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Cover: Gordan Freeman just can't win... but one man's junk is another man's treasure. Check out the preview inside!

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ESTIMATED TOTAL **636 MB**

The following companies make the Cover CD possible every month...

without them we are lost.

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Clever heading up there... I thought of it all by myself...

Well here it is. Be impressed, I am. Considering everything that went wrong and then right and then back to wrong again I'll still pick up this issue years from now, shake my head and go, "whoa! No ways dude." It's been absolute hell on pages - the problems ranged backwards and forwards from a simple case of the flu that turned into something that had a pale faced staff member rushing off to test for SARS - just the flu it turned out to be after all; now add to this being attacked by some nasty dog down the road, increasing the size of the E3 supplement half-way through production, some pure laziness, a car with a dead battery and many other annoying issues and you end up holding a miracle. Typing this here during the final hours I'm half expecting the power to trip for the night… anyway all of the above have in large and small ways contributed, be it good or bad to what you're holding tight now. But then it's not like you really care… all you're after is a good magazine - so to make you care I'm going to be really clever and turn what I suspect to be a nasty mess here and there [if you look closely] into a competition - a spot the mistakes competition - and whoever finds the most embarrassing mistake or stupid slip up wins a cool prize. There'll also be a few runner-up prizes. Now remember, we're not talking about simple spelling mistakes or grammatical slips - goodness knows there are going to be plenty of those; I'm talking red faced howlers or worse. Send your entries to my address: **ed@nag.co.za** with the subject line: screw up. We'll announce and publish the results next issue…

Now onto the serious stuff…

Nedbank does care

Those of you who have been following the exciting saga of me against the banking world will be thrilled to know that I actually received a response. Well I suppose the words exciting and thrilled are assuming a bit too much but anyway… Here's the reply - it's a little too PC for my liking but hey at least they are trying. [*Here is the letter*]:

Good day Michael

Your letter in the May edition of NAG Magazine on the poor service received at Nedbank refers. My name is Paul Truter and I am a Senior Manager in the Nedbank Vehicle Finance Product Support Division. The Settlements Unit, with whom you attempted to engage, is part of my area of responsibility and I apologise at the outset for the poor service that you have experienced.

The root cause of the problem, quite simply, is that we did not have adequate capacity on our inbound telephony systems to handle surges in volumes like those experienced in April this year.

Following this, in an attempt to reduce call loads we implemented an e-mail solution for settlement requests (which I see you used). In addition we employed extra staff and extended our work shifts to ensure that all requests on a particular day are, as far as possible, resolved on that day. These interventions have helped, but we recognise that it's still necessary to upgrade our systems. This upgrade is already in progress.

I don't mean to offer a list of excuses. The damage has been done and I can understand fully the frustration that you must have gone through. Please be assured that your complaint is being treated with the concern that it merits.

Our staff are dedicated and we care about customer service. I urge you to contact me if you are still having problems or in future if you have any further issues.

Regards

Paul Truter

Nedbank Vehicle Finance

In other news (this can be seen as good or bad depending on your taste), are you ready for this… Ramjet will be gracing the pages of NAG once again. If you're reading this and wondering who Ramjet is, he used to write a rather nasty opinionated column in NAG a while back. He's rude, offensive and now needs money after blowing his life savings on a two year tour of a Siberian Salt mine strip club circuit - his argument of, 'it didn't look anything like the brochures' didn't stand up in court and the judge threw him out for being terminally stupid. Anyway, look out for him.

Enjoy this issue!

Michael James
Editor

next issue

Well, after an issue like this how on the wet Earth do you expect us to do any better...? The truth is we probably won't in August. As much as I'd like to get all excited about the August issue I really can't tell a fib - it will be full of good things rest assured - but it'll be nothing like this one. So the plan then is to give us off for a month so we can recover... Then we'll impress you with the September issue.

The August issue will be on sale: 25th July 2003

caption of the month

Bee fun knee

Each month we'll select a screenshot from one of the games in the issue and write a funny caption for it, well... we'll try and make it funny...

Your job is to see if you can come up with an even funnier caption and send it to: **ed@nag.co.za**
Subject: **July Caption**
If you use the wrong subject in your e-mail it'll get deleted...

Your prize: Our sponsor for the screenshot of the month competition is Vivendi Universal Games. They said they'll give us something interesting each month... if we don't want it we'll be sure to send it along to the winner mentioned to the right of this... here...?

▲ 'Security officer Barney lights a fart in Block **A** section **D** - Alias barely escapes' - **nag's best [13% lame] effort**

may winner

▲ 'Life was tough for secret agent Siamese twins.' - **Ben Crous**

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Motorola's Wearable Wireless

As part of Motorola's ongoing design development, some concepts were recently launched at the New Orleans CTIA Wireless 2003 conference. Motorola Offspring ('Wearables') is a design exploration of a family of connected, modular wireless communication devices. The concepts utilize Motorola's iDEN technology, as well as the latest advances in miniaturization and Bluetooth technology, to enable entertainment, business, and security-related communications and broadband applications. The devices, individually designed to be worn as fashionable accessories, each have an independent power source and memory. Each device communicates and shares information with the other devices and the user, operating as a seamless personal network.

WDA (Wearable Digital Assistant) - The WDA is a handheld device that contains the same components as an iDEN phone. This device does not use a numeric keypad. Instead, it contains voice recognition capabilities, a video-game-like navigation device, and high capacity storage for audio and visual data. Like the other products in the family, the WDA is Bluetooth enabled for seamless wireless connectivity between devices.

Wristable - The Wristable serves the same function and has the same technical description as the WDA, but it is worn on the wrist. The display is black and white. he materials are plastic for the housing and rubber for the areas that interface with the user.

Goggles - Integrated into the frame of exciting, stylish sports eyewear, this device incorporates a heads-up display, digital camera, ear bud and microphone. Due to the power requirements, there is a tethered cord that runs out the back to an external power supply. You can view 800 X 600 displays while simultaneously staying in touch with the world around you.

Comport - A Bluetooth enabled, wireless hands free earbud and mic combination, this unit interfaces with the WDA and the Wristable.

Radio-button (Wireless push-to-talk) - This wireless, Bluetooth enabled Push-to-Talk button can be worn as an accessory.

Digi-Cam: Digital Camera - This is a mini-digital camera that is Bluetooth enabled. It has a clip that allows it to be worn on any piece of clothing. Tethered to the digi-cam is the shutter button. After an image is captured, it is immediately sent to either the WDA or the wristable.

Intelli-pen - This is a pen with two tips, a rollerball with ink and a plastic tip that can go over on any surface. There is an LCD screen on the side of the pen for viewing of functions and to review what has been written. For the ink, the user can write or draw on a surface, have the original in ink and a saved digital version in storage independent of the WDA or the wristable. The data can be uploaded to the WDA or the wristable at any time, where it can be sent to any email account. The same is true for the plastic tip but without an original copy.

Nyko Wireless Net Extender

Nyko Technologies have released the Wireless Net Extender, a device that allows a console, specifically a PlayStation 2 or Xbox, to connect to an Internet connection elsewhere on the premises. This means that the line need not be run to wherever the television is in the house. The unit has excellent bandwidth, to avoid causing game slowdown.

XBOX AND PLAYSTATION 2 PRICE CUTS

Sony and Microsoft have both cut the prices on their current flagship console systems in the US. Whether this will affect pricing locally remains to be seen, but certainly it's cheaper to import these units from that shore than it was. Sony are also about to release an updated version of the PS2, which includes built-in online networking support and revamped DVD playback hardware.

SONY ANNOUNCES HANDHELD PLAYSTATION

Sony expects to have its upcoming PlayStation Portable on the market by the end of next year. The unit will feature the new UMD disc format, which will hold up to 1.8GB of data. As well as DVD-quality video playback, the unit will feature advanced connectivity options, and will use memory sticks instead of the memory card standard in previous PlayStations.

EYETOY AND USB HEADSET FOR PS2

By October, Sony will release a USB camera called the EyeToy for the PlayStation 2. The device incorporates motion capture technology to allow a player to interact virtually with games on-screen. In addition, Sony will also release a USB Headset for the PS2 that makes use of Voice Over Internet Protocol in September, for use with games that support a headset.

SONY'S HARDWARE AND ONLINE PLANS

In the US, the PlayStation 2 Online Pack has been made available, consisting of a console and a Network Adapter. This gambit into the online market is being reinforced by a partnership with Electronic Arts, which has agreed to make nine of its sports franchises PS2-exclusive for the remainder of this year and the next. Sony will also simultaneously release, early next year, an internal 40GBN hard drive and Square Enix's Final Fantasy XI, the only PS2 game to date to require hard disk storage. The persistent online world that will be playable in this game will allow cross-platform interaction, supporting both console and PC versions of the game.

XBOX MUSIC MIXER

Music Mixer for the Xbox allows users to take advantage of the Xbox's multimedia capabilities. Users will be able to share digital photos and music, view slideshows set to music, sing Karaoke, play back CDs and make use of sound visualisers, much like MP3 playback applications for PCs do.

NEW JOYSTICKS FROM LOGITECH

Two new joysticks from Logitech will become available within the next couple of months for PC and Mac. The Logitech Extreme 3D Pro is the high-end unit, primarily targeted at hardcore joystick users, and features 12 programmable buttons, comfortable twist handle, rubberised 8-way hat switch, high precision throttle and a stable, weighted base. The Logitech Attack 3 is a unit that is intended for any category of gamer. This stick is designed to be as easy and simple to set and use as possible, and features an ambidextrous handle. The unit has 11 programmable buttons, and is similar to the Extreme 3D Pro in most other regards. Both offer USB connectivity. The product bundles will include an extensive array of software, from proprietary applications to optimise joystick performance to third-party software of interest to gamers.

SUPERCOMPUTER MADE OF PLAYSTATIONS

A group of scientists have built a supercomputer by combining 70 PlayStation 2s. The researchers obtained the hardware at retail prices, and still seriously undercut the average cost of a regular supercomputer. Admittedly, however, the cluster is not among the fastest arrays in the world. Ironically, it is not the PS2's main processor that the scientists harnessed, but the graphics processing unit, the Emotion Engine. The cluster was built up by linking the innards of the consoles via a high-speed switch. Currently, the system is being used to carry out calculations in quantum chromodynamics, an offshoot of nuclear physics. The most interesting aspect of this development is the fact that increasingly the most powerful computing equipment is being developed for end-users, particularly gamers, rather than large corporate entities or military organisations.

Intec PS2 Peripherals

Intec is launching a PS2 controller and 2.5" TFT game screen which will play DVD's and comes packed in an aluminum case.
www.inteclinkeurope.com

New cameras from Sony

Two new Cyber-shot cameras will become available next month from Sony, the DSC-U60 and the DSC-U30. The first is waterproof to a depth of 1.5m and is vertically oriented, making it usable with one hand. Little is known about the DSC-U30, which is presumably a cut-down version of the U60.

Logitech Internet Chat Headset

The Internet Chat Headset has it all - rich stereo sound, a noise-canceling microphone, in-line control for extra convenience, and a sleek behind-the-head design. With a 9-foot cable you have plenty of room to move around. Ideal for voice & video chat, multiplayer gaming, and music listening.
www.logitech.com

OmniView 2-Port KVM Switch

Belkin's OmniView 2-Port KVM Switch is a device that allows two PCs to share one monitor, keyboard and mouse. It includes all cabling, requires no power supply and features hotkey commands to allow switching between the computers via the keyboard. A limiting factor may be that it appears to only support PS/2 connections for keyboard and mouse.

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XBOX CONTROLLERS FROM LOGITECH

Also to debut in the next couple of months, Logitech's Precision Controller and ThunderPad are two upcoming Xbox controllers. These are full-featured units, with the ThunderPad also featuring Turbo AutoFire, which lets players fire quickly and repeatedly without having to strenuously work the buttons.

NEW GEFORCE CARD

NVidia's latest graphics card is the GeForce FX 5900, previously known as NV35. It is similar to the FX 5800, except that it is much quieter. It also features double the memory bandwidth of previous models. This is a large card, and occupies two expansion slots. It should be arriving as you read this.

RetroCON

Within a month or two, MadCatz will be releasing the RetroCON, a controller for consoles with a decidedly aesthetic nature. The device will initially be available for PlayStation and PlayStation 2, with the possibility of Xbox and GameCube versions to follow.

Saitek ST90 joystick

Saitek have designed a joystick with the express intent of delivering a combination of style and practicality. The ST90's main innovation is its retractable and lockable legs - fold out for stability while using, fold back while storing or transporting. The ST90 will be available in September.

Cyborg Evo

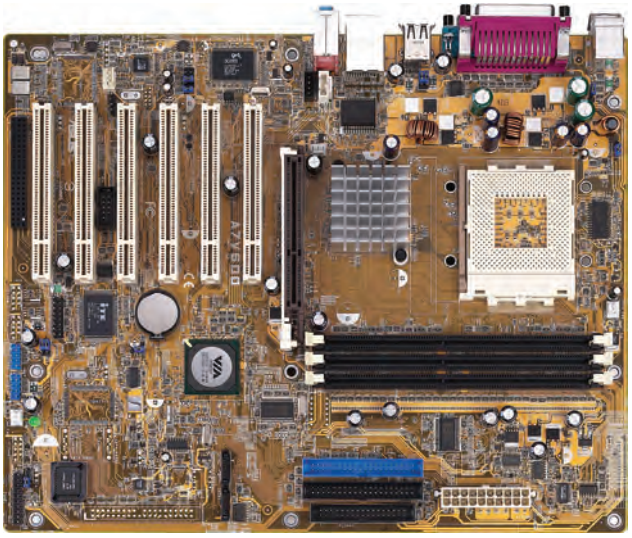
Saitek will release a new generation of its Cyborg joystick a bit later this year. The Cyborg Evo has an ambidextrous grip and has a science-fiction look about it. New software will allow for an increased number of shift states and function assignments, and the unit will be programmable on the fly.

Hand-drier!

A second generation of Nyko's Air Flo controller for the PlayStation 2 has become available, called the Air Flo EX. This is a full-featured controller that blows thin streams of air around the grips, thus reducing sweat from long hours of gaming.

Asus A7V600 motherboard

The A7V600 is Asus's latest offering for Athlon owners. Carrying the latest Via KT600 chipset, it supports the AMD Athlon XP 3200+ processor and 400MHz front-side bus. Other features include support for DDR400 memory, AGP8X slot, serial ATA RAID, eight USB 2.0 ports, six-channel audio and a 3Com Gigabit network adapter. For hardware protection, the board includes an automatic overheat shutdown circuit and a mechanism to allow automatic restoring of BIOS in the event of overclocking failure.



Sony PSX

Sony are developing an all-in-one device dubbed the PSX. This product will include a TV tuner, 120GB hard disk and DVD recorder, in addition to PlayStation functionality. It will use memory sticks instead of memory cards. The PSX will be introduced in Japan late this year, and will appear elsewhere early next year.

New GBA SP colour

To commemorate more than a million GBA SP consoles having been sold, Nintendo America will be releasing the GBA SP in flame (red).
"In our industry, any product selling more than 1 million units is a certified megahit," said Peter MacDougall, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Nintendo of America. "For Game Boy Advance SP to outsell each of the home console systems is testament to the expanding popularity of gaming on the go."
The new GBA SP has apparently sold at a constant rate of 10 per minute since its launch. The original Game Boy console was released back in 1989, and since then more than 150 million have been sold along with over half a billion games worldwide.

ASUS MyPal A620 Pocket PC

In Taiwan, a new pocket PC from Asus is available, called the MyPal A620. It's powered by a 400MHz Intel PXA255 processor, carries 32MB Flash ROM and 64MB SDRAM, a 3.5" colour sensor LCD screen supporting resolutions of up to 320x240 in 65000 colours, a Type II CompactFlash slot and built-in speaker and microphone. This unit will become available very soon, and another model, the A710, which features a Wi-Fi module, will follow shortly thereafter.

Logitech USB headset

Logitech will soon release a USB Headset for PlayStation 2. The unit will include an adjustable headband, digital USB audio processor, noise-cancelling microphone, interchangeable ear-pads made of differing materials and a 3m cord.

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Ballerium

Ballerium is a project currently underway at Majorem. Described as a persistent massively multiplayer online real-time strategy game, Ballerium will boast a feature that will allow players to issue orders to their forces that can be carried out even when the player is offline. The game will be set in a fantasy world, and will support a potentially infinite number of players. www.ballerium.com

Rise of Power

An online first-person role-playing game is under development at Amped Labs. Set in the year 2056, Rise of Power's basic premise is of an ongoing struggle between the police and the underworld. Players will be able to pick and, should they desire, switch sides in a persistent world that will track their statistics and achievements. Rise of Power will be playable on free servers, a pleasant break from massively multiplayer tradition.

BoomTown

A Wild West-themed action game called BoomTown is on its way to PC and Xbox from LogicalVice. Although making use of the Unreal Warfare engine, BoomTown is expected to be a combination of several game genres. To spice things up, occult elements are being included in the story and the players' options. It will be playable in first- or third-person views. BoomTown is expected to be ready in just over a year.

Unreal Tournament 2004

Epic's upcoming Unreal Tournament 2004 has been scheduled for release late this year. The game will include all of UT2003's content, as well as new modes, mods, characters, maps (20 of them) and controllable land, air and space based vehicles.

Abducted

nVidia has teamed up with Contraband Entertainment to develop Abducted, a science-fiction-themed game that will make use of all the most advanced features of nVidia's latest graphics processors. No release information has been released as yet.

Bits

TRAIN SIMULATOR 2

A sequel for Train Simulator is on its way from Microsoft Game Studios. In addition to dynamic weather, Train Simulator 2 will feature new routes and the ability for players to ride trains from various eras. Expect this one later this year.

KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

The release of the PC version of Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic from LucasArts has been postponed to late this year. The Xbox version, under construction by BioWare, will still be released, as it stands at the moment, in July.

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS: HORDES OF THE UNDERDARK

BioWare are developing an expansion pack for Neverwinter Nights, titled Hordes of the Underdark. The game will be set in the underground portion of the Forgotten Realms Dungeons & Dragons world.

UNDISCLOSED PROJECTS

Real Time Worlds, headed by David Jones, the creator of Lemmings and Grand Theft Auto, are currently working on two games, although no details regarding their nature have been made available as yet. Also involved are other prominent names from the games development industry, including a former managing director of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe and founder of Psygnosis, and a former director of Nintendo of America.

EMINEM GAMES TO START APPEARING

Conspiracy Entertainment has secured the rights to publish interactive properties based on the celebrity figure Eminem. The company plans to release computer games on all major gaming platforms. The first of these will be Mix TV Presents: Eminem, a puzzle game which will require players to reassemble scrambled Eminem videos before they play to the end.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ONLINE

Turbine Entertainment, creators of the Asheron's Call games, is at work on Dungeons & Dragons Online, a massively multiplayer online role-playing game based on the Dungeons & Dragons 3rd Edition rule-set. In addition to the usual combat emphasis, this game will feature significant power struggles between guilds. To be released in 2005, this game will have the distinct advantage of being based on the most widely played role-playing system in the world.

Joan of Arc

A third-person 3D game based on the life and battles of Joan of Arc will be released towards the end of this year. Players can assume the role of Joan of Arc and will engage in fast-action combat, RPG character development, and real-time strategy elements in an epic military campaign that will include some of the most intense historical battles of medieval Europe.
The game will feature a new proprietary 3D graphics engine designed to render detailed terrain and vast legions of French and English troops. Joan of Arc will feature a series of individual battles as well as larger strategic campaigns between the French and English.

Thief III

A third episode of the Thief series is being developed for PC and Xbox by Ion Storm, creators of the Deus Ex games. The most significant feature known as yet is the fact that the game will offer "body awareness", which means that players will usually be able to see their arms and hands, and feet too, if circumstances allow. The main character in Thief III will also interact with lighting conditions, using shadows to remain inconspicuous. Thief III will be published by Eidos.

Magic: The Gathering – Battlegrounds

Atari and Secret Level have acquired the license to develop a game based on Wizards of the Coast's popular trading card game, Magic: The Gathering. Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds will not recreate the play dynamic of the card game, but rather will make use of story elements, creatures and spells available in the original. Players will create a duellist character versed in up to two of Magic's five colours. Thereafter, it will be up to the player to take on opponents in order to win spells and creatures, as well as advancement. The game will be available for PC and Xbox in a few months. More information can be found at www.magicthegathering.com.

3D Game Development Manual

A new textbook on programming 3D graphics has been published. Andre LaMothe's Tricks of the 3D Game Programming Gurus - Advanced 3D Graphics and Rasterization sets out to teach how to build a 3D engine from scratch. According to the author, the availability of 3D APIs and accelerators, while overall a great help, has also resulted in the gradual decline of fundamental know-how and theoretical knowledge. In this volume, he aims to rectify this situation.

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Delta Force – Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre

NovaLogic's Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre is the upcoming expansion pack for Delta Force - Black Hawk Down. The action in this add-on will take place in the Columbian jungles where drug lords operate, and in the oilfields of Iran. New multiplayer features will be on offer, including fully controllable vehicles. The title will support up to 50 players on a LAN. Team Sabre will ship later this year.

Counter-Strike: Condition Zero

We have it on good authority that Condition Zero, the single player successor to Counter-Strike, will be released on 18 July 2003. It combines six story-driven episodes, three different single player modes and multiplayer enhancements.

American Conquest – Fight Back

CDV are at work on American Conquest - Fight Back, a follow-up to American Conquest. This title will not be an expansion pack, but rather a stand-alone game. In addition to five new nations and twenty six campaign missions, the title will include new game modes primarily focused on battlefield tactics rather than resource management and base and unit construction and maintenance. Fight Back is expected to be out in August.

Against Rome

Against Rome, from Independent Arts, will be a historical real-time strategy title that will allow players to assume the roles of military leaders of barbarian peoples from the times of the Roman Empire's expansion. The game will be made challenging by the fact that players will forever be facing opponents with a higher level of technological sophistication. The game will offer 8-player multiplayer over Internet or LAN, and this mode will allow players to play the Roman side. Against Rome will be published by JoWood near the end of the year.

Unreal mod competition

Epic, Digital Extremes, nVidia and Atari have launched their $1 000 000 nVidia Make Something Unreal competition. The contest aims to recognise talented upcoming developers, and revolves around mods designed for Unreal Tournament 2003 and the upcoming Unreal Tournament 2004. Prizes will be awarded to winners in thirteen categories. Details can be found at www.unrealtournament2003.com/?contest, and tutorial material can be found at http://sv1.3dbuzz.com/vbforum/unr_main.php. Prizes will include cash, a commercial Unreal Tournament game engine license and 100 high-end PCs. The competition will close in about a year.

Damn Dirty Apes

In an attempt to come up with something original in the real-time wargame genre, Darkmonth Studios are currently working on Damn Dirty Apes, wherein the player will command armies of monkeys, specifically the 51st Banana Battalion - have you ever? Players will face campaigns against various other pithacoids. Paradoxically, although the environments and models will be cartoon-like in aspect, the developers stated that wounding effects will be very realistic. Damn Dirty Apes is expected to be released by the end of the year.

Riftrunner and Divinity 2

Larian Studios has confirmed that a follow-up and a full sequel to the role-playing game Divine Divinity is in development. Divinity 2 will be avaialable in 2004, while the follow-up to the original game, Riftrunner, will be released toward the end of this year. Riftrunner will use an enhanced version of the original Divinity engine and will include a new and unlimited character development system, a random quest generator, 3D character animations, and a new combat system.

International Release Dates

TITLE	GENRE	RELEASE DATE
Northland	Strategy	July 8
Freedom: Soldiers of Liberty	FPS	July 15
Anarchy Online: Shadowlands	MMORPG	July 17
Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight	Simulator	July 22
Charm of War	Strategy	July 23
Sabotage	Action	July 25
Hoyle Majestic Chess	Strategy	July 29
Dark Fall	Adventure	July 29
1914 - The Great War	Strategy	August 1
Aquanox 2: Revelation	Action	August 1
Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader	RPG	August 12
Madden NFL 2004	Sport	August 12
Ghost Master	Strategy	August 14
Cold Zero: The Last Stand	Action	August 14
Battlecruiser Generations	Simulator	August 17
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	Simulator	August 19
Breed	FPS	August 26
No Man's Land	Strategy	August 26
Tron 2.0	Action	August 26
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	FPS	September 9
Harpoon 4	Strategy	September 14
Painkiller	FPS	September 23
Midnight Nowhere	Adventure	September 23
XIII	FPS	September 23
America II	Strategy	September 23
Apocalyptica	Action	September 23
Supreme Ruler 2010	Strategy	September 23

Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

Ubi Soft's upcoming Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow is under development and expected to become available on various platforms early next year. The game will feature a strongly cinematic feel, and will be the first stealth-based game to offer online multiplayer playability.

colin mcrae rally 3™

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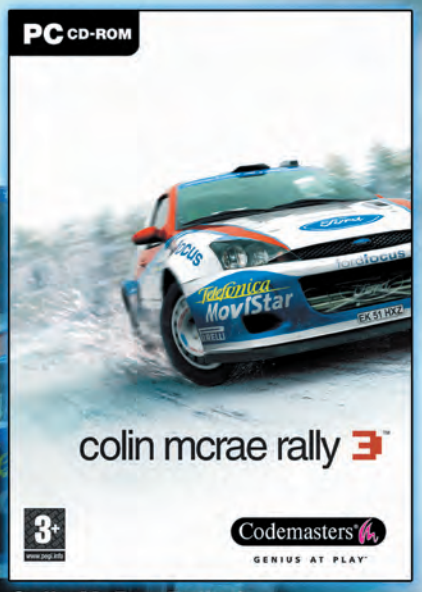

Colin McRae Rally 3
Colin McRae Rally 3, coming to PC this summer, captures the emotions and consequences of being a professional rally champion. It's an unbelievably personal gaming experience, as you become the globe's greatest rally driver - Colin McRae himself.

R 299

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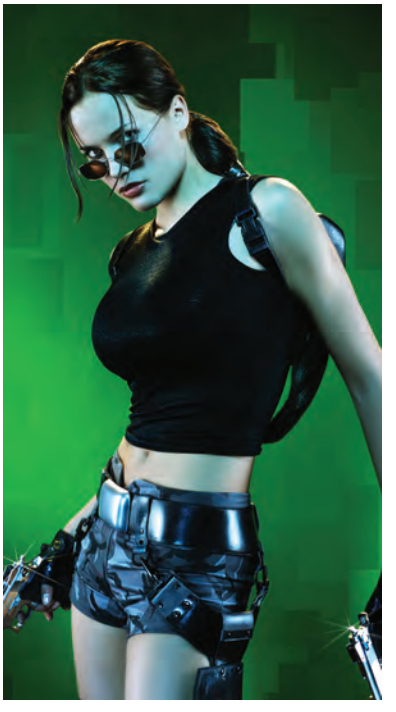
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness

Lara Croft's new face

Eidos and Core have appointed Dutch model Jill de Jong as the model for Tomb Raider's Lara Croft. Standing 6ft tall and measuring 34-26-38, Jill has been in the modeling industry for three years, and has done work for L'Oreal in Europe. She will be promoting Eidos's upcoming Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness worldwide. The game is expected to be complete in the next month or two.

Full name:	Jill de Jong
Profession:	Model
Birth place:	Hoogeveen, Netherlands
Birth date:	17-02-82
Place of residence:	Netherlands
Marital status:	Single
Height:	6ft
Weight:	64kg
Eyes:	Green
Hair:	Naturally blonde
Vital statistics:	34B-26-38



EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers

EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers is under development at Sony Online Entertainment. The game will expand on EverQuest Online Adventures, adding new territories, items, spells, monsters and a new playable race. Sony are adding many new features to the game, mostly concerned with making the game as user-friendly as possible. Frontiers will become available for the PlayStation 2 later this year.

Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu

Ubi Soft's Montreal Studio is at work on Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu for the Xbox, PlayStation 2 and GameCube. Artwork authenticity will be assured by the fact that Jim Lee, who currently handles DC Comics' Batman art, is involved in the project.

The game will include characters such as Batman, Robin, Nightwing, Batgirl, Bane, Clayface, Scarecrow and a new villain - Sin Tzu. Players will be able to assume the role of Batman or one of the other protagonists, and a two-player co-operative mode is planned. Rise of Sin Tzu is expected to be out later this year.

International Release Dates

TITLE	PLATFORM	GENRE	RELEASE
1080: Avalanche	GC	Sports	July 7
Space Channel 5 Part 2	PS2	Puzzle	July 8
XGRA PS2	GC	Sports	July 8
Dragon's Lair 3D	PS2	Adventure	July 15
Robocop	PS2	Action	July 15
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder	Xbox	Action	July 15
Unlimited SaGa	PS2	Role-Playing	July 15
Fugitive Hunter	PS2	Action	July 22
The Great Escape	Xbox	Action	July 22
EyeToy: Mini Games	PS2	Action	July 28
Fire Warrior	PS2	Action	July 28
Freaky Flyers	GC | Xbox	Action	July 28
Mario Golf	GC	Sports	July 28
Splashdown 2	PS2	Driving	July 28
Fuel	Xbox	Driving	August 1
Futurama	PS2 | GC Xbox	Action	August 1
Groove Runner	Xbox	Driving	August 1
Starsky & Hutch	Xbox	Driving	August 1
Loose Cannon	Xbox	Action	August 4
Pitfall Harry	PS2	Action	August 5
RPG Maker 2	PS2	Role-Playing	August 5
Silent Hill 3	PS2	Adventure	August 5

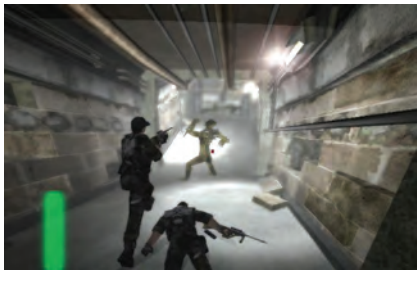
Sunrise World War

Anime RPG on its way

Bandai are at work on Sunrise World War, their upcoming computer RPG title for the PlayStation 2. The game will feature 39 anime characters by Sunrise Productions from 1981 to the present day. The game will make use of a combination of 2D and 3D graphics, the former for presentation and adventuring screens, the latter for combat. Sunrise World War will include numerous clips from the various anime series, and is expected to ship in August.

Geist

Nintendo and n-Space are collaborating on development of Geist. This title will let players assume the role of a ghost that can possess other characters. This first-person game will combine elements of action and stealth gaming. It will be available exclusively on the GameCube.



RoadKill

Set in a post-apocalyptic world, Roadkill is Midway Games' upcoming mission-based combat driving game. After the world's civilisation is wiped out by a plague, the resulting barbaric society is ruled largely by road gangs. Players will take to the roads with a variety of vehicles outfitted with various weapons. Combat will feature vehicles and stationary targets as opponents, and victories will gain the player reputation, which will be necessary to found a powerful gang. Two- and four-player split-screen modes will be available. Roadkill is scheduled for release late this year, and will be available on PlayStation 2, GameCube and Xbox, with the Xbox version featuring a soundtrack creation utility.

Dinotopia

TDK Mediactive and Vicious Cycle Software are at work on Dinotopia: The Sunstone Odyssey, an upcoming action-adventure game for Xbox and GameCube. The game is expected to become available around mid-year, and revolves around one Drake Gemini, who lives in a land where men and dragons coexist in harmony. Drake's ultimate destiny is to become a Guardian of Dinotopia.

Powerdrome

Argonaut Software is currently designing Powerdrome for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox. The team is being headed by Michael Powell, who wrote the original Commodore Amiga and Atari ST versions back in 1988. The game has a future-racing theme and will require players to pilot Blades, anti-gravity vehicles powered by jet-engines. The game will feature online play on both platforms.

Final Fantasy XI

Final Fantasy XI has been officially confirmed and western shipping schedules have been disclosed. The PlayStation 2 version, to be published by Sony, will be released early next year, while the PC version, to be published by Square Enix, will be available from October this year. The system requirements of the PC version will be way below current entry levels.

Sony game franchise films

Rumour has it that a film based on the PlayStation 2 game The Getaway is in the works at Sony Pictures. Screen Gems, responsible for the screen rendition of Resident Evil, is likely to be handling the project. The film is expected to be released at the same time as a sequel to the game. A film sequel to Resident Evil is also, apparently, underway.

Bits

LEGENDS OF WRESTLING III

Legends of Wrestling III is under development at Acclaim Sports. This latest title in the series has been rebuilt from scratch, and will feature new content. It will be available for all next-generation console systems later this year.

THE VIDEOGAME BOND GIRL

Electronic Arts' upcoming James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing will feature the likeness and voice of film actress Shannon Elizabeth.
The game will be released on PS2, Xbox, GC and GBA and will feature an original storyline.

THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Capcom and Buena Vista Interactive have teamed up to bring the Tim Burton film The Nightmare Before Christmas to the PlayStation 2.
The game will be available early next year and will take the form of an action adventure.

GRAND THEFT AUTO

The next instalment in the GTA franchise will be released on PlayStation 2 sometime next year. Meanwhile, GTA3 and GTA: Vice City will become available on Xbox and GameCube, as Sony and Rockstar's PS2-exclusivity deal expires.

Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain

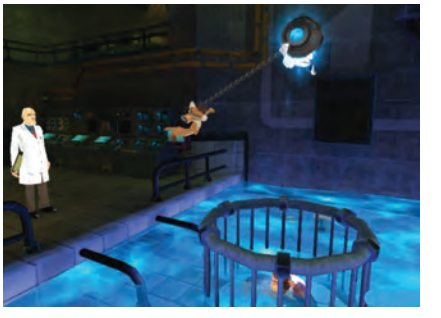
Sony have announced Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain, the fourth instalment in the series. This latest episode places less emphasis on stealth, although elements will still be present, and facilitates combat by providing over 100 weapons and high-tech gadgets during the course of a game. The Omega Strain will feature online functionality and will support voice chat to allow team-mates to communicate with each other via a headset accessory.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds is a 3rd person action-adventure game based on the successful cult series Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Due for release on PS2, Xbox and GameCube towards the end of this year, Chaos Bleeds has been developed as a 'lost episode' from season 5. The game will focus on combat and solving puzzles and will include weapons such as mystical knives, swords, battleaxes, baseball bats and electricity blasters.

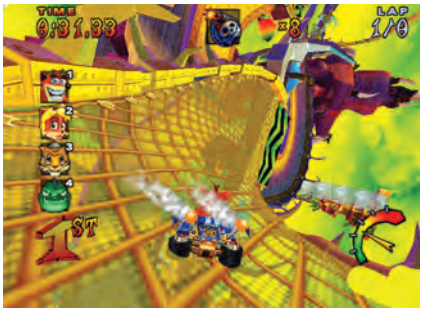
Whiplash

Whiplash is a current project at Eidos. The game involves two animal heroes who are chained to each other (hence the title) and simultaneously try to escape and destroy a product testing facility where animals are used in nasty experiments. The game's flavour is humorous, and character and environment interactions play important roles. Whiplash should be out in three months or thereabouts, and will be available on PlayStation 2 and Xbox.



