes. This has, needless to say, its own benefit, as the player can now get used to the game (not in a practice or free ride environment) between completing missions.



Complete with good graphics, an absolutely brilliant (and very retro) sound track featuring bands like Iron Maiden and the Toy Dolls, not to mention Motorhead, and more tricks than you can kickflip at, this title is full of more of the same skating action that fans have come to expect. This in itself may be a bit of a problem, because there have been no major changes to the way the game plays. Of course, that raises a question: have there ever been? Guaranteed hours of fun for skate freaks here. It may not be a very original title, but it is good.

REVIEWED BY	
Wait "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Nice graphics More "freeform" Brilliant soundtrack	Nothing really new
<b>score 78</b>	



# spyro: enter the dragonfly

**developer:** check six studios  
**publisher:** universal vivendi  
**distributor:** comztek (0800) 600 557  
**price:** R 348.00  
**genre:** platform adventure  
**internet:** www.spyrothedragon.com

Universal Interactive, who already have a reputation for rehashing games, thanks to the latest in the Crash Bandicoot line, have pulled the same trick with the newest Spyro game, and although it remains quite an enjoyable title, particularly after Spyro's extended hiatus, it brings nothing new to the platform table, somewhat of a problem for a game competing with the likes of Ratchet & Clank.

Spyro, star of 3 highly successful titles on the PSone, has finally made his PS2 debut, sure to delight those looking for more of the same in terms of play dynamic, but it's far from revolutionary. The storyline this time around is that Spyro's old nemesis, Ripto, has scattered all the dragonflies (who guide young dragons around, and without whom,

apparently, the entire dragon race is powerless) well, pretty much everywhere, and once again it's up to Spyro to save the day. So, this time around, you have to go around collecting dragonflies, in addition to the multitudes of gems sprinkled



liberally about. All of Spyro's old tricks are still present, such as gliding and charging, however he is now also able to climb in certain areas, and there are more "breath weapons" available, such as bubble breath for dragonfly collection, as well as ice and electrical breath weapons. Aside from that, however, the only innovation in the game comes from several mini-games, as well as numerous new vehicles to pilot (including a tank and a UFO). Unfortunately, other than that, the play dynamic remains unchanged. The control system, though, remains intuitive and responsive, making Spyro a delight to control. In terms of visuals, the animations and detail levels have been spruced up since Spyro's PSone days, with plant life swaying with the breeze, and wonderful particle effects displayed when using Spyro's breath weapons, however there are also points at which the game slows down incredibly, and the load times are unforgivably long. Sound, though is one redeeming factor. The soundtrack to Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly does manage to live up to the high standard set by its predecessors though, and the voices for each character lend them a tremendous amount of personality.

Also, the game is quite long, so if you do decide to invest in it, it should keep you occupied for a while, but be warned not to expect anything new - it's just more of the same old Spyro we've all seen before.

REVIEWED BY	
Adam "Madman" Liebman	
PLUS	MINUS
Good clean fun	Frame rate Repetitive Load times
<b>score 69</b>	





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# legion:the legend of excalibur

**developer:** midway  
**publisher:** midway  
**distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445 7900  
**price:** R 699.00  
**genre:** adventure  
**internet:** www.midway.com

The Arthurian legend is one of the most popular pieces of folklore ever told. We have seen every kind of entertainment dedicated to the tale of this boy king and his great sword Excalibur, told from every side of the story and ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. Now we can experience his tale on the PS2... umm, well, sort of...



My friends tell me that I am picky and critical. Fine. Be that way. But if you are going to make a game called Legion: The Legend of Excalibur, then at least make it about the right thing. Seriously. Just because this game has the names Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot, not to mention a fancy knife called Excalibur, doesn't mean that it's Arthurian legend. Sure there are many sides to the story of the rise and fall of king Arthur, but this has nothing to do with any of them. It's a fictionalised version of fiction, which ain't really all that great.



Aside from this rather horrible fact, the game itself is not bad. Not great, but worth playing for a while at least. Basically an isometric action adventure with RPG style character development, Legion: The Legend of Excalibur requires the player to control one or more of the main characters within the game (while AI support characters follow you around) in a quest to save the kingdom from the evil army of Morgana le Fey. The game has a compelling enough story, with a lot of humour injected and features simple controls that make for easy play. There are a few issues with the controls (particularly when more than one main character is involved) but these can be bested with a little work on the player's part. This is not a game that will make you say "wow" but it is fun none the less.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Fun Simple control	Nothing to do with Arthurian Legend Some control issues
<b>score 69</b>	



# resident evil - code veronica x

**developer:** capcom  
**publisher:** capcom  
**distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445 7900  
**price:** R 199.00  
**genre:** survival horror  
**internet:** www.capcom.com



It really is amazing to see just how much blood developers are prepared to squeeze out of a successful franchise. There have been more versions of Resident Evil than Pokémon characters, all focusing on different elements of the same story. If they don't stop soon you'll eventually end up playing something like Resident Evil: Dagwood, where players get to be a dog who must escape from Raccoon City before the zombie cats ignore him and go back to sleep...

Originally released on the Sega Dreamcast, this game quickly earned the reputation of being the best of the series and now it finds its way onto the shelves as a budget release from Sony's Platinum range. Essentially the game is a direct port from the Dreamcast version and to add a little more excitement it's incorrectly named...

**Extra X**  
 When this game was released on the Dreamcast it had the same name minus the X tagged on at the end. When Capcom decided to release this title for the PlayStation 2 they added a few extra goodies to the package, a DVD with some exclusive footage and a demo of their then upcoming Devil May Cry - you had to pay a little more for these extras which are now not available on the Platinum version even



REVIEWED BY	
Michael 'RedTide' James	
PLUS	MINUS
Familiar play dynamic Solid action Decent story	Average movement animation Not revolutionary
<b>score 82</b>	

though it still carries the X in the name. It's a little misleading and if you're sitting there thinking you're going to score all those extra bits for the price of a budget title - you'd be wrong. Besides this little indiscretion the meat and bones actual game is all there and looks pretty much just like any other Resident Evil game you've ever played. This instalment is set three months after Resident Evil 2 - Claire Redfield chases off to find her brother and to cut a long one short ends up in an Umbrella Corporation prison complex on a remote island with another outbreak of the T-Virus. The rest of the story is told via some superb cut-scenes and numerous in-game situations, but the story is the last thing you'll be thinking about as you face off against the game's multitude of enemy characters and creepy locations. The play dynamic is identical to any game in the series and involves exploring, avoiding creatures, solving puzzles and trying to stay alive. You get to control two different characters in the game and it's important to remember that if you use certain items the first time around they won't be available if you need to explore the same area again with the alternative character, Chris. As a budget title you can't go wrong with this one, it's more of the same only better.



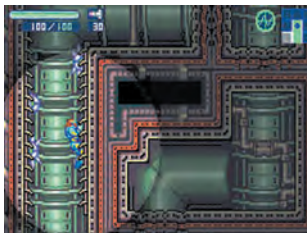
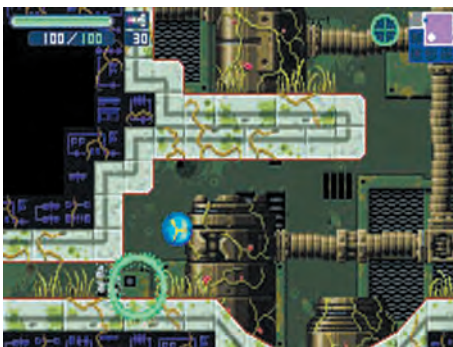
# metroid fusion

**developer:** nintendo  
**publisher:** nintendo  
**distributor:** futronic [011] 315 0079  
**price:** R 349.00  
**genre:** side scroller  
**internet:** www.nintendo.com

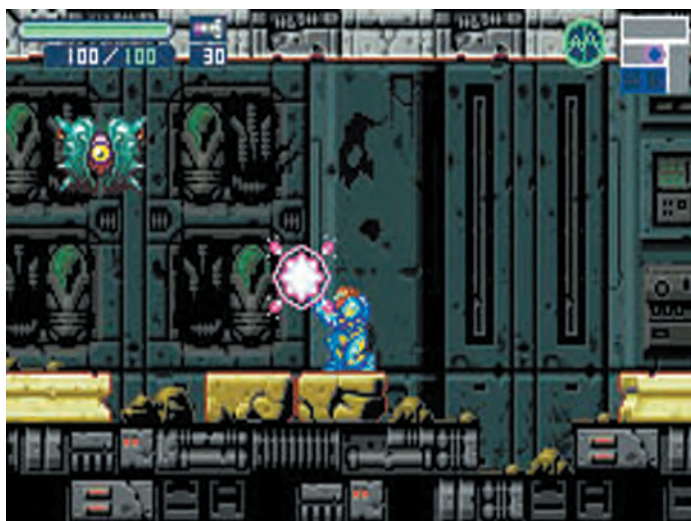
**Evil just doesn't go away. But when that evil is a mindless force that does not know the consequences of its actions, things just seem all that more bleak. But when you're Samus Aran, evil is just part of the business...**

I suppose the nature of the Metroids could be argued for hours. Are they mindless evil? Or are they a force that knows far more than we can understand? But who has time to discuss theories when there's killing to be done. While leading a mission to planet SR388, Samus is infected by the mysterious X virus. Now, some months later, X is back, this time on an orbital space station. And the only person who can stop the terrible virus is a weakened Samus, who has to recover while she fights the threat. But she has a secret weapon... DNA from the last Metroid that was used to save her from the X virus.

I love this kind of game. It's an all out, action packed side scroller with lots of creepy-crawlies to kill - and interesting ways to kill them, gained as you progress through the game's many levels. Add to that the fact that players of the Metroid Prime GameCube title can unlock extra features in the Gameboy Advance version, and you have quite a compelling game. The game is a little dark for my liking, making it difficult to play in all but the best lighting conditions. But this isn't a big train smash, because the game soon distracts you away from this kind of problem. It is, for all intents and purposes, a brilliant title for the Gameboy Advance, full of excitement and challenges. It even has a reasonably good story to go along with it.



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Great fun	Very dark
<b>score 82</b>	



# monster force

**developer:** digital eclipse  
**publisher:** universal vivendi  
**distributor:** comztek [0800] 600 557  
**price:** R 245.00  
**genre:** adventure  
**internet:** www.universalinteractive.com

**Vampires, werewolves, resurrected monsters... this is the stuff of gothic horror at its best. Dark shadows and haunted villages, foreboding castles and decrepit graveyards... these are the things that reach into the primal parts of us and scare us silly. Unless, of course, the monsters are teenagers, and these haunts are home...**

Doctor Frankenstein is missing and it is up to his young friends, Drac, Frankie and Wolfie, to find him. Needless to say, these friends are a vampire, a monster and a werewolf respectively. Reminiscent of old coin operated titles like Gauntlet (or Get Medieval on the PC) Monster Force is an isometric view adventure title that winds through maze like settings in an attempt to find the missing scientist - who was on the verge of a breakthrough that would prove to the "normal" people of the world that monsters aren't all that bad.

Featuring a multiplayer mode for up to three players, Monster Force is a classic maze style adventure, full of nasty pumpkins and tough bosses to defeat - as well as Igor's shop, where the player can buy several useful items and artefacts to make the game more interesting. Monster Force is a stylish and fun title, with an atmosphere that is both frightening and fun. It is an addictive title, full of action and adventure, whether played in single or multiplayer modes. Sadly, the graphics are a little indistinct during the game. This is certainly due, at least in part, to the lack of backlighting in the GBA, but even with such a luxury, the game would be a little difficult to play due to the nature of the graphics. However, if you can get past this problem (which, depending on your view, is relatively minor) Monster Force is a fun title for everyone to enjoy, with thirty-five challenging levels.



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Fast paced	lffy graphics
<b>score 71</b>	





# spyro: season of ice

# spyro 2: season of flame

**developer:** digital eclipse  
**publisher:** universal vivendi  
**distributor:** comztek (0800) 600 657  
**price:** R 348.00  
**genre:** maze adventure  
**internet:** www.universalinteractive.com

An evil wizard has captured a hundred fairies in an attempt to cure his headache. This leaves the world in peril - but all hope is not lost, for Spyro the Dragon is at hand, in all his purple splendour, to save the fairies and, so doing, save the day.

Spyro the Dragon has proven to be one of the most successful console characters ever. A large fan base built up around the PlayStation Spyro titles, and his fame has spread. Now Spyro is, for the first time, available for play on the Gameboy Advance. Unlike the console titles of the series, this game takes a different viewpoint - an isometric one in fact, turning the game into the sort of maze adventure that plays so well on the Gameboy Advance.

The game is a simple enough premise, requiring the player to travel around several levels, rescuing captured fairies from the evil wizard that caught them, collecting gems and taking on Rhynocs everywhere. Personally, I must admit, that I prefer a more traditional side scroller when it comes to the Gameboy Advance, because there are certain elements within this title that make for pretty frustrating gameplay. Jumping from one elevated level and gliding to another, for example, could be a lot simpler if the visuals of the game were a little clearer. However, for the most part (if you can get past the frustration) this is a very fun title to play.

The controls are simple, and the game will keep any player busy for days - what with the huge amount of missions to complete, minor tasks to undertake and fairies to save.



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Engrossing	Some control issues Sometimes unclear
<b>score 77</b>	

**developer:** digital eclipse  
**publisher:** universal vivendi  
**distributor:** comztek (0800) 600 657  
**price:** R 270.00  
**genre:** maze adventure  
**internet:** www.universalinteractive.com

The big chill is coming to the land of Spyro, one of the console world's favourite game titles. All the fireflies, the source of a dragon's fiery breath, have disappeared, and it is up to our intrepid purple hero to save them.

Sequels are always, in my mind, a dodgy proposition. See, not only do they have to deliver at least the same quality of play, but most players expect them to have made some pretty serious improvements overall to be at least impressive. Spyro 2: Season of Flame does not do this. In fact, the game is an exact clone of Spyro: Season of Ice. The only difference is that, due to the lack of fireflies, our hero breathes ice instead of fire. But that's about it. The style of play, the basic concept and the aim of the game are all virtually identical to this title's predecessor.

There are two sides to this story, of course. The one argument is that players often enjoy more of the same, and besides, when two titles are released so close together there is little time to create improvements within the game. The other side of the argument is the unreasonable side that views the number 2 in the sequel title mathematically - this title should be twice as good as the original, no excuses. Whatever your viewpoint may be, the maze action of this game is very compelling and utterly fun, with lots to do and see in a large number of very different levels. If you liked Spyro: Season of Ice, you will also enjoy Spyro: 2 Season of Flame. Being virtually the same game, it has similar issues to the former title. But these can be overlooked in the interests of enjoyment and avoidance of a frustration induced heart attack.



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Entertaining Plenty to do	Some control issues
<b>score 76</b>	



# super mario sunshine

developer: nintendo  
 publisher: nintendo  
 distributor: futronics (011) 315 0079  
 price: R 599.00  
 genre: 3D platform  
 internet: www.supermariosunshine.com

What can be more fun than a gun that shoots water, an island full of goo and an Italian Plumber framed for the pollution that has besieged an island?

The same formula, but with a flamethrower, I suppose. Still, there's nothing quite like a bit of Nintendo-given Sunshine in your life...



Super Mario Sunshine is definitely one of the big titles on offer for GameCube owners, purely because it's the first big Mario platformer to arrive on the console. Sure, there was Super Mario Party and Smash Bros Melee, but none of those involved navigating Mario across a level, platformer-style.

Sunshine is a stunner from the word go, and to date the most graphically impressive game I've seen on the GameCube. That says a lot, though. The story is simple - someone is polluting the island you are visiting, and since the culprit looks a bit like Mario, Mario is accused, tried and ordered to clean the island with a strange water-gun. But as he goes around, he encounters the strange villain, and soon finds a way to teleport to other parts of the island, where you have to finish tasks, defeat bosses, collect coins, and spray lots and lots of water. Your water-gun also doubles as a jetpack, and you operate the aiming and power by how hard and frequently you hit the shoulder button. Every now and then you need to jump into a pond or lake and refill the water, but your supply does last a reasonable time.

Sunshine is quite tough, and will keep most platformers going for hours. It's also quite improved over the N64 game, and it also has all the Nintendo quirks you'd expect, such as hidden bonuses and mini-games that give you extra awards. The levels and enemy units are nicely varied, and the soundtrack and sound effects carry well in the cutesy Mario Bros world. I found the voice-acting a bit annoying, though, but most of the time conversations are simply text boxes you scan through. Overall, if you love Mario, you'd want this. But I don't need to tell you that. As for anyone else who simply loves platforming, or good console gaming, give Sunshine a bash - it's a star (pun intended).



REVIEWED BY	
James "Loves Peaches" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Stunning visuals Fun play dynamic It's Mario!	Annoying voices Tough on beginners
<b>score 92</b>	

# mario party 4

developer: nintendo  
 publisher: nintendo  
 distributor: futronics (011) 315 0079  
 price: R 599.00  
 genre: arcade puzzle  
 internet: www.nintendo.com

Get three of your friends, get drunk, load up Mario Party 4 and you'll have to anticipate a few fistfights. After all, he just dunked my Yoshi!



What's the most fun four people can have on a GameCube? Okay, the mind wanders if you'd say 'on an Xbox', but that's a big console - lots of room. The GameCube, though, is

small, and that would limit you to playing actual games. Not a problem, though, since Nintendo have a few four-player titles out there already. The first of those was Super Smash Bros. Melee. But it's been ousted off its high-and-mighty four player throne by Mario Party 4, and not to anyone's surprise, since it is the best party game out there since Super Monkey Ball.

The game is pretty simple. There are five boards you can play, and the aim is to collect as many coins, stars and other bonuses before the rounds finish. The boards come in various flavours, including a jungle location and a haunted mansion. Each also has its own bonuses, for instance in the haunted mansion you can buy an item or go to an area where you instruct a ghost to steal items from other players. In essence, you run around the board, hitting a dice with your head to see how many moves you get. After each round, there is a mini game that could be each for himself, two-on-two or three-on-one. These games vary quite a bit - from winning a drag race or trying to get the most balls through moving hoops to the fastest shooter or getting a certain amount of goals past a specific player. Then there are sillier ones such as trying to tip the boat of the guy in the middle of the pond, or seeing who can deflate the giant jelly faces the fastest.

Each mini game gives you a chance to practice it before actually playing, and winning one gains you coins. There are also hidden games, such as having to inflate Bowser's replica without popping it. You also grab bonuses such as a super mushroom, which lets you take a double turn, as well as hit any character who gets in the way (they lose 10 coins).

It's really not fair to try and explain how much fun this is in half a page, so take my word for it. Even with fewer players or on your own its fun, but plan on getting more controllers at some point...



REVIEWED BY	
James "Party Animal" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Fun Varied games Excellent with 4 players	Can get repetitive Games can take a while
<b>score 90</b>	



# need for speed: hot pursuit 2

**developer:** electronic arts  
**publisher:** electronic arts  
**distributor:** ea africa (011) 516 8300  
**price:** tba  
**genre:** driving simulator  
**internet:** www.eagames.com

Fast cars, exotic locations, a heavy foot and - unfortunately - gung-ho cops. Yeah, it sounds like a bad seventies comedy starring Burt Reynolds and Dom Delouise. But it's not. What it is, is the latest driving simulator from Electronic Arts, and now it has found a home on the Xbox.

I admit it. I like the Xbox. Especially now. See, I got to play this title on several platforms, and it just kept getting better. Now I have found its ultimate place - right on the Microsoft Xbox console.



Probably the biggest difference to the game, performance wise, on the Xbox lies in the unit's controller. While I normally complain that it is a bit too bulky, I must say that, as a driving controller, it is utterly sublime. With a sensitivity not yet seen, the controller makes the

game so much more enjoyable to play. No more slewing around the road out of control - now you can power-slide beautifully while still maintaining control. It is wonderful! In terms of graphics, the Xbox displays brilliant performance, and a game like Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, with its highly detailed levels and well modelled cars, is perfect for showing off the graphic capabilities of this latest next generation console.

Overall, I wouldn't say that this is the best title in the NFS series, but it certainly does have its merits. A good damage model would have been nice, though, to further show off this console's graphic capabilities. One of the things that is really nice about this title is the sound track, which features songs by great bands including the likes of Bush.

As the first driving simulator I have personally seen on the Xbox, I would say... good job. The controls really make the difference, but the game is, overall, really enjoyable... if you don't get too picky about nitty-gritty details.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Nice graphics	Poor damage model
<b>score 79</b>	



# ssx tricky

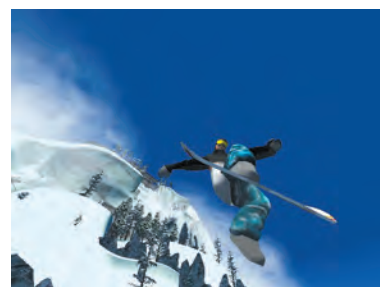
**developer:** ea sports big  
**publisher:** electronic arts  
**distributor:** ea africa (011) 516 8300  
**price:** tba  
**genre:** snowboarding simulator  
**internet:** www.eagames.com

Extreme Sports titles really are all the rage these days. Now, one of the original series, SSX, is available on the Xbox, in the form of SSX Tricky - that trick spinning, fast paced fun ride we first saw on the PlayStation 2...

Long time, regular readers of this publication will remember that I was rather impressed with EA Big's SSX Tricky on the PlayStation 2. Well, I am pleased to report that I am impressed with the Xbox version of this game too! But, then again, it pretty much is the same thing all over again.

I should at this point, admit that I do actually prefer the PlayStation 2 version of the title, but only for one, small reason. Well, smaller reason, actually. See, the Xbox controller is quite, umm, large, and having small hands like me can be a problem. This is because the combo buttons for the tricks are a bit more difficult to get to on the Xbox controller than they are on the smaller PS2 device. Other than that - although it is an identical game - SSX Tricky on the Xbox looks better, sounds better and just seems so much more impressive than the PlayStation 2 version. The characters are the same, the tricks are still radical, and the courses are still challenging and plentiful. It just seems so much more there on this new console.

For those of you who don't know anything about SSX Tricky, here's a quick run down: zany characters, mind-numbing tricks, fast paced action, twisting downhill courses, great graphics, cool sound. There. Now you know.



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Great graphics Tons of fun	Xbox controller size
<b>score 82</b>	







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# H@RD@CORE3

m o u s e

by Tom "The Toolman" Taylor

For gamers, the keyboard and mouse are like the sword and shield we do battle with. There are many varieties and brands to choose from and the "tools" we choose could ultimately lead to our victory or loss (just imagine your ball-mouse clogs up as you run into the Axiz base). It is for this reason I decided to look at the two pieces of computer hardware we simply cannot be without.

Over the past couple of years we have seen a variety of exciting technologies added to our battle gear. To me the most welcome technology was the incorporation of an optical laser into the mouse. At home, and more so on the scruffy tables found at your local LAN, the optical mouse has provided us with hovercraft-like gliding, and the fear of your mouse not able to accurately move onto a target, is long gone. Some manufacturers have even added some more buttons to their mice which, in the games it is compatible with, makes a world of difference.

For both keyboards and mice wireless technology has become the next big thing, the first and most obvious benefit is the fact that there are no cables with such a setup. If you are so inclined you can also use this as an excuse to operate your PC from a reasonable distance, be it your bed or the couch. I have honestly never experienced the need to do so, and I am sure I am not alone in saying that. But hey... its new technology which means we gotta have it.

Choosing a keyboard and mouse is more than just buying the cheapest or best looking products available. You must consider the fact that you will be using it a lot, if you use the keyboard as much as I do you will come to appreciate a good wrist pad, the general feel of it while typing is also very important.

A mouse on the other hand requires a comfortable grip, and if you are serious about gaming you will probably also prefer a couple of extra buttons (preferably those which are compatible with your games), its ability to move smoothly and accurately while you are using it, is just as imperative.

Sadly a decent keyboard and mouse does not always come cheap, the Saitek and Logitech range comes to mind. But if you are on a shoestring budget don't despair. Companies like AOpen and Sahara have produced mice which should satisfy most of your needs.

Until the day we are able to wear funky gloves and use a sign language interface (as seen in *Minority Report*) to operate our computers and play our games, these are the tools we will use to crush our enemies and conquer empires.





The Labtec Wireless Desktop is aesthetically pleasing; it sports a funky black and metallic silver finish. The keyboard is not the most comfortable one I have used but for someone with smallish hands it should suffice. The discomfort is caused by the fixed wrist pad which does not extend out long enough for me to rest my palms comfortably.

The keyboard hosts 7 multimedia shortcut keys - play/pause, mute, refresh, web browser, E-mail, volume up, and volume down. Unfortunately these shortcut keys are not customisable. Both the keyboard and mouse use AAA non-rechargeable batteries which are included in the package. The mouse on the other hand (excuse the pun) feels sturdy and glides smoothly. It is ambidextrous, so it will fit nicely in the hands of left and right handed folk. Sadly the mouse still uses the old ball mechanism, but looking on the bright side it improves the life of the batteries. It only has 2 buttons and a wheel and I also noticed that there is an unusual gap (you can actually see the circuit board), of about 1 or 2 mm on the mouse between the part where the wheel and the buttons to either side are



Ergonomics	75	<b>Overall</b> <b>78</b>	<b>Pros:</b> Smooth ball-mouse   Very affordably priced <b>Cons:</b> It has nothing that makes me go "ooh!" <b>Supplied by:</b> Logitech [011] 452 - 7331 <b>ERP:</b> R599.00 <b>Internet:</b> www.labtec.com
Features	63		
Game playability	89		
Value for money	88		

The Genius Wireless 2.4G TwinTouch+ features a titanium-like finish with black keys and translucent-blue shortcut keys. The keyboard is comfortable to use and the wrist pad can be folded underneath the keyboard if it is not needed. There are 12 multimedia shortcut keys situated on the keyboard. The first 4 are for controlling audio played through your CD-ROM, and include rewind, play/pause, stop, and fast forward. The other shortcut keys are volume up and down, My favourite, E-mail, Back, web browser, Forward and Sleep. Sadly the "My favourite" shortcut key does not drop-down the Favourites menu in your web browser, instead it opens the favourites folder in a window. An interesting and welcome feature is the branding of the most commonly used shortcut keys for Windows based applications. On the S-key for example you will find the text "Save" and on the X-key you will see the text "Cut". The mouse is a standard Genius Wheel mouse with 2 buttons and a wheel. It still uses the ball mechanism but again, the optimist in me says that this is good for battery life.

Probably the most exciting feature of this keyboard and mouse combo is the fact that it operates on a radio frequency of 2.4 GHz (it is the same frequency



Ergonomics	87	<b>Overall</b> <b>88</b>	<b>Pros:</b> Customisable shortcuts   Foldable wrist pad <b>Cons:</b> No optical mouse <b>Supplied by:</b> TVR Computers [011] 807-1390 <b>ERP:</b> R 825.00 <b>Internet:</b> www.geniusnet.com.tw
Features	85		
Game playability	92		
Value for money	90		

### Benchmarking

The criteria for entrants in this round-up were simple. I tried to get a variety of corded, cordless, single, and combo units.

Putting these products through their paces was a lengthy task and many hours of game play went into it. Most of the keyboards are not all that different from each other (as is the case everywhere), different manufacturers do however try and spice up theirs by adding shortcut keys, stylish aesthetics or a unique feature or two. Other than that I took into account the look, features, price, and extras.

Looking at the mice on offer was a lot more involved. The first important feature is the shape, seeing that it is in your hand most of the time it is important that its shape and size fits your hand comfortably.

The next thing to note is the amount of buttons, and if they are situated in an easy to reach position.

There were one or two of the mice that did not feature the optical laser; these lost a lot of points. The reason? Why settle for a technology that is almost extinct, not to mention the performance difference.

The battery life was the one aspect of the wireless products I did not test; I simply did not have the wireless products long enough to be able to benchmark that particular feature.

The games I played using these products were UT2003 and GTA III, and I took into consideration the feel and performance of each product.

situated. This will no doubt lead to the build up of dust, dirt, and fingernail-clippings inside the mouse.

The Labtec Wireless Desktop connects to your PC using a single receiver and plugs into your both your computers' PS2 ports. The working range of this product is about 4 meters which is more than adequate.

This combo is compatible with all Windows operating systems. In Windows XP the keyboard and mouse is recognised without the drivers, but if you want to use the multimedia shortcuts you will need to install them. The drivers do not have a user interface and if you want to change any settings pertaining to either the keyboard or mouse you will have to do it using the Windows Control Panel.

During game play the mouse felt a bit heavy, but it was responsive. The keyboard offered nothing spectacular but as part of this combo it will prove more than sufficient for most people.

Looking at the ERP, this is a good package to start off with. I would recommend you spend a bit more and get something with more features like the Logitech Cordless Desktop Navigator or the Memorex RF Multimedia Bundle, but hey, if you aint rollin' in the cash get this one.

that is used for wireless LAN's, as opposed to the 27 MHz of normal wireless products). It is for this reason that the Genius Wireless 2.4G TwinTouch+ comes with a built in 16-channel switch, so that you can change its channel if it interferes with an existing wireless device. The 2.4 GHz receiver uses both your PS2 ports to connect to your PC and its working range was about 3 meters, in spite of its much higher frequency.

The Genius Wireless 2.4G TwinTouch+ is compatible with all Windows operating systems from Windows 98 and up and it is, to my surprise, MS-DOS compatible. The drivers for this combo are easy to use and it allow you to customise a whole range of settings pertaining to the mouse and keyboard, of which you can customise most of the multimedia shortcut keys. It even has a battery life indicator. The mouse operates on two AAA, and the keyboard on AA non rechargeable batteries which are included in the box.

Playing games proved nothing spectacular. The mouse, although it is still the ball-type, moved smoothly and I was able to aim accurately. I would have loved to see a button or two extra on the mouse, and making it optical would not have been a bad thing either.

Looking at what this package has to offer and its ERP, I can safely say that this combo should definitely be on your short list, it has a lot more features than most and it would look stunning on any desk.





Logitech Cordless Desktop Navigator

**L**ooking at this sleek looking combo it's not difficult to see why Logitech devices are so popular amongst computer users.

The Logitech Cordless Desktop Navigator sports a sophisticated white and silver finish on both the keyboard and the mouse. The keyboard has 18 shortcut keys laid out across the top of the unit, these include shortcuts to your E-mail application, messenger program and webcam, and there are also volume keys and keys used to control audio, as well as some Internet shortcut keys. All of these keys can be customised to your needs.

After the drivers are installed no keys are assigned by default, instead, the first time you press a shortcut key a window pops up explaining what you can do with that particular key as well as explaining a bit more about the key. What I found very innovative about the software is that you can customise the E-mail shortcut to take you directly to a web based e-mail website. Each key can either be assigned to a specific program, URL, or you can create a menu of different applications that will pop up once the button is pressed. Something Microsoft is doing with their new range of keyboards is also featured on this Keyboard, on the function keys (F1, F2 etc.) there are icons indicating different functions.



These can also be modified and assigned to various functions. The default list of shortcuts include New E-mail, Reply E-mail, Forward E-mail, Undo, Redo, Print, Save and so on. To switch between the function keys and the shortcuts depicted on them you simply have to press the F-Lock button. Something you might love or hate is that when you press a key that performs a function such as Caps Lock or one of the shortcut keys the on screen display notifies you of the action.

The keyboard and mouse both use AAA batteries, and is fully compatible with Mac OS X, Windows users need Windows 98 or higher.