Crash Nitro Kart

Vivendi Universal Games have contracted Vicarious Visions to develop Crash Nitro Kart, a kart-racing game for PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube, to be released late this year. The evil emperor Velo has kidnapped Crash Bandicoot and has forced him to race in his coliseum. The future of the Earth depends on Crash's success. The game will include a single-player adventure mode and a system-link multiplayer option that will support up to eight players, though at present it is unknown in how many of the formats this last will be implemented.

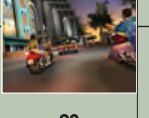
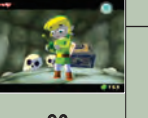


Dungeons and Dragons: Heroes

Atari's upcoming cooperative multiplayer computer RPG game, Dungeons & Dragons: Heroes, will be released in October, exclusively on Xbox. The game, using the 3rd Edition D&D rule-set, will allow up to four players to join forces to explore 3D worlds and battle various monsters.

Web Scores

How NAG reviews compare to internet site reviews

	GTA Vice City [PS2]	Silent Hill 3 [PS2]	MotoGP 3 [PS2]	NBA Street Vol 2 [PS2]	Metroid Prime [GC]	Legend of Zelda WindWaker [GC]
						
NAG /100	89	88	85	91	93	96
www.ign.com /10	9.7	9.2	8.5	9.4	9.8	9.6
www.gamespot.com /10	9.6	n/r	8.2	8.4	9.7	9.3
www.gamespy.com /100	95	n/r	87	94	96	97

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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.

Back due to popular demand, this issue will feature 'reality letters' [reality letters are letters directly from our readers with absolutely no editing, spell checking or grammar corrections - just so you can see what we get each month]. For those conspiracy theorists out there this has absolutely nothing to do with the problems outlined in the Ed's Note… it's all just some amazing coincidence…

The insane tenacity of a gamer

Gamers tend to be middle/upper class, not suprising considering the cost of hardware and games. It is with great pride then that I blather here about my enduring quest and battle to save up for a machine decent enough to run todays games as they are intended to be run, and with shame that I admit I am losing this battle. Now I would classify myself (I am loathe to classify myself but its usefull for my purposes here) as a lower/middle class 20 something, earning just enough money to pay rent, eat and enjoy the occasional beer. This is where my obsession with games come in, I just cant afford to save up for a decent machine and survive, it is taking soo long that I just cant takes it no more! I fear I have fallen into a dark pit of pleasure/pain, whenever I get a copy of NAG and look at all the games I cant play my eyes glaze over and I emit deep sighs, I am addicted to this painful unfulfilled lust. I have wracked my brain for ideas on how to make more money (which tends to be on very practical inventions but impractical to implement considering the cost of patents), worked excpetionally hard for a raise but got turned down when I asked. And so, I have become despondent, gaming for me has become relegated to a mere phantasy that evokes pleasure/pain, what am I to do? As if this isnt bad enough, [<**cut**> *sad story goes on a bit, Ed*].

Maybe I coud sell my body, or volunteer to be a guinea pig for science, or... And all of this just for an addiction to pixelated death. Quite sad really.

Blue Tengu

p.s: How about some free hardware?

Ed: *Your sad story about your pathetic life earns you a free game - too bad it'll never work on your tired washed up sorry story of a computer... perhaps this free game will inspire you to turn your life around and upgrade. Let us know how it all turns out in a few months time - remember, NAG cares!*

shorts

Old Games

What does nag do with its old games, do you just throw them away? I would really like to know what you do with them when finished reviewing them.

Snake

Ed: *Do you really think we just throw all our review samples away? We actually keep them (I get the feeling there should be a 'duh!' here…)*

Curious about "writers wanted" feedback

First of all, hats off to a very decent publication, which I've been buying for almost two years now. Haven't missed a single issue [and don't intend to, for the foreseeable future.] a couple of issues ago there was a request for writers. I was curious how the feedback was going on that, since I sent two articles along [one was a review of the fan-remake of "king's quest one" and the other was a feature/article on the "death of adventure gaming"] and haven't heard anything since. I recall that in the issue just after placing the last set of advertisements, it was stated that everyone would be contacted in due course. I do [completely] understand if you're still buried under submissions. I'm largely just curious.

Curious writer

Ed: *Yes, would you believe that I'm still trying to get through everything - I know it's a lame excuse but that's how it is with the truth. Realistically I'm probably only going to get through everything sometime during December - that's if I don't go to Mauritius. If I do end up on an island I'll take a picture of NAG next to a coconut…*

Rampage Thing

I fully agree with both points mentioned in Bryan's short in letter section of the May issue. One reason is because I was the guy who brought up the LOTR trailer issue and just I love it when people agree with me.

By the way I sent the that email in mid November and you only replied in February, if this isn't a hint to do something about your email backlog I don't know what is.

His the other thing he said was to put another Rampage thingy on the CD. He is of course referring to when The Basilisk did an article on "the Cheese" and supplied various examples on the cover CD for all to enjoy (like Superfly, Killer Bean & Kung Fu stickman) in the February 2002 issue. This I feel is a great idea and should be a monthly occurrence on the cover CD.

Reader

Ed: *Hey, I know my backlog is a small problem but at least you get a reply - eventually - thanks for the translation on the request I'll see about getting more funny things on the CD.*

AMD versus Intel - The Answer right here

I think I found the answer to the AMD vs. Intel battle [*now it's a battle? Ed*]. I'm going to attempt to explain this issue without taking sides...

Here Goes...

Look at it this way... for years now people have been fighting it out over Mercedes Benz and BMW. So let us compare our CPU's to these cars.

So lets say Intel is the Mercedes and AMD the BMW.

Easy enough... you should be able to see where I'm going already. If you have to buy one of these, cars why would you want it???? The Mercedes Benz is reliable, flashy, fast and ... (add some more NICE words) and driven by people with an "Oh! Look at me, I drive a Mercedes Benz" "I'm too good for you." attitude. The BMW on the other hand is, reliable, flashy, fast and huh.. (add some more NICE words) and driven by people with a "Don't you dare look at me!!!!!"... "WINDGAT" attitude.

Sums it up perfectly I think.

What it boils down to is both cars, in the end, do exactly the same... gets you from point A to B. The BMW being a load cheaper than its Mercedes counter part though. And there is the heart of the matter. If Intel can bring its prices down to meet AMD's. The battle would be fair. Intel is sold on the premise of Brand name alone... It's more expensive, thus it has to be better. And this makes the owners feel all powerful and SNOBISHS!! AMD is cheaper and thus frowned upon, making the users suffer from low self esteem. Therefore adopting a bullying, " WINDGAT" attitude.

(If you feel affronted by me using these cars as examples or in real live you do drive one of the above.... Tough!!! There are motoring magazines that will deal with your issues!!)

So There... (and not once I felt the need to take sides...) I do however myself tend to stick to one of the brands. More out of a sense of... You know what? I don't know... So I guess there is a third type of user. Not affected by hype, just wanting to get on without the fuss and getting their moneys worth out of their chosen CPU.

Hopefully now we could all understand each other, and live in peaceful harmony.

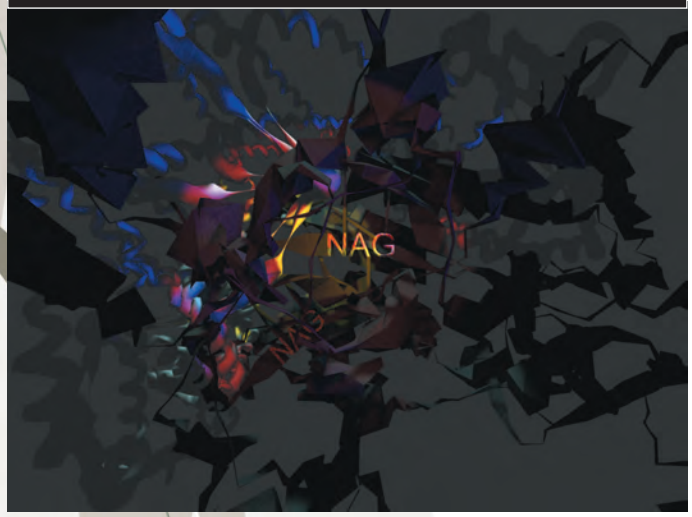
In other words....

Go out there and Frag your brothers ass. Not because his different. But because you can!!!

Hooch

Ed: *Thankfully this is a reality letters issue. BMW is way better than Mercedes any day. Now that I've done my bit for German engineering can someone from BMW give me a call so we can talk a deal or something - I've got a big Intel sticker that I want to stick on the one side of my sponsored BMW*

The following surreal work is all thanks to Lamar Hart



as well as a big NAG sticker on the other; my plan is to drive around with my AMD number plate causing a scene. There must be at least one gamer high up in one of these companies, so call me on my cellular people, let's make this thing happen <rubs hands with glee>.

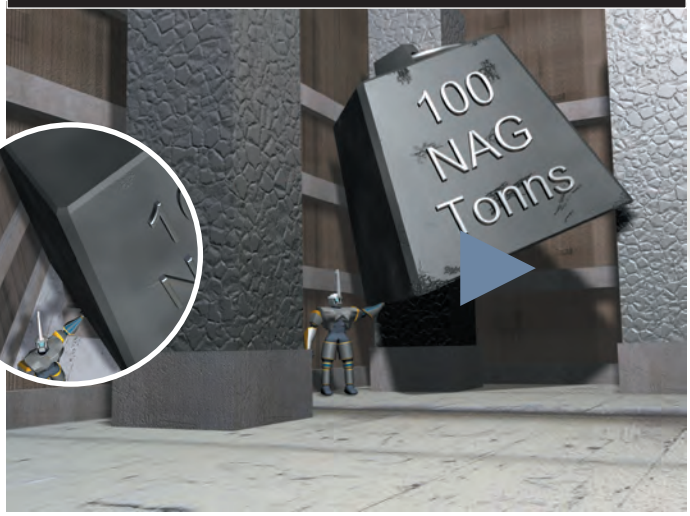
Piracy

Where do pirates get their games from? I've got this theory. You see when a game distribution truck is driving down the freeway a group of bakkies drives alongside the truck, they've got guns on the bakkies. Then a group of "people"in camo gear jump on the truck and steal some games. they then get brave and try and jump back on the bakkies, they sometimes "don't make it". The bakkie then veers off and goes 4x4 style over the veld. they then proceed to the nearest copy station. then they got to brakpan flea market. so that's how pirates get new games.

Schizo Pupu

Ed: *Don't you think the getaway cars should rather be BMWs with Intel stickers on them? Naturally, if Mercedes contacts me first with a deal then BMW is out. What's a copy station anyway? Oh, I'll also look at Audi.*

This work of art is all thanks to The Hip Hop Happy Meal



Ideas, Subscriber Specials

I have a few suggestions; please see them as constructive criticism.

The first two are concerning screenshots. Publish bigger screenshots in your main game reviews and previews. After all, our computer and TV screens are much bigger than the magazine's pages. A larger screenshot gives us a much better idea of what a game will look like when being played. One full-page screenshot would be excellent; the letters could go on top of the picture.

Also, write descriptions for every screenshot. A review or preview really feels incomplete when only two of the ten screenshots on a page has descriptions. Sometimes the reviewer's comments can elaborate more on a picture than we can see for ourselves.

Dedicate a part of your magazine to answering technical questions. In the past I have had many PC problems solved by reading Q&A letters of technical help sections in other computer magazines. It also gives a magazine an added dimension, and it's usually an informative read and, more importantly, a great service to your readers.

You've got a brilliant magazine going. NAG's covers are by far the most eye-catching in store. Please don't start putting scantily clad women on the cover. Your sales will go up, but I don't think you need a reader base that's mostly adolescent. By the way, why not do a survey to find out what the average age of South Africa's serious gamer is? To start you off, I'm 28.

Just one last thing, regarding the letter you received about specials for subscribers; I'm one and I do not think we should have any special offers, gifts, etc. I know PC Gamer offers subscriber-exclusive freeware games on their discs (which can be unlocked with a subcriber password), but I see this as shunning the majority of your readers, who buy the magazine off the shelves.

Christo

Ed: *Thanks for the suggestions. Larger screenshots are possible but using the 'monitor screen size is larger than the magazine page therefore should be big in the magazine' argument isn't the way to go - that's like saying a car moves fast the closer your head is to the road… you get the idea. Sometimes coming up with a caption is difficult, especially if the reviewer doesn't supply captions for screenshots - you see they get paid for the words in the review and not the captions - I'm hoping this answer here drops the hint. We've always wanted to do a Q&A section but I think this would cause more trouble than it would solve. People are always saying I never answer letters properly.*

Hello King Ed

Your magazine rules it's the best... blah blah. You know the usual sucking up. I would just like to comment on Byron Will, subscriber comps are the spawn from the devil loins. I have bought your mag from day one and I always fill in the comps. I do not subscribe because I know what the post office do with post. They stomp, mane or just plain molester the poor innocent mail. And I don't want them doing that to my Nag. So if Byron wants to life in Godforsaken Graaff-Rienet, he should stop b1tching like a red headed step child. Or I'll beat him like a red headed step child. If you know what I mean. And I am sure that you do.

The Gamer formerly known as The not so mighty Bob and Bob2k.

Ps. I got 13 points on the Gamer IQ test. Should I send you my CV? Do you actually need a male stripper at Nag? I would like to work for you don't get me wrong. But do you need a naked guy prancing around? My brother says he got 14 points, I think he's a lying git. I was just joking about being a stripper. I am actually a rocket scientist and a world famous gangster rapper.

Reader

Ed: *Be nice to our other readers. Also, when writing letters to strangers leave all references to 'naked prancing' out - it's not helping you. Also, buy BMW!*

more shorts...

Smile

Your review box Bad News Smiley looks so sad. Can't you guys do anything to cheer him up?

Morgue [FLB]

Ed: *He is the focal representation of all that sucks in games and based on some of the trash we have to play each month there's not a chance in hell he'll ever be happy - don't worry though, we got him a hot exclamation to date. Behind that frown is a very happy soul.*

Question

WTF is an 8-way hat switch?

Morgue [FLB]

Ed: *It is a little plastic thingy stuck on most new joysticks - it can move all around but only registers 8 different directions - it's also usually found on the top part of the joystick shaft - therefore 8-way hat switch. Watch Top Gun to find out how to use it.*

Letter of the Month

I have a theory that if I call my letter the Letter of the Month, it will be the Letter of the Month.

How does that sound?

Really Confident

Morgue [FLB]

Ed: *In life one must put some effort into things to get somewhere - NAG fortune cookie.*

Reply please

I just want to test my email and yours is the only one i could find.

Ed: *I got it…*

TOCA Race

Is there a reason for adding 2 exact same pictures on exactly the same page? Refer page 70 May 2003 editions.

Reader

Ed: *Mistakes are like accidents, they usually happen when you're not looking.*

[**[117 Words]** The specification here is approximately 120 words to fill up this area. Some people get paid a whopping R2.80 for each word they write in some magazines, that's R 327.60 just to fill up this little block with rubbish. Now do you see why I'd rather write a whole load of rubbish in here instead of paying a professional journalist to come up with a thoughtful or clever anecdote - I'll be damned if I'm paying someone a little over R 300.00 to do this - it's easy, notice how entertained you feel right now - any fool can do this! We'll I've reached 104 words right here and I only have 5 more to go here. Bye!

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

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

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

writer: Anton "The_Basilisk" Lines

PWNED GG KTHXBAAI!

THE DOMAIN OF THE_BASILISK

Under the direction of my good friend Shryke, I recently paid a visit to Exclusive Books, looking for a specific title he'd been talking about. After perusing the volumes and volumes of remorselessly bad fiction and the shelves of depressing self-help books for women, I eventually found it: "The Most Up-To-Date Slang Dictionary Ever". The reason for our interest in this book was simply that the "most up to date slang dictionary ever" does not contain 1337 sp33k. For those of you living in the stone age, 1337 sp33k is a form of communication that evolved within the online, gaming, IT and hacker communities. It has been around for more than a decade already, and is growing daily. I would say that since this slang is used consistently by a fairly noticeable chunk of the human population, it should appear in slang dictionaries. Alas, this book seems to have been compiled by the same idiots responsible for "The Ultimate 80's Album In The World... Ever". Seems I must, again, graciously step in to correct the mistakes of this sad, sad world. Whether this article will be useful in learning to understand the confusing stream of seemingly random characters that one will experience on Internet Relay Chat (IRC), or just good for a laugh, I feel it is my duty to provide this particular service to the community.

The Most Up-To-Date Slang Column Ever

The most common practise in 1337 5p33k is the substitution of numbers for letters, wherever possible, whenever possible, as many times as possible, r35ul71ng 1n 1337 53n73nc35 5uch 45 7h15 0n3. I suppose this progression was only natural, considering the general level of boredom amongst IT professionals and IRC users, and the fact that certain numbers do look fairly similar to certain letters. For those unable to decipher this on their own, 1 = I or L, 2 = Z, 3 = E, 4 = A, 5 = S, 6 = G, 7 = T, 8 = B, 0 = O. You will notice the number 9 is not included on that list. And if you are a true connoisseur, you will have realised that 9 can be used as a small "g". However, there is a fine line between 1337n355 and absolute stupidity. This facet of the slang has been around for nearly the longest, second only to the contractions that started it all.

Where does the term "1337 5p33k" come from? "Leet" is a word initially derived from the common hacker / gamer term "elite", which means being good at what you do. This was the first one of its kind and soon spawned a rush of insane contractions, based loosely on phonetics and the inherent laziness of their creators. Words like "haxor" (hacker) and "noob" (newbie) quickly became commonplace. And it was only a matter of time before what I spoke about in the previous paragraph made it into "h4x0r", "n00b" and of course "1337". The gamers weren't satisfied with only shortening words, of course, and began to include several expansions on common words like "sekz" (sex), "ghei" (gay) and baai (bye). Anything was acceptable as long as the new word was ridiculously far away from its original form but still retainined its identity (well, generally speaking). And soon we had "h4x0r kiddehs r0x0ring our b0xx0rs" on a daily basis.

A part of 1337 sp33k that one cannot blame only on the gamers are IRC abreviations. Even an IRC user who has never played a game or hacked / administered a website in his / her life will know that "lol" stands for "laugh out loud", "brb" means "be right back", "afk" denotes that someone is "away from keyboard", "ta" is saying "thanks alot", and "wb" means "welcome back". Afaik (as far as I know), those are the most standard ones. Of course we gamers take it a step further with "gg" (good game), "hf, gl" (have fun, good luck), "lpb" (low ping bastard), "wtf" (what the ****), "ffs" (for ****'s sake) and "omg" (oh my god). There are also expansions on the abbreviations (people are never satisfied with simplicity, are they?) such as "bbiab" which stands for "be back in a bit", "roflmao" which indicates "rolling on the floor laughing my ass off", and "tb0aunw15" which is an essential one, meaning "The Basilisk 0wns all useless n00bs with 1337 5k33lz."

It continually amazes me how quickly this slang form is growing. It seems every day there is a new phrase or term coined by the inhabitants of #chknhd or #nightfall (possibly the most insane IRC channels ever). First came the invention of new words (or some would call it the corruption of old ones) such as "0wnage", which should technically, by the laws of grammar, be "ownership". But no, gamers are 1337. A few years back, for a reason beyond our meagre comprehension, people just started adding "z0r" onto the end of every word they typed. This resulted in the ability to get 0wnz0red / rapez0red (depending on the degree of defeat) in a game. Not to mention you can 0wnz0rz0rz0rz0r (add several extra "z0rs" as the victory becomes more convincing). The biggest movement since the beginning of 1337 5p33k was the concept of intentionally misspelling words. It all started with "teh" which was a common typo when the user meant to type "the". Eventually, it was done on purpose. This lead on to rearranging letters of pretty much everything. Soon "porn" became "pron", "owned" evolved into "pwned" (pronounced "pawned") and "fear" became "ph34r" then "phj34r" and then finally "opj34r". And if you think this is pretty lame, then you will probably be told that "U si teh n0bolet!"

The next phase of the development of 1337 5p33k is already worming its way into our lives. At LANs, slowly but undeniably, people are starting to use these words in their actual speech. At first, hearing someone actually saying "lol" in person was a ridiculously hilarious experience. Of course, that particular person was called a nerd / geek / loser for several hours afterwards, but most of the critics have since eaten their words at the involuntary utterance of "pawned!", "that was 1337!" or "gg, man, gg." A long while back, in my early days at NAG, I did a small piece on how PC-related jargon has influenced the english language. I honestly had no idea at that time that it would go this far, and I'm quite convinced it's going to get even more ridiculous in the future.

THIS IS NOT A NUMBER:

1337

"It doesn't matter what anyone says. No amount of education can change that fact. No tradition, no value-system, no love for language, no reference to dictionaries or pure, absolute fact can change that. No matter how many degrees you have, or how long you have been living on this planet, no matter who you are or how much you have experienced... this is not a number. Why is it not a number? It looks like one. It should be one. But no, it is not, and all because a bunch of lazy dyslexic gamers with the typing skills of chimpanzees say so..." - **RAMJET**

cheese update

Yes, it is finally time for another update on the topic of The Cheese.

" TROGDOR the BURNiNATOR (www.homestarrunner.com/sbemail58.html) - You seriously have to see this one to believe it. It is a flash cartoon that, while apparently purile at first, will grow on you to the point that you wake up screaming "and the Trogdor comes in the niiiiiiiight!" The rest of the homestarrunner site is also quite amusing, but Trogdor is simply a timeless classic.

" Maddox (maddox.xmission.com) - This is the best page in the universe. If you disagree with anything said on this page, you are wrong. Maddox is some sort of IT professional who hates everyone, and the articles he frequently uploads are a source of endless comedy.

" Real Ultimate Power (www.realultimatepower.net) - The author of this site loves ninjas. Why does he love ninjas? Because they flip out and kill people for NO REASON. And that's what he calls "REAL ULTIMATE POWER."

NAG does not entirely condone, verbally verify, absolve into, nullify onto any terms regarding to or as otherwise known as 1337 sp33k. We think the use of extreme slang in the written form is too easy to master - any fool can do it with a DIY guide [see above article] - we've moved on, beyond even speaking this tongue, we now 7h1nk in 1337.

Win 5 HULK Hampers

[Each hamper consists of the following]:
The Hulk Inflatable Bop Bag
The Hulk Adult's Branded T-Shirt
The Hulk Movie Poster
All Imported from the USA
and a copy of The Hulk PC Game

This is a two-fold question,
firstly how tall is the Hulk and then tell us in no more than 50 words how you would defeat the Hulk... entries must reach us by the end of July or they'll get deleted while we giggle like school girls...

Entries to reach us by the end of July 2003
Send your answers and personal information to:
COMP@NAG.CO.ZA – Subject: **Hulk Smash**
Postal Entries can be sent to:
P O Box 237, Olivedale, 2158
NOTE: Only 1 [one] entry per person – any more and we delete your whole batch...

5 Hulk Games courtesy Vivendi Universal Games

ICON XI

South Africa's premier role playing convention, Icon XI, is happening this month at the Jabula Recreation Centre in Sandringham, Johannesburg.

Taking place on the 11th, 12th and 13th of July, the event promises to live up to it's reputation as the biggest and best role playing event within our borders.

Organiser Grant Charlton has been in the role playing business for a good long while, and has, with his dedicated and rather overworked Icon committee, turned the event into quite the showcase for role playing, trading card gaming, table top war gaming and live action role playing. "We've grown in attendance every year," a rather tired sounding Charlton stated, "so we're hoping that this will be the biggest Icon yet."

The first Icon event was held 11 years ago at the Patterson Park Recreation Centre in Orange Grove, Johannesburg. Through the years, the event has grown larger with each incarnation. Icon III was the first event hosted in the Edenvale Recreation Centre (the venue would be the home of Icon for six years, and also saw the first ever GLSA WorFaire event at Icon VIII in 1999.) And just for those that may remember GenCon… this was Icon under another name. Legal wrangles happening overseas resulted in the event changing names.

Icon XI will feature everything regular visitors have come to expect. Aside from gaming events and competitions, there will also be other attractions to visit, like the Anime "theatre," where the crew from Black Blade will be showing the best Anime movies around. There will also be another infamous Icon Afterparty for those so inclined, but space is limited, so bookings need to be made in a hurry!

The gaming events will include 14 role playing modules, table top wargaming (which includes Games Workshop competitions for Warhammer Fantasy and Warhammer 40K,) trading card gaming competitions, live action role playing and a host of other events and competitions to take advantage of.

Those visitors that have some money burning a hole in their pockets will also be able to take advantage of numerous retailers present at the event. Items on sale will include comics, sci-fi and fantasy books and miniatures, as well as the usual RPG paraphernalia. As always, there will be souvenir T-Shirts on sale, as well as coffee mugs (and regular visitors know that if you buy one of those mugs, they fill it for free for the entire event.)

With over 2000 visitors expected from all around the country, Icon XI should prove to be another great success. If you are a role player, card gamer or anything else like that, or are interested in finding out more about the whole thing, make your way there.

For more details on the event, as well as pricing and booking information, visit the official Icon XI site at www.rpg.co.za.

There are a number of events happening at Icon and, while they all fall into the "alternative gaming" category, they are vastly different.

Role playing you should (by now) have the basic gist of. Trading card gaming is played by players using collectable trading cards to try and outsmart each other. Games that fall into this category include Magic: The Gathering and Pokemon.

Table top wargaming (the original strategy gaming) involves using figurines on a simulated, table top battlefield. Games in this category include Warhammer 40 000 and Mage Knight. Finally, live action role playing. This is just like normal role playing, except that the players actually "act out" their respective parts - almost like an improvised theatre piece. Any game system can be used, but the rules are generally heavily modified to ensure the safety of all involved.

writer: Walt Pretorius

legend of the five rings

This month's product review is a little different: we're looking at two versions of the same game, basically, but with different rule systems. So, without further ado: Legend of the Five Rings, original vs d20. Hajime*!

Based on the trading card game of the same name, Legend of the Five Rings is a fantasy role playing game set in a mythological setting styled on feudal Japan. The game draws heavily on Japanese mythology as an inspiration, and most of the terminology within the game has a very Japanese feel.

The trading card game proved so popular that the producers of the game decided to license out a role playing version of the game. This also proved very popular - enough so that gaming giant Wizards of the Coast (who rose to their powerful position on a gamble called Magic: The Gathering) bought out the license and added the game to their stable of titles which includes Dungeons and Dragons. And this is where things get interesting.

After finding that the rule system for Dungeons and Dragons 3rd edition was very effective, the game rule system was turned into a generic rule set called the d20 system. Several titles have now been remade using the d20 system (including Deadlands and Call of Cthulhu.) Having this single, generic system makes the "crossing" of game genres simple (much like the case of GURPS or the World of Darkness series.) And yes, Legend of the Five Rings was also rewritten to use the d20 system. Despite the rewrite, the original version of LOT5R is still available and being produced - by the same company that makes its "competition."

So which one is the one to buy? Which system provides the best value for money in terms of role playing? Basically, it breaks down to this. Both versions have good systems and a great setting. However, the d20 system has the added versatility that it can be used with other d20 titles - particularly Dungeons and Dragons. In fact, the d20 LOT5R is a sort of supplement to the Dungeons and Dragons game. This, of course, means that you cannot play it without owning the Dungeons and Dragons core rule books - a bit annoying if you are out to play LOT5R. But, then again, someone who buys the d20 version will probably have bought the D&D books already.

The original LOT5R game does not require the D&D rule books to play. It does have a few books that are needed to play the game, but we're talking two or three instead of five or six needed to play the d20 version. However, the versatility within the d20 version is missing in the original incarnation of the game.

Essentially, either game is great fun. Neither is much more expensive than the other (unless, like I said, you need to buy all the D&D books as well.) The choice comes down to what exactly you want to do with your game. And this is where the d20 system wins - basically because the scope of the game is greatly expanded for the creative GM. Added to that is the fact that the d20 system is a familiar rule system, while the original would require everyone having to come to grips with new rules.

REVIEWED BY
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

LOT5R Original

PLUS	MINUS
Less books Great setting Sturdy system	Some limitations imposed by the game's setting

LOT5R d20

PLUS	MINUS
Well known and reliable system Great versatility	Need D&D 3rd Edition

SUPPLIED BY: Outer Limits (011) 482-3771
PRICE: R 400.00 average
INTERNET: www.outerlimits.co.za

** "Go!" A Japanese term used in many martial arts to mark the start of a contest.*

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100% OtakU the NaG Anime paGe

This particular project is well documented on the web. Visit the official site at **www.theanimatrix.com**

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

by Anton Lines

Sneak Peak

This month we have been fortunate enough to lay our hands on a copy of The Animatrix DVD, which has just been released locally. There is so much to say on this remarkable series of short films that part 4 of the Japanese language series has been postponed to make space for the full review. Worry not, the course will continue next month.

The Animatrix

Genre: Science Fiction
Year: 2003
Producer: Andy and Larry Wachowski
Format: Short Film Series
Episodes: 9
Language: English / German
Availability: Most retail and video stores in SA
RRP: R 229.00
Supplied By: Nu Metro Home Entertainment

Concept	9
Story	8
Soundtrack	8
Characters	8
Animation	10
Translation	10
Total Score (out of 100)	88

The Matrix was a revolution in western cinematography. Although by now most people have learned that pretty much everything was adapted from anime. The Wachowski brothers (creators of The Matrix), have themselves admitted the influence anime had on their work as writers and directors. I find it admirable that they are giving credit where credit is due, and nowhere is that more evident than The Animatrix, a series of short anime films set in The Matrix universe. This is the concept returning to its roots in an absolutely spectacular fashion. Andy and Larry wrote four of the episodes personally, and collaborated with each director to ensure that the project stayed true to their vision. What this is doing, is expanding the target audience to include both fans of anime and of The Matrix mythology. If you are new to anime, I seriously recommend getting your hands on The Animatrix as your first experience with the style.

It is seriously refreshing to see the amount of experimentation involved in this project. Each director was given complete artistic freedom by the Wachowskis, and encouraged to produce whatever they envisioned. This resulted in a range of unique and mindblowing styles that you just won't see anywhere else. The use of computer generated imagery is a recurring technique, but in each episode it is used differently. The first episode, "Final Flight of the Osiris", for instance, is produced entirely in 3D, by the makers of Final Fantasy. In "Beyond" and "The Second Renaissance", many of the backgrounds are created in 3D to appear as if they are drawn, then integrated with the 2D characters. In "Matriculated", CGI is used for parts of the backgrounds as well as certain characters. Even in the fully 2D episodes, the directors have played on new ideas for the drawing, such as in "Kid's Story", "Detective Story", and "World Record". No two episodes look even remotely the same, and it is this variety that is The Animatrix's greatest attribute.
Some of the stories are pieces of The Matrix puzzle, and serve to detail events that are important to the movie trilogy. Others are independent of the movies, but still set within the boundaries of The Matrix world. There are integral parts of the main movie storyline that you won't find anywhere else other than on this DVD, and I have never before seen a single concept stretch across so many media. Although I personally prefer the independent stories, which are very reminiscent of the great episodes of The Outer Limits. The episode entitled "Beyond" has become one of my favourite animes ever.
It is immensely difficult to score The Animatrix because of its variety. Therefore, in addition to the total score mentioned in this review, I have decided to score each episode individually.

Final Flight of the Osiris: Directed by Andy Jones. Visually incredible, wonderful fight choreography, integral to The Matrix movie trilogy storyline, although a little predictable.
Score - 80

The Second Renaissance (Part 1 and 2): Directed by Mahiro Maeda. This is the terminator-esque backstory to how the Matrix came about. Man vs Machine. Good use of CGI. But a somewhat childish tone for such a serious story.
Score - 77

Kid's Story: Directed by Shinichiro Watanabe (Cowboy Bebop). Incredible drawing style that is very appropriate for its content. Introduces a character from The Matrix Reloaded.
Score - 85

Program: Directed by Yoshiaki Kawajiri (X-TV). Probably the most traditional anime episode. Wild hairstyles and overacted fight scenes. Story holds your attention right to the end.
Score - 88

World Record: Directed by Takeshi Koike. Very experimental animation style, something I've never seen before. Reminiscent of certain western comic books.
Score - 83

Beyond: Directed by Koji Morimoto (Memories). A revolution in anime, a simply remarkable work of genius. Independent story that is intriguing on so many levels. Insane use of CGI backgrounds and appealing 2D characters. Vastly original use of camera motion.
Score - 98

Detective Story: Directed by Shinichiro Watanabe. It's blatantly obvious this is from the man behind Cowboy Bebop. Not often you see film noir done in anime, and here it works.
Score - 90

Matriculated: Directed by Peter Chung (Aeon Flux). Another visual masterpiece. Interesting concept, but some of the sequences tend to trail off into nothing.
Score - 79

As for features, the DVD is fairly loaded with them. Interviews with the directors, behind the scenes footage and information on how the episodes were made, history of anime, the making of the "Enter The Matrix" game, and enhanced features for PC DVD ROM.

Anime happenings at the tip of Africa

[Shiroi nikoGe <white featheRs>]

Many a wonderful thing has been happening in the South African Anime Community and there are a lot of exciting upcoming events to look forward to.
By the time you read this article, Spirited Away (Sen to Chihiro Kamikakushi) will already be out in Cinemas. This is another of Miyazaki's greats, and although the die hard action anime fan may not enjoy this film, on the whole I think it has something for just about everyone. Black Blade organised a gathering for the 21st of June at Monte Casino in order to show our support for Anime on the Big Screen (this doesn't happen often in our country.. other than at our screenings mind you ;)
Coming soon is the Icon Gaming Convention on the 11th, 12th and 13th of July - for those of you who are unsure of what the Icon gaming convention is... well it's a large gathering of pen and paper Role Players. Comic shops and the like sell their goods, competitive Role playing is had and generally anything goes. It has been a tradition for Icon to have an anime room, we now run that room, and we can guarantee that you'll enjoy it... we ran close to 50 hours of Anime last year.
Our 10th Anime day is also set to be a big event, although we're still in the planning stages it will pay off to keep an eye on the website www.blackblade.za.net for details on our next and hopefully biggest Anime day.
But wait, there's more…
Although the details are yet to be finalised, NAG has something big in the pipeline. I won't say much other than we will be providing an anime "theatre" at NAG's big end of year event. Keep an eye on the Yomikaki (black blade forum) for more details about the above mentioned events.

- Serpent

Serpent's Monthly Character Bio

Name: Yakumo Fuji
Title: Wu
Favourite colour: Red (watch the OAV's to understand)
Favourite hobby: Trying to become human / Protecting Pai
Famous Quote: I was careless, they're already here!