The mouse is optical and is very sensitive and smooth. It would have been nice if it was shaped like one of the MX range of mice but for what it is, it's comfortable enough for everyday use. The mouse features no spectacular features; it only has 2 buttons and a wheel of which each one can be customised to perform any of the 50 preset functions. Playing games proved smooth and enjoyable using this combo, my only gripe is that the mouse did not have more buttons. This is one of the better combos I have seen and it comes highly recommended, I would have obviously preferred it if it retailed for about R300 less... :)

Ergonomics	93	<b>Overall</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>Pros:</b> Comfortable keyboard   Many shortcut keys <b>Cons:</b> Mouse could have been better <b>Supplied by:</b> Logitech [011] 452 - 7331 <b>ERP:</b> R1299.00 <b>Internet:</b> www.logitech.com
Features	90			
Game playability	88			
Value for money	89			

Memorex RF Multimedia Bundle MX5500RF

**I**f there were ever a keyboard and mouse bundle designed for going to LAN's this would be it.

The keyboard and mouse comes in a hard-plastic case, and there is even a shoulder strap included. It was nice to see a keyboard that did not look like every one of its counterparts. It features curvy contours and its multimedia buttons are fashionably arranged. It has a metallic silver finish with black keys and a comfortable soft(ish) rubber wrist pad. It has 16 multimedia shortcut keys of which it has all the standard volume, Internet, and audio keys (play, rewind, etc.). It also has a Power Off, Sleep, and Wake Up button.

The mouse reminds me a bit of the Razor Boomslang and it is surprisingly comfortable to hold, but being the fussy person that I am I would have liked it to be a bit wider in the middle of the unit and I would have much rather



preferred an optical version. This mouse has 5 buttons, the normal three (left, right, wheel) and another button on each side. Sadly the extra buttons are not situated in the ideal location and I often found myself pressing them unintentionally. These buttons are customisable using the supplied drivers and most of the new games will recognise the two extra buttons.

The Memorex RF Multimedia Bundle has a working range of about 3 meters and is compatible with all Windows operating systems from Windows 98 and up. I also found it rather strange and a bit disorienting, to find that the keyboard had a UK key layout. This meant that some of the symbol keys were located in different places to what I was accustomed to. Playing games produced no specific problems; the mouse did however feel a bit sluggish at times.

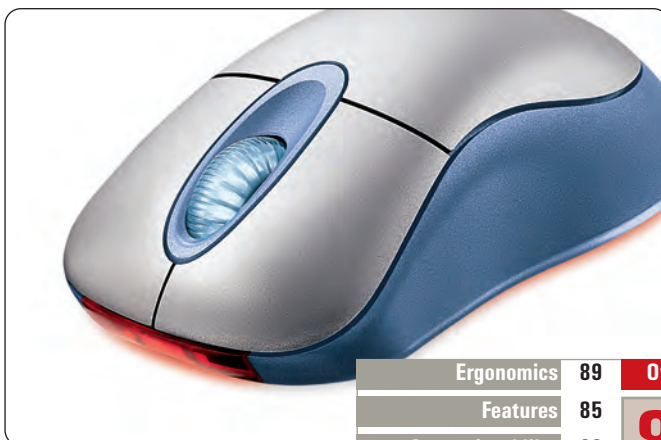
All in all this is definitely a product worth investing some money in, and I can highly recommend it.

Ergonomics	90	<b>Overall</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>Pros:</b> Funky mouse   Comfortable keyboard <b>Cons:</b> UK-style keyboard <b>Supplied by:</b> Drive Control [021] 531-6454 <b>ERP:</b> R950.00 <b>Internet:</b> www.memorex.com
Features	80			
Game playability	89			
Value for money	78			

Mice  
Microsoft Wireless Optical Mouse Blue

**T**he Microsoft Wireless Optical Mouse Blue is ambidextrous and hosts a funky looking metallic blue and silver finish. This is not the most aesthetically pleasing mouse on the market but Microsoft has latched onto a shape that works well under all conditions.

This unit has 2 buttons and an inviting translucent-blue scroll wheel. The drivers are Microsoft's IntelliPoint 4.1, which are used throughout their range of mice. The drivers allow you to customise any of the three buttons to functions such as back and forward in a web browser, copy, cut, and double click. A feature I particularly liked was the facility where I could program specific button configurations. Using the dialog box I could simply select an application and set a button configuration for it.



Because not all users hold and move their mouse the same, Microsoft incorporated an orientation setting. This allows you to hold the mouse in the position you are comfortable with and by simply clicking and dragging the given object the mouse will be set accordingly. The wheel on this mouse does not move as smoothly as some of the other mice in this round-up and it also does not scroll as quietly.

The receiver module connects to your PC via the USB port. The receiver is also slightly larger than what I would prefer but being a wireless mouse I can hide it behind my computer case. The mouse is powered by 2 AA batteries and its range is about 2 meters. It requires either Windows 98 or higher, or you can plug it into a Macintosh computer with either Mac OS 8.6 or higher (not compatible with Mac OS 10.0).

Playing games I found no problems with this mouse, it moved smoothly, and accurately. Looking at its price it will not be my first choice, and an extra (strategically) placed button or two would not have done any harm.

Ergonomics	89	<b>Overall</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>Pros:</b> Comfortable for both hands   Driver settings <b>Cons:</b> Limited range <b>Supplied by:</b> Microsoft [0860] 225-567 <b>ERP:</b> R629.00 <b>Internet:</b> www.microsoft.com
Features	85			
Game playability	90			
Value for money	65			





**Logitech MX500 Optical Mouse**

**L**ogitech has always had their hands in the peripheral market in some way or another. Their products have gone from strength to strength and today their peripherals are rated amongst the best. The Logitech MX500 Optical Mouse

sports a funky black and metallic silver finish; it is ergonomically one of the best mice in this round up and to me it was the most enjoyable and comfortable to work with (this also goes for the MX700). This unit connects to your PC via USB, but a USB to PS/2 converter is included if you don't have USB ports. What makes this mouse look even better is the fact that the left and right buttons flow seamlessly into the body of the mouse, there is one piece of plastic from the front to the back.

Left handed folk will sadly miss out on this mouse as it is clearly designed for the right hand. The MX500 fits into your hand quite snugly and there is a deep groove on its left side to place your thumb which



Ergonomics	95
Features	90
Game playability	91
Value for money	89

The one design element all the other 5 button mice lacked was the positioning of the 2 extra buttons. Not only does this mouse feature 8 buttons (to quote Shryke "Count 'em"), but Logitech gets a gold star for placing them in the most comfortable position, both in reach of your thumb. The other three buttons are a bit more oddly placed, but reaching them was no problem. All the buttons on the mouse can be customised using the supplied drivers. There are about 50 Windows based commands you can assign to these buttons and some have their own subset of settings. It was quite odd to see that with the drivers, Logitech bundled MusicMatch Jukebox and WildTangent Game channel. Sadly, in the games I played only the two side buttons were recognised, I would have loved to be able to make use of all 8. The fact that this mouse operates very smoothly placed the nail in the coffin for me. The damn thing is near perfect!

<b>Overall</b>	<b>91</b>	Pros: Everything, except... Cons: 3 extra buttons don't work in games   Pricy Supplied by: Logitech [011] 793-116 ERP: R799.00 Internet: www.logitech.com
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**LG Optical Mouse**

**T**his is the first mouse I have seen from the electronics giant, LG. The company has been big in the optical drive market for quite some time now and, I guess, it is no surprise to see

that they have released an optical mouse. This corded mouse performs surprisingly well, and so much so that it is one of the smoothest moving mice I have used to date. I think the hardware designers at LG need a course in ergonomics though as they have a lot more potential. The mouse has two buttons and a wheel; the wheel feels surprisingly responsive and rolls without much effort. The drivers shipped with this mouse offered a reasonable amount of functionality. The wheel is the only button you are able to customise to perform a function other than left or right clicking. You are able to assign it to scroll vertically or horizontally, you can set



Ergonomics	59
Features	65
Game playability	85
Value for money	83

it to zoom a certain area and set the zoom factor, you can set it to scroll in the direction of your mouse once the wheel is pressed, or you can assign the wheel to perform a variety of actions when pressed like cut, tab or even pop up the start menu to name a few.

When I first saw this mouse I thought that the window on its top end was a fingerprint scanner, I am sure I am forgiven for thinking so. This was sadly not the case. The window is simply a gimmicky way of exploiting the light emitted off the optical sensor to create an illuminated effect; the bottom end is also see-through thus emitting light onto the desk that the mouse works on. This light emitting effect might be a good seller among home users but I for one will not be caught dead with one of these at my local LAN. This is a sad fact as I think the mouse performs very well, especially under gaming conditions. And gaming is where I think this mouse has a lot of potential, as it is one of the smoothest operating mice I have used to date. Aiming and looking around with the mouse in the games I played felt extremely smooth and accurate. This mouse from LG offered much potential but it lost a lot of points because it has little extra to offer. Looking at its price though I would much rather opt for the Aopen or Sahara mice.

<b>Overall</b>	<b>73</b>	Pros: Smooth movement   Very responsive Cons: Not much to look at   Too few buttons Supplied by: AXiZ [011] 237-7000 ERP: R199 Internet: www.axiz.co.za
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**Sahara Optical Mouse**

**T**he Sahara Optical Mouse hosts all the features that the LG Optical Mouse lacked. This mouse, which has a very close resemblance to the Microsoft IntelliMouse Optical, might not have all the extra features offered by some of its high end counterparts, but for a gamer on a budget, or for someone not wanting a cordless mouse with all its accompanying bells and whistles this mouse is definitely the one to consider. The unit connects to your PC via USB although there is a driver disk (yes stiffy's are still being used). The mouse also features two extra buttons, which are situated on each side of the mouse. As with the Memorex mouse, these buttons are not ideally situated and I found myself not using them all that often. The wheel on this mouse offers a smooth scroll and I found no problems there.



Ergonomics	89
Features	85
Game playability	90
Value for money	90

I was very impressed with the functionality that the drivers had to offer. You are able to adjust the standard settings pertaining to the wheel, like the amount of lines to scroll. The added functions to the wheel offer you the ability to reverse the vertical and horizontal scroll direction. The drivers also allow you to set a range of programmable buttons; these can either be applied to the wheel or to one of the side buttons. Auto Scroll allows you to move your mouse in the direction you want to scroll by simply clicking on the assigned button. With Magic Jump you can quickly move to one of 7 pre-programmed functions, when you click on the assigned button a box pops up and you simply click on the function you want to execute. These shortcuts include links to your Control Panel, Windows Explorer to name a few; you can even shut down your PC this way. A feature I found particularly useful was the Switch AP function - after assigning a button you can switch between open applications effortlessly. The other features are nothing spectacular and include the ability to zoom in and out, you can press on a button to perform the task of a double click, and you can move forward and backward between web pages. Playing games proved to be smooth and I found no problems in that arena. Looking at its ERP this mouse is a good buy as it offers great performance and it has 5 buttons to boot.

<b>Overall</b>	<b>88</b>	Pros: Smooth movement   5 buttons   Value Cons: Nothing comes to mind Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542-1000 ERP: R129.00 Internet: www.sahara.co.za
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Logitech MX700 Optical Mouse

The Logitech MX700 Optical Mouse is the big brother of the MX500. The only difference, apart from the price, is that the MX700 is cordless. This unit also looks a bit better with its (near black) dark blue and smooth metallic finish. The MX700 hosts all the features of the MX500, 8 customisable buttons, smooth operation, comfortable ergonomics etc. Being cordless means that batteries are needed, with normal cordless units you will find yourself changing batteries every so often. Logitech has solved this problem and have included 2 rechargeable Ni-MH batteries. What is even better is the fact that the receiver module doubles as a docking station/battery charger. This allows you to pop the unit into the docking station when it is not used and you should not have to worry about batteries for a very long time. The initial charge took about three hours. A flashing LED on the mouse, below the three buttons and the wheel, lets you know when it is charging by blinking green, and when it is done the LED turns solid green. If the batteries run low the LED blinks red, and you can simply pop the mouse back in its cradle. If you



Ergonomics	95
Features	90
Game playability	91
Value for money	84

**Overall**  
**90**

**Pros:** Everything, except...  
**Cons:** 3 extra buttons don't work in games  
**Supplied by:** Logitech [011] 452 - 7331  
**ERP:** R1199.00  
**Internet:** www.logitech.com

are planning to go LAN'ing for a weekend I suggest you take some spare batteries with, just in case your mouse does not get enough time to charge. Something I did not particularly like was the fact that the battery charger did not draw its power from the USB port, instead you have to plug a supplied power adapter into the USB cable which in turn charges your battery. The Logitech MX700 has two channels of communication, if you have other wireless devices such as a keyboard or joystick, you might find that there is some interference between the devices and you can simply switch channels to overcome this problem. More seriously, if a couple of people at a LAN use wireless mice (the same mouse, and they sit right next to each other) you might have some trouble, and two channels might not be enough, but I have never experienced this to such a degree that drastic measures were necessary. The drivers of this mouse are also exactly the same as the ones found with the MX500 but with one addition, a battery meter, which is surprisingly accurate. I really liked this mouse, it has all the right features, its ergonomics are flawless and to top it all off it is very comfortable to use. Personally I would still stick with the corded version but I think that this is only so that I can use the Mouse Bungee. But seriously, wireless mice have never really appealed to me, however the Logitech MX700 has managed to convince me otherwise.

Genius PowerScroll Wireless 2.4G

For some reason, Genius does not explore and experiment with many mouse designs, or at least they don't make them commercially available. Although they have a design that works with their current range of mice, consumers want to see new and innovative designs and shapes. The Genius PowerScroll Wireless 2.4G has nothing new and exciting to offer in the field of ergonomics but its ambidextrous design has been welcomed by many computer users. The main feature of this mouse is its high radio frequency of 2.4 GHz, with a range of about 3-4 meters. The mouse features 2 buttons and a wheel. In fact, this mouse is exactly the same as the one bundled with the Genius Wireless 2.4G TwinTouch+ albeit a different colour. Sadly though it still uses a ball but I have it on good authority that an optical version is on its way. The unit runs off two AAA batteries that fit under the palm rest. Having a high radio frequency requires you to have more channels to hop between in case of interference and the PowerScroll Wireless 2.4G offers 16 of them. The receiver unit connects to your PC using a PS/2 port and is a bit larger than what I would have preferred but that is not a major issue. On the receiver are



Ergonomics	80
Features	80
Game playability	85
Value for money	89

**Overall**  
**83**

**Pros:** 2.4 GHz radio frequency | 16 channels  
**Cons:** It's not optical | It offers nothing spectacular  
**Supplied by:** TVR Computers [011] 807 1390  
**ERP:** R539.00  
**Internet:** www.tvr.co.za

three LED's which indicate Power, Action, and Battery Low. The Power LED should speak for itself, the Action button simply flashes as the mouse moves and the Battery Low indicates when the battery is, you guessed it, low.

The drivers offer some handy features. On the button set up menu you can assign various tasks to the all the mouse buttons except the left button (I found this quite strange), on the other two buttons you can assign any of the 37 or so tasks which include, zoom, cut, copy, and paste. You can also assign an application to execute or you can make the EasyJump menu appear. The EasyJump menu is a circular menu on which you can jump to one of 8 various options such as run your web browser, close current application, open the Windows Control Panel, and so on. The mouse did not move as smoothly as some of the other mice, but it was very acceptable during game play, I also did not pick up any problems and the mouse performed effortlessly. Sadly though it does not have as much to offer as some of its counterparts and if I were buying a mouse today this one will not be on the top 3 list.