Little did Yakumo know that the strange girl he almost ran over on his scooter would turn out to be a legendary holy demon that he later would be bound to protect and love. Pai at first seemed like an ordinary if maybe slightly strange girl, that is until her pet demon escaped and attacked Tokyo city. In the struggle Yakumo was mortally wounded and to save his life Pai bound his soul to her own making him her "Wu"... now before you all call me a nut-case let me explain. The ancient race of the Sanjiyan Unkara (of which Pai is the last surviving member) had the ability to control powerful magics, but after expending great amounts of energy they were forced to rest in a coma like state for long periods in order to recuperate; this is where their "Wu" comes in. He/she is a person chosen by the Sanjiyan to protect him/herself during these periods of recuperation. The Wu is granted the power of immortality and must protect his Sanjiyan, a Wu cannot die as long as the Sanjiyan lives as their souls are intertwined. Yakumo must now help Pai become mortal so that he himself can return to normal, Yakumo's undying devotion and love for Pai may just be enough to pull it off.

On in-depth anime combat

Those who have seen enough action anime will no doubt have noticed the style of combat that some of these anime contain. I'm referring to the kind where, when two characters square up, they take a swing or two at each other, talk for a while, take another swing or two, talk a bit more, and repeat the process until one of them, somehow, gains victory.
It could look a little odd to someone standing on the outside who hasn't been following what's going on, but it's actually a way to add a little more depth and intellectual interest to the combat where it would usually be pure action. What happens is that the characters usually take the time to explain their techniques to their foes. A rather odd thing to do, anyone combat fan might think, to explain the very essence of the techniques that stand between you and death. Though this is usually done by the arrogant villains when they have the edge. This is because a lot of anime follows a particular trend which I'm sure a lot otaku have noticed, and it goes like this:
The hapless hero is a pretty well-trained, fairly skilled fighter. In this case, let's take the Rurouni Kenshin series as an example, where the main protagonist, Himura Kenshin, is the successor to the deadly assassination style, Hiten Mitsurugi Ryu, which relies on godlike speed for its effectiveness. At a particular stage in the series, he finds himself fighting against the leader of the Oniwa Banshu ninja, the icy Shinomori Aoshi, who wielded only a short sword. Naturally, all of Kenshin's comrades thought that Aoshi was insane to try and take Kenshin on with a short sword when Kenshin was armed with his sakaba sword (a sword with the blade on the reverse side, not made for killing). And so Kenshin initiates the attack, but gets a nasty surprise. Turns out that Aoshi had no intention of attacking with the sword, and used his deadly unarmed style, Kenpo, to counterattack after parrying all of Kenshin's strikes. Following the trend, the hero and the villain usually separate at this point while the villain takes a brief moment to explain why his techniques are proving to be superior to the hero's. The hero, at this point, may or may not be grievously wounded and or coughing up blood, depending on how badly they were beaten. The hero may try attacking a few more times before the next part of the trend takes place. The hero can do one of two things, either use a technique that is superior to the villain's technique or, if they don't have one, adjust one of their current techniques to be superior. In the case of Kenshin, he simply gets up and attacks Aoshi again. Aoshi, expecting another easy win, is rather surprised when Kenshin lands a crushing blow on his shoulder. Now it's the turn of hero, Kenshin, to explain how he beat the villain's technique. In this case, Kenshin realised that the reason he could not beat Aoshi was that his longer sword wasn't fast enough to get past Aoshi's smaller sword. He solved the problem by holding his sword higher up, on the blade, thus decreasing the length and increasing the speed (and shredding his hand too).
Although you do get plenty of exceptions, I've noticed that this formula is very widely followed. The villain starts out with the advantage and trounces the hero for a few rounds. Following a good beating, the hero gains some kind of insight into why he is losing and comes up with a way to defeat the villain's technique. The hero can achieve this in any number of ways, but it usually involves either whipping out a deadlier technique or adjusting an existing one. I first noticed this formula in the Rurouni Kenshin series, where Kenshin goes through this to beat a great many enemies - of course, there are many fights where the villains never stood a chance too. The next time I noticed it was in the Flame of Recca series, where practically every single fight follows this formula. I've seen it to a lesser degree in many other anime that I've watched, and I'm sure that even more anime I haven't seen use it too.

- KnightGainax

the LAZY GAMER'S guide to ...

Sony SVGA Ultra Compact LCD Projector

Right, here's something that we never thought would get in here - largely because the price of this unit is pretty much beyond the grasp of your average lazy gamer's well emptied wallet. Then again, there is something about playing your favourite first person shooter on a huge ten foot "screen"... like your neighbour's wall, or something.

All the better to see with
The lense features a 4x Zoom level, and has a throwing distance of up to 7.2 meters. The colour system supports NTSC3.58, NTSC4.43, SECAM, PAL-N and PAL-M. Throw that in with Picture Freeze and Picture muting.

On the move
The whole system is based around portability. Everything is conveniently sized and ready to go. Therefore the fact that a durable carry case is part of the package is pretty handy.

Tilt!
On the unit itself you can adjust the tilt automatically on the top, and the zoom can be manually adjusted on the side.

From the other room
The remote lets you do everything you want from anywhere in the room. Apart from the standard functions, the remote also functions as a mouse, with the left-click button resting at the bottom of the remote.

Suppied by: Drive Control [011] 887-8927
RRP: R 16 670.00

Input!
To get things to your projector, you can use the standard means of an RGB cable, or an S-Video cable. You can also operate the mouse function through the projector from your PC via the USB cable. The projector also supports inserting a Sony Memory Stick.

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Freeloader: ACDSee 5.0.1

ON THE CD

The nature of the Internet, and multimedia in general, is that over time you will be collecting a lot of pictures - especially with even cellphones coming in with their own digital cameras. And most of us have more than that, with picture collections copied at a LAN or perhaps you work a lot with images. Either way, managing these things get harder to do the bigger your images become. The whole thing compounds even more when you throw in movies.

The big thing is that management of images goes beyond Windows XP's thumbnail feature. You need something that can convert, do batch work, and show you any image file out there, without having to open a memory hog such as PSP or Photoshop.

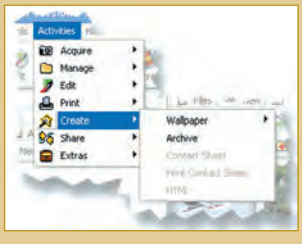
ACDSee has been a crowd favourite for years, and it's probably the most feature-rich media viewer commonly available, though it does come on a 30-Day trail period. But if your imaging needs go beyond what an excellent free client such as Irfanview can provide you perhaps it's worth shelling out a few bucks to get a commercial copy.

navigation window

On the far-left of the interface you'll see the **Navigation Window**. This piece of screen real estate is everything you need to organize your collection, and will probably be most useful to large image managers. There are several tabs to look at here, and they all have their uses. The Photo Discs section, for instance, allows you to catalogue your Image CDs, and then browse their content without having to insert the CD. The Calendar area allows you to sort images according to their file dates. The Folders and Photo Albums tabs are similar, but the first allows you to browse the folders on your machine, while the latter lets you create specific collections to browse. Lastly, the Category tab lets you manage and create categories, which you can use to sort images. For instance, the picture of a cat would do well under a Pets category.

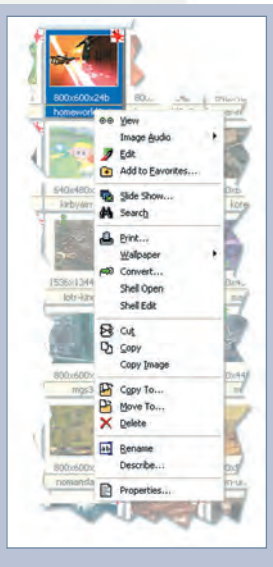
activity menu

The **Activity Menu** is a great place to find extra features in ACDSee, from the ability to create a wallpaper to sending your pics to friends or to an online collection to scanning images or retrieving files from a digital camera. It also houses quick shortcuts to edit options and create image archives.

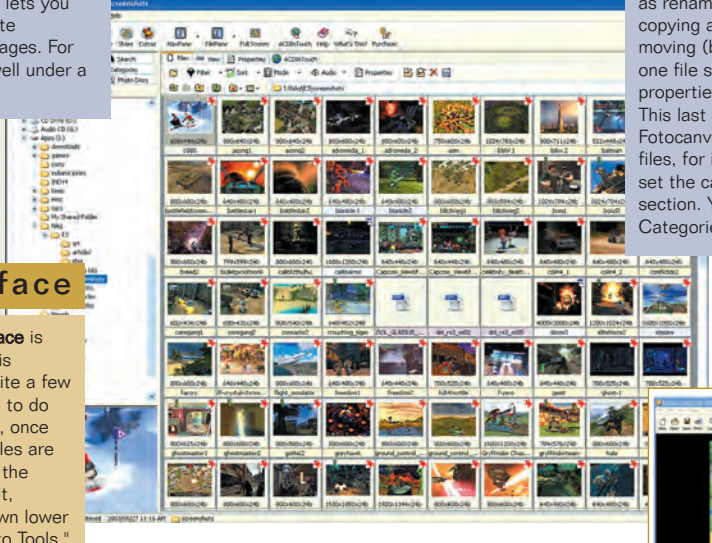


menu

Almost everything you want to do with an image can be manipulated through the right-click **menu**. For instance, there is the Convert option, which will convert the files to another format. This section does not give you that much control over the file-specific settings as a full-blown graphics program, but it is fine for standard work.



The menu also give other options, such as renaming, copying and moving (batch options appear if you have more than one file selected), the ability to change the file properties and description, and lastly to edit the file. This last option will open the image in ACD Fotocanvas Lite. If you work with a lot of image files, for instance a clipart collection, you can also set the category for the image in the Properties section. You can add new categories Under the Categories tab on the Navigation Pane (far left).

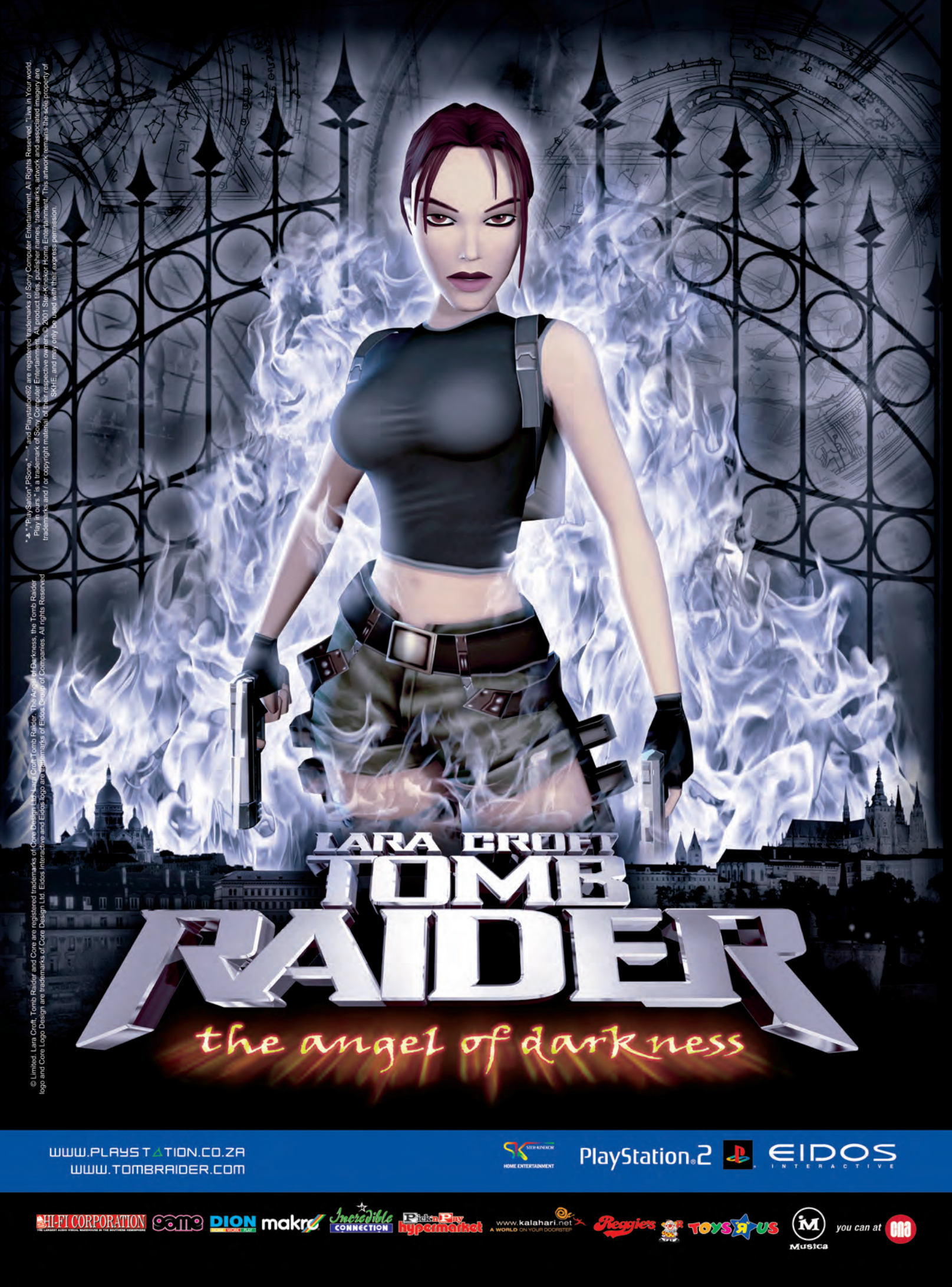


interface

From the get-go, ACDSee's **interface** is very user-friendly. Of course, this is version 5 already, so there have been quite a few revisions. In a nutshell, nothing you want to do isn't a mouse-click away. As you can see, once you select a directory or album, all the files are shown inside the selection. Of course, if the folder in question has a lot of images in it, especially large ones, this could slow down lower spec machines. To work around this, go to Tools " Options (or press Alt + O) and select Thumbnail Views. In this part you can change the quality of the thumbnail, as well as its size and other options such as overlay icons and such.

fotocanvas

Fotocanvas is ACD System's own light-weight image manipulation software that ships with ACDSee, and can be used to make standard changes to an image, such as alter the brightness or contrast levels, or rotate it to a specific angle. Some of these options are available in the viewer itself, but using Fotocanvas gives you more control over the process. The easiest way to get there is simply to right-click on the image and select Edit. You can also open FotoCanvas from the Start menu and work from there.



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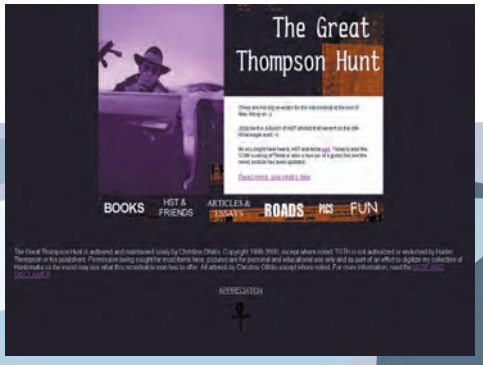

WWW.

It's the way you say it
http://members.shaw.ca/tom.t/unh/dir.html

Now here is a novel concept that makes all the time spent on the net, wasting costly company bandwidth, worth it. This site documents comic book frames with strange action scenes and action words. For instance, someone saying "Mnnhh!" while having his face shoved into snow. Or the ever-popular "Twack!" sound when someone gets hit.

Of course, there's more to it. The site also celebrates badly written scenes, and each picture is accompanied by commentary on the piece.

Overall, it's a celebration of cheesy comic culture, and even though the artists and writers probably had the best, and most serious, of intentions, it's hilarious seeing it in this context.

Then again, what did you expect from a site called "Unh!"?

The Empire Rolls On
www.empiresrts.com

Activision wowed everyone with this RTS at E3 this year, and now you can see first-hand what the fuss is about with the official website. It's a bit heavy on the graphics, but overall a nice site to find out more on the game. To date, the site covers the nations of Korea, the US, Germany, China and the United Kingdom, with more to come.

The site still lacks a bit, but they are slowly building up to it, and eventually you'll be able to match unit stats and get wallpapers. In the mean time you can download the E trailer, have a look at the new screenshots, and read up detailed info on Germany and Korea.

If anything, you can register there to be kept up to date on the game's happenings.

The Duke of Gonzo
www.gonzo.org

This is an unofficial website celebrating the still-going life and writings of Hunter S. Thompson, largely seen as the creator of Gonzo Journalism, and writer of such infamous novels as Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas.

The site is a loose collection of pictures, essays and books from the journalist who had America gagging on itself during the 60s and 70s, giving him the kind of celebrity status only rogues and the slightly deranged tend to achieve. Either way, there are three kinds of people in the world: those who love him, hate him, or haven't heard of him yet.

The website itself might at first not appear to be a great resource on HST, but a bit of digging will reveal the lists of information on him, including the great FAQs.

There is still a lot left to be said, but as a fan site, it's a great job, and at the very least should be on an HST fan's bookmark list.

Go to war!
www.dayofdefeat.za.net

There are few quality fan sites locally for games, so it's refreshing to see a site with such polish and dedication as the Day of Defeat one. Run by a group of locals, it covers the popular mod for Half-Life.

The website gives you the means to get going online, the rules by which games are played, competition events, clans and everything else you'll need to get into the local DOD scene. All this is wrapped in a nice design and fairly frequent news posts. It's quite obvious that a lot of time and dedication is going into this community site.

If your interest is peaked, check out the review in this issue and then head online for classic World War 2 combat.

Euthanasia Award

www.yo.tv

This month's Euthanasia award, i.e. A site that deserves to be put out of its misery, goes to the Yo.tv site. It's supposed to be the official site for SABC 1's kid's channel, but even though the domain has been advertised months ago, the site is still nothing more than an image.

And what an image it is, since it's just over 300kb in size, does not even center, and is pretty much a waste of space.

Plus, all the small things you'd like to see, such as contact details, a program schedule, or perhaps just a link back to big daddy SABC 1 are non-existent.

Hey, maybe they blew their whole budget on the photo and are waiting for the year to pass before they can go further.

idle hands

Wasting time - we're good at that. In between doing a magazine [*hacking out a slapdash effort you mean, Ed*] and our five-hour lunches, we need to do something with all our time, else we might get up to no good and spike the office coffee. Thank goodness for the Internet…

www.p45.net
This site even has a Boss Button, which quickly pops up a spreadsheet page, so that it at least looks like you are working. P45 claims to be the leader at wasting time. While we'd still need to confirm that, it's one of the leading ones - there's just too much to do here. It's tiring…

www.crazythoughts.com
Why worry about the important stuff? It's more rewarding to worry about questions that no-one really has any answer for. For instance, why can't your palms tan? Or if you die with braces, do they take them off? Or which way does a compass point in space?

www.alltooflat.com
All Too Flat has a lot to offer, though you'll need to register. Sure, it's free, but they REALLY want you to register. You have to wonder why… At least they seem to have a serious problem with spam, so I doubt they'll be selling off your email.

cleverbit.cherrii.net
"Viewing any material on this site could result in loss of brain cells. What follows is not educational or nutritional, has no vitamins or minerals, is packed with artificial flavoring, is taking up bandwidth someone else could be using and it's probably non-biodegradable but the people who were supposed to test for health hazards wouldn't come near it."

www.shiola.co.uk
So what's this site about? Not even its creators know…

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writer: James Francis

THE BIG GREEN CGI MACHINE

When Industrial Light & Magic started work on The Hulk two years ago, they were confronted with a new problem - for the first time the main character in a live action movie is a CGI character, not to mention that it's a huge green monster that never speaks, being directed by one of the most anally detailed directors in the industry.

2003 might be tagged the age of the fantasy hero. It's got the line-up for it: Lord of the Rings, Daredevil, Matrix Reloaded...and The Hulk. The last time the original mean green machine appeared on the big screen was in 1977 when Lou Ferrigno was painted green, wore a silly wig and ran around screaming at military folk. But let's face it, it was simply a guy painted green, pretending to be one of the biggest and most destructive super-heroes in comic book history.

In 2003, though, Ang Lee and Marvel plan to amaze us with the latest incarnation of the monster, and this time with the help of Industrial Light and Magic, they intend to do what has not been done before: create a main movie character, in a real-world setting, made completely out of CGI effects.

"We started over 2 years ago, and we had the challenge of bringing a computer-generated character to life," said Wilson Tang, Art Director/Systems R&D at ILM. "In making him believable, we had to calculate realistic muscle movement under the skin, the correct emotional reaction, and everything to make the Hulk a believable character. The Hulk represents the best work we've ever done - the best expressions, the best movement, the best hair."

But not quite a human one. The Hulk is unlike most stars, since he weighs up to two tons and in some scenes he has to be able to run up to 150 mph, not to mention that he's quite agile. His hands and feet are also huge, thus simply taking a human character and inflating him to gigantic status would not have worked. Not to mention that he barely speaks, so body language is an important aspect of his personality. This represented a different level of challenge for ILM in creating him. The Hulk was created ahead of the movie itself, since the project was less about making a silver screen version than making something that the audience would perceive as real.

Director Ang Lee, famed for Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon, knew where he wanted to go - the end had to be a computer-generated green giant that the audience could believe in and have feelings for.

"Ang was instrumental in the creation of the Hulk, and he laid out what he wanted from the start," said Tang. Ang Lee and editor Tim Squyres also worked with the ILM team in Northern California for 9 months - after all, the Hulk is not just another effect, but the movie's main character. The one advantage the team, which started at 20 and ended up being over 300 big, had was that they knew Eric Bana, the Melbourne stand-up comedian, who was cast as Bruce Banner, the Hulk's alter-ego. The Hulk mimics a lot of Bana's movements, and this was instrumental in making the giant believable, especially since most of the reactions of the Hulk are without any dialogue, not to mention that there is quite a bit of interaction with co-stars Jennifer Connelly, Nick Nolte and Josh Lucas. Not to mention that thanks to his colour and behemoth size, the Hulk is an instant scene stealer. Traditionally CGI effects are intended to be in the background, or to flesh out a scene. But this is the first time that a CG character takes center stage.

"If people can see we created a CGI character, and they don't accept him as believable, we have failed." Tang explained that the process for creating Hulk started well ahead of the movie. By the time that the actual movie was shot, ILM had a fully living, breathing character to put into the process.

Another change in the process is that formerly Eric Bana might have walked around on set covered in prosthetics mimicking some of the morphing stages where Banner turns into his Doppleganger. This time around, though, the process is done in CG. At one point, the animated character takes over and morphs into the Hulk - something that comes across more believable. The original plan was that he'd change off-screen or in the shadows, but this was not bound to stand, especially since the technology is capable of doing the effect. To take it even a step further, during a lot of the transformation scenes, Lee kept the camera static to make sure that the effect would not be mistaken for some old-fashioned camera-angle cheat.

The Hulk represents a major step in movie special effects, and the place that computer-generated graphics have in the entertainment world. A few years ago, computers were the big thing in the world of special effects, but they were in the birth stages of their existence.

Tang, though, feels that the technology has come of age, "Special effects over the years have been like the keys of a piano. When we discover and develop a new way of doing something, we add to the collection of keys. Now we've finally reached the stage where we have enough keys to create a masterpiece."

The future of special effects looks green indeed.

Industrial Light and Magic at a Glance

Created by George Lucas in 1975, Industrial Light and Magic represent the cream of the crop of the special effects industry. Since its creation, the company has worked on the likes of Star Wars, ET: The Extra Terrestrial, The Lost World: Jurassic Park, The Mummy, Twister and Terminator 2: Judgment Day - totaling over 160 films. What few know, though, is that seven of the 10 world-wide top-grossing films of all time had Industrial Light and Magic working on them. The company has won over 14 Oscars and has been nominated for an additional 17 and 21 Scientific and Technical Academy Award Certificates.

developer: ea sports [] **publisher:** electronic arts [] **distributor:** electronic arts africa [011] 516-8300
release date: Q3 [] **genre:** sports [] **internet:** www.ea.co.za
platforms: pc | ps2

writer: Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar

Tackling the South

New Age Gaming was recently invited to an exclusive demonstration of the upcoming Electronic Arts (EA) Rugby 2004 title. The producer of the title, Andrew Wilson, was flown up from Australia to showcase the game.
In typical EA fashion, the event was also attended by several well-known personalities. These included 5fm disc jockey Zuraida Jardine, national cricketer Jacques Kallis and national rugby players Dean Hall, Jannes Labuschagne and Russell Winter amongst others.

Wilson started proceedings by giving some background information on the EA rugby franchise.
"The last rugby title we released was in 2001. At the time I had no idea if there was even going to be another one. In many ways Rugby 2001 was used to test the waters for the franchise. Expectations were that we would sell 100 000 units. Imagine our surprise then when sales broke through the 500 000 unit mark worldwide!"
However, Wilson readily admits that while the previous title was good, it could have been made much better but for budgetary constraints. "With Rugby 2004 we therefore want to sell a real EA Sports title and not just a game with the EA badge stuck on."
This can only be good news for fans and newcomers alike. With the title still on course for a September release and the demo being available when you read this, the time is fast approaching where rugby gamers will be able to play a good title.
Unfortunately, GameCube and Xbox fans will have to get either a PC or PlayStation 2 to be able to experience the game. "We have very strict budgets when developing titles for the console so we tend to identify which ones our target market use. Currently, the PlayStation 2 is the console of choice in the southern hemisphere. So instead of developing an average game on several platforms, we wanted to develop the best possible game for the PC and PlayStation 2."
According to Wilson, EA identified three areas where the title had to improve over its predecessor. "Firstly, there had to be more depth in gameplay. It goes without saying that graphics need to be better. Lastly, we wanted to develop a title with some unique rugby elements thrown in. These include different refereeing interpretations, being able to make high tackles, throw the ball in skew at the line-out and so on."
Fans will be happy to know that apart from the usual friendly matches, all the major international tournaments have been included. For the uninitiated, these are the World Cup, the Six Nations, the Tri-Nations, Super 12 and the European Trophy. "The European Trophy is effectively the Heineken Cup, but the legalities pertaining to alcohol advertisements in games had us go this route," Wilson explained.
However, Springbok supporters will be happy to know that EA did manage to do a deal pertaining to the green and gold blazer. "We removed the branding from the Springbok jersey and it just did not look right. We made a few deals and will include the exact jersey that has become famous the world over."
A nice add-on is the fact that winning the Tri-Nations will mean either Australia, New Zealand or South Africa will be able to play against the Lions.
While these tournaments are great to have, Wilson believes that there must be more progression in game play. "Seeing how successful our other sport titles like FIFA and NHL have become by allowing the player to compete in a league-format, we decided to include a world league element to Rugby 2004."
"The player is now able to create his/her own team and use that team to play against all the other sides in the game. You get points according to your performance and you will be able to use those points to manage your team more effectively."
"Of course, if you are not happy with any of the players in your team, you can use the player editor to create your own players." This roster management feature is similar to how you create a Sim on the console version of The Sims. There will be no attribute limit, so players will be able to create superhuman rugby players.
"Players will quickly realise that the better the player being created, the more expensive that player will become. Luckily, you will be able to use your team of super-players in friendly matches, but it will be impossibly expensive to use them in league-play."
There are a plethora of abilities to tweak and each rugby player will also have three special abilities. These include being a playmaker, a goal-kicker or even resistance to injuries to a certain degree. Overall, ninety new players can be created.
Rugby 2004 also features 75 stadia and a four-player cooperative mode where two players control the forwards and two players control the backs. However, the more likely multiplayer scenario is two versus two with each player controlling either the forwards or the backs.
"In keeping with the pace in which rugby is played today, we wanted to focus on running rugby in Rugby 2004. Teams are now able to build momentum and use that momentum to drive forward in ruck and maul situations. Strategy is also going to form a key part of this title. We have introduced a Madden-style game book where players will be able to select from a range of plays to use against the opposition."
The television-style presentation is reminiscent of FIFA 2003 and the actual play dynamic is much better than the button and keyboard smashing that went along with playing Rugby 2001.
Even though the game being demonstrated was not completely finished, it does look set to be the best rugby game to date. Judging by the improvements over its predecessor, Wilson might just be right.
If anything, Rugby 2004 will definitely be the game to play if you are a rugby supporter.

▼ The following screens are all from an early alpha build of the game...

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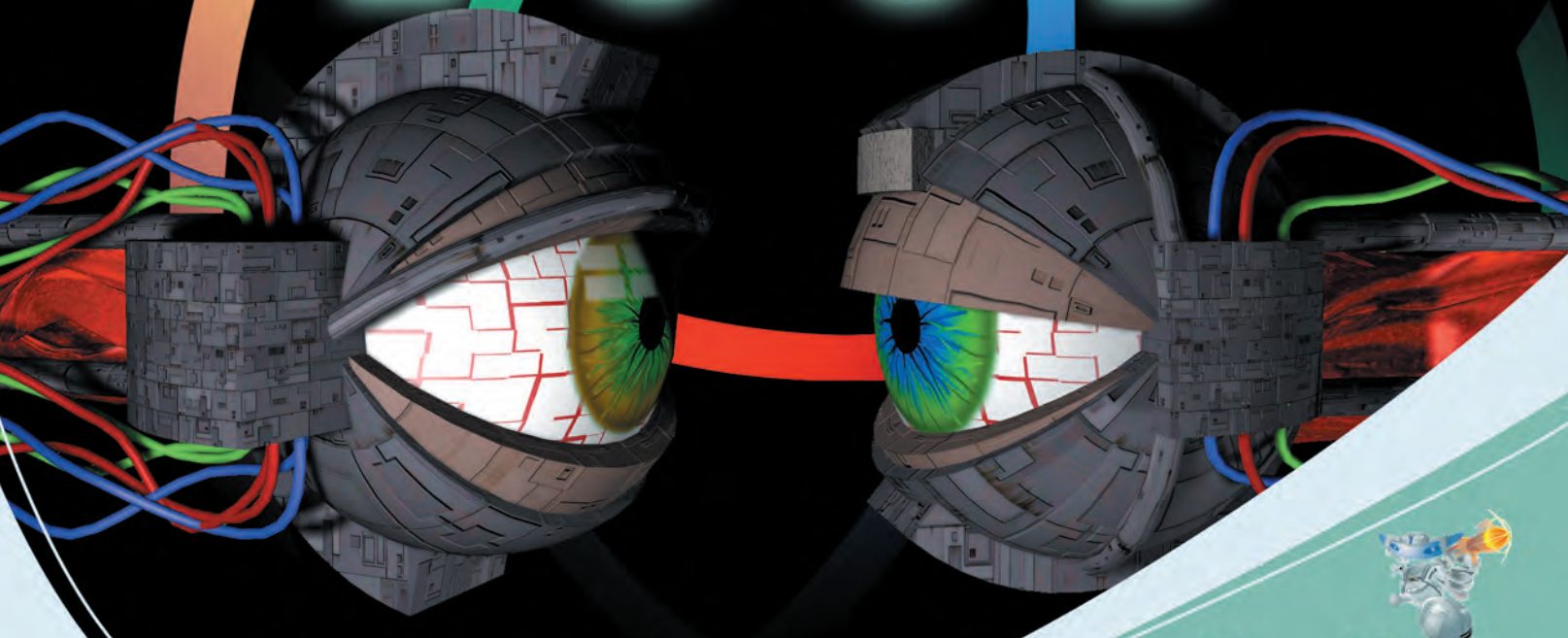
world cyber games 2003



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Player of the Month

Name:
Ross Mc Ilroy

Nick:
Cavalier

Age:
19

Clan:
Nightfall

Occupation:
Student

Games:
WarCraft III | StarCraft: Broodwar | Command & Conquer Generals

Quote:
"I rate quotes are a bit stupid :D"

Achievements:
~ 1st Place in WarCraft III, Worfaire 2002 Johannesburg Preliminaries
~ 1st Place in WarCraft III, Gamers Gate Eastgate 2002
~ 3rd Place in WarCraft III, Worfaire 2002 Finals
~ 1st Place WarLeagueZA Final
~ 3rd Place First WLZA League
~ 4th Place in WarCraft III, 1000ManLAN 2003
~ 1st Place wartourZA Invite-Only Tourney
~ 1st Place in WarCraft III Best of the Best 2v2 Tourney (with nf-jackal)
~ 5th Place wartourZA-2 Invite-Only Tourney
~ Member of the South African StarCraft Team (2000-2001)
~ Top 16 in StarCraft, Worfaire 2000 Finals
~ 2nd Place in StarCraft, Worfaire 2001 Online Qualifier
~ 4th Place in StarCraft, Worfaire 2001 Finals
~ Top 8 at Electronic Arts Command & Conquer Generals LAN

<The_Basilisk> StarCraft or Warcraft III, which is better?
<Cavalier> Starcraft is much better competitively, as it has more depth and the skill requirements are higher. At the moment WarCraft III is more fun though.

<The_Basilisk> How do you think our ES World Cup representative will do in France?
<Cavalier> Skill wise I don't think we are far behind, but we lack experience. I think that will be the decisive factor at ESWC. But we could surprise everyone.

<The_Basilisk> What's happening in the Nightfall camp lately?
<Cavalier> We are preparing for Gamers Gate at the moment, as well as looking for sponsors and working on a few projects of our own. (www.nf.web.za/wartourZA.html).

<The_Basilisk> What made you into the player you are today?
<Cavalier> I spend a lot of time playing , and have family (brother, dad, cousin) and friends to play with so it's more of a social experience than a serious one, which is why I don't get bored.

<The_Basilisk> What are your predictions for Gamers Gate?
<Cavalier> Well, with the new patch it's very difficult to say. I predict that nightfall players will do well though. Maybe even win it.

<The_Basilisk> How does the new patch affect gameplay?
<Cavalier> From what I have seen, mass spellcasters aren't as good as before, and some units that were previously neglected like riflemen and banshees are now required to form a balanced army. No really massive changes though.

<The_Basilisk> What's the stupidest thing you ever did?
<Cavalier> Agree to do this interview :D

THE COLLECTIVE

The Collective LAN was started in May last year as a fun LAN with an atmosphere of relaxation and friendship. Marius van der Merve, (known as Space Raider to all of the Borg drones), has been running small events since the early days of LANning. "I have been at it since the BNC days," he says. "I probably hosted one of the first LANs in the country in the days of WarCraft 1. The Collective is basically a fun LAN. Many different games are played and the atmosphere is not one of competitiveness. It's a place where any game goes." Over the months, it became the offline home of Gauteng's Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault and Unreal Tournament 2003 communities and was pretty much the only monthly event where you were guaranteed to find opponents in both of those games.

Marius decided to run three fun competitions in UT2003, MOHAA and Quake 3, to celebrate the LAN's first year of operation. Each competition was organised by its respective community, while The Collective sponsored the prizes (except for Rune[NGC] who put up the Quake 3 prizes himself). The UT2003 and Quake 3 tournaments were both won by 42.Livid who walked away with R400 cash and a 64MB USB hard drive. 42.Mburr took both second places. |HR|Casper finished third in UT2003 and [o]ThinIce took third in Quake 3. As for MOHAA, the winner was determined in a nailbiting three-way final which saw BITCH (the only female player in the competition) finishing first, with]H[TheProven coming in second and <BORG>Demonhammer third.