Saitek Optical Mouse Pro

I have always seen Saitek as the brand with the most solid constructed mice. This might sound strange but if you look at the mice they produce you will see what I mean. The Saitek Optical Mouse Pro follows in this tradition; it has a black and silver finish and hosts a shape that is sadly not very comfortable. The first thing you will notice about this mouse is the funky blue light on the top and around the back of the unit, interestingly this is more than just a gimmicky LED and I will explain later. I mentioned the shape was not very comfortable, especially not for intensive use such as gaming; this is because the mouse does not form a rounded shape at the back which means that your palm cannot rest comfortably on it. The drivers are very comprehensive. You are able to customise all 3 of the buttons to one of about 45 actions, which include magnifier, cut, copy, paste, and hyperlink with which you can assign any program to launch when you click the assigned button. You can also set the orientation; this allows you to hold the mouse at an angle comfortable to you without jeopardising its accuracy. There are some other mundane settings which



Ergonomics	60
Ergonomics	82
Game playability	75
Value for money	55

**Overall**  
**68**

**Pros:** Email notification lights  
**Cons:** Expensive | Not shaped for gaming  
**Supplied by:** Virtual Media Systems [011] 678 3221  
**ERP:** R499.00  
**Internet:** www.saitek.com

include X Focus, which makes a window active when you move the pointer over its title bar, Slow Motion, which allows you to slow down the mouse pointer when pressing the shift key to allow accurate positioning (useful when you draw with your mouse), Sonar, which helps you find mouse pointer by pressing the Ctrl key, Pointer Vanish, (the best feature of the lot) which hides your mouse pointer when you type, and Pointer Wrap which causes your mouse to "come out of" to the opposite end of the screen when you move it off your desktop boundaries. The main driver function of this mouse is its ability to detect when you have received e-mails, although you have to enter the account settings, and using the light on the mouse it will notify you when an e-mail has arrived. You can customise the speed at which the light on the mouse will flash or you can turn the light off all together. You can also filter the e-mail addresses so that the light will only blink when e-mail from a certain recipient is received. The Saitek Optical Mouse Pro is not a mouse I would recommend a gamer to buy, it does however offer smooth control. Sadly, some of the other mice have much more to offer, especially looking at the comfort level. This mouse offers some nifty features, especially for home use. I did enjoy using it and if only it had a more ergonomic shape and a couple of extra buttons this would have been a great contender. Pity about the price though...



## Aopen Open Mouse

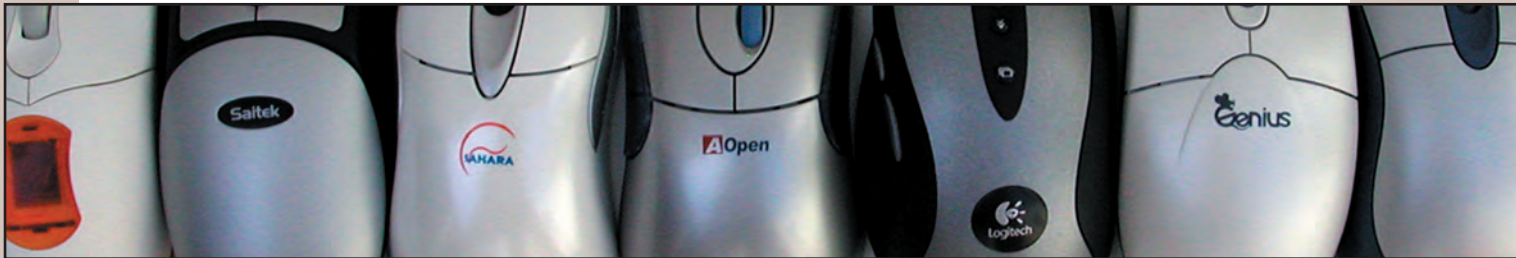
**A**Open is a strong competitor to most of the big names in the computer industry, and they are continually expanding their product line. This ambidextrous mouse sports a silver and translucent-blue body and it has two wheels built in. This unit also features 2 extra buttons to either side of the body, but again they are not situated in an ideal position. Something that you might either love or hate is the weight of this mouse which is very light, and sadly this does make it feel flimsy. Looking at the drivers, you will notice that all the buttons except for the left click button is customisable (if you choose the left-handed configuration, it would be the right click button). There are about 56 different functions you can assign to each button, these include cut, copy, paste, close application, run, undo and so on. The two wheels are used for





scrolling vertically and horizontally in documents or web pages. The accuracy is customisable and you can swap them around if you wish. If you do not use horizontal scrolling you can use the second wheel to zoom in and out of documents.

One of the functions you can assign your buttons to is NetJump and LuckyJump. NetJump, when activated, will pop up with a grid of fully customisable commands pertaining to web browsing; you can set it to contain a shortcut to your e-mail application, Internet browser, or to move forward and backward between web pages. LuckyJump on the other hand allows you to assign various Windows based commands like accessing the Start menu, opening Windows Explorer, or minimising all your windows to view your desktop. There are 26 commands you can choose from and you can even create your own commands to run a certain application or perform a certain function. Playing games proved not to be this mouse's strong point, although it was accurate and smooth during game play, the two side buttons were not recognised in the games I played. I would have also loved to be able to use the two wheels independently of each other in games, but sadly both wheels are picked up by the games as one wheel. Looking at its price, this one should not be overlooked if you are in the market for a mouse for home use.

Ergonomics	86	<b>Overall</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>Pros:</b> Two wheels   Comfortable to hold <b>Cons:</b> Games do not recognise certain buttons <b>Supplied by:</b> Rectron [011] 203 1000 <b>ERP:</b> R139.00 <b>Internet:</b> www.aopen.com
Ergonomics	88			
Game playability	80			
Value for money	89			



Name	Interface (PS2/USB)	Wireless/Corded	Mouse Buttons	Batteries	Optical Mouse	Resolution	Pictures per second	Price	Rating
<b>Mouse &amp; Keyboard Bundles</b>									
Labtec Wireless Desktop	PS/2	Wireless 27MHz	2+ wheel	AAA keyboard, AAA Mouse	No	-	-	R599.00	78%
Genius Wireless 2.4G TwinTouch+	PS/2	Wireless 2.4GHz	2+ wheel	AA keyboard, AAA Mouse	No	-	-	R825.00	88%
Memorex RF Multimedia bundle	PS/2	Wireless 27MHz	4+ wheel	AA keyboard, AAA Mouse	No	-	-	R950.00	84%
 Logitech Cordless Desktop Navigator	PS/2 & USB	Wireless 27MHz	2+ wheel	AA keyboard, AA Mouse	Yes	800 dpi	1500	R1299.00	90%
<b>Mice</b>									
Microsoft Wireless Optical Mouse Blue	PS/2 & USB	Wireless 27MHz	2+ wheel	AA	Yes	Information not available	6000	R629.00	82%
LG Optical Mouse	PS/2	Corded	2+ wheel	-	Yes	540 dpi	1500	R199.00	73%
Sahara Optical	USB	Corded	4+ wheel	-	Yes	600 dpi	1500	R129.00	88%
 Logitech MX500 Optical Mouse	PS/2 & USB	Corded	7+ wheel	-	Yes	800 dpi	4700	R799.00	91%
Logitech MX700 Optical Mouse	PS/2 & USB	Wireless 27MHz	7+ wheel	AA	Yes	800 dpi	4700	R1199.00	90%
Genius PowerScroll Wireless 2.4G	PS/2	Wireless 2.4GHz	2+ wheel	AAA	No	-	-	R539.00	83%
Saitek Optical Mouse	USB	Corded	2+ wheel	-	Yes	Information not available	Information not available	R499.00	68%
Aopen Open Mouse	PS/2 & USB	Corded	4+ 2 wheels	-	Yes	520 dpi	Information not available	R139.00	85%



# creative cardcam value

With digital photography becoming all the rage, everyone is trying to get in on the act - no more film, no more expensive developing, no more hassles to get your photographs done properly, and no more expensive reprints. Just a PC and, of course, a digital camera. But these items cost a pretty penny, so most people don't get much of a chance to use (never mind buy) them.



It appears that Creative are rising to the challenge though, by producing a number of low and medium cost digital cameras - thereby allowing a greater number of people access to them.

One of these is the Creative CardCam Value. This pocket sized, slim camera is powered by two AAA batteries, and sports a 2MB memory, which allows the user to save 22 photographs at 640 x 480, or 99 at 320 x 240.

The camera connects to the PC using a USB cable and a very simple interface. It is also capable of video capture.

The camera is wonderfully sized, only 21mm thick and around 90mm by 60mm along the front. A conveniently placed "snapshot" button is located at the top of the camera, with a small LCD screen (although not for picture display) and a power button on the rear of the unit.

The idea and the intentions behind this device are great. In fact, it is a really handy little camera, capable and versatile.

However, there are a few problems with the device that users should be aware of.

The biggest of these is the lack of flash.

There just isn't one, and there is no way to attach an independent flash to the camera.

Ok, so that's not an entire train smash, but it does limit the use of the camera to outdoor situations mainly, or brightly lit rooms.

This will impact on the use of the camera for most amateur photographers, who tend to use their camera at social gatherings - exactly when a flash is required.

The other major problem lies in the fact that the camera doesn't ship with any kind of stand.

Not the biggest of mishaps, sure... until you try use it for video capture or as a web-cam.

What happens is that the user has to construct makeshift supports and gantries to support the camera in the desired position - a rather large pain in the rear, I am sure you will agree. Overall, the Creative CardCam Value is a great idea, and for the user

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Small	No stand
Nice price	No flash

SUPPLIED BY: Creative Labs SA [011] 805 0188  
 PRICE: R 529.00  
 INTERNET: asia.creative.com

that isn't going to be too picky it's probably perfect, purely for its convenience and absolute simplicity. But if you are going to be making any serious use of your camera, then you may want to consider another product.

# creative pc-cam 550

It really does seem like Creative have a finger in virtually every pie, doesn't it? But, when you consider that they generally produce very good products, then it makes sense that they should do just that.

Take, for example, the Creative PC-Cam 550. This is admittedly a low-cost digital camera (says so right there on the box) but it certainly out-performs other cameras of that kind.

Unlike many digital cameras, the PC-Cam 550 can take still pictures and capture video. In other words, it can be used as a photo camera and a web-cam, if you like. This is a handy extra, especially when you consider the unit's price.

Looking at this camera from a photographer's point of view is a mistake.

It does not perform as well as any normal film camera (using, for example, 35mm film which needs to be processed at a photolab) which would be any photographer's yard stick to measure a device's performance by.

But, then again, the price of the unit does enter into the picture yet again.

See, this is not a high performance camera, and does not claim to be.

It is a medium performance device that is perfect for every day use - as opposed to professional photography. It is sturdy, conveniently sized, and very versatile, making it perfect for digital snapshots.

With an 8MB memory, the camera can store up to 88 images at either 1280x960 (with software interpolation) or 640x480 (those are 1.3 megapixel photos, if you want to know), or up to 195 images at 320x240. This may seem small, but this size is great for web based shots. It has an integrated strobe flash with variable settings, as well as a self-timed and rapid shot mode.

And, as a nice extra feature, the camera has the PhotoSafe feature - which protects the memory of the camera, even if the three AAA batteries it needs are dead or removed.

Connected to the PC by a USB cable, the camera becomes a video capture device capable of live video capture in 16.7 million colours at a resolution of 640x480, via a comprehensive and user friendly software interface.

Additional software bundled with the device will take care of the user's photo and video editing needs - nothing fancy, but it does work.

This is by no means the best camera on the market - what the Creative PC-Cam 550 is, is an effective and handy way of taking digital photos or capturing live video, no mess, no fuss.



At a price that is comparatively brilliant, it goes a long way towards making sure that everyone out there can afford a digital camera.

Welcome to the new age, folks... the days of celluloid film spools are numbered!

The savings on film and processing alone make this a good purchase, unless you want high resolution pics.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Compact	Not exactly of professional standards...
Versatile	

SUPPLIED BY: Creative Labs SA [011] 805 0188  
 PRICE: R 1229.00  
 INTERNET: asia.creative.com



# logitech gamecube force feedback wheel

Do you have this unquenchable urge to grip something between your legs and pull and tug at it until it gives? Yeah, we all hate pickle jars. And now for something else...



Okay, off hand this is a rather pointless peripheral. No, it's not bad - in fact, it's a fairly good piece of hardware. It's just that when I think GameCube, driving games don't come to mind. Sure, there are a good few on the way, but how many will actually arrive locally?

At the moment the selection is very small indeed. That said, let's take a look at Logitech's steering wheel.

The unit allows you to stick it onto a table or you can attach the leg rest, which allows you to hold the steering wheel between your thighs.

This is probably the best way to play, since we don't all keep our consoles on the living room table.

On the face you find the GameCube controller buttons (minus the two analog sticks), and by your fingers you'll feel two buttons sitting on

the left and right hand sides behind the steering wheel. The chord is nearly twice as long as a standard controller's, so lounging on the couch while driving is highly recommended.

The force feedback is pretty much what you'd expect, with reaction to turns, bumpy roads and opponents slamming into you. The physics aren't perfect, though, especially when you lean into corners.

The problem I have, though, is the wheel's dead-zones are too big and reaction time is slow, but I'm not sure if this was due to the steering wheel or the games we tried, since the reaction varied from title to title.

My best advice - test drive it first before you buy. Price wise it's pretty affordable, considering what steering wheels usually cost you.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Low Octane" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Nice price	Big dead zones
Long cord	Slow reaction
Easy to sit with	Dodgy physics

SUPPLIED BY: Logitech [011] 452 - 7331  
 PRICE: R 849.00  
 INTERNET: www.logitech.com

# logitech z-640 speakers

Crank up the volume as we test drive the Z-680's smaller brother. And for those who are concerned, the verdict on my "disturbing the peace" charge is still pending.

If you've read the review on Creative's new speakers, you'd see that I am in a mood that demands to be impressed. I blame this completely on Logitech after they shipped over the new Z-680 set of speakers - which were very impressive even if you consider the R 5000 price tag. But they at least kept in mind that we're not all into high-risk financing or cleaning car windows, so 5k might be a bit out of the price range of the average punter. Of course, the Z-680 was an all-round solution for folks who want to push great 5.1 sound from everything except the toaster and kitchen sink. It gave Dolby and THX capabilities to your PC, PS2, DVD player and anything else that could take Digital, standard or RCA jacks. The Z-640 obviously doesn't, but it is priced much lower, though this is probably the most expensive set of speakers in its league. But what do you get for just shy of R 1,700? Off the bat, it has the same design as the Z-680, except the sub and speakers are smaller



and there is no control unit or remote.

Instead the volume controls are built into your center speaker, which might be a problem if you prefer that to be on top of your monitor. The control center also has a Headphone jack (but no Mic support). There are five speakers - two to a side and the center. The input cables support cards with up to 6 Audio outs, though a thing called the Matrix button allows you to mimic surround sound on a 2 speaker card. Of course, if you are going to buy something like this, get a decent sound card to support it, at least.

Aesthetically the design is really nice with sturdy speakers set on the steel stands. These can be removed and placed into different positions, depending on where you seat your speakers. All the cables run into the sub, except for the Input cables that come from the PC to the center speaker. And it has the trademark feature I love most in the new Logitech sets - there is no transformer outside on a power cable; said power cable is a single line that goes from your power to the sub, and there is no big transformer box cluttering the floor. The speaker sound quality is solid and clear, so no faults there either. But the acme of this system's impressiveness? A simple little unit that allows you to plug RCA cables into two of the input cables, allowing you to, for instance, run a console's sound through the set. It's small, but the fact that they included it shows the attention to detail that went in here.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Sonic Pop" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Nice design	Rather pricy
Good sound	No Mic support
Mimics surround	

SUPPLIED BY: Logitech [011] 452 - 7331  
 PRICE: R 1699.00  
 INTERNET: www.logitech.com

# gamecube wavebird

A cordless GameCube controller? It even picks up signals from the kitchen while you are making a sandwich with the controller in your pocket. That's why I lost. Not because I suck...

The Wavebird is without doubt on the list of most hardcore GameCube owners. Simply put, it's Nintendo's cordless version to the standard controller, minus the rumble feature. Off the bat, the rumble side of things has been left out to give the controller more battery life. And that does mean it has a rather impressive lifespan of nearly a day of continuous play. The controller is powered by 3 AA batteries, and ships with three ready to be plugged in. The unit has twelve



channel frequencies, so you can plug up to four into a console, and still have several consoles in one room, all with Wavebirds. The odds on that happening are quite small, but it's a nice touch.

The range is also pretty impressive, and you can sit pretty much anywhere you want in the room. In fact, the controller has quite a range, and I only had a cut out on the other side of my house. And I probably shouldn't mention this, but the unit is pretty tough and will survive most household drops (don't play on the roof, though).

I did miss the rumble feature, though, and I wish Nintendo would rather have given us the option of using that, as other third-party cordless controllers do. After all, if you don't want rumble features, don't turn them on. The unit is also quite pricey at more than twice that of a normal controller, plus it becomes a mini remote in that you constantly lose the damn thing. Also, if you start the console without turning on the controller, it doesn't respond.

Overall, though, if you're willing to spend the cash, it's a proper controller with good range, a nice lifespan, and it survives being bounced off a dog's head. So I hear.



REVIEWED BY	
James "Indecisive" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Long range	No rumble features
Good battery life	Pricy
Sturdy	Very lightweight

SUPPLIED BY: Futronics [011] 315 0079  
 PRICE: R 699.00  
 INTERNET: www.nintendo.com



# logitech momo force feedback steering wheel



A wheel is a wheel is a wheel, right? Well, you might think that until you've used a wheel of exceptional quality, like the Logitech MOMO Force Feedback Steering Wheel.

Using the design specs of the award winning MOMO racing wheel (and we're talking the real thing here, used by real racing drivers in real racing cars) Logitech have produced yet another winner. This peripheral must be one of the finest wheels I have ever experienced.

The system uses an optical system, resulting in better in game control and a minimised dead-zone, complete with a 240 degree rotational field. The wheel features six easily accessible buttons on the face of the wheel, as well as two tiptronic style paddles behind the wheel. Additionally, a sequential stick shifter is also included (which can be changed to either the left or right side of the system's housing, making it great for left handed users).

The wheel is finished in a comfortable, non slip (and slightly spongy) substance, making driving a joy. Nothing like a comfortable wheel, folks! Additionally, the foot pedals included with the unit are fairly large and very stable, featuring non slip pads for tiled floors and a "carpet grip" panel that can be flipped out of the way if needed. This is probably the most stable pedal set I have ever found, because it doesn't try to "run away" during use. In fact, the wheel itself is also very stable, making use of a triple clamping system that holds it

fast (although users with a thinner desk surface may have to wedge something under the screw piece). And the Force Feedback? Dreamy, I tell you, simply dreamy. As technology advances, the units keep getting better and more realistic. The whole unit is, unfortunately, rather large. But once you have experienced the performance of this set, size really won't matter!



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Stable	A bit pricy
Sturdy	
Versatile	

SUPPLIED BY: Logitech [011] 452 - 7331  
 PRICE: R 1499.00  
 INTERNET: www.logitech.com

# hey-ban flat speaker

In Japanese "heiban" means flat board - you might wonder why I'm mentioning this, it's because I have a pair of speakers in front of me, A4 in size and only 8.5mm thick, a true technical wonder.

You may be wondering how these speakers work considering they have no cone to generate sound. Well the Hey-Ban works on a very simple principle - a diaphragm is inserted between two magnets with a little bit of space between them to cause vibration, which in turn creates sound. I thought that these speakers would lack a lot of bass but the sound quality was really quite good. The speakers come with their own min-amp that plugs into your sound card, the amp is basic with a volume control, but any good media player like Winamp or Windows Media Player will give you sufficient control to get the most out of these speakers.

One amazing thing about the Hey-Ban system is that they have the technology to create a speaker in any shape or size your heart desires, and the ability to make the speakers only 1mm thick; I guess in Japan where space is a real issue these speakers fit in with their minimalist approach to many things. The build quality on these speakers is impressive, and they can easily be mounted anywhere, making these speakers a real lifestyle product. The sound levels generated were sufficient and performed adequately in 3D games as well as mp3's; the technolo-



gy is definitely very good and shows that sound can be generated using different materials, without sacrificing sound quality. Hey-Ban speakers come in 12 different colours although the plain chrome finished one's I got for review look great and do take up a lot less space than normal bulkier speakers. The local distributor also offers the ability to silkscreen the speakers so companies could have their logo's printed on the speakers or Clans could have their clan logo on their speakers. Hey-Ban speakers seem to defy logic, but are very competent at what they do, they don't have massive amounts of bass but performed well under most sound situations and have a great quality of sound that only distorts at very high levels.

For those looking for something different, the Hey-Ban speakers might be worth a look at.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	MINUS
Slim design	Price
Great finish	Not everyone's cup of tea

SUPPLIED BY: PPA Acoustics 082-963-3270  
 PRICE: Speakers R999-99 | Amp R450-00  
 INTERNET: www.protro.com



# shuttle xpc sn41g2

Okay so many of our readers can sympathize with anyone who has had to carry their 15kg case and 19 inch monitor from the car to the nearest LAN venue, well maybe shuttle has the solution for us with their barebone mini (and I mean mini) Shuttle XP SN41G2 system.

Measuring only (L)300\*(W)200\*(H)185 and weighing only 4.65kg, the Shuttle X-PC brushed in aluminum looks the part. Ok so I know what you are thinking, smaller means less performance right, I mean how can you pack all the features in such a tiny package without sacrificing performance. Well I can tell you unequivocally that the Shuttle XP has all the performance of any full size ATX format and maybe one or two features that a bigger model might not have.



Shuttle have clearly built themselves a niche in the mini pc market by adding features like FireWire (IEEE1394), USB 2.0, digital audio (SP/DIF), analog audio in and out at the front of the mini pc. The back of the case sports more FireWire and USB 2 ports, a network jack, two VGA outs and a TV connector. Now tell me this mini pc is an office pc only.

The SN41G2 is based on the N-Force2 chipset with an onboard 128mb (shared) Ge-Force4 MX graphics chipset, support for 400 MHz DDR memory, Realtek

ALC650 6 channel onboard sound and the latest AMD XP CPU's. The systems will be available with a choice of hard drives from IBM, Seagate or Western Digital and Kingston, Legend, Alpica or Spectek memory depending on the re-seller you buy a system from.

For all the hardcore gamers out there that know onboard graphics just don't quite cut it, Shuttle have included the latest 8XAGP slot for you to fit the latest Radeon 9700 or Ge-Force 4 series, there is also a PCI slot available for any other card you might want to add. With my Ge-Force Ti4400 installed the performance figures were almost identical to my standard ATX system, the only features missing from the Shuttle system is any overclockability in the BIOS with regards to voltage and FSB, but in such a confined space heat would be a problem.

So you are probably wondering how Shuttle manage to cool the X-PC, well they have been innovative here using a heat-pipe system, which works in the following way:

1. The heat pipe uses a hollow receptacle (metal pipe) to transport heat directly from one point to another.
2. The metal pipe is filled with fluid, 90 percent of which is distilled water; the remainder consists of special ingredients added to optimize the liquid's thermal transfer properties.

3. When cold, the pipe contains very little water. However, when the heat pipe contacts the CPU directly on one end, the water evaporates and transports the thermal energy to the cold end of the pipe.
4. The heat pipe fan blows away the warm air and the process starts again, never allowing the top end of the heat pipe to be warmer than the bottom attached to the CPU (the difference is about 8 degrees Celsius).

The only problem I had with this system is the air flow inside the X-PC is very restrictive when fully kitted out and leads to the AMD system running quite hot, it's also not as quiet as I expected and may put an office user off what otherwise is a beautiful looking system. The X-PC does have an overheat warning led and CPU Burn-Proof protection.

The Shuttle X-PC would make a great LAN box considering its small size and weight and the fact that a carry bag is an optional extra. Just add a CPU and DVD/CD/CDR-W drive and you're all set to have the lightest and sexiest machine at the next LAN.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	MINUS
Size and weight	Not cheap
Fully featured	Finish scratches easily
Performance	Heat and noise

SUPPLIED BY: Proton [011] 486 0748  
 PRICE: R 3800.00  
 INTERNET: www.shuttle.com

# creative i-trigue 2.1 speakers

Sit down and crank up the volume on the coolest-looking speakers this side of the cosmos. Pity nothing else blows us away, though.

While I was reviewing these, every person who saw this set would reply with a "Wow. Those look cool!" That's because they do. In fact, the I-Trigue set looks really cool. In short, there are two small, expensive-looking speakers, a sub that hides under the table, and a black volume/power control that hues blue. In short, it looks the bit - a mid-cost speaker system for your PC.

The pity is that it doesn't live up to this. The illusion is quickly shattered when you play sound over the speakers. When it comes to standard game sound, they perform okay(ish), but put any music through them and you realize they distort quite a bit. Sure, they can push the volume, but their clarity is really in dispute. The sub has nice sound, though, but that's rather pointless when the rest of the system does not live up to that. It's not that they distort in crackling tones, so to speak. The sound just lacks any real clarity. I suppose that you can fix this if you are willing to tweak the tons of sound options on your system, but why should you when you've just paid over a grand for the set. Besides, it's Creative.

That must be the biggest disappointment - where did Creative go wrong and release a sub-standard set of speakers? I got the same bad vibe when reviewing their recent MP3 players. It's almost as if the company is going for looks and forgot that aesthetics does not mean quality. Plus, why another huge plug? At least Logitech sets hide their transformers in the Sub box. Lastly, but this is a complaint ranged at most speaker sets from this price range - where are the COAX/RCA ports? Why do these sets all insist that they only use a small, standard jack, effectively cutting out using the digital ports on your sound card or the opportunity of running sound out of a DVD player or TV? Okay, it's a nitpick, but I'd like the option.

What I did like, though, is the sensitive but proper volume control, which responds really well to your tweaking. Creative also had the insight to add a headphone jack to the control, which most companies forget to do. There isn't a Microphone jack, though. In a nutshell - buy something else. You can pick up something much better for a few hundred more, or



something that does the same job at a few hundred less. Basically the I-Trigue is a low-cost speaker system with a sub. Don't let the looks fool you otherwise.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Woggabonga" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Looks nice	Poor sound
Good sub	No Audio Jack support
Nice volume control	Inferior to similar sets

SUPPLIED BY: Creative Labs SA [011] 805 0188  
 PRICE: R 1,299.00  
 INTERNET: asia.creative.com



# a-open h-600b computer housing



You know boring gray cases are on the way out when the big suppliers start offering computer cases in different colours and with a Perspex window. People who don't have the skill or time to do their own case mods can now go out and get a modded case off the shelf.

It's good to see just how far the hobby of case modding has come, when the big manufacturer's of cases like A-Open start bringing out modded cases like the H-600B - then it's no longer just a hobby. A-Open have taken their very successful H600 series and added a few modifications.

The great thing about this case is the easy installation and access to the motherboard and drives, the case also has thumbscrews on the side panels for easy entry. Added to this the H-600B also has space for up to 9 drives (4x HDD 1x stiffy & 4x CDROM) which is something you don't see in many cases now days. Ventilation is very good in this case, with only 1 of the optional 8cm fans, my system is now running roughly 5-8 degrees cooler than my previous case, and with the optional fans this case could really be considered a decent over-clockers case. The A-Open H600 is attractively finished in matt black with silver trimmings; add the side Perspex window and you have one hot looking case. Response to it has been really overwhelming with the quality of the finishing's impressing even the hardcore case modders. The Perspex cutout is really nicely done with no sharp edges. And the 300watt power supply has run perfectly fine powering a XP1800, GF4 ti4400 and 5 drives.

All in all a quality product at a reasonable price without all the hard work of creating your own case mod; add the A-Open sound activated cathode fluorescent lamp and you have one styling case to show off at any LAN.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	MINUS
Easy installation Looks great Thumbscrews	No aluminum model

SUPPLIED BY: Rectron [011] 203 1000  
PRICE: R999.00  
INTERNET: www.rectron.co.za

# a-open sound activated cathode fluorescent lamp

So you have a I33t case, with a window, funky rounded IDE cables and enough fans to start a mini-tornado and you're thinking, what else can I add to my modded box? Maybe some lighting is what you are looking for?

Case modding has become so mainstream that everyone has done something or is planning to do something to their vanilla cases. Well once you have decided to add a window or better air cooling, one option that has been pretty limited has been the availability of some decent lighting mods in South Africa, unless you were willing to spend a lot on bringing it in from overseas your options were few and far between. Rectron, the distributors of A-Open, have seen a gap in the case modding market and have introduced a few products that are aimed at the case modding scene -

yes finally someone who agrees just plain gray is boring! Above I reviewed the A-Open H600B case, a great looking black and silver number with a built in window. I then looked at adding the A-Open sound activated cathode fluorescent lamp to this box. Installation was a breeze; just find a spot that you would like to install it, remove the 3m covers and stick it down, connect it to a power connector and boot up your machine. The lamp has three settings - off, on and



sound activated. The sound activation also has a sensitivity control that responds to the level of sound. Pump up your latest Mp3's while in sound activation mode and watch the cathode respond to the music, really cool for showing off your case mod to envious friends. Adding lighting to your case mod makes it stand out from the rest - A-Open has made this a relatively easy and affordable task.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	MINUS
Easy installation Looks great Sound activation	Looks a little plasticky

SUPPLIED BY: Rectron [011] 203 1000  
PRICE: R 179.00  
INTERNET: www.rectron.co.za

# mouse bungee

The Mouse Bungee is one of those products that make you go "Why didn't I think of that?" If you have not converted to a cordless mouse, you would have no doubt come across the problem where your mouse cord hooks or snags on something, or the weight of it makes moving your mouse around your desk very uncomfortable. The Mouse Bungee was designed to eliminate that problem.

There are two flavours of this product - the Mouse Bungee and the Mouse Bungee Crystal Pro. The Mouse Bungee is a plastic housing with two 45 degree coils coming out of it. There is a weight in the base to keep the Mouse Bungee stable on your desk and at the end of the two coils is a clip with which you clip your mouse cord into the Mouse Bungee. When your mouse is clipped in, the two coils will bend over and move with your mouse. This makes for surprisingly effective snag-free mouse-ing. The Mouse Bungee Crystal Pro is simply the Mouse Bungee with a mouse pad built on. The "pad" is a reversible piece of tempered glass. On the one side it is smooth and on the other it is textured. The smooth side works best for optical mice and the textured side makes movement with a ball mouse feel accurate and smooth. What I like about the Mouse Bungee Crystal Pro is that you can place your own logo or photograph under the glass. This innovative product works surprisingly well, and sadly for us South Africans this product is on the pricey side. Retailing at \$9.95 for the Mouse Bungee and \$24.95 for the Mouse Bungee Crystal Pro I cannot see that it will be very popular here.



REVIEWED BY	
Tom "The Toolman" Taylor	
PLUS	MINUS
Eliminates cord snags Very smooth movement Looks funky	Price

SUPPLIED BY: The Mouse Bungee Company  
PRICE: \$9.95 [+ -R85.00] | \$24.95 [+ -R207.00]  
INTERNET: www.mousebungee.com



# GA-8INXP Motherboard

Intel® E7205 Chipset

GIGABYTE  
TECHNOLOGY

sponsored by

Your Components Solution Provider

rectron  
www.rectron.net



**G** GA-8INXP featuring Intel's first AGP 8x motherboard.

Powered by Intel E7205 chipset supporting the latest Intel Pentium 4 Processor with Hyper Threading Technology up to 3.06GHz and above. With Dual Channel DDR memory

architecture that supports a maximum memory size up to 4GB, the platform is poised to deliver an unrivaled performance through a theoretical memory bandwidth of up to 4.2GB/sec. GIGABYTE new and innovative patented technology Dual Power System (DPS) design is made to deliver utmost power to drive the next generation of Socket 478 Pentium 4 processors. The ingenious design features a 6 phase power circuitry that ensures seamless current is delivered to the processor for stable and reliable operation. The board, coupled with several of the latest cutting edge technologies such as Serial ATA, Gigabit LAN network, ATA 133 RAID, 6-channel audio, plus the usual fare of features unique only to GIGABYTE, the GA-8INXP will bring users an unlimited level of computing experience.

## FEATURES AND BENEFITS

### Supports Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology

Provides a performance boost on multi-threading and multi-tasking operations for the Intel® NetBurst™ microarchitecture.



### Dual Channel DDR memory architecture

Supports a high capacity of up to 4GB memory size, providing the highest performance platform ever seen with utmost double bandwidth up to 4.2GB/sec, delivering high value segment for the mainstream DDR memory solution.