What was an otherwise successful and enjoyable event was marred by the callous theft of one of The Collective's network switches. While they have a few leads on who was responsible, nothing can be proven at this point. As such, Marius will not be running any public events for a while until he has sorted out the problem of losing a switch. I certainly hope this does not become a trend. Actions like this are a disgrace to the entire gaming community. www.collectiveza.com

All Bets Are In! – The_Basilisk's ES World Cup Predictions

It's official, by the time you read this, eight SA players will be flying off to France to compete at the Electronic Sports World Cup. While Stephen "Ph4ntom" Cloete has been pre-selected as one of the 20 best Quake 3 players in the world, the other seven players will have earned their spots at the ESWC qualifier held by Gamers Gate in June at The Carousel. So who are they going to be?

Counter-Strike

A good all-round indicator of how the teams stand against each other is the Mayhem Offline League, which came to a close this month. However, since this was an ongoing league, sometimes teams couldn't make it to every event or were occasionally missing players. Both DC-Ignite and 7 Esports Stars are contenders for the number one spot, but at times both of those teams have lacked the big match temperament to go all the way. For this very reason, with cool heads and decisive teamwork, Evolve-Aim have shown time and time again that they are the team to beat. Evolve's B team and KSports' T6 will probably fill up the remainder of the top 5.

UT2003

So far the game has been dominated by Livid and Mburr from Team 42, who have taken first and second place in every UT2003 competition to date. With the experience to back them up, it is likely that they will do it again. However, the relatively unknown Zero-1 is coming up from Cape Town and has proved online that he cannot be discounted. |HR|Casper is also practising to win and if our old favourite Gandulf decides to attend, he will no doubt throw a whole new spanner into the works.

WarCraft III

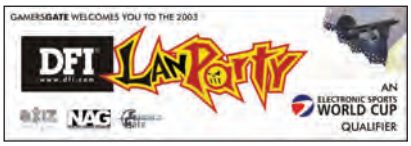
The nature of this game makes it very difficult to predict the winner. In the community, there are at least six players with a very real chance of finishing first. These players are sWoop, Cavalier, Stealth and Zick (from clan Nightfall), Vetoll (clan 0wned), and Juvenile (from No Damn Clan). Stealth (who usually plays random) is mainly a 2v2 player but his insane grasp of strategy has always made him a firm contender. Zick (usually Orc), Juvenile (usually Human) and Vetoll (always Undead) have also featured highly in many tournaments in the past. But in the end I would say sWoop and Cavalier (who both always play Night Elf) each have the correct mindset to win. I expect to see at least one of them in the final.

The Gamers Gate, DFI LanParty Electronic Sports World Cup Qualifier kicks off one week from now. Yet, by the time you read this it will have come and gone.
A full report back will appear in the August 2003 issue and hopefully our guys will do us proud at the ESWC event in France.

Hello LAN Party freaks!

DFI, a manufacturer of the stunning LanParty motherboard range, distributed by Axiz in South Africa, was the main sponsor for this event and gave us amazing prizes to give away to the gamers! On top of that, they made sure that the winning Counter-Strike team had sufficient funds to make their way to the 'friendly' city of Poitiers in France. Rumour has it that the South Africans have built up a reputation for their amazing aim, however… it is the strategy section of our game that lacks. Hopefully we will have proven them wrong this time round.

The most exciting news for South Africa is the fact that for the first time, we received a special invite for one of our players to compete in an exhibition match against the top ten players in the world. Allow me to explain… Last year, at the Samsung World Cyber Games event held in Seoul, Korea, Stephen (Ph4ntom) Cloete a 16-year-old player from Cape Town managed to impress the world by beating the world number one ranked Quake III player in his opening round of the tournament and then went on to finish 7th over all. By achieving this amazing feat, Ph4ntom secured his official world ranking and thus an invite to France. When Gamers Gate last spoke with Stephen he seemed confident that he would be able to help put South African gaming on top of the world. Go Stephen!



Everyone's invited…

Gamers Gate is proud to announce the return of the Samsung World Cyber Games to South Africa!

Samsung have contracted Gamers Gate to run the WCG this year and we are in the final stages of setting the wheels in motion, so to speak… We are really excited, yet at the same time worried about the lack of sleep we will have to suffer. Now, if you think you might have what it takes to compete against South Africa's best, go to the Gamers Gate site. Click on registrations, select your game and you are done. As simple as that. Keep an eye on the Gamers Gate site as well as next month's NAG for final dates and other details. We can however confirm that preliminaries will be held in JHB and Cape Town with the final taking place in JHB during the first couple of weeks in October.

The grand final will take place in Seoul, Korea from 12 - 18 October 2003 bringing together approximately 600 gamers from over 56 participating countries. With a total prize purse of US$350,000 up for grabs in Korea, all you Counter-Strike, UT 2003 and WarCraft III players best start practising!

Remember when competing, it is 60% skill and 40% attitude. So, if you are the snot nose ass that everyone hates because you are so damn arrogant… enter an event, you never know, you may just surprise yourself. And even your "rent-a-crowd-friends" will act surprised, nod slowly and wish you well.

Till next month… Cheers

Len Nery [Fr33]
www.gamersgate.co.za

there's nothing a maggot loves more than dead meat

rAge
really awesome gaming event

Computer Gaming & Technology Expo+
26-28 September 2003
The Dome
Northgate

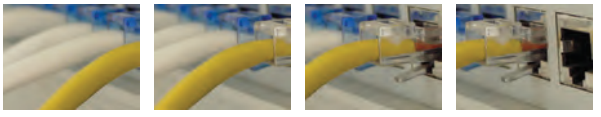
rAge is proud to host the Samsung WCG JHB preliminary

A NAG
hardcore gaming
INITIATIVE

for exhibitor enquiries do this - rage@nag.co.za
registration for the NAG LAN @ rAge will open soon on www.langames.co.za

SAMSUNG
WCG
world cyber games
2003

"One never notices what has been done, one can only see what remains to be done."
Marie Curie



Network? Cabling? Bah! Who needs them?!

Ping! Ping? Yes ping. Such a unique word that expresses pain, pleasure, hate and love. Few words in the English vocabulary are so versatile. It can express disgust, "Check my Ping!"; boastfulness, "Did you see my Ping? "; trouble, "you'd better sort out my ping or else I'll send my IP packets where it hurt "; difficulty, "If only I knew why my ping is so high on this server"; inquiry, "What is ping? ".

But with such a versatile word, some people still do not grasp the true complexity and nature of this word that makes any true gamer nod in appreciation when it is uttered. The word, for those that are less informed, refers to the response time of your data on the network. Thus it can be described as the time that it takes your data to be sent to another computer and be received and acknowledged. The time is measured in milli seconds.

When playing online one can expect a ping from 30 to 200 depending on your quality connection and the server that you are connecting to. The reason why LAN's are so popular is the fact that your ping is zero. Yet there have been many LAN's where this has not been the case. The reason for this is that not all networks were created equal. There are switches, hubs, 10MB/s, 100 MB/s, 1GB/s, cabling, shielding, layout, configuring, protocol and other things to consider. I will try to explain briefly in the limited space available these basics concepts.

Firstly there are switches and hubs. A hub is in essence just a backplane where a lot of network cables can be plugged in so that data can be exchanged between them. There is no significant control over how the data flows between source and destination. Hubs allow PC's to join a network without the need to disturb the network topology, as was the case with the old coaxial technology. With the ever-increasing demand that our digital world has put on network performance, the advent of switches came about. Switches are similar to hubs, in that they connect the different network cables to a backplane so that data may be exchanged. The difference is that switches control the flow of data to and from the switch. Bad connections that "chatter" (send a lot of garbage :D) are isolated from the network in such a way that the other connections are not negatively influenced by it. Switches also "learn" where certain PC's are located, and forward data that is intended for a specific PC, only to that PC and thus effectively keeps your bandwidth open.

10MB/s has been the standard for many years, but as with all things, its time has come to an end. 100 MB/s is the new standard for desktops. Higher end servers utilize 1GB/s connections, it will however be quite some before LANs venture that route. Most of the more established LANs are utilizing 1GB/s connections for their backbone. In other words, they connect their different switches and/or hubs to a common connection via 1GB/s links. This is the type of connection that you will need if you are to allow gamers to copy while play is in progress. At our last LAN, one of my friends copied more than 180G of data for the day.

My advice would be to try and make use of switches if possible. If you cannot get hold of switches, try to at least have one switch available to connect all your smaller switches/ hubs to. This will allow you to distribute your network in such a way that you do not need excessively long cables that everybody will trip over. Do keep in mind the path that data has to flow to reach its destination. The more switches it has to go through, the more lag will be induced due to the overhead requirements of each switch to process the data. Thus if you had five 8-port hubs and a 24-port switch, utilize the switch as your backbone. Connect each hub to your central switch via a crossover cable if required. This will leave you with 35 ports (five times seven ports due to crossover) and 19 ports (24-5 crossovers) for a total of 54 ports. Now this might seem just what the doctor ordered for your 54 player LAN, just remember to allocate a port for each server that you will be supplying. If you are to supply servers, it is best to connect them to your main switch.

If we were to connect our five hubs one to the other and then to the switch in series, your performance would be seriously influenced. Let's say that you are connected to hub 1, and want data from the switch that is connected to the other end. Now for the purpose of illustration, let's assume that each hub requires 1milli second to process a request. This means that your request now has an overhead of 6 milli seconds for each request. Since you have hubs connected, you can expect collisions on the network that will introduce even more delay. So try and stay with a star topology with the strongest switch in the middle.

When you plan your cabling for the event, three major things need to be considered. Firstly you need to ensure that your cables stay as short as possible and run in straight lengths, not coiled up under the server. This is due to the fact that the soft type network cable is intended for lengths less than 10 meters, and the stiffer type network cable is intended for lengths up to 100 meters. Since most people use the soft type of cable, keep your lengths as short as possible. The coiling up of cable may introduce crosstalk that degrades your performance.
Secondly, do not run your network cable in close vicinity to your power cabling, as you may experience induction from the power cabling to your network. Remember that each conductor of your power has a small magnetic field around it, this is what causes the problems when low power cabling such as network cabling runs in close vicinity. UTP cable that we use stands for Unshielded Twisted Pair. Please note the unshielded in the acronym. The twist in the cable is to help prevent crosstalk between the pairs. The one pair is for transmitting data, and the other pair for receiving data. Thirdly, always try and keep your cabling away from grabbing feet that pass by. If somebody gets caught in one of your snares, he/she may pull your switch or computer that is connected to it, from the table that it stands on. As we all know, bouncing our LANning equipment on the floor is not good idea.

Although most gamers have a piece of network cable to bring to the LAN, I am of the opinion that we have reached such a stage in hosting LAN's in the country, that the supply of cable is expected and not a nice touch. If you make up your network cable, please test it way before the LAN, as you will most likely make a mistake or two, and the day of the LAN is not the time to find out.

Most games utilize TCP/IP, and thus you will need to cater for this. You can set up a DHCP server that automatically hands out IP addresses as people connect to the network. Although this sounds like the perfect solution, it is not recommend. Firstly due to the fact that you will most probably need to run windows server, which you do not have a legal copy of, although there are other utilities that can do the same. Secondly, there are many instances where applications hand out IP addresses too. This will mean that you will have two or more machines handing out addresses without correlation. The safest bet is to hand out manual IP addresses on a piece of paper when the gamers pay on the day. IP addresses are in the format number1.number2.number3.number4 and subnet in the format number1.number2.number3.number4. Apply the following rules and your addressing should work fine. Ensure that each number is between 1 and 254, the first three numbers of your IP should be the same, for example 192.168.2.number4. Now use consecutive numbers for number 4, never duplicating a number. You can see that we have more than enough addresses available. Your subnet is just the networks way of indicating where you are located. Use 255.255.255.0 for all PC's.

With so may things left unsaid, and space being up, I sure hope that you found something useful or maybe even insightful. Hope that you have made it through the second technically inclined installment, as we will be covering sponsors, prizes etc in the next issue.

Wolvenoid
frags@mailbox.co.za
www.vc.org.za

SHUTTLE, TEAM EVOLVE ANNOUNCE SPONSORSHIP DEAL

The world's best LAN party PC, the Shuttle XPC, is the power behind South Africa's top competitive gaming team.

Team EVOLVE, the number 1 ranked competitive CS gaming team in South Africa is proud to announce its official sponsor for 2003 is Shuttle Inc, a leading provider of small form-factor (SFF) computers and mainboards.

"Team EVOLVE are proud to associate themselves with the world class brand of Shuttle, which will provide us with much needed hardware that is perfect for LAN environments. These SFF rigs are so easy to transport without sacrificing the power of conventional machines, and in most cases out performs them," says Warren Steven, player/manager for Team Evolve.
Team EVOLVE will use the XPC's provided for its practice facility in Boksburg, and will be showcasing the XPC's at all major competitive gaming tournaments around South Africa.
"This is a major step for competitive gaming teams in South Africa who are now being recognised for their abilities and reaping the benefits thereof," says Ettienne de Beer, manager of Team EVOLVE. Shuttle is officially distributed in South Africa by WenTek International, and are avid supporters of competitive gaming and LAN parties around the country.

For further information on Shuttle Inc, visit their international website at www.shuttle.com and for further information on Team EVOLVE and its sponsors visit the Team EVOLVE website at www.teamevolve.co.za.

Back right to left: Jannie 'Hellhound' van Niekerk, Julian 'Raumas' Bales, Riaan 'Style' van Niekerk, Max 'Slipstream' Jordaan, Carlos 'Unknown Soldier' Pinto, Jason 'Jay' Stead.

Front right to left: Manager Warren 'Storm' Steven, Shaun 'Deathsbane' Marx, Marc 'Surge' du Plessis.

Organised Chaos May LAN

The May OC LAN showed that gaming in the Western Cape is definitely becoming more popular. Gamers started arriving at three on Friday afternoon despite the advertised 8pm starting time. These were just the first of the one hundred and sixty people that registered for the weekends LAN. Gamers came from all over the place: the northern suburbs, the southern suburbs, Worcester, Paarl and Hermanus. This massive increase in participation resulted in some growing pains as the LAN's infrastructure was stretched to the limit. The organisers rushed around trying to find enough leads and cables for all the gamers that were clamouring at the door, and all was in place when the doors opened. Steve, who spent a large part of Friday night staring at the flashing light of a switch did a fantastic job of sorting out a large number of problems, with Plank, Sadistic Carrot and Choc-Salties all lending a hand.

The registration of the gamers took longer than some would have liked, with many people standing in the cue for up to an hour. This delay, according to the organisers, was all for a good cause. As in future, participants to all of the OC LANs will be able to register online. With there being talk of gamers becoming affiliated with the South African Wargames Union the organisers thought it would be a good idea to start keeping a database of gamers in the Cape.

The May OC saw a new structure to the competitive side of this social LAN in that the RTS tournaments would be rotated. WarCraft III and C&C Generals tournaments will be held at alternating events starting with WarCraft III. The MOHAA tournament will still be held at each OC. The winner of the WarCraft III tournament was {Breakyboys} Alpha Elite. The MOHAA tourney was once again won by {KMA} Onslaught, followed closely behind by his brother {KMA} Magnavox. The winners of these tournaments and those gamers that won prizes in the raffle, walked away with copies of C&C Generals, Splinter Cell and BF1942.

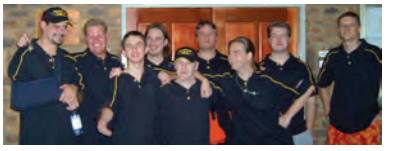
Counter-Strike as ever proved popular, with several servers running full the entire weekend. Jedi Knight 2 also made an appearance, with the Gas Clan leading the way. BF1942 and especially the popular mod Desert Combat both took turns occupying many hours of game time. Showing the social nature of this event there were gamers that registered who actually spent the majority of their time not playing computer games. Knowspick once again spent a large part of his weekend helping Liza with the burgers in the Chaos Café. Ryder spent a large amount of his weekend talking to anyone that would stand still long enough, and there was a kid whose name I didn't get, whom I am sure asked more questions in those three days than most University students ask while busy with their degrees. But hey if you don't ask any questions you never get any answers.

As you read this the first Thunder City LAN will have taken place in Cape Town from 6-8 June. The Thunder City LAN is aimed at getting competitive gaming off the ground in Cape Town and the Western Cape. The organisers have been in contact with several of the prominent people within the Cape gaming community to try to make sure that the majority of the local clans and those gamers, who are not part of any clan but are interested in competitive gaming, come to this event. The focus of this event will be on the competitive games such as Counter-Strike, UT2003, Quake 3, WarCraft III and C&C Generals. There are also plans to try and organise BF1942 into a competitive framework. Social gamers are also welcome and there will be more than enough gaming for everyone. So look forward to a report next month on the inaugural Thunder City LAN. The next Thunder City LAN is scheduled for 4-6 July.

Sean "KiLRoY" Beamish
www.oc.co.za

mayhem
www.mayhem.co.za

- KAN
- PF



EVENT NEWS:
Well it was a lot of work, it has come and gone, but will not be forgotten soon. For a full run down of the Gamers Gate Carousel DFI LanParty (hosted by Mayhem), check out the following sites:
www.mayhem.co.za
www.gamersgate.co.za
www.prophecy.co.za

LEAGUE NEWS:
The Mayhem off-line league 2003 has drawn to an end. The winners are as follows.

1st Place - Evolve A (Sponsored by Shuttle)
2nd Place - 7e*
3rd Place - T6 (Sponsored by K-Sports)
4th Place - Evolve B (Sponsored by Shuttle)

LAN LORE:
Last year saw very few viruses at LANs, this was partly due to the fact that the community had not changed much since the days of WorFAIRE 2001, and everyone knew how to keep safe. Nowadays we are seeing more people who are new to the community. Many of them are not aware of the risks of viruses and sharing.

In response to this Mayhem have put together a guide for people who are new to the LAN gaming world. The guide contains a brief rundown of what you should bring to LANs, a section on viruses and ways of protecting yourself from viruses at home and at LANs.

Mayhem war on viruses Part 1:
Sorry if this sounds a bit like a STD 5 Aims lesson.
How can you get infected at home?
- Downloading things from the Internet
- Via e-mail (most really fun viruses come through e-mail)
- Coping files from friends that are infected

All of the above can be prevented, by using up to date anti-virus software.

Norton Anti-virus and F-prot are used by Mayhem. Both can be updated over the Internet.
You can get these from any local PC dealer. Alternatively mail us. We order it and you can get it at the next Mayhem event.

How can you get infected at LANs?
- Copying infected files from people
- Sharing your PC

We will cover virus prevention at LANs in the next issue. Alternatively you can go to www.mayhem.co.za for more info. We also recommend you get hold of the May issue of NAG and read the article by LanGames.
You can get back issues of NAG from Mayhem events or e-mail subs@nag.co.za

DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR
1 July - Leave Vapour Alone Day
5 July - Funky Cow LAN PTA
5 July - Monthly Link Day PTA
19 July - Mayhem Open LAN
26 July - Mayhem UT2003 Day and VIP LAN
16 August - Mayhem VIP LAN
23 August - Mayhem Open LAN

Vapour[SOD]
Annihilatorism of the month "Cattle prods hurt"
staff@mayhem.co.za

SGS ONLINE

Well im proud to say that Battle For Africa the Day Of Defeat online event launch was a huge success. All who participated had tons of fun. Goto www.dayofdefeat.za.net to register for the next event. Things have slowed down a bit at SGS with no big online game releases in the last month. Most of the news revolves around current game server changes and mods.
Freelancer has a new server with what could be called a "no-rules" approach to the game . That mean's you can enter the server and shoot anything that moves. Remember that the code of conduct will still be enforced.
The Return To Castle Wolfenstein Enemy Territory server is up after a few weeks of testing, that means hopefully no bugs. The BF1942 community has got a very interesting website coming soon, its basically like Battle For Africa and Battle For Europe except the rules/format have been adapted to a BF1942 style of play.

This is sure to make the game that much more playable. check out the forums for more info.

Soldier Of Fortune has a few new maps so download them and join the server. Make sure to join the server or soon you will be the only SF n00b in the country.

Some news on Never Winter Nights ,a huge game with a huge following online. NWN has four server's each with a different game style. They even have a server that runs a mod developed by South Africans for South Africans. So I guess to sum up this months news, I would have to say that we bandwidth starved freaks here in beautiful S.A. have the best of it all, no thanks to the many brilliant website developers and modders, willing to spend their precious time on creating events and mods that take your favourite game to another level of enjoyment. Big up and many thanks to all of you.

PS. I was sent a letter of complaint (if you can call it that) in the forums, it was related to the comments I made about America's Army. To all the America's Army junkies I am sorry if I dissed your favourite game.

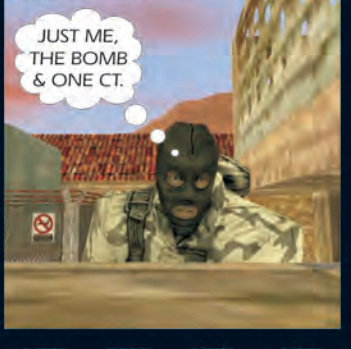
On the other hand that mail could have come from the Pentagon so ummm.....im sorry Mr Bush your game rocks!!!! What me bash America never :P

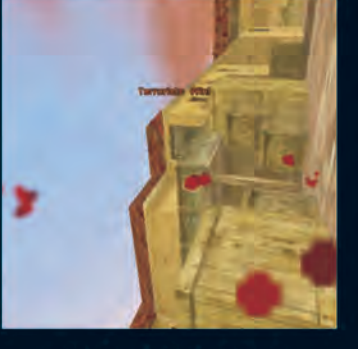
AMANDLA!!! AMERICA!!!
AWETO!!! AMERICA!!!

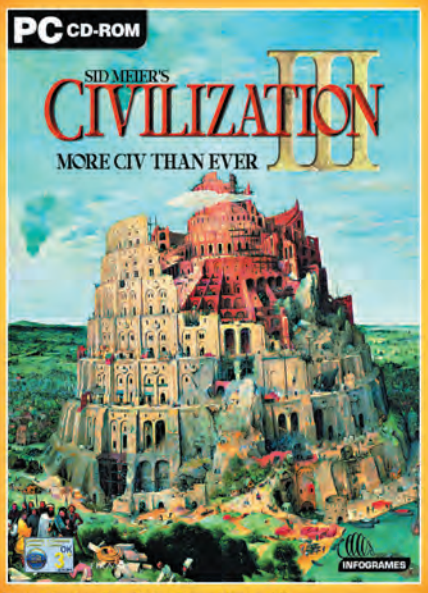
http://games.saix.net/

Snakestyles

8BALL TAKES A CLOSER LOOK AT COUNTER-STRIKE







Sid Meier's Civilization III

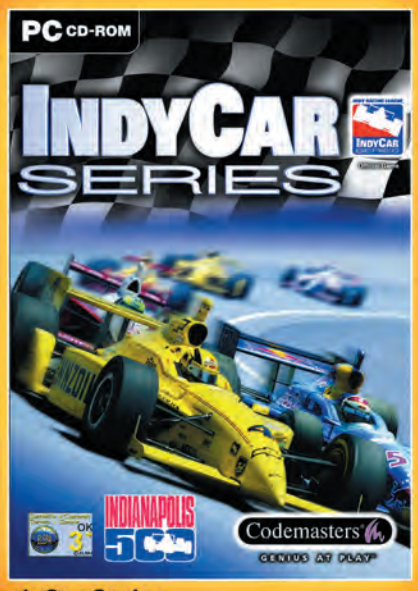
Sid Meier created the original Civilization computer game in 1990. Civilization instantly set the standard and defined a new genre of empire-building strategy games and is still recognized as one of the greatest games of all time.

Available Now **R 229**

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City will surpass the unprecedented play dynamic, cinematic graphics and immersive audio experience that gamers associate with Grand Theft Auto 3. It's an entirely new game set in the '80s, the location is Vice City, and the vibe is glamour, power and corruption...

Available Now **R 299**



IndyCar Series

Indy Racing League delivers the Indy Racing season, including the Indianapolis 500 (Indy 500) race, "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing". The season is an open-wheeled championship on short ovals and super speedways throughout the US, with the Indy 500 as the highlight of its racing calendar.

July Release **R 299**

Midnight Club II

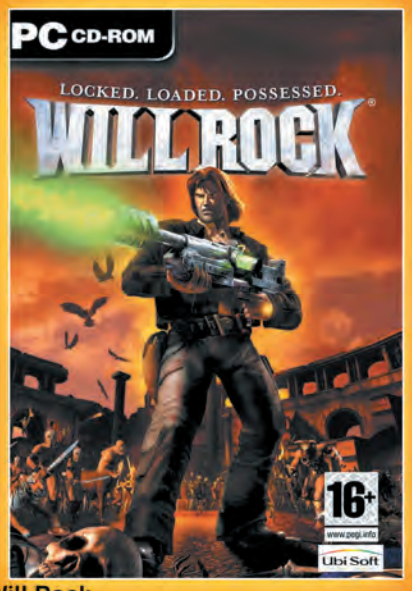
The world's most notorious street racers meet each night on the streets of LA, Paris, and Tokyo. Choose from the latest performance enhanced cars and bikes and compete head-to-head to make a name for yourself. There are no rules. Drive anywhere in the city.

July Release **R 299**

Medieval Total War: Viking Invasion

Medieval: Total War™ Viking Invasion™ is the expansion pack to the award-winning Medieval: Total War™, and takes the action of the game to a new level and a new time.

Available Now **R 229**



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Display:	*Size:* 14.1 inch *Resolution:* XGA: 1024x768 Simultaneous LCD and CRT display Dual view support	**Audio System:**	AC-97' Audio Direct Sound Compatible Sound Blaster-Pro Compatible
Graphics:	ATI M6P VGA chip 32MB VRAM	**Wire Communications and Connectivity:**	10 / 100 BaseT LAN Built-in V92 56Kbps software data / fax modem
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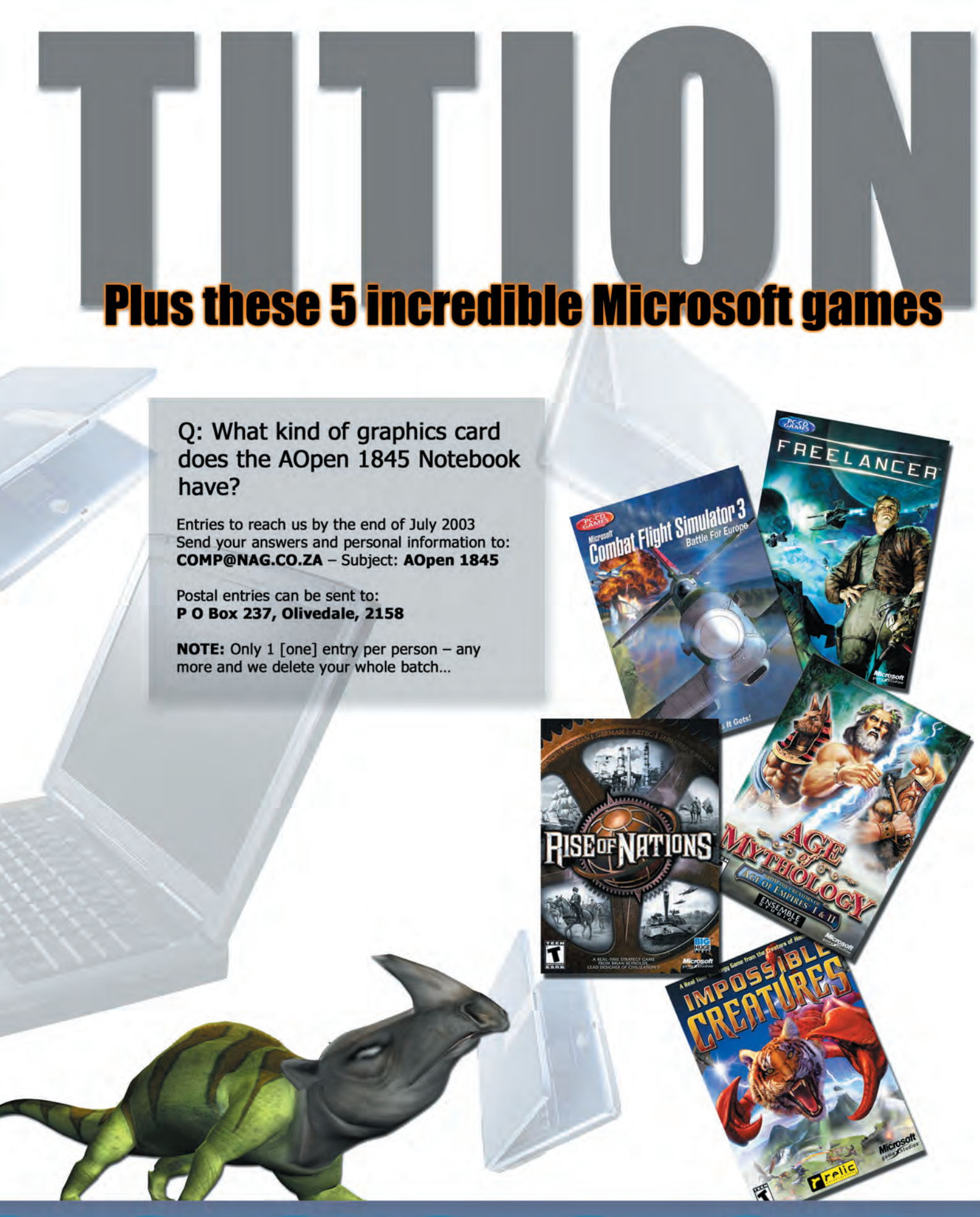
NOTE: Only 1 [one] entry per person – any more and we delete your whole batch...



developer: valve [] **publisher:** vivendi universal [] **distributor:** comztek (0800) 600-557
release date: Q3 [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.half-life2.com
platforms: pc | xbox

Writer: James "Priest" Francis

Half-Life 2

ON THE CD

And in the beginning Valve said "Let there be Half-Life". And the people rejoiced and split into the groups of Counter-Strike, Natural Selection and Day of Defeat, among others. And all was good.
Not bad for a game where Valve had to give half of the development money upfront!
Of course, the genre did not start with Half-Life, but it was a major breath of fresh air for FPS games, introducing a story-based play dynamic and essentially something that went beyond the "go in and kill it" method of play that Doom started.

Over the years since the 1998 release of Half-Life, Valve managed to keep things under the radar by working on Team Fortress 2 and Condition Zero, the stand-alone CS sequel, so the sequel to HL came as a bit of a surprise. But the news was bound to leak out, though in a much-less dramatic fashion than Doom 3 did - at least no-one got fired in the process.
Half-Life 2 first emerged at E3 this year to a wowed audience, making it the default hit of the show, but I could have told you that before even seeing it - the Half-Life franchise is a huge money maker and bound to attract attention. Also on show was Vampire: Bloodlines, which uses Valve's Source engine, but it did not seem near as impressive as HL2's demonstration did. That said, Vampire did look good…
Source is Valve's magic bullet in this respect - it's been in development since the release of Half-Life five years ago, and a lot of work has gone into it. "Basically we took every dollar we made on Half-Life and put it into Half-Life 2." said Gabe Newell, Managing Director of Valve. And that equates to quite a bit. This also means that the engine is completely proprietary, unlike Half-Life's.

How will HL2 improve over its predecessor, considering what Half-Life has achieved? Culturally that's a tall order, but as far as making the Half-Life world more immersive and intense, Valve has done well in bringing new technology and elements to the series.
There are three unofficial tiers to next generation shooters: Graphics, Sound and Physics. Graphically a benchmark is being set, seen last when shooters became 3D. Shader technology finally became available to the gaming market en-masse thanks to next-

shaders

Shaders? You've heard that a lot over the past month, and even the Valve people like saying it a lot when they talk about Source. But what are they?
Without getting too detailed, shaders represent the programmable power behind graphics cards. The GeForce 3 punted this aspect, but it was never used - now it finally is. Using shaders, commonly appearing as either pixel or vertex shaders, programmers can manipulate the game world in real time. For instance, rippling water, moving fur, even grass waving according to the direction of the wind - these are all shaders in action. Moving cloth and dynamic lighting are also part of shader technology. The downside is that graphics cards below a GeForce 3 or Radeon 8500 card do not support shader technology as they don't have programmable GPUs.

generation graphics cards, making for a more tangible world. On the same level, today's machines are more capable of handling dynamic lighting from multiple sources, something reflected in games such as Doom 3 and Far Cry. Particle systems are becoming more complex, since the maths involved can be processed faster, and texturing has gone leaps and bounds. In short, the future of shooters never looked this good.

Sound is the second tier, and has always been the poorer cousin of the development cycle. That's mainly because, apart from EAX, not much has happened since Waves replaced Midi, and technologies such as Dolby were a bit out of reach for the average gamer. But the new shooters are keen on taking advantage of real-time mixing and more channels.

The last tier is physics, which seems to be the core focus of all the new shooters. Ragdoll technology is still in its infancy, but it's an indication of what we can expect in the future. Boxes bouncing according to their size and momentum, wood shattering, a car going around a corner on two wheels - these are all examples of how physics are becoming more relevant to good gameplay in 3D games.

Source wants to make a mark here, and it's heading more towards the physical than the aesthetic. This doesn't mean it doesn't look good, but I wouldn't quite place it in Doom 3's league yet. Still, the technology gives the most stunning visual effects, such as refracting water, diluted light and excellent bumpmapping - all of which contribute to making, in particular, the outdoor scenes look stunning.

When approaching the real world aspect, the engine does it in a rather surprisingly simple way - let it act the way it looks. For instance, apply a wood texture (and supposedly wood properties) to a surface, and it becomes just that. This means that you could hack your way through a solid wooden door. Metal sinks, mattresses flop around, and plastic barrels bounce and reverb off concrete. As demonstrated in the tech-side of the show, you could apply this to anything, as they showed with a character made completely out of water.

This goes hand-in-hand with a very impressive physics engine - the best I've seen yet. Chances are that even movies such as Final Fantasy and the WarCraft III cut-scenes did not use a physics algorithm this advanced. Almost everything in the game reacts as their real-world counterparts would. Glass shatters at the point of impact, metal does more damage when it hits something, and boxes, people and anything else affected by gravity will react as you'd expect them to.

We'll have to wait for the final game to see just how realistic this has been done - for instance the wood-shattering effect looks a tad pre-determined (it doesn't seem to break at the point of impact), but it makes for a wholly impressive, vibrant world. As you've, no doubt, already seen in Doom 3 real-world physics also introduce more complex mechanics. Half-Life 2 takes advantage of this in the

▾ The old and the new... Eli and Alyx

◂ With improved graphics, improved animation... hell, improved everything, plus a lot more...

◂ Alyx's mood quickly changed after we told her this role requires a lot less clothing... Characters feature forty facial muscles and are capable of a wide range of emotions, all in-game.

vehicles. The game expands on the world with a range of vehicles (still unspecified by Valve, but you can bet on a range of military, civilian and alien machines) and the real-world physics are applied to these as well. Cars have moving suspension and even the wrecks of cars bend, rattle and seem to have a thousand things inside moving around as they take impacts. That said, in one scene a grenade explosion propels a bad guy into the air, landing him on a car wreck - but the impact didn't shake the car at all. Still, these are nit-picky details.