### First AGP 8x Intel Chipset based motherboard

Featuring AGP 8x (AGP 3.0) the new generation VGA interface specification that delivers enhanced graphics performance with high bandwidth speed up to 2.12GB/s. Allowing users to have a more realistic graphics experience while gaming or movie watching.



### GIGABYTE patented technology - Dual Power System (DPS)

A cool stylish neon blue Dual Power Voltage Regulator Module (DPVRM) that supply a total of 6 phase power circuit design, delivers a high durable power design for the new generation Intel platform.



### Silicon Image Serial ATA interface

Serial ATA is the new generation for ATA specification that



provides an outstanding performance for data transfer. With up to 150MB/s data transfer rate, Serial ATA is faster than current Parallel ATA, while providing 100% software compatibility

### Promise RAID + ATA 133 IDE Controller

Supports RAID 0 (Striping) or RAID 1 (Mirroring) function, through GIGABYTE outstanding smart-bios technology, GA-8INXP provides additional two IDE UDMA ATA-133/100 connectors that support not only HDD but also other ATAPI devices such as CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, CD-RW and DVD-RAM.



### Intel® Kenai 32 Gigabit network Connection

On-board 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN connectivity utilizing Intel® LAN for value-minded users who need straightforward network connectivity.



### High Speed USB 2.0

Dual-port rear connectors and two headers for four front panel ports. With data transfer rates up to 480Mbps, 40 times faster than USB 1.1, providing a faster data transfer rate between platform and peripherals.



### High quality 6-channel AC'97 audio with S/P-DIF function

Integrated Realtek ALC650 AC'97 audio CODEC chip, enabling users to experience the seamless high quality 6-channel audio while watching movies or gaming.



### GIGABYTE Patent DualBIOS™

Provides a double security for BIOS from virus attacks, enhancing the PC stability.



### GIGABYTE unique EZ-Fix™ AGP 4x and memory DIMM slot with Anti-Burn™ design

Prevents motherboard from damaging if an AGP 2x (3.3V) is inserted or memory module is not properly installed.



### GIGABYTE Unique AGP 2x Detector

Sends out a warning signal light when an AGP 2x (3.3V) card is installed.



### User Friendly Overclocking Features

EasyTune™ 4, an exclusive Windows based overclocking utility that totally changes the traditional way for "overclocking".



### Colour coded front panel pin design

Easily recognize colour codes provides an easier way to install front panel devices such as Power switch, Reset switch, HDD LED, Power LED, PC speaker.



### Round Corner PCB Plate Design

Provide a better durability with round corner design, preventing motherboard edges from cracking during accidental bumping.



## SPECIFICATIONS

### Processor

- Socket 478 for Intel® Pentium® 4 with HT Technology

### Chipset

- Intel® E7205 MCH
- Intel® 82801DB ICH4
- Intel® 82540EM Gigabit Ethernet controller
- Silicon Image SiI3112A chip
- Promise 20276 RAID controller chip
- Realtek ALC650E Audio AC'97 CODEC
- Super I/O: ITE I/O IT8712F chip
- 2 x 4M bit flash ROM

### FSB

- 533/400 MHz FSB.

### Memory

- Type: Dual DDR200/266 ECC support
- Max capacity: Up to 4 GB by 4 DIMM slots

### Internal I/O Connectors

- 1 x FDD
- 2 x Serial ATA
- 2 x UDMA ATA 133/100/66 Bus Master IDE
- 2 x UDMA ATA 100/66 Bus Master IDE
- 2 x USB 2.0 (4 ports by cable with rear USB bracket)
- S/P DIF input/output (with rear bracket)
- 3 x cooling fan pin headers
- CD/AUX in

### Expansion Slots

- 1 x AGP 8x
- 5x PCI (PCI 2.2 compliant)
- 1 x Dual Power System slot

### Rear Panel

- 2 x USB 2.0 ports
- 1 x RJ45 LAN port
- 1 x LPT
- 2 x COM ports
- Audio (1 x Line-in / 1 x Line-out / 1 x MIC) connector
- PS/2 Keyboard/Mouse connector
- 1 x Game/Midi port

### CPU/AGP/DIMM Settings

- CPU FSB / Multiplier / Vcore Voltage adjustable via BIOS
- AGP Voltage / Clock adjustable via BIOS
- DIMM Voltage / Clock adjustable via BIOS

### Hardware Monitoring

- System health status auto-detect and report by BIOS
- H/W detect and report power-in voltage, CPU voltage, and Fan speed.

### Form Factor

- ATX
- 30.5cm x 24.4cm

### Other Features

- GIGABYTE patented DualBIOS™
- IDE #1-#4, SCSI, LS120, ZIP, CD-ROM and USB bootable.
- Suspend to RAM (STR)
- Supports USB KB / MS wake up from S3

### Bundle Software

- Norton Internet Security
- Norton Anti Virus™
- Norton™ Personal Firewall
- Norton™ Privacy Control
- Norton™ Parental Control
- Ad Blocking
- GIGABYTE Windows Utility Manager
- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Adobe Acrobat e-Book Reader
- IAA (Intel® Application Accelerator)
- Direct X 8.1



# editing for unreal tournament 2003 chapter three - get your guns

Welcome to the third chapter of our Unreal Tournament 2003 level editing series. We're about halfway through now, and doing well.

Before I begin, I would just like to make sure that you, the reader, understand that I can only give examples. How you utilise them is up to you. But, on the bright side, after this chapter you will, finally, be able to make fully functional deathmatch maps. They won't work really well with bots just yet, but they will be fine to play with your friends. So, let's get started...

We know how to build our rooms - various shapes, mind you - texture them and light them. We also know how to add static meshes for decoration, and create a general atmosphere in our level. But these levels are not really playable yet, because there are a few things missing - like guns.

Before we get going on that though, I will, for the examples in this chapter, be using texture and static mesh sets from the Abaddon range.

### Arming the natives

Okay, let's build a room. It doesn't really matter what size and so on, seeing as you should have arrived at a point where you have several rooms - maybe even complete levels - waiting for weapons. But, if you are making a room for this tutorial, make sure that you make it big enough to move around in.

Right. Now that we have the spot we want to add our weapon, we need to put in a weapon spawn point, or pickup base. Open your actor browser (the same one as textures and static meshes - just click on the actor tab) and select the xPickupbase option (near the bottom of the tree.) Under this category, you will see xWeaponbase. Highlight this option, and then right click (preferably in the orthographic viewport) on the spot you want to place the weapon pickup base. Select the "add xWeaponbase here" option from the popup menu. You will see that a generic weapon base has been added to your level, in the form of a static mesh object. Make sure of the base's position in the various viewports, and there you go - a spot for weapons to appear. However, this will not produce a weapon. We

need to tell the game what weapon is to be provided here, and we do so as follows: right click on the weapon base, and select xWeaponbase properties. At the bottom of the popup menu, you will see the weapon base option. Select it, and then pick a weapon type from the drop-down menu that appears in the weapon type option. That's all there is to it. This will produce weapons at a default rate. We will take a look at setting this kind of detail towards the end of this series of tutorials. You will notice that you cannot see your weapon here - it will only be visible in the game. Now we need to make sure that our weapon base works - of course it does, but let's take a look anyway. Make sure you "build all" before hitting the play map button. And don't forget your player start spot!

### A box of bullets, please... and a side order of health

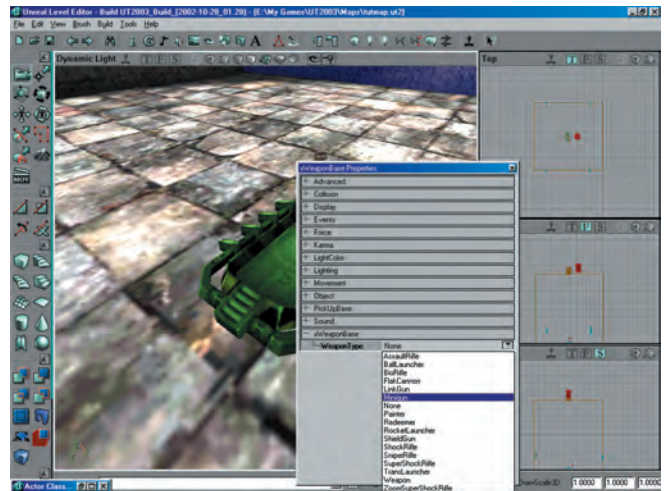
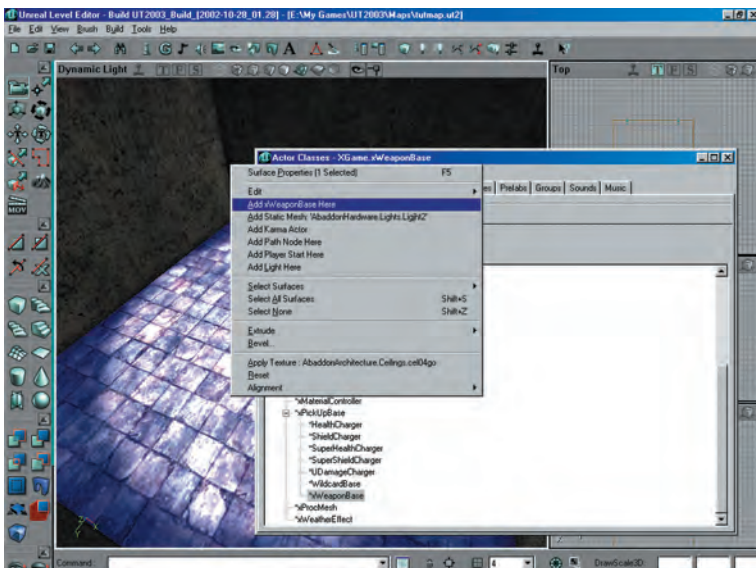
Ok, so we've put in a gun. Hell, we can put in thirty, if we want, or even more. But people eventually will run out of ammo. To add ammo, follow these steps: select xPickups from the actor interface. Note that this is not a base, but a pickup. Select ammo, then UT ammo pickup, and highlight the kind of ammo you want. Right click where you want it, and select "add [ammo type] here," where [ammo type] is the variable that will change according to the ammo you have selected. In fact, any kind of pickup can be placed in this way - health, shields, amplified damage... whatever. Go through the pickup and pickup base lists to see what items are available for you to use within the game, and try them out. Don't be afraid to experiment - the worst that can happen is a program crash!

### Going up...

Movers are a very important element of any level, because they provide an alternative to stairs and jumping. These objects move when activated by a player stepping onto them. The most

common kind of movers are lifts, and these are the ones I will be discussing. However, a little logic will ensure that the designer can create movers that go sideways, diagonally... wherever.

The first thing to do is find an appropriate mover. Although virtually any static mesh can be set as a mover, there are some that are designed as such. For this tutorial, I will use ElevatorLM1GO (from the miscellaneous category of Abaddon Hardware) - with ElevtrackLM1GO as a lift rail, just for added realism. In fact, to ensure accurate placement, I will lay the track first, using copy and paste techniques to make sure that it is long enough. After the track is in, it is time to add the mover itself. Select (and highlight) the mover static mesh you want to use. Then instead of adding the mesh in the usual "right click" fashion, click the "add mover" button. This will add a purple mover to your level. Using the various edit views, position the mover at its start position (i.e., where it will spend the most of its time, and where it will be when the level starts.) Now comes the complicated part - or at least as complicated as this simple procedure gets. First of all, bring up the mover properties dialogue, and expand the movers option. There are a large number of settings that can be made here, but we are just going to deal with the ones that will make your life work... we will look at other variables in a later chapter. The first setting we want to adjust is out KeyNum setting. This





stipulates the positions that the mover can go to. For now, we are just going to use two - the bottom and the top of the track. Make sure your mover is positioned at the start point, and make sure that the KeyNum value is 0 (zero). Now set the KeyNum value to 1, and move the lift to its next position. Now, if you enter 0, the lift should go to the start position, and entering 1 should place it at its end position. Make sure to change the KeyNum value before manually placing the lift, and make sure that you reset the KeyNum value to 0 when you are done. This is a finicky procedure, and you will probably have to try a few times to get it right initially. Now, we will set the move time. The default MoveTime setting is one second - this is the time it will take your lift to complete its full move. You can change that if you like.

Now, one last setting. Under the Object tree there is an option called InitialState. Set this option to StandOpenTime - this means that a player will have to

### players needed

Obviously you are going to need more than one spawn spot for a deathmatch map to work properly. Luckily, adding multiple spawn spots is easy - just add a player start spot wherever you want your players to spawn. The game will randomly determine who spawns where during play.

### balancing a level

There is no cut and dried rule for balancing the weapon distribution in a level. However, certain things should be kept in mind - good levels never provide any one player with an advantage at a spawn point. Everyone should start out on a level, with advantages being gained through the game. But that's up to you as a level creator. It depends on how you want your level to play. A level with only rocket launchers will play very differently from a level with only sniper rifles. Experimentation is the key here. Try a few combos before you try and impress your friends with your level. This counts for any kind of pickup that you put in the game.

### file naming

It is important to save your maps with the right name. Unlike other editors, you do not need to perform any kind of exporting for your map, but you will have to name your file correctly. To make sure that your map occurs in the right menu, you have to insert code letters before the name. Say, for example, you have created a deathmatch map called SnoCone. Your file that you save will have to be called DM-Snocone.ut2. The codes are as follows:  
**DM-\*.ut2** for deathmatch  
**BR-\*.ut2** for bombing run  
**CTF-\*.ut2** for capture the flag  
**DOM-\*.ut2** for domination  
Please keep in mind that the "\*" in the above codes is a variable placeholder, and that it must not be included in the file name. Also, make sure that the file is saved in the "maps" directory of your Unreal Tournament 2003 directory... this is the default directory that the editing software saves to, so you will only need to worry about that if you actively changed the file's location.

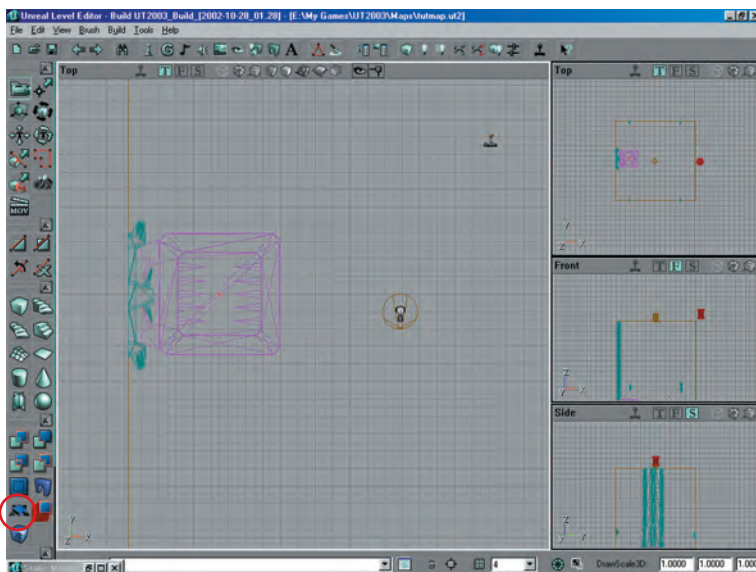
stand on the lift to make it move... rather than have it go off at the slightest bump. There you go, you have a working lift! Build it and test it.

### A little noise

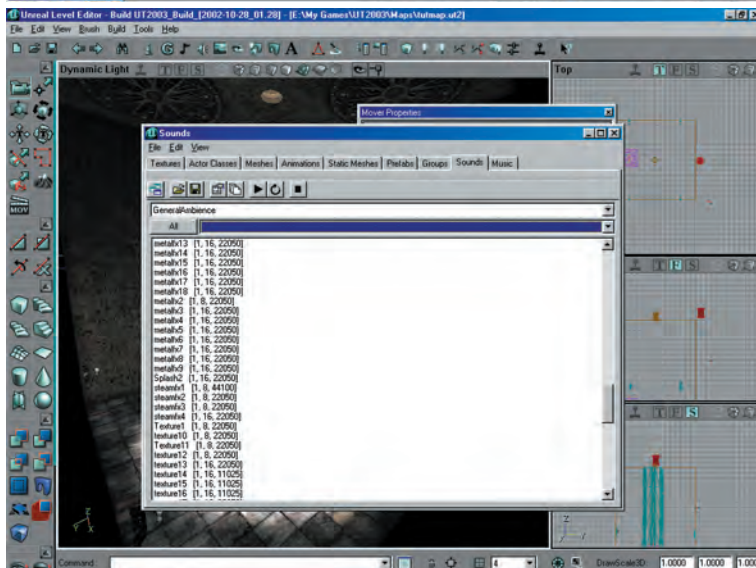
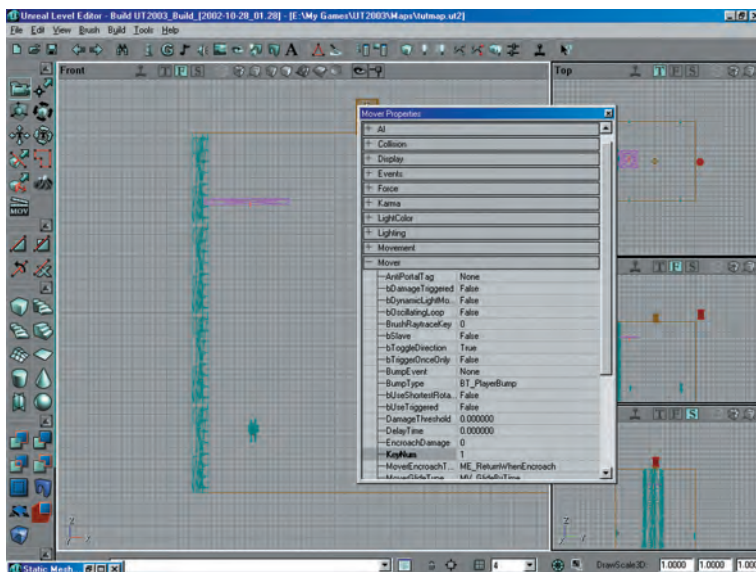
One last thing. Most objects have default sounds but some, like movers, do not. To make your mover "say" something when it is activated, you need to assign a sound. Open the sound browser (yes, you guessed it, same as the texture one) and find a sound you wish to use. This can be time consuming, folks, but finding the right sound is important. Open a few files and dig around - it's well worth it. Highlight the sound you want to use. In the MoverSounds options of the mover properties dialogue, set the sound by selecting opening sound and clicking use. A closing sound can also be set in the same fashion - they can even be different sounds.

Well, we have run out of space. Next time around we will be taking to the skies in two ways - jump pads and the great outdoors (plus a few extras.) Until then, happy building.

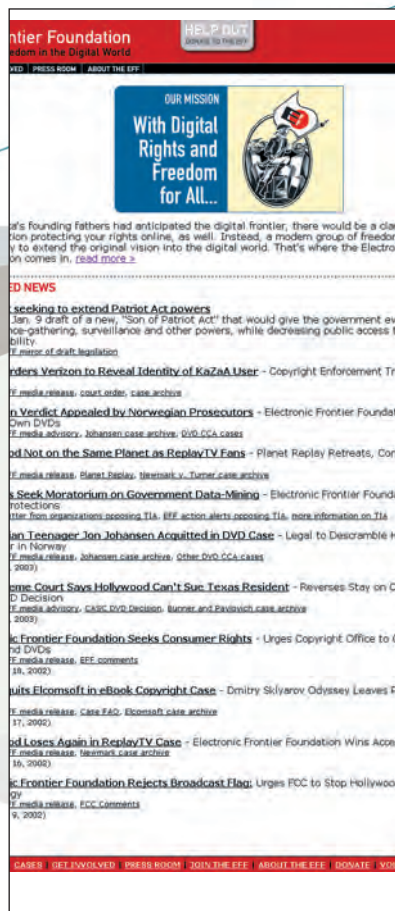
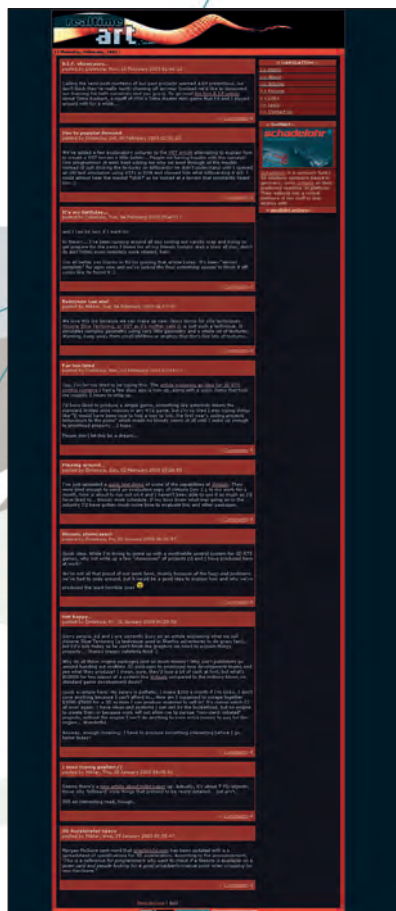
► Selecting sound is time consuming, but worth it!



▲ The circled button is the "Add Mover" button, in case you are too lazy to go back and check chapter one. Once added, the mover will appear as a purple mesh in the editing views







Unreal Discworld

www.discworldmod.net/

If you haven't read a Discworld novel, or you don't know anyone who has read a Discworld novel, that means one of three things - you can't read, you know extremely dull people or you prefer Tom Clancy. Nevermind, though, for help is on its way, in the form of Harold Stibbons, an Unreal II Total Conversion (TC), based on Terry Pratchett's crazy but fun world.

Of course, a gun-crazed Discworld shooter might sound novel, but you can only shoot so many over-curious wizards before it all gets dull. So that's where the twist comes in - the TC is no a shooter but an adventure game! Okay, you do still get weapons, though, as you set off to find out who stole your right, and only, shoe. In the process you'll also discover why Ankh-Morpork is in Chaos as you travel from there through the lands to the forests of Uberwald.



quick hits

www.osearth.com/resources/worldometers/worldcrew.shtml

Ready to be scared out of your wits? Then go to this site, not for gruesome imagery or some new horror film promotion. This site calculates the average of humans that are born or die every second. It also then carries stats on availability of food, resources and other material. The result? Very bleak, indeed...

www.divstivs.plus.com/iconwar/

Marvel at an excellent piece of Flash animation, namely Icon War! The action takes place on a desktop when the MSN icon decided to throw its head at the ICQ icon, which retaliates with gunfire. Pretty soon the IE icon is attacking the Outlook Icon, and the Norton Icon is trying to electrocute My Computer.

www.whatisthematrix.com/

Hey, where have you been? The last two Matrix movies are being released this year, and we are all drooling after seeing the absolutely mind blowing Superbowl trailer. Of course, that's on the cover CD, but it's also on this site, as well as posters, screensavers and other goodies for the next two films.

bookmarks

www.froencpu.com/cgi-bin/froencpu/cig-01.html

Don't know what to buy for the smoker who has everything? How about a built-in cigarette lighter for his PC? And at \$19.00 the smoker would never even have to look around at where their lighter went to...

http://thesurrealist.co.uk/slogan.cgi

Need a slogan fast? Don't give a damn about your credibility? Then head over to this site and type in our name. Or any name. Perhaps a company name. And get such gems as "Nobody Better Lay a Finger on my Nag."

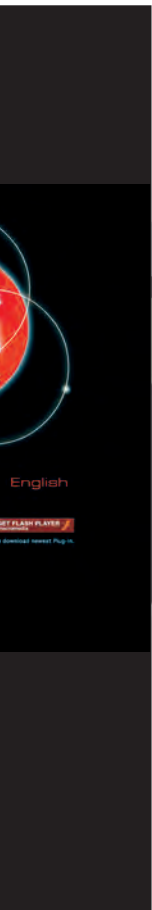
www.gurpsonline.com/

You don't know what GURPS is? Well it stands for Generic Universal Role Playing System. In short, it's a system that can be used as the base for any roleplaying world, and the pen-and-paper version includes the likes of Star Trek and Discworld. This site is dedicated to online games based on the system.

www.sammy-zone.com/gash

From the makers of the Guilty Gear X games comes the sequel to Galerian, namely Galerian: Ash. All the way from Japan, the survival horror is now making a US debut, and the official website tells you a lot of what it's about.





[www.1000manlan.co.za](http://www.1000manlan.co.za)  
a 1000manlan event

**Home Page**

**Competition games - pressure builds**  
6 February 2007

The first arrivals we received about the selected competition games were from the (quite a) community software to being asked by those concerned players to get the game loaded in the official computer tent to spike their voices, and the greatest amount of word built has been generated by them so far.

If we want your favourite game included, send us an e-mail, tell your friends and clan members to sufficient interest to cover a competition format, we include those games on our application for support registered and said, we will make sure that we include the game in the competition.

If there is enough interest too, we will organize dedicated servers for the different games so that noise

**Press Release**  
3 February 2007

1000manlan are asking for the co-operation of all South African computer gaming enthusiasts to bring the record at the **Waterloo Base Waterloof**, in Capetown, Gauteng.

Later in 2007 at the **World Wide Cultural Finals, the Summer League of South Africa (SLSA)** (previously known as the Southern Hemisphere to register a 1000 player LAN event. Put a number of reasons, the 1000 manlan, and now the Aussie have beaten us to it!

On January 12th and 13th this year, the Melbourne-based **Shuffled LAN** sold 700 tickets in advance, vendors, staff and exhibitors bringing this estimated attendance figure to over 1000 (final number to be confirmed).

The only way the 1000manlan record breaking event can be guaranteed a success is if everyone South African would be to bring all of the national PC gaming **senior president** from all regions into the tent included to the **SLSA, Mayhem, Chaos, Gamers, Staff, 1000manlan, Latgama, and Ten Worlds** gaming communities and online gaming providers in South Africa because it is only through the computer gaming event that South Africa and the Southern Hemisphere has seen.

**Getting Something Out**

PC gamers in South Africa have always been looking for recognition - by it from their parents, in games, competitions. The 1000manlan event is being planned as a catalyst to expand that recognition, with **international exposure** that the 1000manlan event will generate, nobody will be able to deny the a report in South Africa's future.

South Africa's **eff** are invited to attend the competition which has more than half the available expanded at every event - will be invited to fill the rest of the available spaces, and will include a video introduction to PC and PC gaming.

The 1000manlan event has been selected to include an IT exhibition of both those players and sites available, and provide free travel, registration or address for their PC's, should any of the games or action of the games, a viewing area will be set up, and some alternative entertainment will be available.

Alisa Hillman, seen at Waterloo's Airbase at the highly successful **Alisa Aerospace and Defense** War on **Alisa**, games, and competition to the wide area to show their interests in **plastic model building**, and associated PC gaming.



The conversion is still a way bit off, but the site gives you a bit of info, as well as a look at some of the characters, weapons and livestock.

**Have Idea, Will Post**

[www.realttimeart.za.net/](http://www.realttimeart.za.net/)

So what is Realtime 3D? Well, played a game recently? Of course you have. There you go then - realtime 3D is what produces those polygons on your screen, making everything look great thanks to bump-mapping and textures, and oozing atmosphere thanks to the lighting. And this website regards that as art - real time art, so to speak.

Founded by two local 3D developers that some of the online crowd know, the site is about promoting real time 3D art, in whatever form it comes. This means a site full of articles about creating 3D worlds, project ideas, failed projects, profiles on 3D developers and development, and so on.

The site design itself is just as professional, and you can see that the people involved know what they are doing and have a passion for design and art. It's still in its early stages, so it needs the support from a development community. So swing by!

**The Electronic Frontier Foundation**

[www.eff.org/](http://www.eff.org/)

Think your rights are secure online? Think again, and when you consider that the online world is the equivalent of the Wild West - a proverbial nomansland - then you'd realize that unless there was someone out there looking out for us, we'd be in trouble. That's what the Electronic Frontier Foundation is about. This non-profit group is out to protect the rights of people online, campaigning against exploitive or unconstitutional laws.

Their website is a hive of news on their activities, news related to the online fight for digital rights, and other activities that ultimately help or hurt you. For example, who do you think pioneered online privacy, stopping companies from legally harvesting your personal information from your machine and then using it against you? Or helped enforce that sites should keep your information confidential.

The EFF is also a pseudo watchdog to make sure that governments don't overstep their line, for instance by brining in laws that are unconstitutional.

**Ikaruga Online!**

[www.ikaruga-atari.net/](http://www.ikaruga-atari.net/)

Never heard of Ikaruga before? Neither have we. But that's because up to now Ikaruga has been a Japanese Dreamcast game hiding in the land of the rising sun, avoiding our western eyes and itchy game fingers. But now Infogrames have announced a port to the PlayStation 2 under the Atari license, so we can see what it takes to have what has been called a cult shooter. Strangely, though, it has nothing to do with shooting cultists. Those crazy Japanese...

**The thousand man LAN!**

[www.1000manlan.co.za/](http://www.1000manlan.co.za/)

Apparently there has never been a thousand-attendee LAN in the southern hemisphere. Or at least, there wasn't until the Australians had a 1040 man LAN (but they counted the vendors as well), and now someone wants to make the record local. This is what we've been told visiting the above site. The 1000manlan project aims to have the biggest LAN in

**apocalypse now?**

So, are we in the end times? Partly because of a looming war between the US and Iraq, but mainly because we've been watching that C&C: Generals trailer all the time, it's time to see if the end is high.



[www.chrisnelson.net/](http://www.chrisnelson.net/)

Before you hit the other sites, go to this one first. Chris Nelson's site A Brief History of the Apocalypse lists past, failed doomsday predictions, debunking a lot of the myths and rumours doing the rounds.

[www.apocalypsesoon.org/english.html](http://www.apocalypsesoon.org/english.html)

Okay, this site is ALL Doomsday. In fact, if they could say "we're screwed" they would, but they are far too religious for that. Still, a good resource if you're planning your own doomsday cult.

[www.survivingtheapocalypse.com/](http://www.survivingtheapocalypse.com/)

This skeptics site lists whenever we were supposed to die. For instance on October 19th 1533, Michel Stifel, a biblical Scholar and Mathematician, expected the Apocalypse to start at 8:00 AM. Guess not...

[www.surfingtheapocalypse.com/](http://www.surfingtheapocalypse.com/)

This site doesn't exactly fall into the Apocalypse site mould as it's more about collecting ideas that might pertain to apocalyptic events. As the site says, 'Apocalypse' actually means to uncover. In short, they are more about enlightenment than the end of the world.

[www.religioustolerance.org/destruct.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/destruct.htm)

One thing that relates well to Doomsday and Armageddon are the Doomsday cults. This site has a list of Doomsday cults that have been dangerous or can be very dangerous.

[www.bullatomsci.org/clock.html](http://www.bullatomsci.org/clock.html)

This is a site you should take seriously. The Armageddon Clock is a scientific date synopsis on how close humans are to nuking themselves. Its quite scary, considering that on 2002 the clock was moved to 11:53. Of course, it was at 11:57 in 1984.

[www.countdown.org/](http://www.countdown.org/)

O, we're all dead anyway. The countdown has begun. And this site has all the answers. Except for the rather rational suggestion of just getting really drunk and sleeping through the whole thing.

the southern hemisphere and by far the biggest one in South Africa.

The LAN will have both a competitive element, a BYOC section, game displays, and other things to attract crowds and entertain bored girlfriends, parents and spouses as their current boyfriend, significant other or offspring have a ball.