No shooter would be complete without some sort of large outdoor scenario these days, and Half-Life 2 takes the crown here. Far Cry is probably the only other game that uses this scale at a high level of detail, but the HL2 outdoor maps are massive, and tend to have a lot of architecture in them. This is partly thanks to the bump-mapping technology, making buildings seem more detailed than they are, and there is no real indication exactly how expansive a map could be. The only truly massive map was one in which Gordon drove around in a buggy, and he only gets out near the end, so there's room open for speculation if you can actually run around these maps armed with your crowbar and a mind set on vandalism.

▲ Like father and son... except there is absolutely no comparison between Half-Life and Half-Life 2

Of course, a great world is nothing without a few things to shoot at, or with. Half-Life takes the popular trend of teaming you up with characters from time to time. Actually, this is incorrect - Half-Life started this trend with those wacky scientists taking a break from their portal hopping to help you, not to mention the ever-present security guards (except when you really need them - figures). In the sequel, there are many scenes where you will be teamed up with someone, or fighting alongside a group. Your most prevailing contact will be Alyx Vance, the daughter of one of the scientists from Black Mesa. The Man in the Suit (G-Man) and Barney the security officer also make their returns, as will a few other old characters, plus new ones. Half-Life impressed us because it had flapping jaws. HL2 is going a step further. The main character models, such as the G-Man, Alyx, Barney and co have up to forty muscles in their faces to control their reactions, using an emotive system created by a doctor who studies the muscles and their relation to human emotion. This is not restricted to the face, and you could probably guess a character's mood just by watching them as they tilt their head, move their arms and shift their weight. The character engine also allows any language to be used, and the lips sync to the sound, as Valve demonstrated the G-Man talking to us in Japanese. This is quite unbelievable to watch, and marks one of the last chasms that games need to gap - realistic, believable characters. Of course not all of the characters are as advanced, but they use the realistic physics in combat and movement. Characters don't use pre-scripted routes, and their AI advances or backs off according to your movements. Sounds great, but the brief bit shown on that doesn't really indicate how successful this will be.

Foe wise you might be spoilt for choice, though very little has been revealed. What we do know is that there is another alien species around, and those pesky military guys have struck a deal with the Xen - the original bad guys - in order to beat the new menace. How you fit in I don't know, since those black ops guys are still shooting at you… Apart from the military guys, who have had their ranks expanded (including the return of the original game's sniper), the aliens are also all over the place. A new weapon allows you to have the scent of some lower aliens on you, allowing you to command them, and there is a really nasty-looking flying unit complete with a machine-gun (most likely a hybrid unit thanks to the military and Xen collaboration). And there are truly massive aliens as well, just to compliment those huge maps.

Half-Life 2 looks impressive, though from my perspective, it's not quite Doom 3. Then again, that's an apples-oranges comparisons - these two shooters are of very different breeds. The game will be out as soon as September, and considering the demo was on a top-end machine with a 9800 Pro powering it, you might want to start budgeting for an upgrade, even though Valve assures us that it scales down well to low-end machines. But let's be honest, a game as potentially glorious as Half-Life 2 deserves better. Whether it's the best shooter yet remains until we've played the new breed of FPS games, but it's right up there with the best spearheading the next-gen PC revolution.

What did you expect? It's Half-Life!

the edge

Doom 3 vs. Half-Life 2. While some of us feel that you can't really compare these games for a myriad of reasons, you'd like us to do it anyway. So here we go…

Monsters

HL: Big stuff, small stuff, military stuff

D3: Floating heads, zombies, skeletons with rocket launchers (**EDGE**)

Fear

HL: Haaa!!! Bite my auto-machine gun fire!

D3: What the hell was that sound!? (**EDGE**)

Sound

HL: Well, it sounds really good

D3: Trent Reznor in da house! (**EDGE**)

Vehicles

HL: Cannonball Run - eat your heart out (**EDGE**)

D3: You have legs, soldier! Use them!!

Modding

HL: Built for modders (**TIE**)

D3: In game, realtime builder (**TIE**)

It's a tie! Well, what did you expect? We're not wagering any money yet, though those high-pitched D3 vs. HL office screaming matches are getting annoying…

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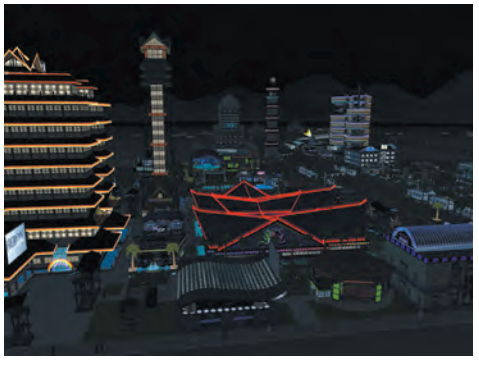
developer: deep red games [] **publisher:** empire interactive [] **distributor:** wwe (011) 462-0150
release date: Q2 [] **genre:** management [] **internet:** www.deepred.co.uk
platforms: pc

writer: Derek de la Fuente



Vegas: Make it Big

Vegas - it's like nowhere else on Earth. It looks bizarre in pictures and on TV and even madder to the naked eye. Fairy tale castles, pirate ships, roman palaces and even a pyramid; top quality restaurants, high class entertainers, world championship sports events and shows with albino tigers, it's got the lot all thrown together... and in the middle of a desert. But it works. Millions of people flock there every year. It's a wacko place but one you can't ignore as Jon Law, Lead Designer at Deep Red Games, explained when speaking with Derek dela Fuente.

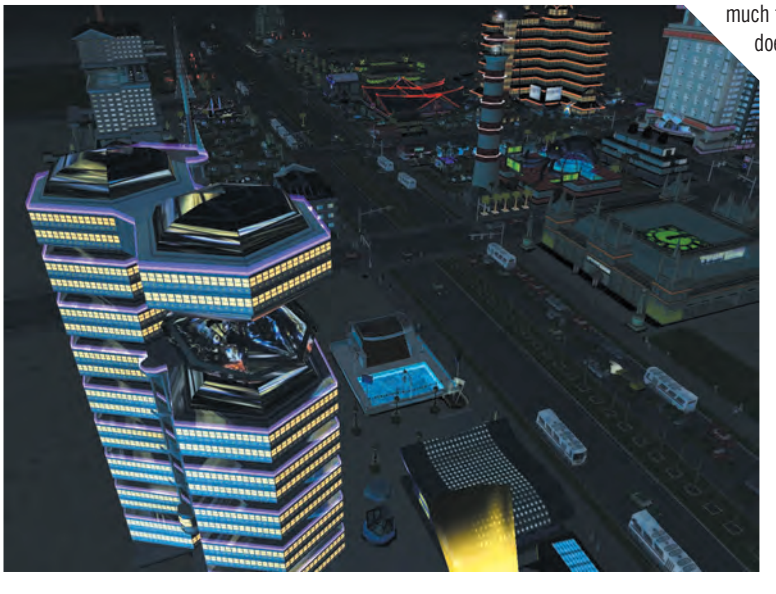
"Vegas is an exciting, vibrant place. When looking for a location to set a game, it's second to none! It's an incredible oasis in the middle of the desert and so building up a thriving Hotel and Casino complex in this environment is very satisfying. Also, this title gives you the opportunity to play the gambling game from the other side - you reap the benefits of others misfortune! Overall it's a very rich environment, you're not confined to casinos, rather you have an entire entertainment complex to build and manage with stage shows, entertainers, roller coasters, nightclubs and much more."

Getting your head around this concept is simple - forget other titles and think big, think casinos - which are the main focus for customisation. This is a game about the gambling capital of the world, so each Casino that you place has a detailed and fully customisable interior! You can place a preset casino if you want, which will include all of the necessary components to give a well-balanced experience to your guests. Of course, you will want to get in there and modify it to make the most of your investment. You can also place an empty shell and build each interior from scratch. This gives you the freedom to create your ideal environment, experiment with the positioning of each of the attractions and find your own ideal layout. Once created your interior can be saved and reused in other games, and even shared with other players.

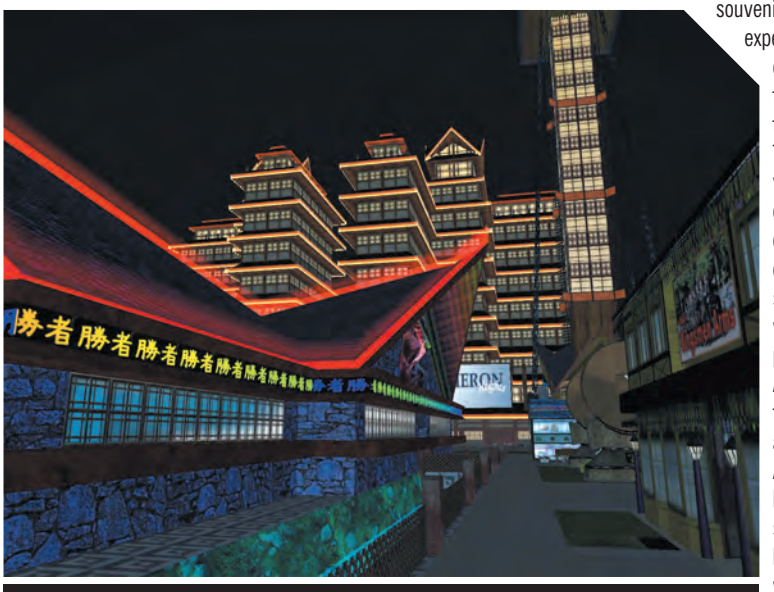
"Each scenario takes place on a stretch of Las Vegas Boulevard - The Strip. As you progress through the scenarios the area you are playing in expands and the other Casinos around you are more advanced and harder to compete against. You are able to fly over the other casino complexes and see the guests in the same detail as those within your own complex. The other casinos respond to your actions and fight for their share of the visitors."

Deep Red has a wonderful understanding of how Casinos and their infrastructure work and it's not because the guys have a bad habit. The whole team went to Vegas at the beginning of the project to soak up the atmosphere and get an insight into what the place is really like. "Visually there's not much that you can't do. It doesn't matter how creative you get, there will be something in Vegas that is more extreme! The biggest change we have made is shifting many of the attractions outside. Instead of cramming all of the bars, shows and clubs inside the casino building, we have opted to free the players up to be more expansive and creative with their environment. As a result the player is more exposed to the surrounding complexes, and can see the effect that his actions are having on the world as a whole. All of this is lost when you push the player into an enclosed interior

> "Okay, the gambling is important, especially when you manage to attract a whale (Vegas speak for a gambler with a bankroll that allows them to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars a night without batting an eyelid) but I think you can see that there's a lot more to consider when laying out your ideal gambling resort!"



environment for the vast majority of the game."
You will need to offer guests far more than a gambling pit to throw their money into! All of the classic Vegas attractions will be available and more. Some guests will need to see a chorus line of showgirls; others will want a seedier strip joint or even a lap-dancing club! At the other end of the scale there will be a family demand for circuses and magic shows, aquatic shows and street entertainers. Oh, and everything in between. Your guests will want to buy things too, ranging from the tacky souvenirs to extortionately expensive jewellery, and even works of art from the gallery - food and drink? There's a wealth of various eating and drinking establishments, each targeted at satisfying the various groups of people.
And then there are the sport and other activities...
All of the tables have the real game simulated in the background. The various guest types have preferences for which games they like to play, and the sort of stakes they are looking for. Location and surroundings are very important, so planning your floor layout is essential. You will need your guests to lose at the tables if you're going to make any money at this business, and with that comes the risk of making them unhappy. Hiring the most charismatic croupiers and table staff will help combat this, especially on the high stake games.
Getting a good look, feel and even understanding of the game's theme comes from being able to watch events and the all important camera and 'birds eye' view is executed masterfully. The camera used is very flexible, allowing you to view the whole world on screen, right down to tracking a single person as they go about their business. You can even move around at eye level as if you are a guest yourself.
When it comes to building and analysing your attractions, the camera automatically takes up the optimum position based on the object selected, making it very easy to assess the situation and make decisions. The AI, which underpins the game, is an area of Deep Red's expertise… but the way things work also relies a lot on the player. It is up to you to set up your tables and machines to appeal to the right kind of guests. If a table is set too much in the house's favour, it will be less enjoyable for the guests and they will look for something more appealing. Of course, you can set the table to the opposite extreme and make the guests very happy. This may well lead to you losing money, so getting the balance right is essential. You can bias odds in your favour, as long as you counteract this by beautifying the area and employing the best-suited staff. If a guest is cheating at a table they will also cut into your profits. Posting security guards and cameras in the area will help combat this.
To succeed is not all about great design and clever tinkering - other factors need to be considered.
"The reputation of your casino spreads by word of mouth, so giving your customers a good time is vital for sustained growth. Erecting enormous signs along The Strip entices in more passing guests, and setting up Airline Deals and Package Tours in your Travel Agent draws in visitors from further a field."
With every eventuality looking like it has been covered Jon explained a bit about their technology and engine. Without this, there would only be good ideas.
"Some of the components from monopoly Tycoons 3D engine have survived, but it is now beyond recognition. We have increased the object complexity by 50X by taking advantage of modern video cards and also by using innovative Level-of-Detail tricks. We have also added advanced shading mode capabilities to give real-world material properties and colourful animated lighting."
"As well as this we have massively increased the amount of people, vehicles and buildings, to make the world even busier than before. Vehicles take a far more active role in the game, picking guests up and dropping them off in the fully functioning taxi ranks, plus Limo hire and even a helipad for those unfeasibly rich high rollers!"
"For a management game to succeed it needs to offer the player the ability to build an environment that is unique to them. The more customisable and personal the experience is the better. It's vital that you feel a sense of pride in what you have built, and that you can take your time and enjoy your creation. That said, it needs to challenge you and give you goals to achieve. Setting the balance between these two areas correctly results in a game that is inspiring and challenging, that should keep you coming back for more."
Vegas - Make it Big can be played as a sandbox game, where you have the freedom to build when and what you like, where you like. Of course, not everybody likes this open, freeform style of play, so a series of challenges or scenarios is also available. Completing these successfully unlocks various buildings and options, expanding the game as you play. These scenarios can be played in one of two ways, with time restraints turned on or off. Obviously, with the time restraints on you will be expected to complete tasks within pre-defined deadlines. For a more leisurely and experimental experience, switch them off and go at your own pace.



▲ If it wasn't Vegas, we'd say this was a rather gaudy screen shot...

▼ Big bright and overstated - just like the real thing

developer: crytek studios [] **publisher:** ubisoft [] **distributor:** megarom (011) 234-2680
release date: Q4 [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.farcry-thegame.com
platforms: pc

writer: Derek de la Fuente

Far Cry

ON THE CD

Amongst the monster titles of Half-Life 2 and DOOM 3 coming to the FPS arena this year is one game that looks set to slip in-between all the hype and excitement and blow everyone away. Far Cry aims to be the FPS surprise of the year, and it is already well on its way to doing just that.

With Far Cry, the developer [Crytek] plans to offer up a number of classic ideas, along with a few unusually inventive ones - ideas that make Far Cry a little bit more interesting than your average FPS. Cutting edge technology, a vast amount of experience, lots of creative ideas and a technology focus all come together with a development team of 45 strong working in their Coburg offices. This includes the team's own 3D engine which has been meticulously designed to offer next-generation technology, including Polybump mapping, advanced environment and character physics, destructible terrain, dynamic lighting, motion-captured animation, and total surround sound. This stunning engine alongside top notch A.I. and a strong storyline all add up to a very impressive game… so far.

The story is focused around freelance mariner, Jack Carver, whose daring escapades will thrill and challenge the gamer. After an idyllic holiday Jack meets up with a brash female reporter named Valerie who offers him a large sum of cash to take her to an unspoiled paradise - a deserted island. Shortly after docking, however, Jack's boat is greeted by artillery fire from a mysterious militia group swarming about the island. With his boat destroyed, his money gone, and the gorgeous Valerie suddenly missing, Jack now finds himself facing an army of mercenaries amidst the wilds of the island, with nothing but a gun and his wits to survive. However, the further he pushes into the lush jungle canopy, the stranger things become. There are many questions that apparently need to be answered but only Jack's progression through the game will answer them.

Presently the team is keeping quiet about the precise in-game action and specific events that the player will encounter but it is pretty obvious from the screens and information that is available that Jack will face a myriad of mercenaries, some well armed with deadly intentions and other evil dudes who have one thing on their mind. It is however some of the 'in game' features that are really out of the ordinary, impressive innovations that are set to push the envelope in this genre. When it comes to A.I., the team has expressed their vision to move one step ahead - we've all heard developers spouting on about certain ideas but all these are, to most, effectively transparent - that is until now. In other games you assume the role of the would-be hero and you seek out and hunt down the enemy within a set environment. In Far Cry the A.I actively hunts the player down and those who have played the current build of the game have commented that the game feels different and offers a different kind of experience to most. The A.I also gives the enemies more substance so that when they are not doing anything it will assign them sub-tasks to do, like it would a real human. (People do not stand around doing nothing). Another important aspect of the A.I. and the enemy is that they are not merely scripted or tagged to run through a process. They have many options and will react according to events, which offers truer realism. Different tactics by Jack will offer new eventualities and vice versa.

Facing Far Cry's unpredictable intelligent A.I. mercenary units, trained in advanced adaptive group tactics ensure that battles never become repetitive no matter how many times you reload your game. There are other facets to the A.I. that the team is even more excited about for example you'll face well-equipped enemy units including snipers, stalkers, scouts, and grenadiers that engage you from all angles, distances, and terrains in

▲ "Dear Mom. Wish you were here! This is a tropical paradise, with beautiful water, gorgeous beaches and lots of natives to shoot at..."

▲ Apparently Club Med in these parts had slightly lower accommodation standards than Norman was used to...

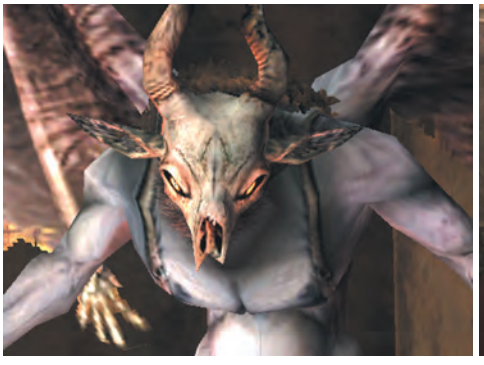
coordinated strikes. Commanders will even call for reinforcements by land, sea or air.
To give an example, in one scene if you do not take out the company attacking you, they might call for reinforcements (unless you manage to destroy the radio). You can replay that scenario in various ways, since some units will run off for back-up, some will go for the radio, and some will stay and fight. If you use a grenade or something similar - you might even alert a nearby company, who will arrive to investigate, and help their buddies. A novel twist is that if the enemy units can't see you, they won't know where you are, so you can effectively hide from them, as you would in multiplayer matches - the bad guys aren't magically informed of your location. Even once they have seen you - once they lose sight of you, they'll have to search around again.
More interestingly is that you can fight to the ends of the Earth with Far Cry's unique, 800-meter scalable view system. Lock onto enemies from a distance with motion-sensing binoculars. Then choose your style of attack - from long range sniping to ballistic close-quarter fire fights - and everything in between.
Throughout the story, the player will have to use his initiative and explore, finding out more information, rescue people, but must always be prepared to take fire and kill bad guys - to this end there are some really great weapons are on offer. (Pistols to machineguns to mounted mortars.) The special effects that bombs and grenades display when going off are very authentic and add to the atmosphere.

The re-playability of the game should impart many hours of play as the player undertakes different strategies and methods to survive and discover what is going on all around him. You will be able to master a dynamic list of combat skills including close-quarters combat, long-range shooting as well as search and destroy tactics, stealth operations and combat driving skills, through indoor and outdoor environments.
With attention to graphical details the outdoor environments are stunning and very organic with some lush settings (swamp land, jungle, mountains, etc.) Crytek believe that the climatic effects outdoors will offer slightly different challenges than those indoors. With the wind and elements to add to the outdoor equation the visual display, with excellent use of dynamic lighting, certainly does convey a different sensation when outdoors as opposed to inside a building.
A game where the team is reluctant to give away any information not only on the story but the way the game is structured in terms of sizes, levels and missions could appear to be one where the team is unsure and uncommitted but this does not appear to be the case here. Already with rave reviews from E3 and many speaking of this as one of the gems of 2003, it's a case of ever improving and not wanting to divulge too much when gamers are already placing this on their 'must have' lists.
The story, and even level construction, is meaningless when you can see the code and ideas created are already better than most FPS offerings on the market.

With stunning looking locales, cleverly devised action and tactics the next focus would be the way the cast actually move, their physical attributes, etc. Once again, this and all the actual game mechanics have been well thought out. New movements and the way you implement them are on offer. Taking into account the terrain you can crouch and seamlessly blend into the surroundings - as you would in real life. We have all seen films where a person is crouching in a bush, pokes his head up to see what is going on and then grabs his rifle, fires and then hides back in the bushes. A full realistic experience is on offer!
Multiplayer options within the game are presently being worked on and certainly options such as CTF and Deathmatch will be included.
The player is totally in control of his own destiny, and we are told the game will actually mould itself to the way you play. The enemy is evil and varied but all with bad intentions. One other aspect that was touched on was the fact the player also has a list of vehicles to use, which adds another dimension to this enthralling FPS.
Finally, least we not forget, if you are overly aggressive the enemy will rise to your challenge and react accordingly. It appears from the teams thoughts that the 'in game' cast have always been the victims and cannon fodder but not this time around. They can 'sense you' and you find this unnerving. The rich mix of action in buildings, old bunkers, caves, and research facilities, along with long-range action, is interesting. The ideas are fresh but obvious and it is in the implementation of all this that the game will be judged on.

developer: 3do [] **publisher:** tba [] **distributor:** tba
release date: Q4 [] **genre:** action adventure [] **internet:** www.4horsemen-game.com
platforms: pc | xbox | ps2

writer: Derek de la Fuente

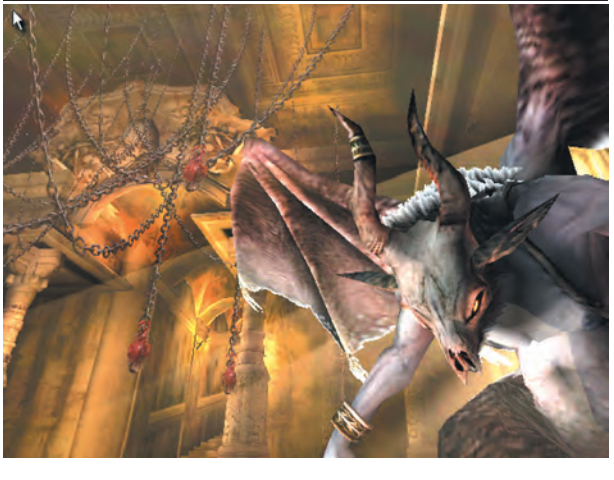


The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

This title has been in development for over 2 years and is one of the most eagerly anticipated games to date from 3DO. Time, money and resources have been focused on The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse but can expectations be met? Derek dela Fuente spoke with Michael Mendheim - V.P. and Senior Creative and Executive Director - keeper of the vision.

Aimed at the 18+ market, the subject matter strongly encompasses war, famine, pestilence and death. But will the controversy surrounding the game detract from the play dynamic and give the wrong message to gamers?

"Of course I'm pissed off! If you had a face like a dead goat, how happy would you be?"



"The video game medium is maturing. People that played video games as children continue to play them as adults. I am 40 and still an avid gamer. People don't stop watching movies as they grow older and they won't stop playing games. Don't forget that this generation is the first ever who grew up with video games. So then it comes down to content. Are people of all ages forced to only watch Disney movies? Of course not, there is a wide variety of content to please moviegoers of all ages. We certainly can't expect 20 to 30 year old males to play with furry little creatures. This medium is growing; there are games in development (like ours) that target the more mature market. These are the breakthrough games and some of them are legitimate works of art."

Russell Shiffer, director on the game also added his comments on the subject matter. "We are making this game for action gamers who are drawn to the dark, apocalyptic universe we are creating. We're going to have graphic violence, a little profanity, and some disturbing situations. Satan's minions do some horrific things in this game, like peeling the skin off of people and hanging them on meat hooks, which we show complete with screaming and dripping blood. We need the player to see that these enemies aren't cardboard props to be mowed down, but vicious, demented beings with a desire to have Satan rule the world. Seeing their atrocities makes you want to fight them. That's pretty mature. As for offending people, nobody here wants to offend anyone, but we aren't watering things down either. And the market seems to be big enough that as long as we deliver something compelling we should do fine."

The story is powerful and gripping as was explained by Michael. "When researching the story, I, of course, read Revelations (many times), the Left Behind book series, as well as numerous books on Satan, Hell, and Demons. Also discovering the Book of Enoch was a huge influence in creating this universe. I did my research and then veered away from following everything literally and started to create the story."

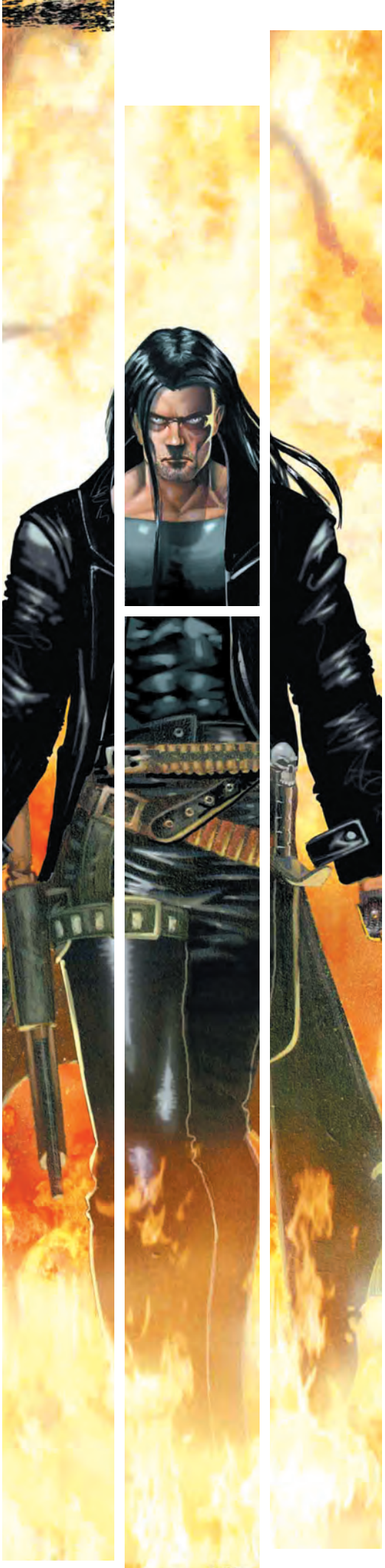
Four Horsemen can best be described as an action/horror game, a combination of mood and violence. It all starts with immersing the player in the world and setting up their expectations - you are in a world on the verge of evil, and it is corrupting everything around you. Not everybody is a bad guy, but the bad guys you do meet are really scary. Intelligent scary.

"Seeing their atrocities makes you want to fight them. That's pretty mature. As for offending people, nobody here wants to offend anyone, but we aren't watering things down either."

what's in a name?

"Many people who are following the game story have taken issue with me naming the character Abaddon - since Abaddon is believed by the majority of biblical scholars to be a demon. Doing research I discovered that there was a small minority of religious scholars who believe that Abaddon is actually a fallen angel, watching over the pit of Hell for God and that he is not aligned with Satan (one of his names is the Destroyer). Now there is some debate about this issue and for the sake of our story, I did not want Abaddon to be aligned with Satan. He is the only demon mentioned in Revelations (chapter 9)".

"If we want to be very specific in our story, Abaddon is a fallen arch angel, he is no longer welcome in Heaven, he is also not welcome in Hell - he is somewhere in the middle but he is doing God's bidding. We wanted an arch/fallen angel who had moral ambiguity, almost like old school Eastwood (an angel with no name). I think most of our audience will find that we did a respectable job researching the material and we hope they'll find the story compelling. In the end though it is a story and we did take some liberties with it."



War...

Brutish scary. The team has gone for extreme realism, so if you walk through a pool of blood, you'll track bloody footprints for a while. If you blast someone with a shotgun from close up, you'll blow a bloody hole in their chest and spray blood onto the wall behind them. If you hear a scream from around the corner, expect to find somebody being tortured. Sounds, lighting and camera angles will heighten the tension.

More in-game specifics pertaining to cast attributes and characteristics of the player you assume and of the four main horsemen were discussed. Russell: "Abaddon is a fallen Archangel looking for redemption. He's sort of a Clint Eastwood, strong, silent type. He has his twin swords and guns that he fights with, as well as some gravity-defying manoeuvres he can pull off. He can call upon the Wrath of God, which slows time and makes him very powerful. Abaddon also has skills that can be improved throughout the game, and he can get new weapons and new melee moves along the way."

Pestilence is a beautiful alluring woman when she wants to be, but her beauty is only skin deep - literally. She morphs into a disgusting, pestilent beast when enraged. War is a mindless destructive force. He's fully armoured and ready to rock. Famine is a ravenous sadist who likes to see people die a long, slow death. He feeds endlessly off of the souls of those he has killed. Death is the brains of the operation and has the ability to… Sorry, can't tell you what Death does you will have to find out when you play.

Lots of expertise and ideas have been brought in but perceptions will be made on 3DO's standing in the gaming community, as well as the code itself. Is all the blood, focus and controversy merely cosmetic? Can this game make an impact, are many issues that will have a say in the final judgement on the game? Glenn Wissner (Senior Producer), "The days of game development consisting of a programmer and a couple of artists/designer are over. Virtually every top-10 game is made up of 50 or more specialists (Engineers, Designers and Artist) in their field of expertise with two or more years of development time. We have just taken this new model one step further by adding specialist in the field of Story Development, Character Design, Environmental Design, Voice Talent, etc. Going out of house to acquire top talent for specific functions is the way of the future in game development. As a producer, it's my job to add value to my product and support the team by providing them the best services and assets available. Additionally as producer, it is my responsibility to develop a product that will be commercially successful and compete in today's (and tomorrow's) marketplace. With the quality bar being set higher and higher each year, procuring top talent is essential in maintaining a competitive edge. Regarding the play dynamic, I believe

story

Four Horsemen is a story-based game told through a mix of in-game movies, full motion videos and graphic comic books. The story is critical to the overall product vision. 3DO want players to 'experience the story emotionally' as they play the game, and the player to care about defeating evil. Here's a brief summary of the story and how it fits into the game.

The player assumes the role of the archangel Abaddon, pitted against the four dark forces of the Apocalypse (Pestilence, War, Famine and Death) in a timeless battle for the fate of the Earth and all humanity. During this epic struggle, the player must find the three mortals known as the Chosen. Abaddon must protect the chosen, strategically using their powers with his own incredible abilities to defeat the dark power of the horsemen. Of course, finding the Chosen is not enough, Abaddon must 'turn' them; they must 'choose' to help him battle evil out of their own free will. The Chosen consist of Jesse, a prostitute, Jimmy Ray, a convicted serial killer, and Scott Anderson, a corrupt politician. These people, along with Abaddon (a fallen archangel) are the heroes of the game.

"Wanna buy some dirt?"

▲ Concept art by Simon Bisley

having professional storytelling, visually compelling characters, realistic environments and superior voice talent, combined with proven game mechanics and well thought out design greatly enhances the gamers overall experience. Is it all just 'pretty cosmetics'? No way!"

Dialogue and interaction between the cast is pivotal. It has been very important that the team develop Abaddon, the Horsemen and the Chosen as believable characters in the game, so they speak and interact with each other quite a bit. Renowned comic artist Simon Bisley has done some of the character design and is creating a graphic novel that will be used to tell the story, merging that with in-game sequences and voice-overs. As the game progresses, the Chosen will fight alongside you and provide you with aid, while the Horsemen will taunt and oppose you at every turn.

"Innovations are plentiful", Olivier Lhermite (Tech Lead), "I'm specifically excited about the destruction and visual effects system that we are setting up for the Four Horsemen. Being able to create realistic visual and audio effects is the key to setting up the ambiance of the game with the scenario and mission goals. The AI is also pretty interesting, it sets the fun of the game; you don't want to fight against 'stupid' creatures. You want compelling and 'intelligent' enemies, you should be able to meet an enemy for the fifth time and still wonder what is going to happen."

The Horsemen will be mounted during cinematic sequences and on foot when you fight them. Their fights will all be boss battles, with special AI and a sequence of actions that must be mastered. The Chosen are key elements to defeating the Horsemen. They don't fight the battle for you, but they are a necessary part of winning. For example, one Chosen can make a Horseman vulnerable for a moment, allowing you to jump in and do damage. But you'll need to time it so that you can get back to safety before the Horseman starts whacking again.

"Getting whacked by a Horseman is definitely a bad thing. For animation, we're using motion capture for all of the humanoids in the game, and hand animating the monsters. We also have physics for cloth and hair in the game, and we'll be doing morphing, facial animation and lip-sync."

With high value production and presentations (it looks gorgeous) the question of limitation of the machines the game is being coded on was put to Olivier Lhermite (Tech Lead). "We will use the hardware specific features of each platform to improve the look and feel of the game on every platform. Our ultimate goal is to have a compelling, fun game on every platform. Most of our hard-core technologies are fully cross platform: visual effects, Animation, AI, main rendering and objects system. But inside each core technology, you can find some platform specific features that improve the quality of the game on the given platform."

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse looks a real stunner and offers the classic good versus bad scenario with some really inventive and well-executed ideas!

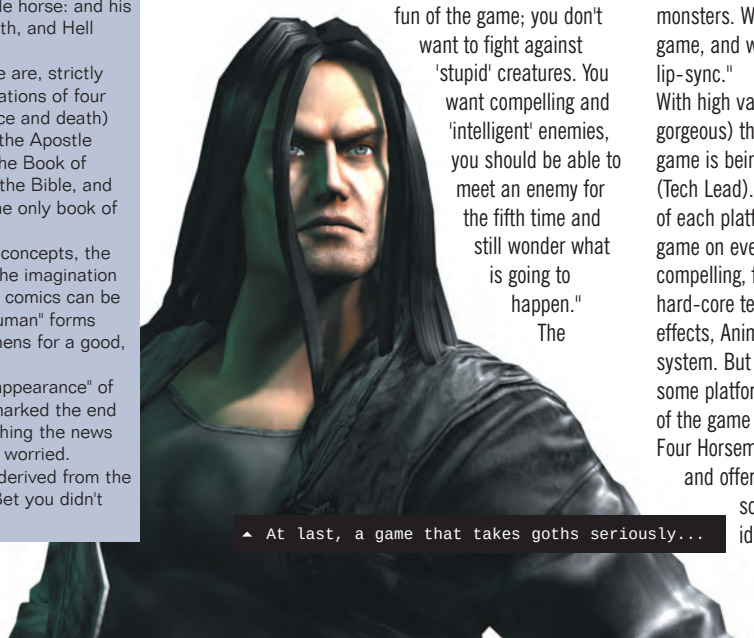
the mythology

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." Revelation 6: 8

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are, strictly speaking, anthropomorphic personifications of four concepts (being war, famine, pestilence and death) as witnessed in a prophetic vision by the Apostle John. This vision was transcribed to the Book of Revelations in the New Testament of the Bible, and details the end of the world. This is the only book of prophecy in the New Testament.

Although certainly representations of concepts, the Four Horsemen have often captured the imagination of modern society. Several books and comics can be found with them appearing in their "human" forms (check out Terry Pratchett's Good Omens for a good, and rather funny, example.)

It is interesting to consider that the "appearance" of these four concepts in John's vision marked the end of the world. Spend a few hours watching the news on television, and you may get a little worried. Incidentally, the word "apocalypse" is derived from the Ancient Greek word for "revelation." Bet you didn't know that one.



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developer: gearbox software / bungie [] **publisher:** microsoft [] **distributor:** comztek (0800) 600-557
release date: tba [] **genre:** action [] **internet:** www.microsoft.com
platforms: pc

writer: Derek de la Fuente

Halo

Halo, one of the flagship titles on the Xbox, is coming to the PC late this summer. With Halo 2 already announced for the Xbox, will PC owners merely be getting a port from the Xbox without any extras? Derek dela Fuente spoke with a number of key people associated with the game to find out more.

The first words from Microsoft to allay any fears are that this is in no way a mere port. New ideas have been added and a positive focus by the team to make this an even better experience than that on the Xbox.
For those PC owners who may not have seen the original Halo, it is a futuristic tale set in the year 2552. It is an action romp with incredible visuals.
Planet Earth still exists, but overpopulation has forced many of her former residents to colonise other worlds. Faster-than-light travel is now a reality and Earth's unified government, through the United Nations Space Command, has put its full weight behind the colonisation effort; millions of humans now live on habitable planets in other solar systems. A keystone of humanity's colonisation efforts is the planet Reach, an interstellar naval yard that builds colony ships for civilians and warships for the UNSC's armed forces. Conveniently close to Earth, Reach is also a hub of scientific and military activity. On Reach, a secret military project to create cyborg super-soldiers takes on newfound importance. The soldiers of the SPARTAN-II project rack up an impressive record against the Covenant in test deployments, but there are too few of them to turn the tide of the war. Existing SPARTAN-II soldiers are recalled to Reach for further augmentation. The plan: board a Covenant vessel with the improved SPARTAN-IIs and learn the location of the Covenant home world. Two days before the mission begins, Covenant forces strike Reach and annihilate the colony. The Covenant is now on Earth's doorstep. One ship, the Pillar of Autumn, escapes with the last SPARTAN-II and makes a blind jump into deep space, hoping to lead the Covenant away from Earth. You are assigned the task of fighting for humanity against the alien onslaught as you race to uncover the mysteries of Halo.
What distinguishes Halo from other games is the incredible amount of action, attention to onscreen detail and the way it has been choreographed, which comes over like a high production movie. The PC version has passed over to Gearbox (Half-Life, Tony Hawks and James Bond) with the original Bungie development team keeping an eye on things.

"You are offered a rich sci-fi experience which transports gamers into a science fiction universe fresh out of a Hollywood movie. With a detailed, twisting storyline, complex characters and cunning enemies, Halo will fulfill every sci-fi enthusiast's dreams."

A little known fact is that Halo was originally intended to be released on the PC, before Microsoft spotted the game and thought it would make a superb Xbox title. It was only after many requests by PC gamers that late last summer Microsoft announced its PC development. It was only recently that the PC version was officially sanctioned. "Our intention for the PC version is not so much to change things and its design but to improve the technical aspects."
The all-important multiplayer feature is also a special focus for the team: "There will be new maps, weapons and vehicles. Halo may also support 32 players per server and there is even talk referring to a mod pack that would allow fans to create new levels for Halo. The ideal is for Halo to take full advantage of what the PC has to offer and you know we obviously want to take full advantage of the multiplayer aspect."
The exact number of maps and weapons has not been finalised but it is important to say the additions are not cosmetic, but very integral to making the PC version a fresh and revitalized offering. This is not to say that the game is vastly different in concept and feel to the original, as most of the missions and AI remain the same.
All the nuances that made Halo such a hit on the Xbox will be enjoyed by PC gamers, including the clever way the enemies work as teams, the armour and the different feel and look when in action both indoors and outdoors. A year's extra work when completed on the PC version will ensure that this is no mere port. Presently around 60% of code has been completed.
Quizzed why Halo will be so successful on PC brought the familiar answers. "You are offered a rich sci-fi experience which transports gamers into a science fiction universe fresh out of a Hollywood movie. With a detailed, twisting storyline, complex characters and cunning enemies, Halo will fulfil every sci-fi enthusiast's dreams. With vehicles and foot-based action, players can tackle missions any way they choose, be it storming an enemy base or taking the wheel or gunnery position in a variety of powerful vehicles."
The PC version looks worthy - even better - than its predecessor.

▾ Just like shooting aliens in a barrel

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Legend of Zelda: The WindWaker [GC] — 96% (Award of Excellence)

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Metroid Prime [GC] — 93% (Award of Excellence)

"Its attention to detail such as this that enables a truly immersive gaming experience."

Edouard Dracon

NBA Street Vol. 2 [PS2] — 91% (Award of Excellence)

"…it does provide entertainment second to none, and will keep you playing for a long time indeed…"

Adam Liebman

Colin McRae 3 [PC] — 90% (Award of Excellence)

"Just when you manage to master driving in dry conditions on tar you need to get to grips with wet and muddy conditions."

Brett Hamilton

Grand Theft Auto 3: Vice City [PS2] — 89% (Award of Merit)

"From small, wimpy scooters to powerful superbikes, you can zip around the city on two wheels."

Walt Pretorius

Silent Hill 3 [PS2] — 88% (Award of Merit)

"… the eerie sounds are sure to give anyone who plays it a lot to think about, not to mention a few chills."

Adam Liebman

Rise of Nations [PC] — 85% (Award of Merit)

"… this latest game in Microsoft's real-time strategy series breaks the mould and introduces new concepts not seen heretofore."

Alex Jelagin

MotoGP3 [PS2] — 85% (Award of Merit)

"…even on the easiest level the game is challenging, and the AI riders are no pushovers."

Adam Liebman

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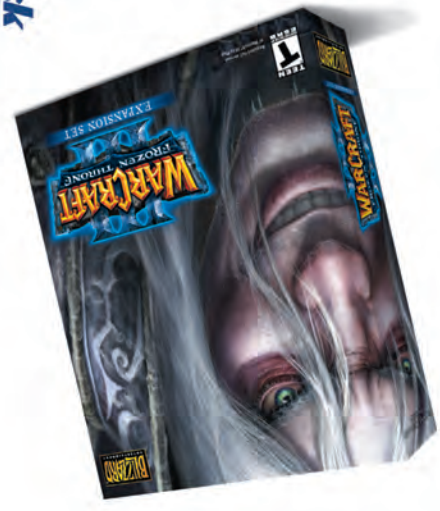

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developer: big huge games | microsoft games studio [] **publisher:** microsoft [] **distributor:** comztek (0800) 600-557
price: R 599.00 [] **genre:** real time strategy [] **internet:** www.riseofnations.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Alex "R.A.V.E.N." Jelagin

Rise of Nations

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

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Microsoft's successful "Age" franchise keeps growing. It is strange, then, that this latest game doesn't carry an "Age of…" title. Or perhaps not so strange - this latest game in Microsoft's real-time strategy series breaks the mould and introduces new concepts not seen heretofore.

For those of you unfamiliar with Microsoft's Age of Empires series, their game type's basic premise is developing a civilization in a real-time strategy environment. Players are required to create villagers to carry out resource-gathering and construction tasks, develop technologies and train armies to conquer enemies with. In this basic respect, Rise of Nations is no different, although specific details of the implementation have been changed somewhat.

▲ Guard towers deployed on the national border threaten a neighbouring nation

Economy

In contrast to previous real-time strategy titles, Rise of Nations employs a dynamic model that does not calculate individual trips by gatherers to the resources they collect. Instead, manpower is allocated to various industries, such as timber logging, food production and mining. The resource output of any given facility is determined by its staff complement, and the maximum number of staff allowed at any given facility depends on the richness of the deposit being exploited. Your nation's total production is determined by the number of facilities, their staff and the level of technological sophistication present in that industry at the time. Your nation's total production of any given resource is reflected as an income number, which indicates how much of that good is being accumulated over a period of time, and this figure changes dynamically according to changing conditions, for example, if a technology that increases output is researched, the production number is increased proportionately.

The level of commercial advancement determines efficiency, which is the maximum possible output at that commercial level. This cap cannot be exceeded without the development of appropriate technologies. The resources used in Rise of Nations are food, timber, metal, wealth and knowledge. All of these are handled in a similar fashion, with the exception that knowledge is not subject to a maximum cap and cannot be traded with or for.

In addition to the five common resources, the game features numerous rare resource deposits, which can be exploited by traders. Each such controlled rare resource location will, depending on the specific resource, bestow certain benefits. For example, a player may receive a boost to a certain common resource's production, or a

▲ An empty city makes an easy target for capture by armed forces

▲ With the artillery arrived, the onslaught begins!

construction time improvement, or a speed upgrade for a unit type, or some such.

Technology

The structure of technologies in Rise of Nations is similar to that in Age of Empires. The main difference is in the four main technology categories, military, civic, economic and scientific.
These four categories have many levels each, and determine what age can be advanced to, as well as what specific technologies can be researched at various facilities.

Territory and commerce

A new concept introduced in Rise of Nations is the National Border. Each city and fortress exerts pressure on national borders, pushing these outward. Soon enough in a game, opposing borders meet. They do not, however, remain static - as new technologies are researched, new cities built or cities captured, the borders will shift. This tug-of-war effect is significant in subtle ways, as a player's territory determines how much tax revenue is generated, which influences wealth.
Another aspect of territory is attrition. Attrition refers to the fact that unsupplied armies in enemy territory have a hard time finding food and necessary repairs. While this is not explicitly depicted in the game, attrition damage is how this is represented in game terms - unsupplied units in hostile territory continually take damage, and the amount of damage is determined by a couple of technologies. In most game set-ups, controlling 70% of the map achieves victory.
Another way to generate wealth, besides taxation, is trade between cities. This is accomplished by means of caravans that travel to and fro. Of course, as in the Age of Empires series, the market allows the buying and selling of various common resources.

The interface

The way in which units are controlled and information is fed back to the player will be familiar to Age of Empires veterans. A few minor enhancements have been added. For instance, controlled rare resources are listed in iconic format down the left-hand side of the main view, while any researches, age advancements or wonders under construction are similarly represented down the right. In terms of combat control, formations have been redefined, and very well implemented - the units in a combat group will form up so as to protect important, vulnerable units, placing these latter in the rear middle or wherever it makes most sense. Each formation is particularly suited to a specific requirement.

Making history

Rise of Nations follows in the footsteps if games such as Empire Earth, tracking the development of a nation from ancient times right through to the present day. The architecture changes accordingly, as well as the available units, both civilian and military. Each nation has been outfitted with its particular, historically inspired unique units and abilities. For example, Russia has advantages in terms of inflicting attrition damage, which is consistent with the land's historical penchant for making life difficult for foreigners (just ask Napoleon or any American spy from the Cold War years!)
It is, of course, critical to advance as rapidly as possible, but without compromising military might, and staying ahead of the opposition on the timeline is likely to insure victory. And as for Microsoft, in Rise of Nations they have a winner.

▲ Fortresses: tactically defensive, strategically offensive

▼ The single-player campaign combines Age of Empires with Risk

▲ Supply wagons carry provisions for armies, negating attrition

2-and-a-half-D

It comes as something of a surprise, in this day and age of 3D graphics, with 3D engines finding their way into every game genre, that Microsoft have opted not to implement a fully 3D engine in Rise of Nations. While the units are indeed depicted as 3D models, structures are still rendered in the age-old 2D manner. This is puzzling, but may be attributed to an effort to keep system requirements as low as possible. Of course, a side-effect of this approach is that the buildings and terrain are very readily recognisable as those of an "Ages" game. A useful feature of the engine is the ability to zoom in and out, though the zoom levels are fairly restricted - there are three in total.

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Minimum Specification

Pentium 500 MHz | 64 MB RAM | 12x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator | 800 MB HDD

- ☺ Familiar yet fresh
- ☺ Fluid game dynamic
- ☹ Dated-looking graphics
- ☹ Still a bit slow

Summary

Although all of Microsoft's Age of Empires (and Age of Mythology) have been good games, this is the first time I have felt truly enthusiastic about one of their real-time strategy titles. The pace has been picked up, and the new fluid game dynamic breathes new life to the genre. If you liked Age of Empires, you will love Rise of Nations.

85

developer: codemasters [] **publisher:** codemasters [] **distributor:** megarom [011] 234-2680
price: R 299.00[] **genre:** sample [] **internet:** www.codemasters.com
platforms: pc | xbox | ps2 | psone | gc

reviewer: Brett "2 left" Hamilton

Colin McRae 3

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

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The World Rally Championship (WRC) has always been one of the most demanding and challenging motor sport competitions on the planet with the world's greatest drivers doing battle in some of the harshest environments on the planet. WRC is one of the most intense motor sport events with it being very demanding on cars and drivers; there is no room for error and one mistake could cost you a race at the very least or your life at the very worst. This is WRC and with CM3 you get to experience it without worrying about your life assurance policy.

CM3 throws you into the deep end, select career mode and you get to play Colin McRae with Nicky Grist taking you through the pace notes while you try to get the most out of your Ford Focus WRC car. You get to do a full three seasons as Colin, as you improve so does the opposition, this offers an almost seamless difficulty system. By the time you have improved to a decent level so have the AI drivers, making the challenge of winning even one season not an easy task. As you improve and win you get to unlock special equipment and cars, making all the hard work worthwhile. CM3 takes you to eight unique geographical settings (UK, Australia, Japan, USA, Sweden, Finland, Spain and Greece), with 56 individual stages.

Graphics are one of the most amazing things about CM3; the landscapes are pretty dreary but the WRC cars are beautifully rendered inside and out, the forest levels are really well done giving you that claustrophobic feeling of the encroaching canopy of trees. Cars have extensive damage modeling from the bumpers falling off to axels being snapped and your wheel disappearing down the road. CM3 is realistic to an extent, CodeMasters didn't want to be too over realistic (else I would never finish a stage) but I feel they got the balance just right. Driving the cars takes a bit of practice, the Ford Focus you get to use for the career mode is an over-steering dog (great for screenshots, bad for playing), my personal favourite is the Mitsubishi Evo VII which handles so beautifully that I cut almost 10 seconds off my Ford Focus lap times. Unfortunately the other rally cars are only available in the stages and multiplayer section of the game, in career mode you are Colin and you drive a Ford - I can understand why CodeMasters did this as they spent a whole season with Colin developing the game but it would be nice to drive another car in career mode.

Enough nit picking, this game is at the pinnacle of Rally games - okay I really enjoyed RalliSport Challenge which beat CM3 in terms of sheer options and matches it for graphical quality, but CM3 is the definitive hardcore rally players game period. You want the WRC experience then CM3 dishes it up in large amounts, the challenge is not an easy one as each stage has it own set of challenges, these all take time to learn and more time to improve your stage times. Just when you manage to master driving in dry conditions on tar you need to get to grips with wet and muddy conditions. Even then you may only come second or third, this game is one difficult challenge no doubt, luckily it rewards the persistent player with the best WRC challenge available today.

If I have one gripe it's the total lack of multiplayer in terms of IP connectivity, multiplayer is limited to taking turns on the same PC. This is a pity as it would be nice to compete at the same time but this is what happens when a PS2 game is ported to PC; I guess we just have to live with the limitations and enjoy the higher resolution textures and FSAA support that PS2 doesn't have.

CM3 is an awesome rally game aimed at the hardcore rally fan, with stunning visuals and a can't be beaten racing system. CM3 belongs in every enthusiast's collection, buy it now!

▲ Although the drivers were still confident despite the damage to the car, the team accountant had a rather sad and very serious cerebral accident...

colin mcrae bio

Colin "the bigmac" McRae
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DOB: 05/08/1968
MARITAL STATUS: Married to Alison and has two children
LIVES: Switzerland
TEAM: Citroen
CO-DRIVER: Derek Ringer
THE STATS
WORLD RALLY TITLES: One
WORLD RALLY WINS (up to end of 2002): 25
POINTS SCORED (up to end of 2002): 579
WORLD RALLY DEBUT: Swedish Rally 1987
WORLD RALLY DEBUT WIN: New Zealand 1993
CAREER HIGHLIGHTS
2002: Fourth in WRC
2001: Second in WRC
2000: Fourth in WRC
1999: Sixth in WRC
1998: Third in WRC
1997: Second in WRC
1996: Second in WRC
1995: World Rally Champion

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Minimum Specification
Pentium 900 MHz | 256 MB RAM | 24 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator 300 MB HDD

- ☺ Ultra realistic rallying
- ☺ 3 season career mode
- ☺ Awesome graphics
- ☹ Career mode limited
- ☹ Multiplayer is sorely lacking
- ☹ Too real for the casual player

Summary
Colin McRae is back with Nicky Grist to help navigate you through some of the toughest rallying challenges yet brought to life on the PC. Featuring awesome new tracks and cars, Colin McRae has once again proved to be a worthy rally title, pity that the multiplayer element has been given scant recognition.

90

developer: enlight software [] **publisher:** nobilis [] **distributor:** vidis (011) 615-9596
price: R 299.00 [] **genre:** restaurant management [] **internet:** www.restaurant-empire.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Restaurant Empire

There are very few things better than sitting down to a wonderfully prepared meal, surrounded by a pleasing ambience and pleasant service. Hell, if I didn't write for NAG, I would probably be a food critic. I like the taste, the look, the smell… But, quite honestly, I would really rather not know what goes into it…

▼ After the soufflé disaster, Andre decided to end it all...

▲ The new world record at clearing a room was set after Yves shouted "bubonic plague!"

The funny thing about games is that they are very taste oriented, no pun intended in this particular case. It goes even further than just plain old genre choices. People get picky within genres, and this is one title that people will be very picky about.

Management games are already not the most popular (I put it down to the fact that the average gamer doesn't want to have to think about the games they play.) But here's one that is going to become a niche market title in an already niche market genre.

I must admit, before I go any further, that I did enjoy this game. It's very original and rather interesting, and features many rather realistic aspects (although they did not include the ability to spit on an annoying patron's food, which I feel is a major oversight.) However, things quickly got monotonous, which, considering the unique approach taken by the developers, is rather sad indeed.

In Restaurant Empire you play the part of an intrepid chef setting out to establish a chain of quality restaurants and, so doing, challenge the dominance of the evil Omnifood Corporation. It really is quite funny, that, because the game makes these Omnifood guys look like Darth Vader's evil twin. Just imagine… ninja chefs armed with butcher knives, graters and small bags of croutons…

Anyway, jokes aside, the player is required to manage a number of restaurants, making sure that they are profitable and that the customers are satisfied. Additionally, a small role playing aspect has also been introduced to the game. As the player's character is a more "hands-on" type than found in your average management sim, the character can be improved with time. New recipes, special ingredients and overall cooking prowess can all be gained. As the character improves, the quality of the food in the restaurants improve, the customers are more satisfied, and so on. You get the picture.

This is probably the most original management game I have seen since Far West. The ideas are new, and the approach to the whole "management thing" is rather fresh. But, as I said, the game gets more stale than three month old French Loaf after a few hours.

The graphics are good, the sound isn't too bad, and the controls are competent. However, the game lacks spice (that pun was intended.) Although the whole story approach is very new, it still does not inject the zest the game needs to make it a top title. My conclusion is that chefs are boring people (hate mail for that comment can be addressed to ed@nag.co.za).

You may enjoy this title (I did, as I said before, although I am not quite sure why) but then again you may not. You'll want to think a bit before rushing out and buying it. Are you really that keen on playing a game largely set in a kitchen? Perhaps this is one for your mom then?

▼ "That's not a fly in your soup sir, it's a cockroach..."

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Minimum Specification

Pentium III 500 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator 700 MB HDD

- ☺ Very original
- ☺ "Adventure" mode
- ☹ Gets monotonous
- ☹ Can't spit in food

Summary

Although this title is very original and brings some exciting new ideas to the management simulation genre, it gets very boring far too quickly. A sad truth, because this game could have really wowed jaded people like me. Basically, you cook food and try to get people to eat it (although it may be a little more complex than that).

59

developer: silverback entertainment [] **publisher:** dreamcatcher [] **distributor:** tba
price: $21.99 [±R 170.00][excluding shipping] [] **genre:** adventure [] **internet:** www.harbingergame.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Harbinger

IMPORT
NOT AVAILABLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Space. One thing is for sure - there's a lot of it. Which is probably why people believe that we'll colonise it in the future (seeing as how we are running out of space down here on Mother Earth). But who's to say that we are the only colonisers around? And, moreover, who's to say we are the most aggressive?

When someone says "isometric adventure game" you immediately think of armour clad heroes running around brandishing swords and slaying anything that moves. That's because computer game developers have, for some or other reason, believed that all adventure games need to have some or other kind of fantasy setting. Ok, sure, there have been a few examples to the contrary (like Arcanum and Fallout) but these have generally still been earth-bound efforts. Well, now the game that's being described as "Diablo in space" has arrived, and it seems to be a sign of things to come.

In Harbinger the player controls one of three characters. The three races present are very different, and follow slightly different story lines through the game (which is quite nice, seeing as how it adds re-playability to the title.) The characters generally blast their way through numerous levels on various quests to get various things for various people. Sounds a little familiar, right? In fact, replace the word "blasts" with the word "hacks…"

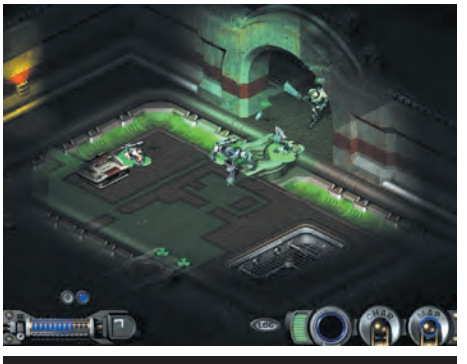
Harbinger may as well have been a Diablo modification of some kind, because the game play is so similar to that title that it goes beyond being just obvious. However, a few changes have been made just to spice things up. Like the fact that you can modify weapons by slotting things into them… oh, wait, hang on…

Despite the fact that playing Harbinger feels a lot like playing Diablo with something different to look at, the game does have its merits. It is, in fact, a rather enjoyable title, full of action and more than a little challenge. The player may often find themselves biting off a touch more than they can chew in this exciting space adventure title.

▲ Tactics rule 34321: Always bring a gun to a knife fight

The graphics don't suck and the controls are fairly easy to come to grips with. Some of the voice acting sounds like it was done by inebriated hillbillies, but you can get past that (especially if you turn the volume down).

The game has managed to capture a sort of film-noir feel, even within its sci-fi setting. Characters talk to themselves a lot, and the whole feel of the game is largely doom and gloom. Tons of weapons and equipment, lots to do and more than enough action make Harbinger a rather enjoyable title, despite its few shortcomings. This is a game that adventure fans will probably enjoy - even if only because it reminds them of something else, for some strange reason…



▲ Tactics rule 47436: Know when to run

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 500 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator 650 MB HDD

☺ Lots to do
☺ Varied character stories
☺ Tons of neat stuff

☹ Very similar to other games…

Summary
While the setting may be fairly original, Harbinger is not an original concept. This space based adventure game features three "races" with differing story lines. It is full of fun and challenges, yet seems vaguely familiar…

76

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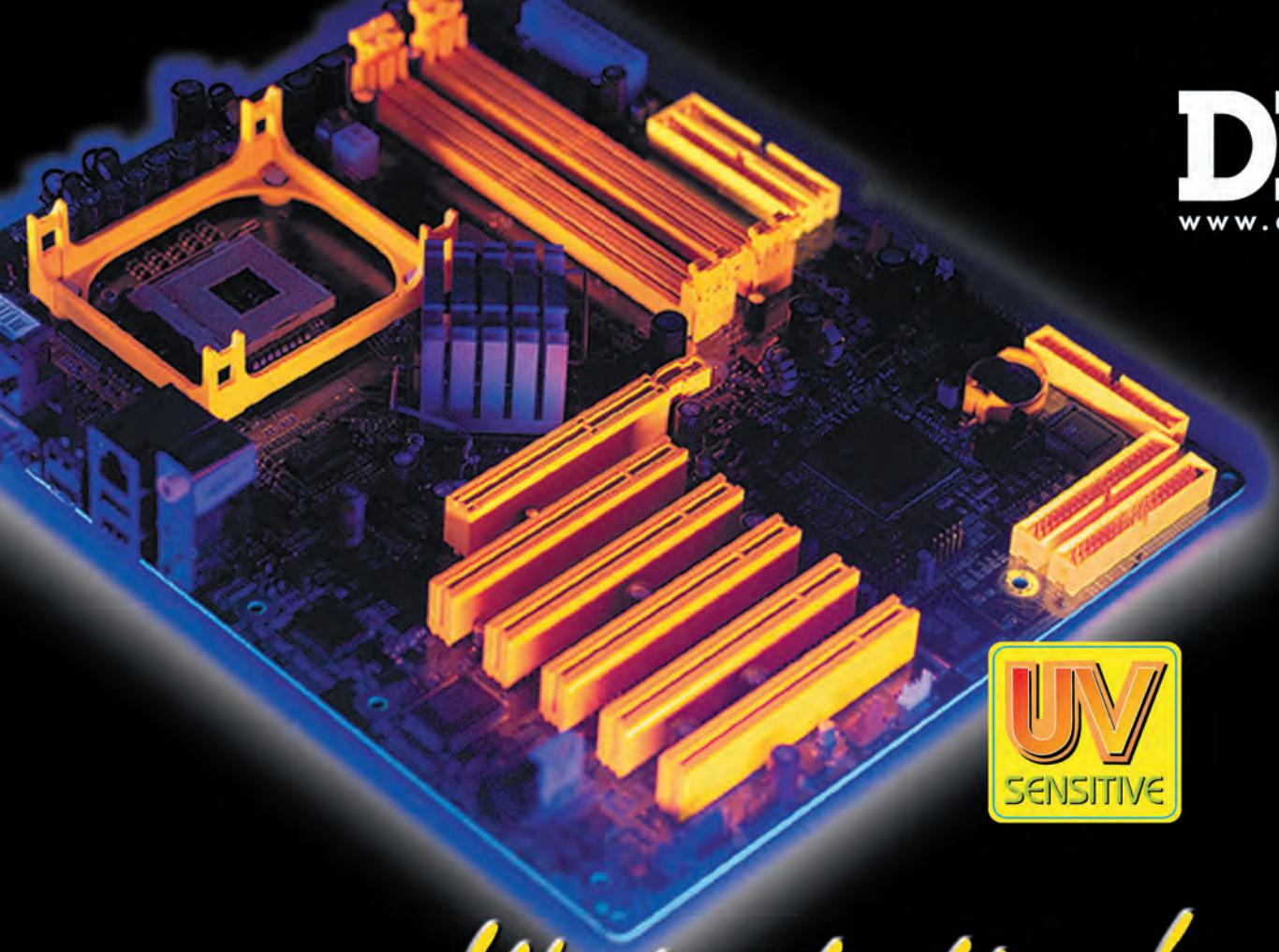

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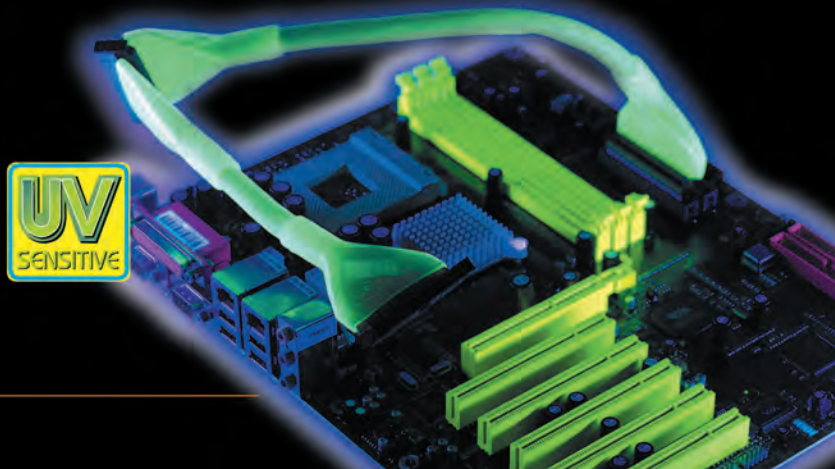

axiz insight

developer: volition | outrage games [] **publisher:** thq [] **distributor:** wwe (011) 462-0150
price: R 299.00] [] **genre:** fps [] **internet:** www.redfaction2.com
platforms: pc | xbox | ps2

reviewer: Moral Minority

Red Faction II

If the next big first person shooters like Half-Life 2, Doom 3 and Far Cry don't fog up my visor and get my heart pounding with excitement then I'm going to give up on this genre for good and start playing decent games like flight simulators and racing or sport titles - at least with these you know what to expect. The FPS genre is very similar to big action Hollywood blockbusters - they tend to drive the industry along with the elusive promise of the next big thing. It's a pity then that they're almost always disappointing?

Not that Red Faction II was ever highly anticipated, but the point remains the same - I was anticipating it because the first game was half decent and featured a clever 3D engine that allowed players to destroy entire parts of whatever level they found themselves on - if you needed an exit in that wall over there then you could make one with a rocket launcher and it was good.

Now we sit with Red Faction II, a disappointingly average game that could have been so much more if it wasn't a stinking console port. Sigh.

There should be a law that makes it illegal for ported games not to display a sticker or something so we can all avoid them. Red Faction II suffers from this portability with simplistic levels, no multiplayer mode and an engine that wouldn't strain a Pentium III. Perhaps making ported games half price would address this issue by lowering initial expectations… Two other aspects that just scream console are the end of level save points and the fact that clearing objectives and levels unlocks extra content you can later go back and look at such as artwork, character models and so on. It's barely interesting and does little to cover up the fact that there isn't much on offer here.

▲ The Mechanically augmented armoured weapons platform

More on the negative, technically the game is laughable - it delivers poorly defined graphics and very low character polygon counts and limited animation. The Geo-Mod engine technology [the ability to blow away large chunks of scenery] that was the main claim to fame of the original Red Faction barely features during the entire game.

Now that all that is out the way we can talk about the good parts. Red Faction manages to put on a fun, if predictable game that will have you playing a wide variety of missions in a number of vehicles as well as on foot in the traditional grunt against the world play dynamic. There are hundreds of enemies to kill, satisfying explosions, a huge arsenal and the ability to climb into a mechanically augmented armoured weapons platform and thump across the level destroying everything that squeaks and moves. The variation on offer here is impressive but it all ultimately comes down to one thing - kill everything while moving through unimaginative levels you've probably all played a hundred times by now.

Other things that need to be mentioned in closing is the story - this is best described as annoying and it seriously gets in the way, thanks to the fact that no matter how many desperate stabs at the keyboard you make you simply cannot escape past these trite and moronic story parts and considering you can't save anywhere you like… imagine the fun. The last interesting point is that the game has no multiplayer option and tries instead to cover this up with a poorly put together player versus artificial intelligence scenario across a number of 'multiplayer' levels.

So yes, it's a fun blast from beginning to end but things aren't nearly as polished as they should be. If this game had of taken things seriously as a PC title instead of a poor console knock off it might have been great but as it stands now it's just okay and doesn't deserve your attention.

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 500 MHz | 256 MB RAM | 32 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator 1.1 GB HDD

- ☺ Play variation
- ☺ Cool vehicle parts
- ☺ It installs
- ☹ Bad console port
- ☹ No multiplayer
- ☹ Too short

Summary
Red Faction II is a fun and exhilarating experience that is plagued by a number of silly problems inherent from its console origins. There is no multiplayer option which just reeks of laziness and zero interest on the part of the publisher in this game as a PC game.

70

developer: creative assembly [] **publisher:** activision [] **distributor:** megarom [011] 234-2680
price: R229.00 [] **genre:** real time strategy [] **internet:** www.totalwar.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Medieval: Total War – Viking Invasion

NOW AVAILABLE @ Musica

In 793 AD England was little more than a few squabbling principalities vying for power and control. Then the Vikings came, and brought with them pillage, death and iron fisted rule. The sight of their longships was enough to terrify anyone, and their savagery was legendary…

Expansions are always something of a gaming loose cannon. The fact is that they can be either phenomenal, or they can suck rather mightily. However, developers keep churning them out, consumers keep buying them, and game reviewers keep bemoaning their existence.
For me, a good expansion is one that adds to and enhances the game it is written for. And, thankfully, this title does both, although not necessarily in the measure that one could hope for.
Basically this expansion dumps one extra campaign onto your machine. This is a battle for the control of Britain, and it's the only place you will actually see the Vikings in action. While the expansion boasts a further 11 playable factions, the fact is that these are only available in this campaign. Rather sad.

However, Viking Invasion does add some other elements to game play that enhance the overall Medieval: Total War experience and thereby make it a worthwhile purchase. For example, a few new units (like the devastating Organ Gun) have been added to the game, adding to the strategies and action available to the player. Also, the introduction of flaming arrows and torches have made castle sieges all the more interesting… particularly when you consider that boiling oil can now be included in a castles defences!

▲ Vices and Virtues in action...

Two new game aspects that I particularly enjoyed were the Vices and Virtues and the new Battle Deployment screen.
Vices and Virtues basically affect the way your populace views your leader and his various generals. These are random factors (although they can be affected by game play dynamics like winning battles or constructing new facilities) which change your "characters' " statistics. For example, a character that gains the reputation of being merciless will gain some points towards his dread rating, and so on. Quite fun, although perhaps a little too random - these can be penalties as well as awards.
The new Battle Deployment Screen refines the player's ability to make the best tactical decisions.

Aside from displaying the battlefield and allowing quick save and load options, as well as giving general strengths and weaknesses of the armies, it allows you to trim your forces to best suit the upcoming battle. Because each army can hold only sixteen units, you may need to swap around some units from your pool of reinforcements, thereby fine tuning your army to the battle ahead. A very nice touch indeed!
Overall, it's not a bad expansion, although maybe another campaign or two would have been better. But, as a stop-gap until Rome: Total War, I think this one does the trick.

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Minimum Specification
Pentium II 350 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator 400 MB HDD

☺ Great new ideas
☺ Cool new units
☹ Not enough campaign stuff

Summary
Although it is a bit shy on new campaigns, this expansion brings great new play ideas to the Medieval: Total War environment. Fans will certainly appreciate the new battle planning aspects. And the Viking Campaign is quite fun, too!