All the info is on one pretty detailed page, and by the time you read this there will have been some changes to the event, so best go to the site and read up on it. Then get your cash together, register and help SA grab a world record!



by Jarred Krombein

**EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS - NU METRO**

To start off with, let me just say this is not the end to a Robert Mugabe joke. It is however the title to one of the most enjoyable modern B Grade horror movies. As you can gather (and if not the continuing sentence will clarify it for you) this film is about spiders, and not just any spiders, giant hairy radioactive freaky mutant eight legged creatures. The most enjoyable thing about this movie is that it keeps its tongue firmly in its cheek and never tries to be scary or of the slightest high quality. Its trash at its best, and that is the way it was intended right from the beginning. This film aims not to end up but more to "honor" those tacky 60's monster movies, except this one has a far bigger budget (hey it's produced by the team that gave us ID4 and Godzilla). The story line is thinner than a piece of paper, but it's carried brilliantly for 90 minutes. The basic premise is that a can of toxic waste is spilt into a nearby river (cliché). It gets to the spiders that grow to enormous proportions (another cliché). The spiders attack the nearby village eating and killing all in its path (you guessed it, cliché, cliché). A lone hero who left town zonks ago returns to save the day and win the girl he has been in love with from day one (cliché, cliché, cliché). The spiders die, the town is saved (besides the few eaten) and all live happily ever after, but wait we are given the hint there will be a sequel (final cliché and roll credits). As you know I am a horror nut and this sort of movie is right up my alley, but I am not saying that it is good for that reason, and I can admit when horror is bad, and it can really go bad (Soul Survivors, DTOX) so believe me when I say, see this movie, it will be the most enjoyable 90 minutes you can spend in front of the TV, and by the way you will never look at spiders the same way (keep the can of Doom near you for all those Daddy Long legs that crawl by.) The DVD's features include Directors commentary and theatrical trailers.

**40 DAYS AND 40 NIGHTS - STER KINEKOR**

Take the premise that a man cannot have sex for 40 days and 40 nights; that's nothing of everything - no kissing, no touching, no nothing. Now imagine how brilliant a movie like this can be, the possibilities, the angles in which it can take us, all I can say is funny, funny and more funny (add in that it's produced by the same people who did Bridget Jones Diary and I have to add in another funny). Well what can I say, no matter how many funnies I add to this review nothing will change the fact or try to convince me that this film was anything remotely close to it, it was more BORING, and I say that in capitals to stress the fact. I really must learn that when they try and sell a film on the popularity of another it has to be mediocre at best. But all in all it did have a rather interesting storyline. A man after his latest breakup throws himself into sex, morning, day and night. He then comes to the realization that this is only making him feel worse and the only way to deal with the issue, is to not have sex for 40 days. All is going fine until he meets the girl of his dreams (and why not, this would only happen once he started his no sex policy). The film then goes on with the couple falling in love and all the people around him betting he will never last, and they don't make it easy, as everyone is out to make sure he screws up (no pun intended). The film takes 95 minutes to tell this story, but it really feels like 95 hours. The first few minutes are great and the last few are even better, but those in-between, all I can say is have your index finger ready to hit that fast forward button. The DVD's extra features are nothing important to write about, as the film is nothing special, so the same goes for the features.

**THE SUM OF ALL FEARS - NU METRO**

For years we got used to a certain man playing Jack Ryan and that man was Harrison Ford. And as the movies went along, Harrison became Jack Ryan, and then we get a new Tom Clancy/Jack Ryan Film but no Harrison Ford, instead we are presented with Ben Affleck as the new agent Ryan. Now anyone who thinks that the two look alike, have the same personalities, stand up now and beat yourself senseless with a plank of wood. Also Ben can only wish he was anything like Harrison, as the closest he will get is playing characters that Harrison no longer wants, shame Ben we still kinda love you. The Sum of All Fears on all accounts is a really good film and can stand with all the previously made movies. This time the CIA suspects Russian scientists of developing nuclear weapons. They follow a danger-ridden trail to a shocking discovery; terrorists plan to provoke a war between the U.S and Russia. It is up to Agent Ryan to defuse the situation and save the day. The story may sound like it has been done before, and I'm sure we will find many films that can fit this description, but The Sum Of All Fears, is an action packed thrill ride, that will be well worth the money you laid out to rent/buy the movie.

Once you watch the movie you will actually forget that Harrison Ford ever played this role, as I have to admit to the fact that Ben does a really good job and is a really good actor (more proof of that can be found by the number of films he has done to the number of films his best bud Matt Damon has done). The DVD comes with some nice extra features including, commentary by the director and novelist Tom Clancy, Visual effects and theatrical trailer.

**BUYING THE COW - STER KINEKOR**

This movie has been waiting to be released for quite a while. I first heard of it early last year and got excited as it seemed to have a fun story line and had a fun cast - Alyssa Milano, Bridgett Wilson Sampras (yes married to the tennis ace), Jerry O'Connell, Ryan Reynolds, etc, etc. It finally hit the shelves almost a year later, and was it worth the wait? Yes and no. Yes as it was a fun movie, no as I had been so obsessed with it, I raised it to more than it should have been. Buying the Cow tells the story of a man who has a commitment phobia, hitting the dating scene furiously when his girlfriend moves away, but starts to pressure him to make the biggest commitment of all. At the same time he is obsessing with the one girl who got away, the one girl he believes he is meant to spend the rest of his life with, all the while, no one has ever seen her and few believe she exists. Situations happen and we are sent along with the cast on a dating frenzy. Now I have said this plenty of times before and I will say it many more, this film is not original, it has been done many times before, but it is fun and that's all that matters. Watch it with your friends, have a laugh, have some fun and you will not regret the choice. In fact these kinds of movies tend to put you in a good mood for the rest of the day and the next.

The DVD has nothing special on it in the special features department. In fact it only has one extra feature and that is, wait for it, you will not be disappointed. The special feature is Filographies. Go run, now buy the DVD for that reason only, and then when you have the disk put it in and enjoy the movie.

**THE ROOKIE - NU METRO**

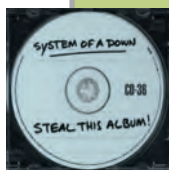
It's really sad when a great movie goes straight to video, because the public shows no interest in its subject matter. The Rookie centers around baseball, a sport not played in South Africa, and a sport that many South Africans don't understand, hence a movie with the subject will be passed by. The only exception to the rule may be if the movie has a huge star in it, like Kevin Costner (Bull Durham), but then every coin has two sides and For Love of the Game stank (also starring Kevin Costner). You can't win.

The Rookie is based on a true story and comes out of the Disney stable, so expect, smaltz and cute storytelling. The story goes that a baseball coach makes the major league after agreeing to try out if his high school team made the playoffs. Now as mentioned this is a Disney film and never will be left with a sad ending, so you kinda know what to expect at the end.

The Rookie, putting all the Baseball aside is a really spiritual movie that delves into life's choices and ambition and the fight for it. This movie will lift your spirit and motivate you to go out in life and get what you want, and at the same time entertain the living hell out of you. The DVD's extra features include commentary by the director and deleted scenes with director's intro. The Rookie will hit home in all ways.



by Walt Pretorius

**Steal This Album! | System of a Down**

The misconception that many people have that heavy metal is mindless has been shattered by the thought provoking lyrics and incredibly off-beat styles of System of a Down, a relative newcomer on the scene who have just released their third studio offering, entitled Steal This Album. Not that they are always serious - in fact, this band's warped sense of humour (reflected in both the words and sounds of their music) is one of the things that makes them so incredibly popular. And Steal This Album is full of that kind of stuff. Basically a stop gap between new recordings, Steal This Album is packed with sixteen tracks that were never included on their previous albums. But it certainly is not second rate - this is utterly brilliant stuff! **(Sony)**

**Sean-Nos Nua | Sinead O'Connor**

The short haired (yes, she is no longer bald) Irish song bird returns with her most beautiful voice. On this new album, Sinead returns to her roots, recording an album that she says she always wanted to; a collection of Irish folk and traditional songs, all bitter-sweet, sometimes heart wrenching and always utterly beautiful. The sadness of Irish music is perfectly complimented by O'Connor's honeyed voice and the gentle accompaniment that makes up the thirteen haunting, stirring tracks on this album. Fans of either Sinead O'Connor or Irish music will love this album... it is a gentle and wistful introspection for her, and will leave the listener moved and (although maybe a little sadder) uplifted. **(David Gresham Records)**

**Theory of a Deadman | Theory of a Deadman**

This self titled album is the first offering from this Canadian band and, as one might expect, Chad Kroeger from Nickelback had a lot to do with it. Not that he is involved in every Canadian band - he just has a touch that can be heard in the music of Theory of a Deadman immediately, even by the most inexperienced listener. I guess you could describe this band as a heavier version of Nickelback, but they aren't clones. They certainly have their own musical identity, and their brand of rock is great. It pleases me that, after grunge, college rock and all the other pretenders, true rock still lives. **(David Gresham Records)**

**MTV Road Rules Vol. 1 | Various Artists**

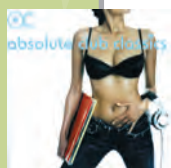
Here's a cool collection of modern rock tracks that ranges from utterly spectacular to not bad. It is an interesting journey along the highway of modern rock, and allows the listener to experience the wide variety of styles and approaches taken by young bands around the world. Featuring artists like Hoobastank, Jimmy Eat World, AFI, Sinch, New Found Glory and more, this album is a brilliant glimpse into the future of music. There is some light hearted stuff here, as well as some deadly serious stuff - in other words, this album should cover every rock oriented taste. **(David Gresham Records)**

**Between Two Lives | Cutting Jade**

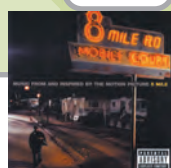
South African outfit Cutting Jade appear slick and well polished on this album. That is thanks to the fact that they are a talented band, and the production is of a high standard (something that has improved vastly in the local scene recently). Cutting Jade offers the listener a good look into South African contemporary rock and, although their material may not sound as original as it could, it is solid and well performed by this talented band. It certainly says good things for the local industry that bands like this are getting places, rather than just the usual metal acts or dance DJs. By the way - this is a 2 CD album... great value for your cash! **(David Gresham Records)**

**Angels With Dirty Faces | Sugababes**

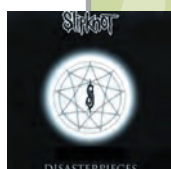
This is an album that really should have been featured earlier, but space is so often a problem... Anyway, the great thing about the Sugababes is that they introduce a wonderfully fresh breath of air into the world of hip-hop and R&B. Good voices and catchy songs blend in this collection of eleven very different songs. This isn't the usual stuff you might expect from these genres of music - there is a newness to the music which sets them apart from the crowd, and makes this album well worth the money. **(Universal)**

**Absolute Club Classics | Various Artists**

Now here is a fresh approach to dance music! The Absolute Club range is well known for having produced a couple of very good dance albums, and now, with Absolute Club Classics, there is yet another to add to the list. But this time they haven't tried to get the latest and best songs on the compilation... in fact, they have turned their eyes back to when dance music was still disco, and they have produced a twenty track collection of remixed classics for your dancing pleasure. This is great club stuff with a nice retro twist. Very enjoyable indeed... **(Gallo)**

**8 Mile | Various Artists**

With the unprecedented (and largely unexpected) success of Marshall Mathers, better known to his fans as Slim Shady or Eminem, Hollywood has decided to jump on the band wagon and make a movie based on his life. Entitled 8 Mile, the film tells the tale of Eminem's long hard road to fame. As is to be expected, this sound track album is full of hard core hip-hop but, surprise surprise, it isn't full of Eminem tracks. Of the sixteen tracks, only four are performed by Mr Mathers and these, I must be honest, are the best tracks on the CD. Other artists on this CD include D12, Jay-Z, Xzibit, Macy Gray and hip-hop newcomer 50 Cent. All the artists on here are top class performers who give it their all on this sound track - their homage is obvious! This is a great hip hop collection. **(Universal)**

**Disasterpieces | Slipknot (DVD)**

We are very fortunate indeed this month to get a sneak peek at the latest Slipknot release. Not a CD, but rather a double DVD that features a host of stuff for the Slipknot fan to freak out to. The first disk offers 15 live tracks from both albums, including Left Behind, Spit it Out and Wait and Bleed - performed at the London Arena, this live section was covered by over 30 cameras, including cameras fitted to the masks worn by this nine member band... allowing the viewer to witness the onstage mayhem first hand. Also included is some interesting behind the scenes footage. The second disk contains all of this ultra-hardcore band's videos, even featuring the very rare animated video for Wait and Bleed (meaning that there are two video versions of this great song on offer). In addition, a bonus audio track, entitled "Purity" has been included as well. Never heard of it? Of course not - you can only get that track on this DVD! Slipknot is a very difficult pill to swallow, but rest assured - they are a masterful band, brimming with talent and absolutely incredible to watch live. This DVD is a brilliant investment! **(David Gresham Records)**

Universal Music have kindly given us 3 copies of the 8 Mile soundtrack to give away, along with 3 8 Mile posters. To get hold of one of these packs, send your details to [comp@nag.co.za](mailto:comp@nag.co.za) (subject: 8 Mile) or snail mail them to PO Box 237, Olivedale, 2158. Oh, yeah, and remember to include the answer to this question: "On which rap superstar's life is the film 8 Mile based?"



S

## HRYKE AND PRIEST ARE SURFING WHEN THEY STUMBLE ACROSS AN INTERESTING WEB SITE...

- Shryke:** Australians. They just can't do anything right, can they?
- Priest:** Well, there is the Sydney Opera house, Fosters beer, Australian Surfer chicks, Kylie Minogue's butt...
- Shryke:** Shane Warne, several extinct species, yeah, I know... but check this out. They tried to do the biggest ever LAN, and the only way they could make up the numbers was by counting the crew as well. That's not right, surely?
- Priest:** Australians can count?
- Shryke:** Not properly, apparently. Not when it counts.
- Priest:** When what counts?
- Shryke:** Counting.
- Priest:** Well, that would be the point of counting, wouldn't it? **[shakes his head at Shryke]** Anyway, what did the Australians miscount LAN-wise and how does this possibly matter to me?
- Shryke:** Well, Priest, I am glad you asked that. It appears that they counted one thousand and forty people... Hark! Look at this...
- Priest:** Why do you have a tag on your shirt that says "Ask Me About The 1000 Man Lan!"?
- Shryke:** Behold yonder web site, Priest. Behold and look on in awe...
- Priest:** "See Stacey and her Pony have fun..."
- Shryke:** **[hurriedly closes browser window]** Um, no. The other one... that one there **[points at grubby monitor]**
- Priest:** Oh. **[ponders the website]** Well, I suppose a 1000 man LAN is interesting... Of course, that means 1000 smelly gamers in one room.
- Shryke:** I think we could live with that... if it means beating the Aussies at something else. Okay, maybe not something else. Just something.
- Priest:** Well, if I attend, only 999 smelly gamers.
- Shryke:** Dude, just because you cover yourself in cheap deodorant doesn't mean you don't stink. But that's beside the point. Think about it... 1000 gamers... oh, hang on...
- Priest:** Hey, you're the one who rubs yourself with car deodoriser! **[Priest sniffs himself, just in case]**
- Shryke:** I just thought of something...
- Priest:** Miracles never cease...
- Shryke:** Well, think about the LANs that take place in this country...
- Priest:** They have tables?
- Shryke:** And what else?
- Priest:** The network always falls over?
- Shryke:** Yep. And when a 1000 user network falls over, how loud will the crash be?
- Priest:** Louder than sixteen bottles of prune juice!
- Shryke:** Pretty much. But I am sure they will probably have some kind of contingency plan in place. Come to think of it, do the people actually have to play? I mean, they just need more than one thousand and forty people attending, right. Not counting crew...
- Priest:** Actually, they just need to sell that many tickets, and give 950 people the wrong address...
- Shryke:** Dude, I have an idea...
- [Priest holds his breath... and breathes again]**
- Shryke:** Let's do one - a 10 000 Man LAN! We sell the tickets, and give EVERYONE the wrong address! We'll be rich!
- Priest:** I already did that. Why do you think I had to change my name to Jabba Doornail? FYI, if an angry mob ever shows up...
- Shryke:** Um, they already did. But you're safe. I said you'd be at the 1000 Man LAN...







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