80

developer: valve | activision [] **publisher:** activision [] **distributor:** megarom [011] 234-2680
price: R 249.00 [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.dayofdefeat.net
platforms: pc

reviewer: Brett "UberCommando" Hamilton

Day of Defeat

NOW AVAILABLE @ Musica

Day of Defeat (DoD) has been one of the most popular mods for Half-Life for quite a while now; at last years Half-Life mod expo the DoD team managed to entice Valve to have a closer look at DoD and their online following. Softened up by the success of Counter-Strike, Valve have now released DoD as a commercial product; how successful it will be is difficult to tell, but considering the development cost of mod projects is not huge, it might be another successful outing for the unstoppable Valve.

Day of Defeat is a class-based, first-person shooter; you will have the choice to play different types of soldiers that include Rifleman to Machine gunners, to Snipers. Each class has its own mix of special abilities and weapons. The overall goal of the game depends upon the map; whether it is to capture an area, defend a beach, or simply destroy the enemy. Players get to play three sides - Axis, Allies or British depending on the map being played. Weapons are one of the shining points of the game with each weapon accurately modelled on its historic counterpart and equipped with awesome sound effects for the most part. Grenades and rocket launchers do an amazing amount of damage and you have the ability to pick up a grenade thrown at you and send it back where it came from, sometimes with hilarious results. Maps in DoD vary from capture the flag to objective based missions, missions focus in on team work instead of gung-ho deathmatch tactics, teams trying to play individually will come unstuck against superior team work.

DoD is a mixed bag considering it's going to get compared to BF1942 and RTCW which learnt a lot from DoD but presented it on a better platform especially in terms of graphics. DoD has a hardcore following both locally and internationally and I don't see this changing in the near future and with the modding possibilities of HL2 I think we will see DoD again in some type or form in the near future.

DoD is a multiplayer only game, so you need an internet connection; DoD is more 56k user friendly than CS and attitudes of the DoD players online is one of the biggest plusses when compared to the aggressiveness of the CS community. DoD is not the easiest game to play well, but it is relatively easy to get into.

DoD is in some ways similar to TFC and other team based games in that you have different classes (limited to one primary, one secondary weapon and the number of grenades), you have multiple lives but are limited by time to respawn. The class system is not very broad and you don't have medics or engineers and are unable to drive any of the vehicles found in the game .DoD also has included Para maps which only give you a single life for each round; I know some hardcore DoD players don't like this idea as it reminds them too much of CS. The setting of each map reflects some historic battle like storming up a beach at the battle of Normandy (although the settings might seem arbitrary they add to the sense of being involved in a huge battle).

Graphically and sound wise DoD is nothing special, so you need to look past this to enjoy DoD. Half-Life's engine is really old now with CS being the only mod to enjoy significant engine upgrades. Model animation is average and map design varies from downright horrible to great. DoD is all about team work, if you get to play with a good team the game can be really good fun, get lumbered with a team of headless chickens and DoD can be really frustrating. DoD reminded me of how much fun TFC was and I really enjoyed playing a team game that wasn't CS. Unfortunately Valve could have helped with the level design and improved some of the poorer maps which has always been a problem with DoD, some of the models have been retextured but still retain pretty poor animations.

The biggest plus of DoD is the local community who take an active role in promoting DoD and running DOD BFA (Battle for Africa) which will keep the interest high. DoD is also a title that people with limited hardware resources could play as an entry into the world of multiplayer gaming as many of the newer games tend to have a much higher demand on resources. DoD is not be successful because of it shinning graphics or stellar game play, it is successful because it has a great fun factor and a community who are active in getting people interested in playing. DoD as a free mod is more than worth it but paying full retail price for the game might be a push as there is really nothing to be gained from the full version in terms of cinematics or any AI driven single player option.

▲ "No, I can't see anything up there... Look, I know you lost your left sock, but I am sure it's not in the barrel of your gun."

dayofdefeat.za.net

This DoD fan website hosts BFA (Battle for Africa). BFA is a local bi-weekly event for all the DoD players (not clan based) which started out as DOD war; maps are played and battles won, taking competitors through numerous encounters on the DOD battlefield. One of the nice things about the battles is you don't have to be in a clan (team) to compete.

The site documents all the results as well as hosting all the necessary files and hints any new or old player might need. Games are hosted on SAIX servers (games.saix.net) and offer very good performance and a choice of 5 dedicated servers to play on. You can find games using the in-game browser but here at NAG we use All-Seeing-Eye (www.udpsoft.com/eye2/index.html).

Grab your spade and machine gun and join the battle for Africa. DoD community members are on the whole a friendly bunch so don't be shy to ask for help if you are not to sure what to do. See you on the battlefield soldier.

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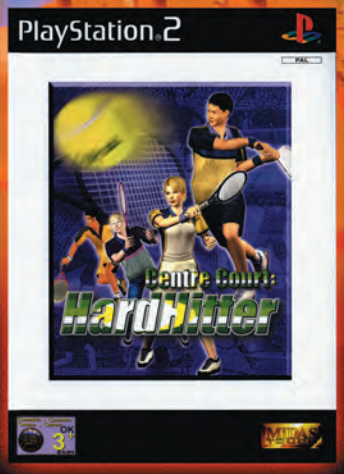
Minimum Specification
Pentium 450 MHz | 64 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 8 MB D3D Video Accelerator
535 MB HDD

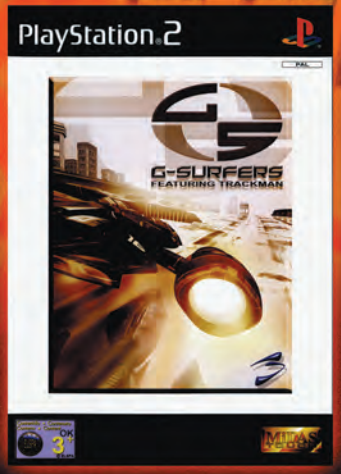
- ☺ Great local DoD community
- ☺ Low system requirements
- ☺ Easy to get into
- ☹ Graphically dated
- ☹ Some server bugs
- ☹ BF 1942 and RTCW do it better

Summary
Day of Defeat shows that mods (user made modifications) can be converted into standalone titles, with the success of Counter-Strike paving the way. DoD is great multiplayer fun although the game engine is now really starting to show its age. DoD retail includes the updated menu system from C.S 1.6 beta which is a really easy to use slick interface.

80

WIN BIG





WIN ONE OF THESE AWSOME GAMES

Q: What does Fred Flintstone do for a living?

Entries to reach us by the end of July 2003
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P O Box 237, Olivedale, 2158
NOTE: Only 1 [one] entry per person – any more and we delete your whole batch...

Games courtesy of WWE, World Web Entertainment

developer: running with scissors [] **publisher:** running with scissors [] **distributor:** tba
price: $ 49.95 [±R 390.00][excluding shipping] [] **genre:** fps [] **internet:** www.postal2.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar

Postal 2

IMPORT
NOT AVAILABLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

With Postal 2, development house Running with Scissors is continuing its tradition of releasing controversial titles. Following in the footsteps of its 1997 predecessor, this first-person shooter is certain to offend just about everyone out there.

Postal caused quite a stir when it was released as a third-person action game in 1997. Its inspiration was drawn from several incidents where U.S. Postal workers had nervous breakdowns and tried to kill everyone in sight. The phrase "going postal" quickly became synonymous with these acts of violence. Running with Scissors sought to create a game in which the player controlled one such worker, a character called the Postal Dude.

With Postal 2, Running with Scissors has decided to go the first-person shooter route. After all, looking through the eyes of the familiar Postal Dude is what one would expect from a title such as this.

The game is set several years after the original. The Postal Dude is now working for Running with Scissors and lives in the small Arizona town of Paradise.

However, the person who named the town must have had a cruel sense of humour, as Paradise is a melting pot for the scourge of humanity to collect. Just about everybody there (including the dogs, cats and occasional elephant) are as psychopathic as the Postal Dude.

Running with Scissors claims that the game is only as violent as the person playing it. However, on several occasions I was minding my own business when someone/something else went berserk and I had to kill him/her/it in self-defence. The police did not take too kindly to that and tried to put me in prison. Of course, I had to wipe out the police force only to have the citizens of Paradise on my case. After a while, I was the only person left standing, my shovel blunt from the numerous decapitations it performed. I have to admit that it is possible to finish the game by not killing, maiming or destroying everything in sight. It is just so much harder to do it that way.

Also, no one is going to buy this title just to complete such mundane objectives as cashing a cheque or getting a petition signed. No, they would want to see with just how much violence they could get away with. Well, without going into specifics, the answer is plenty.

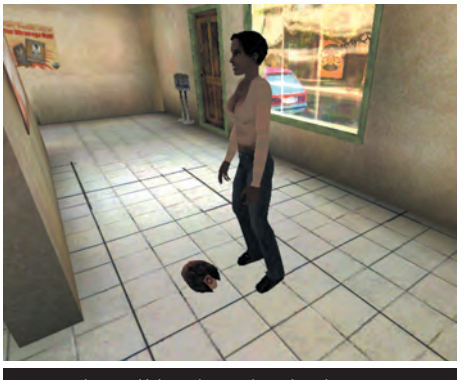
The game uses the Unreal engine and is graphically quite adequate with the sound and music tying in well with the atmosphere of the game. The controls work well and should not be strange to anyone familiar with the genre. However, the biggest problem I have with Postal 2 is the long loading times. In any given hour of playing the game, almost half of that time is spent waiting for the different areas to load. Even on a top-end machine the game takes what seems like an eternity to load.

Postal 2 is one of those games you play when you have nothing better to do. After all, there are only so many ways of killing a person. Blowing up, setting fire to and urinating on yet another citizen can get boring even for the sociopaths amongst us. Sadly, there is no multiplayer mode so you will end up using the editor just to spice up your own play.

This is a title that will offend just about anyone. If you have played everything available, then Postal 2 might just keep you busy long enough before the next really good title comes along.

While Postal 2 exists in the realm of bad taste, it does provide entertainment for those who want to vent any pent-up frustration that they might have.

▲ There might be some electricity between us



▲ Now where did I drop that head?

▲ Guess were having meat for dinner

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 733 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 X CD-ROM | 32 MB GeForce 2 Video Card 3 GB HDD

- ☺ Graphics
- ☺ Mindless fun
- ☺ Editor
- ☹ Long load times
- ☹ No multiplayer
- ☹ Violent

Summary
The past few years have seen PC gaming establishing itself as one of the biggest money making industries. With budgets rivalling many movies, does the industry really need the bad publicity generated by Postal 2? After all, how can one justify playing a game where using a certain part of a feline's anatomy as a silencer is considered to be entertaining?

60

developer: maxis [] **publisher:** electronic arts [] **distributor:** electronic arts africa [011] 516-8300
price: R 179.00 [] **genre:** people simulator [] **internet:** www.thesims.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

The Sims: Superstar

NOW AVAILABLE @ M Musica

Hey, you wanna be famous? I don't mean in the "shot in the head by Billy the Kid" kind of way. Indeed, I speak of catwalks and premiers and rock concerts. You could be the next Claudia Schiffer, the next Mel Gibson, the next Madonna… all it takes is a bit of effort.

The sixth expansion in the ever-increasing Sims universe allows your sims to become famous. Yes, it's the Sims Superstar, and with it your sim can rise from garden variety to absolutely fabulous in no time at all…

provided you put in the dedicated hard work that getting there will take. Featuring sim versions of real world superstars, the Sims Superstar introduces the player to studio town, a collection of studio lots, recording studios and fashion houses which will allow your sim to become famous, should you choose. Three fields of fame (fashion, music and film) await the player, although you will need to partake in all fame activities to generate the five stars needed to be a true superstar.

One can't help but wonder what the next sims expansion will bring. And, with the announcement of the Sims 2 at E3, one must wonder how much of what is currently available for the Sims will be included in the next game series.

But that's the future - let's concentrate on the here and now. The Sims Superstar adds a whole new dimension of play to the game, making it even tougher to build a well rounded sim up from nothing. It's a fun expansion, full of new items (as usual) and new looks for your sims. A few play elements have been modified, but it certainly is not as revolutionary as Hot Date was. However, it is a great addition to the game, and fans will certainly applaud it.

- ☺ New ideas
- ☺ Fun
- ☹ Not revolutionary

78

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developer: quicksilver [] **publisher:** atari [] **distributor:** megarom [011] 234-2680
price: $ 19.99 [± R 170.00][excluding shipping] [] **genre:** galactic management [] **internet:** http://moo3.quicksilver.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Masters of Orion 3

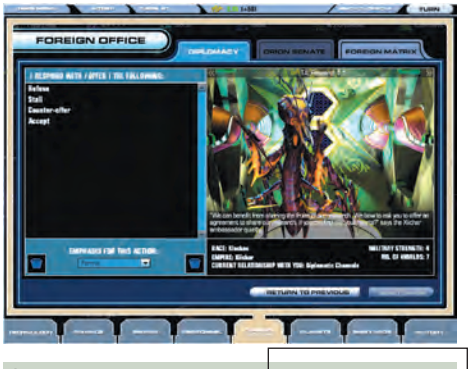
In space, no one can hear you double click. And that's what you'll be doing a lot of if you take on this complex management title… in fact, that's probably all you will do. And you will hope that your degree in macro-economics is enough to get you through this…

While the developer of this title would have everyone believe that it's a turn based management-strategy mix, the truth of the matter is that you're going to spend much more time trying to balance the books than you are fighting the enemy. And fighting the enemy is a rather sad affair… Masters of Orion 3 is a great management game. Running your galactic empire is a complex undertaking, and requires the player to carefully balance everything - even though the game does take care of itself to a large degree. In fact, so much of the game can be handled automatically that the player can just sit back and click on the "next turn" button, and the game would more or less run itself. Exploration is left up to the player entirely, though. Even so, even the least experienced management player could successfully play this title without too much bother.

Strategy gamers will be sorely disappointed though. The 2D space battles have rather disappointing graphics and leave much to be desired by way of actual "strategy." They come down to a matter of "the biggest guns win" nine times out of ten.

As a management title, MOO3 scores well, with a complex and sweeping management style that is as difficult as the player wants it to be. On the other hand, it falls a bit flat in the strategy arena - enough so that the game should not even be considered a strategy title at all. Basically, this is complex management with a few fights for flavour.

▾ Your mother was a mantis!



- ☺ Complex management
- ☺ Variable complexity
- ☹ Strategy? Where?
- ☹ Iffy graphics

68

developer: rockstar [] **publisher:** rockstar [] **distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 549.00 [] **genre:** adventure [] **internet:** www.rockstargames.com
platforms: pc | ps2

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

NOW AVAILABLE @ M Musica

1986. The fashions are bad, and the crime is worse. Why, you might ask, would the crime be so bad, here on the sunny beaches of the beautiful Vice City? Well, a drug deal went bad. That's just the start, because they have turned loose a real hound dog of a bad boy and, clad in his jeans and Hawaiian shirt, he is making big waves in the crime-pool. And on the golf course, too…

Grand Theft Auto 3 did what very few people thought it would. It was a huge success, despite the crime and violence that the game portrayed. Yes, it seemed that Johnny Average the gamer liked his action vicious and on the really wrong side of the law. And so, the developers of that title did what every good developer does when faced with a hit title… they made a sequel.

In this game the player leaves good old Liberty City and heads for more tropical climes. Yes, that's right, the summer playground of Vice City (which in no uncertain terms is modelled on the real world Miami) awaits the player, as well as a whole number of new things to do (almost all of which are less than legal).

Aside from everything you would expect from this title (stealing cars, mugging little old ladies and carrying out jobs for various crime bosses) there are one or two new features that makes Vice City a very worthy bearer of the Grand Theft Auto 3 name. The first is the fact that, once your character rises from the obscurity of small time hoodlum and makes a bit of a blood stained name for himself, you gain the ability to buy businesses. The benefits of this speak for themselves, of course, and the added depth to the game is great fun.

Another change that you will notice is the inclusion of two wheeled vehicles. From small, wimpy scooters to powerful superbikes, you can zip around the city on two wheels. Generally a faster getaway, the player should remember that bike accidents tend to damage the character a lot more than car accidents do. Trust me, I speak from experience [*insert a muffled snigger here, Ed*].

I think the Ed is saving up for one of these...

There a number of smaller, more subtle changes to the game, too (like the inclusion of passengers in cars, a more tenacious cop AI, and so on) but listing all of these here would take too much time.

Bikes. Just as dangerous as the real thing, too!

Needless to say the graphics have been upped a notch or two, making this a very pretty title indeed. And yes, the radio stations are just as good as the Liberty City ones, although Lazlo no longer does talk shows - he now DJs for VROCK which, might I add, plays some excellent classic rock and metal tracks. There is not that much new to find in Vice City. The game dynamic is not much changed from the previous version of the game, and may leave fans that expected a little too much a bit disappointed. It is great fun, though, and those not expecting an unreasonable revolution within the title will find the game as enjoyable (if not more so) than the first title. So go ahead. Break a few laws. But make sure that you're at your PS2 when you do it!

Which one first? Which one first?

Minimum Specification
1 Player | Analog | Vibration

- ☺ Improved graphics
- ☺ Bikes!
- ☺ Cool music
- ☹ More of the same

Summary
Return to a life of crime in this violent, misguided and morally corrupt title! Yes, Grand Theft Auto is back, with a few new ideas, better graphics and Lazlo. Speed through the tropical climes of Vice City in a quest to find out who stole your money (and a few other interesting criminal activities as well.)

89

developer: ea sports big [] **publisher:** electronic arts [] **distributor:** electronic arts africa [011] 516-8300
price: R 449.00 [] **genre:** sports [] **internet:** www.ea.com
platforms: ps2

reviewer: Adam "Madman" Liebman

NBA Street Volume 2

NOW AVAILABLE @ Musica

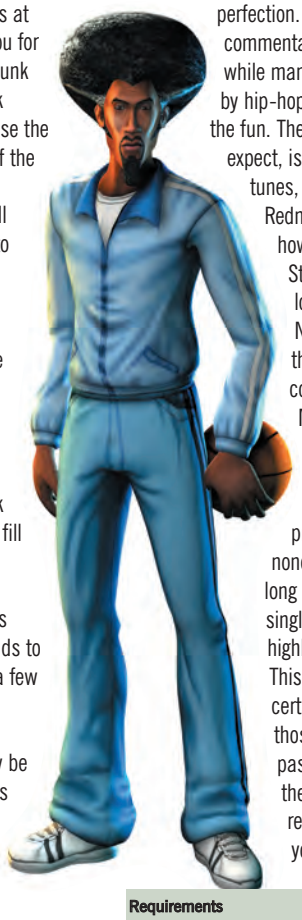
NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The original NBA Street revolutionised the basketball game genre, keeping the realism of the street game, while adding as much flashy razzle-dazzle bells and whistles as possible. The second game in the series takes that idea further, and is undoubtedly one of the most genuinely entertaining sports games around.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the concept behind the NBA Street series, the game is much like ordinary basketball, except that it's played 3 on 3, with the first team to reach 21 points winning the game. Also, there are no fouls, and no time restriction rules, apart from the 24 second shot clock. The other major difference between this game and any other basketball title is the presence of "trick points" - the player has a variety of both offensive and defensive moves at his or her disposal, and the game rewards you for linking them together. For instance, while a dunk alone may earn you a handsome total of trick points, couple it with a few fakeouts to confuse the defender (executed by using a combination of the shoulder buttons and the square button), as well as an "Off the Heezay" (bouncing the ball off a defender's head, sure to be the cause of much emotional scarring), and you're looking at a whole truckload of trick points. The purpose to accumulating trick points comes in the form of the Gamebreaker meter, which is filled up by earning aforementioned trick points. Once you manage to fill it up, you can execute a Gamebreaker shot or dunk, which not only further boosts your trick point total, and adds to your score, but also subtracts a few points from your opponent's score, meaning that even the largest of deficits between players can quickly be reversed. NBA Street 2 also provides much in the way of variety, with a Street School mode to teach you the basics of playing the game, NBA challenge, where you travel through 6 different regions taking on real NBA teams (street style, of course), and Be A Legend mode, where you create your own baller, and earn Development Points to increase his or her attributes by playing street challenges and tournaments. Along the way, you'll also unlock several NBA legends, including the likes of Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, and Darryl Dawkins, not to mention their trademark shots or dunks. Graphically, NBA Street Vol. 2 is a pleasure to play. The characters and arenas are all spectacularly detailed, and each of the multitude of special moves available is animated to absolute perfection. Aurally, the play-by-play commentary is lively, and often humorous, while many of the moves are accompanied by hip-hop inspired sound effects, adding to the fun. The sound track, as one would expect, is entirely comprised of hip-hop tunes, including some by the likes of Redman, MC Lyte and Nelly. Ultimately, however, it should be noted that NBA Street Vol. 2 may disappoint those looking for a completely authentic NBA experience - although many of the rules can be customised to correspond to those used in the NBA, NBA Street 2 is exactly what it claims to be - a street game. You should not, however, write it off on account of that, as it does provide entertainment second to none, and will keep you playing for a long time indeed, with the extensive single player mode, as well as the highly enjoyable multiplayer mode. This game is all about fun, and it certainly delivers, enough so that even those who dislike basketball with a passion will most probably find themselves enjoying this, even if they refuse to admit it. This is a game you probably don't want to miss.

▲ "What ball? I don't have a ball... okay, alright... pick a hand..."

▼ I know Michael Jordan has long legs, but this is ridiculous! He looks like a split-pin...



Requirements
1-4 Players | 103Kb | Analog: sticks only | Vibration compatible

- ☺ Serious entertainment
- ☺ Good graphics
- ☺ Sound
- ☹ Not entirely true to NBA

Summary
This is definitely one of the better sports games currently available. It's easy to pick up, even for a novice, and extremely hard to put down, with excellent graphics, great sound, and an addictive play dynamic. Extensive single player playability, and multiplayer potential mean this disc won't be gathering dust on your shelf, even if you don't generally like basketball games!

91

developer: overworks [] **publisher:** sega [] **distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 549.00 [] **genre:** third person action [] **internet:** www.sega.com
platforms: ps2

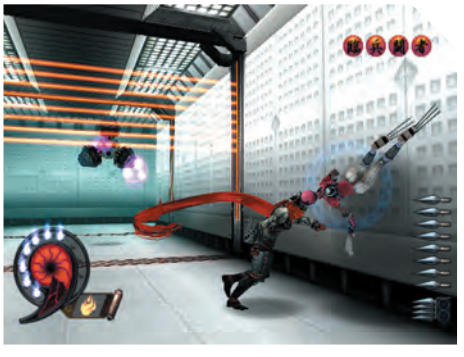
reviewer: Adam "Madman" Liebman

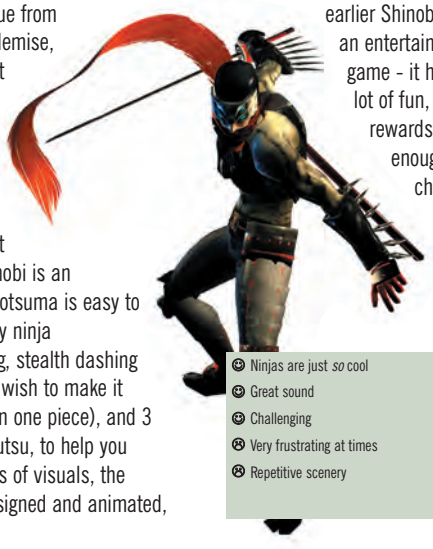
Shinobi

NOW AVAILABLE @ Musica

Everyone's favourite ninja from the days of the Sega MegaDrive is back, this time on the PS2, and it retains most of the appeal from its earlier incarnations, spruced up with fancy graphics and all sorts of other PS2-induced goodness. Unfortunately, it also retains most of its predecessors' frustration factor…

Shinobi is, at its heart, a platform game. You get to control Hotsuma, a somewhat futuristic ninja on a quest for revenge, and to achieve your goal, you'll need to kill hordes upon hordes of zombie ninjas, fire-spewing Hellspawn, and all sorts of other malevolent, if only semi-sentient, creatures. Oh, and you'll also have to jump. Lots. Over bottomless pits. Shinobi's stages (there are 8 levels, each divided into 2 stages) are of almost uncanny length, and within each stage there are no checkpoints that you can continue from should you meet your untimely demise, and this is undoubtedly the most annoying aspect of the game. You are often forced with having to make very tricky jumps, and should you fail, its right back to the beginning. If, however, you are prepared to put up with that, you'll find that Shinobi is an immensely entertaining game. Hotsuma is easy to control, and boasts several fancy ninja techniques, such as wall running, stealth dashing (which must be mastered if you wish to make it through the combat sequences in one piece), and 3 different forms of magic, or ninjutsu, to help you overcome your enemies. In terms of visuals, the characters are all beautifully designed and animated, however almost all the scenery on any given stage is practically identical, leaving you with a feeling of monotony, not to mention making it rather easy to become disorientated. The sound effects and voice acting are excellent, and the soundtrack complements the action well, and is also very reminiscent of earlier Shinobi titles. Ultimately, Shinobi is an entertaining, but deeply frustrating game - it has the capacity to provide a lot of fun, and there are some very cool rewards to unlock if you're persistent enough (including a few hidden characters), but you'll often find yourself experiencing uncontrollable "game rage". It's worth checking out, but try before you buy.





- ☺ Ninjas are just *so* cool
- ☺ Great sound
- ☺ Challenging
- ☹ Very frustrating at times
- ☹ Repetitive scenery

74

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developer: konami [] **publisher:** konami [] **distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 549.00 [] **genre:** survival horror [] **internet:** www.konami.com
platforms: ps2

reviewer: Adam "Madman" Liebman

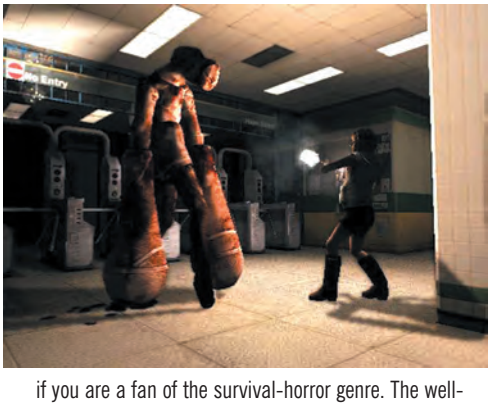
Silent Hill 3

NOW AVAILABLE @ Musica

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Konami's Silent Hill series has been renowned as one of the better survival-horror franchises, and the third game in that series does well to live up to the reputation of its predecessors - it's creepy, mysterious and engaging.

The survival-horror genre has been rather a popular one, ever since Resident Evil pioneered the idea behind this sort of game. Silent Hill 3 once again sees the protagonist battling (or fleeing from, if that's more your style) all sorts of grotesque monsters, who seem to have no purpose or desire, other than finding out what your intestines taste like. The story is rife with religious allusions, and gives the player much to think about, although the game takes care never to reveal too much, and thus you are constantly left never quite knowing what is actually going on, but that certainly adds to the suspenseful atmosphere of the game. The play dynamic is standard fare for the genre, with a variety of melee and projectile weapons on offer, though it should be noted that in an effort to make the game more realistic (or so Konami claim), your character handles the weapons somewhat inexpertly (i.e. not like a martial artist or trained marksman), much as an ordinary person facing a city overrun by zombies would. When you're not fighting the uglies, there are several puzzles that need to be solved to progress through the game, but thankfully none are too frustrating, though they are sure to make you think. Graphically, the locales are well detailed, and certainly supplement the spooky atmosphere, and the character models and animation look very realistic. Aurally, the voice acting is not superb, but it doesn't detract from the SH3 experience, while the sound effects and background music are very well done, and fit in with the style of the game perfectly. On the whole, Silent Hill 3 is one of the better third person action titles available, particularly if you are a fan of the survival-horror genre. The well-written plot and wonderful graphics, not to mention the eerie sounds are sure to give anyone who plays it a lot to think about, not to mention a few chills.



- ☺ Great graphics
- ☺ Good storyline
- ☺ Spooky
- ☹ Not for the kids

88

developer: namco [] **publisher:** namco [] **distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 549.00 [] **genre:** racing [] **internet:** www.motogp3.com
platforms: ps2

reviewer: Adam "Madman" Liebman

Moto GP 3

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

NOW AVAILABLE @ M Musica

Car-racing games are almost a dime a dozen, but the motorcycle racing genre is somewhat of an untapped resource. Namco, the eternal opportunists, have released another iteration in their successful MotoGP series, but have they done enough to make it stand out from its forerunners?

Firstly, I should warn those of you who consider yourselves racing simulation enthusiasts, but have never picked up a motorcycle racing sim, it is vastly different from anything with 4 wheels. In addition to the rudimentary arcade (a single race, set up to your liking), season (battle for the title of MotoGP champion), and time trial modes, MotoGP3 adds a 4-player split-screen option, as well as a Legends mode, where you compete against former MotoGP champions. Also on offer are 100 individual challenges, most of which involve completing a section of track within a time limit, or beating a certain rider, with rewards on offer should you succeed. Of course, most of the objectives are far easier said than done, but that is to be expected, and adds to the longevity of the game. Fortunately for newcomers to the genre, the degree to which MotoGP3 simulates true-life racing is adjustable, making it possible to play in an arcade style, but if you want to experience the game in its most accurate form, you'll be able to use the front and rear brakes independently of each other, as well as shifting your rider's weight to the front or back, not to mention trying to keep your rider from toppling sideways when cornering. These features allow the player to ease into the full MotoGP3 experience, without discouraging anyone by making the game too difficult. Having said that, even on the easiest level the game is challenging, and the AI riders are no pushovers. Visually, the frame rate never falters, the textures are crisp, and the animation is very well done, while the bikes are exceptionally detailed. Unfortunately, the tracks do seem boring at times, in terms of scenery, and the crowd is static, but on the whole, the graphics are superb, as are the sound effects, although the background music is nothing spectacular. Ultimately, MotoGP3 is an excellent motorcycle racing sim, and it bears the official license, which is never a bad thing, and thanks to the plethora of options available, it is never daunting or overwhelming, even for novices. If motorcycle racing is your thing, this is your game.

☺ Realism
☺ Adjustable difficulty
☺ Graphics
☹ Not everyone's cup of tea

85

Do da maths!

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developer: nintendo [] **publisher:** nintendo [] **distributor:** futronic [011] 315-0079
price: R 649.00 [] **genre:** adventure [] **internet:** www.zelda.com
platforms: gc

reviewer: Edouard "Miktar" Dracon

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker

On a certain island, it became customary to garb young boys in green when they came of age. Clothed in the green of fields, they aspire to find heroic blades and cast evil down. The elders wish only for the youths to know courage like the hero of legend…

If there ever was a game series synonymous with the concept of an 'imaginative adventure through a vast, strange land', it would be the Legend of Zelda series of games. There was no one true way to describe the brilliance that went into the previous Zelda games, nor do I believe there is a concise way to explain all that is the first in the next generation of Zelda games, Legend of Zelda: The WindWaker. One can, however, elaborate on certain elements that truly shine throughout this game.

Possibly the most noticeable (and most debated) aspect of The WindWaker, is of course the 'cell shaded' (cartoon appearance) visuals of the game. Colours are bright and crisp, characters are stylised and expressive. While this might fool you into thinking that it's a children's game, nothing could be further from the truth. More so, the graphical style actually manages to assist the game in telling a story that would otherwise be lost in your usual visual styles. From the start, there is a strong narrative to the game, both graphically and textually. Character expressions are clear and noticeable, the transition from happy to sad as definite as day and night. This is a blessing, as you'll find yourself needing to talk to quite a few of the inhabitants of the various islands which you travel to and even enjoying doing just that.

You might have had a peaceful life on Outset Island, your home and the island that marks the beginning of the game, had it not been for a menacing bird that snatched your younger sister. You follow in hot pursuit, setting in motion an epic adventure that will have you sailing the high seas and searching for answers to the mystery of her disappearance. While WindWaker is a direct sequel to Ocarina of Time for the Nintendo 64, you may find yourself confused about the direction of the plot. Have no fear, for the story of WindWaker is both intricate and exciting at the same time, plot twists sending you spiralling deeper into the colourful world of Hyrule. Most of your travel around the

▲ Shortly after setting out on his grand adventure, Link experienced the sudden sinking feeling that he had left the stove on, the door unlocked and the cat in the lavatory...

▲ The unexpected use of flash-bang technology in a fantasy setting left Link slightly stunned and more than a little curious as to the nature of his enemies

▲ Using a clever disguise, Link manages to blend in with the natives

oceans requires you to make use of your talking boat, so naturally the wind plays an important part. Using the WindWaker, a magical conductor's staff, you can control the direction of the wind and, eventually much more. Using the WindWaker is interesting in it's own right, requiring you to play the right 'notes' as specific times, certain melodies doing certain things. Puzzles make extensive use of not only the WindWaker, but also other items that you collect. From the Shield which you can use to reflect light, to the Grapple which allows you to swing across chasms. The Boomerang can be used to collect far off items or stun enemies, the Hookshot becomes a valuable tool for reaching hard-to-reach places.

Combat tends to be quite a letdown in adventure games, and while the combat in WindWaker may not be complex, it is immensely satisfying. Depressing the L-shoulder-button causes you to 'lock on' to an enemy. Movement left and right causes you to circle your enemy, holding a direction on the control pad and attacking produces a variety of attacks. Not all enemies are that simply despatched, however. You will have to defend yourself using your shield, or even attempt interesting 'counterattacks' by pressing the A button at just the right time. The results of a counterattack are often impressive. A guard in full armour swings at you, you automatically roll out of the way and behind the guard, slashing upwards to sever the ropes holding his armour together, causing them to clatter to the ground and leaving the guard exposed. Each hit at an enemy produces what can only be described as a musical note, the more successive attacks, the more notes are produced. Combat becomes something to look forward to, as apposed to something that needs to be done to progress further. Boss characters require more than just skill with the sword to defeat, often you'll have to find imaginative uses for some of your other items to be able to continue.

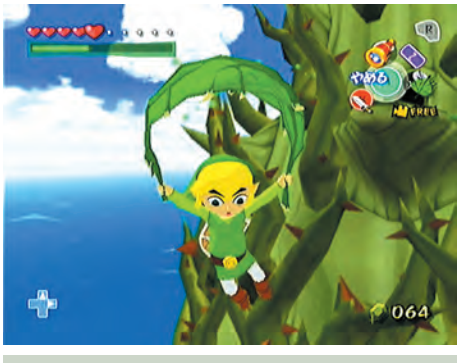
Throughout your travels, you'll be asked to do a large variety of things, some important, some nothing more than entertainment. Go fishing, practise acupuncture, participate in an auction or even become a trader of exquisite flowers. Depending on your fancy, you might decide to go treasure hunting on the oceans, search high mountains for golden feathers or post some letters for people. Due to the nature of how the world was designed, an innocent looking island may yield nothing interesting upon an early visit, but after finding a specific item that allows you to do something new to the environment, you have to start re-thinking how you see the world. Not to mention backtrack to specific places to try out your new abilities and see if you can't uncover something previously hidden.

While sailing upon the oceans, time passes by quickly, throwing the world into cycles of day and night. Time plays an important role; certain activities are only available at night, some only during the daytime. Even the phases of the moon are an aspect to solving one of the multitudes of quests and puzzles. The more you uncover the more ability you gain to uncover more. Exponentially, the world unfolds around you. With a hauntingly beautiful musical score to accompany your travels, you may find yourself simply sitting on your boat, watching the sun set over the ocean. Clouds form as the wind blows, causing rain and rough waters. Every natural aspect of the game is graphically stunning; soon you'll find yourself agreeing that it could not have been done any other way. Throwing in a few bonus concepts such as a 'membership card' which accumulates points when purchasing items at a store, proves to be quite fun. If you have a Gameboy Advance and the Gameboy Advance GameCube link cable, a friend can actually control the mapmaker Tingle (once found), and help you out cooperatively at certain points in the game. It's not needed, but it is an interesting addition.

Often you might find yourself cursing the inhabitants of the world, however, as you must act as errand boy more often than not. A simple task of getting a certain item from someone first requires you to do something for them, which, naturally, involves getting an item from someone else who also first requires something… That tediousness aside, Legend of Zelda: The WindWaker is an experience not to be missed.

bonus disk

Value for money, found easily if you purchase the Zelda: The WindWaker Limited Edition 2-game bonus disk set. The second game-disk contains not only a slew of great trailers for upcoming GameCube games, but also the previous Zelda title, Ocarina of Time and its remixed, unreleased version, Ocarina of Time: Master Quest. Graphically, little has been changed from the original Nintendo 64 version, but the controls were remapped to properly make use of the GameCube controller. Master Quest proves to be a much more difficult game than Ocarina of Time was, item and monster placement 'remixed' to make the whole game require much more effort and thinking. None the less, bundling Ocarina of Time with WindWaker is a great opportunity for those who missed out on the Nintendo 64 title.



Requirements

1 player | 12 memory blocks for WindWaker | 15 memory blocks for Bonus Disk

- ☺ Vast, seamless world
- ☺ Expressive characters and style
- ☺ Almost too many things to do
- ☹ Often cryptic quests
- ☹ Cartoon style might throw some people off

Summary

Often the presentation of a package may mislead into a false sense of security. WindWaker achieves the same effect with its cartoon styling, but this by no means indicates that it's a 'children's game' or easy. The vast world with countless adventures and overflowing imaginative designs will have you busy (and often frustrated) for quite some time.

96

developer: retro studios [] **publisher:** nintendo [] **distributor:** futronic (011) 315-0079
price: R 599.00 [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.retrostudios.com
platforms: gc

reviewer: Edouard "Miktar" Dracon

Metroid Prime

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

Some lives have their stories etched out across the canvas of space. Samus Aran, renowned Bounty Hunter, is such a life. Destitute orphan, raised and trained as a warrior by the secretive and advanced Chozo race, her story continues here. A cornerstone of the GameCube range, Metroid Prime is the first time this title has been realized in 3D and as so many games that make the leap from two-dimensional into the depth of three-dimensional worlds, it could have gone terribly wrong. But instead, the exact opposite has happened.

For those who were not in the know during the reign of the prehistoric console beasts such as the 8-bit Nintendo and its brother, the Super Nintendo, Samus Aran has had quite a busy life in the Metroid range of titles. She stopped the evil Space Pirates and Mother Brain from amassing an army of Metroids on the planet Zebes. Soon after, she was called on to finish the job on SR388, the homeworld of the Metroids, ultimately ridding the universe of all but a single Metroid larva. In Super Metroid for the Super Nintendo, Samus thwarted Mother Brain's attempt to snatch the captive Metroid larva from the scientists on Ceres. Now, Samus is once again called to investigate Space Pirate activities on the unexplored Tallon IV.

Using a silent narrative approach (cut-scenes are real-time and contain no speech, only movement), the introduction of Samus arriving on the crippled spaceship orbiting Tallon IV clearly marks the prelude to a graphical extravagance. From the lush forests on Tallon IV where rain splatters down your visor, to the murky underwater derelict spaceship, attention to detail seems to have been an almost compulsive drive during the development of Metroid Prime. Everything from the roving swarms of alien insects to the reflections on shards of ice. An interesting facet to note is that Metroid Prime truly sports a First Person view of the game-world. You view events through the eyes of Samus herself. If an explosion goes off on a wall nearby, the resulting light actually causes you to see Samus's face reflecting in the visor. Your HUD (Heads Up Display) may distort with static if you wander too close to a BioElectrical enemy. A particularly rough hit from an enemy may cause Samus to bring up her arm to shield herself. A Space Pirate hit by a rocket will flop over railings or down stairs, even float to the surface of water using a full physics system. Its attention to detail such as this that enables a truly immersive gaming experience. While the music may be slightly sub-par, the sound effects themselves are superb.

A First Person Shooter generally revolves around the 'key for a door' principle, and Metroid Prime is no different. However, in following the tradition of the Metroid games, the 'key' for a door is in fact, usually an ability/weapon you have, or need to find. A simple tactic such as directing the player by not letting them pass certain doors until they have a specific weapon lessens the negative impact of linear game-play. However, don't be fooled. What may seem a small world at first, quickly expands into a vast realm as more weapons (such as the Wave Beam and Plasma beam) allow you to open doors previously locked to you. Weapons also play an integral part in how you approach various scenarios, such as enemies that are only vulnerable to certain types of weapons. Now add to that abilities such as the Morph Ball which allows you to become a metal sphere, capable of rolling into smaller areas as well as traverse magnetic rails later when you acquire the Spider Ball upgrade, and you quickly find yourself reassessing areas for previously 'overlooked' elements such as the magnetic rails or even the grappling hook points. A mini-map on your HUD, as well as a detailed map of the world helps in finding these elements. A rather discreet Hint system also makes sure to put you on the right track if you're wandering around aimlessly for too long. The control system, while perhaps confusing at first, soon becomes second nature. Collecting items is a headache-free event, simply holding down the fire button to charge your weapon causes nearby items to be 'tractor beamed' in. Aiming tends to be a problem when faced with a First Person view and a console controller, but in Metroid Prime, pressing the shoulder L button causes Samus to 'lock on' to an enemy. A volley of fire will automatically hit that enemy, but this by no means makes the game easy. You need to choose the right weapon and/or ability to tackle certain enemies, not to mention the right Visor mode. Samus can switch her visor into a variety of different views, such as X-ray or Heat Sensing to find secret areas or to be able to target the vulnerabilities of certain enemies. The Scan Visor will detail specifics of an enemy or area to you, which is then added to your Log Book for review at any time. Important story elements are also conveyed through scans, keeping the narrative theme intact. Scan enough things, and a few secret extras are unlocked. There are more than a few secrets in Metroid Prime, combined with silky smooth and almost non-existent load times, just adds to an already attractive package.

Metroid Prime, while by no means an utterly unique First Person Shooter experience, certainly paves the way for a polished and quality experience.

▲ Although Samus enjoyed killing aliens, she never understood why they always seemed so unhappy to see her coming

Requirements
1 player | 3 memory blocks

- ☺ Beautiful graphics
- ☺ Interesting level design
- ☺ Linearity hidden by complexity
- ☹ Certain enemies annoying to fight
- ☹ Turning rate a bit too slow
- ☹ Music very repetitive

Summary
A landmark title for the GameCube, but by no means the limit of what can be done. While not original in design, certainly original in execution and quality. Perhaps a bit 'slow paced' for the more enthusiastic gamers out there, but rewarding none the less. A cornerstone in the GameCube range of titles.

93

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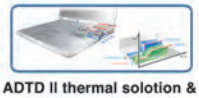

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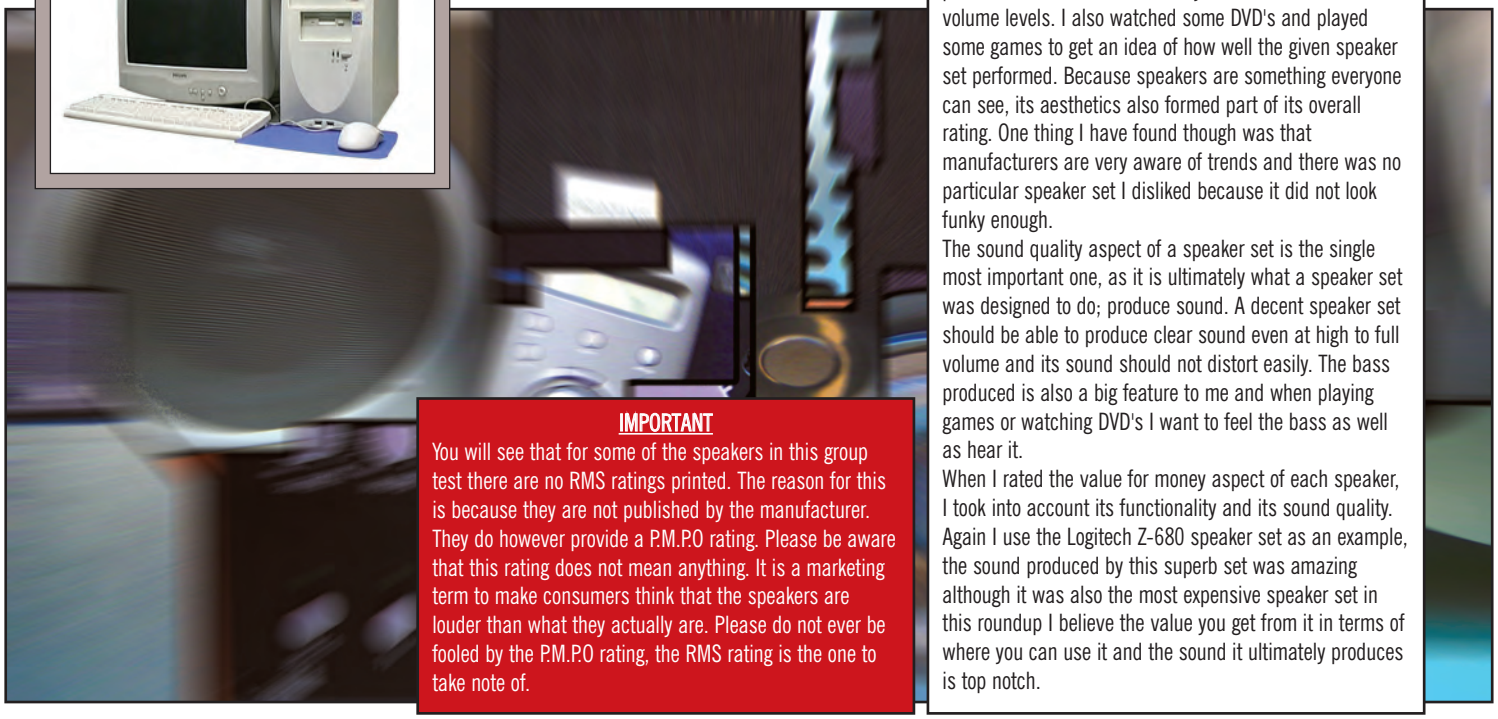
H@RDCOR3 speakers

All H@rdcor3 hardware is tested on an Emerald computer supplied by Light Edge Technology:

2GHz Intel Pentium 4 processor
MSI 845PE Max 2 motherboard
Transcend Radeon 9700
Philips 107E 17" monitor
Transcend 1GHz RAM DDR333
Western Digital 80GB HDD 7200rpm
LG DVD/CD-RW combo drive

writer: Tom "Fr00tC@k3" Taylor



IMPORTANT

You will see that for some of the speakers in this group test there are no RMS ratings printed. The reason for this is because they are not published by the manufacturer. They do however provide a P.M.P.O rating. Please be aware that this rating does not mean anything. It is a marketing term to make consumers think that the speakers are louder than what they actually are. Please do not ever be fooled by the P.M.P.O rating, the RMS rating is the one to take note of.

Benchmarking

There is no application available that can tell you how good a set of speakers really are. It is up to you to decide if the sound produced by a set of speakers suffices to your needs. In testing this month's H@rdcor3 roundup products I listened to various styles of music at various volume levels. I also watched some DVD's and played some games to get an idea of how well the given speaker set performed. Because speakers are something everyone can see, its aesthetics also formed part of its overall rating. One thing I have found though was that manufacturers are very aware of trends and there was no particular speaker set I disliked because it did not look funky enough.

The sound quality aspect of a speaker set is the single most important one, as it is ultimately what a speaker set was designed to do; produce sound. A decent speaker set should be able to produce clear sound even at high to full volume and its sound should not distort easily. The bass produced is also a big feature to me and when playing games or watching DVD's I want to feel the bass as well as hear it.

When I rated the value for money aspect of each speaker, I took into account its functionality and its sound quality. Again I use the Logitech Z-680 speaker set as an example, the sound produced by this superb set was amazing although it was also the most expensive speaker set in this roundup I believe the value you get from it in terms of where you can use it and the sound it ultimately produces is top notch.

So you have upgraded almost everything in your computer but you are still missing something. Your crummy old R50 speakers are not doing it for you anymore and you want to wake up the neighbours with the sound effects from Enter the Matrix or GTA: Vice City. A decent set of speakers can make the difference between a great gaming experience and a superb gaming experience, and although a decent set of speakers can cost an arm and a leg they do have multiple uses. Take the Logitech Z-680 for example, apart from having the loudest and best sound, they can also be used as part of your home theatre package.

I have a friend who recently spent just over R8000 for a big brand home theatre system. The product looks stunning and has a hoard of great features, the system he bought comprises of a DVD player and a set of 5.1 surround speakers. The only problem is that the sound produced by this home theatre set (supposedly top-of-the-range) is not particularly loud. Not even the bass produced by the active subwoofer (a subwoofer with a dedicated, built-in amplifier) takes your breath away.

When I had the privilege to look at the Logitech Z-680 for the first time a couple of months ago I was stumped. For this month's roundup I was able to test it on my own turf and using my own equipment. I hooked it up to my DVD player, using the optical cable and invited my friend over to watch a DVD.

Suffice it to say he has subsequently returned his R8000 home theatre system and bought a R2000 DVD player with the Logitech Z-680 speaker set. He saved just under R2000 but more importantly, the sound he is now able to produce far supersedes that of his other home theatre system.

The moral of the story, get yourself a decent set of speakers which you can use with your computer and your home theatre system and I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

A-866CE

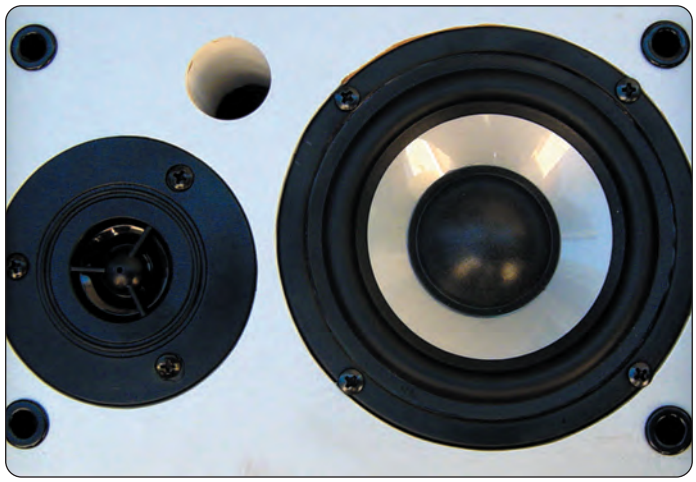
The A-866CE is an elegant looking speaker set. It sports a combination of dark and light wood, although it was just a stick on effect. A great feature to this 5.1 channel speaker system is that it comes with a remote control on which you are able to switch the speaker system on, mute the sound, set the subwoofer, front, centre, and rear speaker's volumes as well as the master volume, base, treble and mid-range frequencies.
Each satellite speaker consists of a tweeter and a mid-range speaker and has a removable front cover. I particularly appreciated the fact that the two rear speakers have hooks built in allowing you to hang them on the wall.
The subwoofer is a well constructed piece of audio equipment. Being a wooden box, results in pure sounding base but disappointingly it starts to distort at full volume. On the front panel of the subwoofer you are able to set all of the functions as that found on the remote control. The volume control sadly did not feel very responsive and you had to turn it a couple of time to get the volume up to full.
On the back of the subwoofer there are three sets of RCA jack inputs (5.1 channel, TV, AUX) allowing this speaker system to be used with devices such as televisions and DVD players. There is also a switch which allows you to change between the various inputs, a feature that I would have really liked to have seen added to the remote though.
The overall sound quality produced by this speaker set should not disappoint your average user. It has a wide range of uses and providing the room you use them in is not to big this speaker system is a good buy. As mentioned before, the sound became a bit distorted at high volumes but setting the volume about three quarters of the way up proved to be its best performance. At this volume the sound proved to be crisp and the subwoofer had a very acceptable thump effect.

Features	90
Aesthetics	87
Sound Quality	85
Value for money	85
Overall	**86**

Pros: Looks smart | Compatible with DVD player
Cons: Finicky volume control
Supplied by: WenTek Technologies [021] 551 8866
ERP: R 950
Internet: www.prototech.co.za

A-900CEV

This speaker set sports the biggest subwoofer I have ever seen on a set of computer speakers. Granted the fact that it can be used for home theatre as well, this is a great speaker set to get if you want a lot of bass. The 10 inch subwoofer is encased in a smart looking grey and black housing which has a multi coloured LCD panel with buttons to set the treble, mid-range, and bass tone, as well as the volume for each of these and the master volume. The housing stands a whopping 47 cm high and the subwoofer was designed to produce maximum bass output. The designers made a clever move to make the actual 10 inch subwoofer face downwards, on the front of the housing below the LCD panel is a blow hole allowing the extra air created by the subwoofer to escape.
The satellite speakers are also not to be overlooked. I liked the fact that the satellite speakers and the subwoofer were designed to look very similar; each satellite features a removable cover under which you will find a 4 inch full range speaker as well as a 3 inch tweeter. On the back of each of the satellites you will find a hook to hang it up against a wall.
Functionality must be this product's middle name, the main audio input features 6 RCA jacks (front, surround, and center) and it also has an additional 4 sets of stereo inputs. This allows you to plug in your hi-fi, television, or whatever else you wish and you simply press a button to switch between the various inputs.
The sound produced by this speaker set is great. Although this is an unknown brand of speaker it produced crystal clear sound and thumping bass. On the negative side, the subwoofer can be a bit big if you have limited pace.



Features	93
Aesthetics	90
Sound Quality	95
Value for money	95
Overall	**93**

Pros: Everything
Cons: Big subwoofer
Supplied by: WenTek Technologies [021] 551 8866
ERP: R 2500
Internet: www.prototech.co.za

Creative Inspire 4400

This 4.1 set of Creative speakers are perfect for the person on a shoestring budget. Sporting an all matt black finish the Inspire 4400 produces crisp sound. Something I have always appreciated about the Creative speakers were that they placed the volume control on an extension cable so that you can place the speakers almost anywhere but control the volume from where you feel most comfortable.
The subwoofer features a powerful 17 watts RMS speaker which is encased in a wood to produce a deeper bass, it also has a removable front panel if you want to give it that industrial look. All the wiring comes together at the back of the subwoofer and there is not much along the way of extra inputs but keep in mind this speaker set is aimed squarely for computer use. There are 4 RCA inputs (front left/right and rear left/right) and two audio inputs (front and rear). Along side the afore mentioned you will find the volume control plug and a bass level adjuster, it would have been great if I were able to set the base level from the volume control extension but that is not such a big deal.
Each of the 4 satellites features 6 watts RMS and they are small enough to hide anywhere. The cables supplied with the front and rear speakers should suffice length wise to place them comfortably around you, if you want to hang the satellite speakers against a wall you can also do so with the built in hooks. Seeing that the base has a removable front cover it was a bit disappointing to see that the satellite speakers did not allow it.
Sound quality on the Inspire 4100 is crystal clear, the bass does lack some thump but for a gamer on a budget it should be more than sufficient. Looking at its great price this speaker set is a great package to start off with.

Features	84
Aesthetics	88
Sound Quality	87
Value for money	90
Overall	**87**

Pros: Price
Cons: Bass lacks thump
Supplied by: Sahara Computers [011] 542 1000
ERP: R 599
Internet: www.creative.com

Creative Inspire 5200

The Creative Inspire 4400 and the Creative Inspire 5200 are very much the same. Everything that the Inspire 4400 lacked this speaker set makes up for. Sadly this excludes a louder overall sound but the slight differences make this one of the best dedicated computer speakers around.
The Creative Inspire 5200 features a 6 channel output (5.1), which allows for a centre speaker to be connected. The front cover of the subwoofer is removable and sadly I must admit that in this case it looks better with the cover on. On the back of the subwoofer you will find 5 RCA outputs (rear left/right, front left/right, and centre) as well as 3 audio inputs (front, rear, and center/subwoofer), the volume control extension plug is also situated here. The corded remote control found with this speaker set allows you to set the master volume and the bass level; I also like the addition of an earphone jack situated neatly on the front of the remote.
Each satellite speaker features curvy contours adding a very classy touch to the aesthetics of this product. Each satellite speaker is rated at 6 watts RMS and comes with a useful stand. Each satellite can also be wall mounted with the built in hook.
Looking at this set as a whole it does not have the great price tag of the Inspire 4400 but the slight improvement alone would make me buy this set instead. The satellite speakers proved to produce a very crisp sound while the subwoofer had a slightly deeper sounding bass. Although it is possible to connect this speaker set to your DVD player I would not really recommend that as its primary use. As a dedicated computer speaker the Inspire 5200 would definitely not disappoint.

Features	87	Overall	**Pros:** Corded remote control's features
Aesthetics	90	88	**Cons:** Large external power supply
Sound Quality	88		**Supplied by:** Sahara Computers [011] 542 1000
Value for money	88		**ERP:** R 949
			Internet: www.creative.com

Logitech Z-640

Logitech has only recently become a big player in the speaker arena. The Z-640 is a 5.1 channel multiplatform speaker set. By multiplatform I mean that it is able to connect to most game consoles on the market such as the PlayStation 1 and 2, Xbox and Nintendo GameCube with a supplied adapter.
The Z-640 might not look the part but it produces superb sound. The 23.5 watt RMS rated subwoofer produces exceptionally deep sounding base and this is most likely thanks to the fact that there are no air holes on the unit.
The subwoofer speaker has a very funky looking silver rim around it, looking on the back of the subwoofer you will see 4 RCA out puts (rear left/right, front left/right,) as well as a bass volume control. The center speaker on this unit connects to the subwoofer using a 15-pin connector; the reason for this is because all of the controls (power, master volume, fader, center volume, matrix button, and earphone jack) are situated on it. The matrix button is not something taking you to the "real world"; instead it allows 2 and 4 channel sound cards to play sound through the center speaker.
Although I did not particularly appreciate the controls on the center speaker, I could not deny the fact that the sound it produces is superb for a price tag of under a R1000.
Each of the satellites features a odd semi-round shape and sports a 5.5 watt RMS output. I liked the fact that each of the satellites also come with a built in stand.
I was very impressed with this speaker set, it offers great sound with deep bass at a very reasonable price. Its unconventional look is a bonus and if you have a budget of about R1000 do not overlook this one.

Features	90	Overall	**Pros:** Deep bass
Aesthetics	92	91	**Cons:** Controls on center speaker
Sound Quality	93		**Supplied by:** Pinnacle Micro [011] 265 3000
Value for money	90		**ERP:** R 995
			Internet: www.logitech.com

Logitech Z-680

NAG EDITOR'S CHOICE

The craftsmanship of this speaker set is of top quality and if you look at its price it is evident that the Z-680 is not for the person on a shoestring budget.
It is true what they say: "you get what you pay for".
This 5.1 channel speaker set boasts an amazing 185 watts RMS subwoofer and each satellite produces 53 watts of RMS. The sexy design of this unit also adds to the great overall impression I got from it.
The subwoofer produced some of the best and deepest sounding base I have heard to date on a set of "computer speakers" and adding the satellite speakers to the equation the sound was exceptionally crisp.
Pushing the speakers to their maximum did not prove to be any problem for the Z-680 and even at full volume the speakers did not distort and I have to again emphasize the excellent sounding bass. Each of the satellite speakers also come with a removable cover and a built in stand.
One of the signature features of this unit is the Digital SoundTouch Control Center, which allows you to set the various settings pertaining to this speaker set, this includes connecting a set of headphones or a an auxiliary input such as a portable audio player. The master volume control found on the Control Center is very responsive and the blue LED added a nice to touch to the system. A full function remote control is an added bonus.
It is not only computer users who could benefit from the Logitech Z-680 - Xbox and PlayStation 2 gamers can connect this speaker set to their consoles and enjoy the incredible sound it produces.

I absolutely fell in love with the Logitech Z-680, it offers everything a great speaker set should have and I would even use it with my home theatre system. You can argue that the price is a bit on the expensive side but I can assure you it is worth every cent. I have never rated a product as high as I did this one, and I do not expect to do it again, well done to Logitech on a superb product.

Features	96	Overall	**Pros:** Everyting
Aesthetics	97	96	**Cons:** Nothing
Sound Quality	98		**Supplied by:** Pinnacle Micro [011] 265 3000
Value for money	95		**ERP:** R 4250
			Internet: www.logitech.com

Genius SW-5.1 Home Theatre

Do not let the name of this speaker set confuse you; it is able to handle both your computer and your home theatre. The Genius SW-5.1 Home Theatre is a very elegant looking wood encased speaker set. The 2 front satellite speakers feature a mid-range speaker as well as a tweeter and a removable cover. The rear satellite speakers only have a mid-range speaker but also sport removable covers. The centre speaker, which is a bit bigger than the other satellite speakers, features 2 mid-range speakers and 1 tweeter. The subwoofer sports the same sleek look of the other speakers and it also has a control panel on the front on which you will find the master volume control as well as volume controls for the center, subwoofer, and surround speakers. There are also 4 buttons allowing you to select between the various source inputs (5.1-channel, TV, Tape, CD/VCD/DVD) which is a great feature especially if you have all the inputs connected simultaneously.
Looking at the back of the unit it is clear that this speaker set is versatile; you are able to connect your 5.1 channel computer sound card as well as another 5.1 channel audio source such as a DVD player, at the same time. There are also 3 sets of 2-channel RCA inputs for devices such as tape players, your television, or even a 2 channel DVD player.
The center and front satellite speakers are a bit on the large side so using it with your computer, if you have limited space, is not really recommended. The smaller rear satellites also feature built in hooks enabling them to be wall mounted. There is also a wireless remote control in the box but sadly it only allows you to switch the power on, mute, and set the volume up or down.
With regards to the sound quality I was very pleased with the crisp sound produced by the center and satellite speakers. Even at full volume they maintained a clear and undistorted sound. The subwoofer did not impress me enough though and although many people not wanting a deep bass should find this speaker set sufficient, it lacked the "thump" I was looking for.
Considering its great price tag I can recommend the Genius SW-5.1 Home Theatre to anybody not as fussy about bass as I am. Even if you are looking to buy a home theatre speaker system this product should keep you happy for a long time.

Features	89	Overall	88
Aesthetics	89		
Sound Quality	87		
Value for money	90		

Pros: Price | Functionality
Cons: Bass
Supplied by: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
ERP: R 1399
Internet: www.geniusnet.com.tw

Genius Deluxe 5.1-Channel Speakers

The Genius Deluxe 5.1-Channel Speakers offers more than acceptable surround sound with a great price to match. This speaker set is obviously not the most powerful in this round up but it is a great solution for somebody on a shoestring budget. The subwoofer features a 10 watt RMS output and the center and satellite speakers each sport 3 watt RMS output. Being a budget speaker set you cannot expect all the bells and whistles as some of the other speakers on offer but having said that it was a welcome surprise to see that Genius made the effort to encase the subwoofer in a wooden case. On the front of the subwoofer you will find the power button, the subwoofer volume, and the master volume. On the back of the subwoofer you will find 6 RCA outputs (front left/right, rear left/right, and center) and one 9-pin din jack input. Each of the satellites and the center speaker come with a removable cover and sadly I have to say that the center speaker's cover would be prone to breaking as the construction of it is not very solid. Each of the satellites has built in hooks allowing them to be wall mounted.
I was not overly amazed by the sound quality and the bass was not all that great either, but in its defense it is important to keep in mind that this product falls into Genius' Value range.
Sadly I have to say that even though the price is not bad I would much rather opt for the Genius SW-5.1 Home Theatre as it is only a couple hundred Rand more expensive but offers so much more sound and value.

Features	78	Overall	82
Aesthetics	80		
Sound Quality	85		
Value for money	80		

Pros: Price
Cons: I would rather go with Genius' other offering
Supplied by: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
ERP: R 799
Internet: www.geniusnet.com.tw

Jazz Speakers J9929B

I have read a lot about the Jazz Speakers products on the Internet so I was quite happy when I looked at their products for the first time.
The subwoofer is totally closed in a smallish wooden case with one air hole and the RMS rating of the subwoofer is a 20 watt. There are also 5 satellite speakers each with a 6 watt RMS rating. The satellite speakers are amazingly small, yet they produce great sound.
Sadly I do not know why the cords for the rear speakers are so short, and because they are built into the speaker itself it is not just a matter of replacing the short wire with a longer one. Also shipped with this product are 5 wall mounting clips, allowing you to easily hang your speakers against your wall.
A trend becoming quite popular among other speaker manufacturers is a dedicated control box on which you will find the volume controls and various settings pertaining to the speakers which you can place neatly next to your monitor, or any other place it would be easily reachable. The decoder box allows you to set the master volume, mute the sound, and select between one of the 3 source inputs (Line, Optical, Coaxial), there is also a mode switch which you use to select between the various sound modes (Dolby Digital, DTS, Pro Logic, and Stereo). On the back of the decoder box you will find 6 RCA audio output jacks (front right/left, rear right/left, center, and subwoofer). Strangely enough you cannot connect this speaker set to your computer via the traditional 3.5 inch jack connector, instead you have to either use optical or coaxial. There are also 2 RCA inputs if required.
The Jazz Speakers J9929B also ships with a fully functional wireless remote control. If you own a PS2 or DVD player this speaker set would work flawlessly with those devices as well.
The sound quality produced by this funky looking speaker set is quite amazing and although not very loud this speaker set would definitely be in my top 5 list.

Features	89	Overall	90
Aesthetics	90		
Sound Quality	92		
Value for money	89		

Pros: Aesthetics
Cons: Only optical and coaxial connections
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000
ERP: R 1750
Internet: www.rectron.net

Altec Lansing 5100

10 points to the R&D team at Altec Lansing for the design of the 5100 speaker set. When I unpacked this set I was impressed by the extremely elegant and small satellite speakers. The subwoofer too looked smart yet plain but I could not believe the sound when I played music through it for the first time.

Each of the 4 satellite speakers (including the centre speaker which is just a horizontally placed satellite) feature two 1 inch neodymium (although I do not really know what it is I included the word because it just sounds cool) speakers rated at 7 watt RMS. The subwoofer features two 4 inch speakers with a rating of 22.5 watt RMS.

A corded remote control also finds it way, comfortably on a cradle, into this package. I would have liked it if the remote was wireless but as is it does the job hassle free. The remote is just as classy as the speakers it is bundled with and allows you to set the master volume, adjust the bass, rear, treble, and center volume. There is also a mode switch enabling you to switch between stereo (2 channel), gaming (5 channel) and the standard 6 channel modes.

On the back of the subwoofer there are 3 audio inputs for the center, rear, and front speakers. The speakers themselves connect to the back of the subwoofer using an RCA jack. The package also includes a Y-splitter RCA cable to allow you to connect any device using RCA audio outputs such as game consoles.

As I said before, I was really impressed with the crisp sound produced by this speaker set. I was really glad the subwoofer produces a deep and clear bass and even though at maximum volume this speaker set was not extremely loud I would still choose it over many of the other speakers in this roundup.

Features	90	Overall	**92**
Aesthetics	98		
Sound Quality	92		
Value for money	89		

Pros: Great aesthetics | Small speakers
Cons: I would have liked it to be louder
Supplied by: CyberDyne [011] 327 0237
ERP: R 1550
Internet: www.alteclanseing.com

Altec Lansing XA3051

The Altec Lansing XA3051 is not actually a set of computer speakers, but I chose to include them in this roundup because they are fully compatible with most game consoles and besides, they look aesthetically stunning. The design of the satellite speakers, more so the grill used to cover the speakers, remind me a lot of the old transistor microphones used years ago.

The reason why this speaker set is not aimed at the computer user is because it only has a 2 RCA input and an auxiliary input. It would have been nice if they included a compatible connector for your computer, but as it stands you can plug it into DVD players as well to use as a home theatre system.

The XA3051 is a 6 channel speaker set and each of the satellite speakers, including the center speaker, has a stand on which you can adjust the angle that the speaker is facing.

The satellite speakers each has an RMS rating of 5 watt and the subwoofer has a rating of 18.2 watt RMS, it too sports the same speaker grill as the satellite speakers and has an air hole right next to the actual subwoofer speaker.

I like the fact that although the speaker is oval in shape it is able to stand horizontally or vertically. The unit also includes a wired remote which allows you to adjust the master volume, the bass, rear, treble, and center volume. There is also a button to allow you to switch between a stereo or surround mode.

The sound quality from this speaker set is great, the bass has a satisfying deep sound and the satellites produce a crisp, clear sound. When I put the volume to full I did experience a bit of distortion but nothing to the extent to be bothered much about.

Features	90	Overall	**92**
Aesthetics	98		
Sound Quality	90		
Value for money	89		

Pros: Looks great
Cons: Not compatible with PCs
Supplied by: CyberDyne [011] 327 0237
ERP: R 1395
Internet: www.alteclanseing.com

A-926C

These speakers from Proton are aimed at the entry level market. This is no secret as the sound quality is not so great at high volumes. This speaker set looks very smart with its dark wood "look". There are 5 satellite speakers with fixed front covers and for the life of me I could not find any technical info on these speakers such as the RMS rating; the manual does, however, say that the each satellite speaker contains a 2x4 inch speaker.

The subwoofer looks powerful but I was disappointed with its bass output. I was also a bit concerned with the design as the 3.5 inch subwoofer speaker is mounted at the bottom of the subwoofer housing without any cover to protect it. If by some unlucky chance you were to put it on a sharp object the speaker would most definitely be damaged.

With this package you will find a control panel on which the master, bass, center, front, and rear volume's can be adjusted. On the back of the control panel you will find 5 RCA jacks for the front left/right, rear left/right, and centre speakers. The subwoofer connection is fixed wire with a plug to which you connect the wire that comes out of the subwoofer. Above the RCA jack you will find three 3.5 mm jack audio input plug to connect your computer to.

There were a couple of things I did not particularly like about this speaker set but providing you do not set the volume to full it does not sound all that bad.

The satellite speakers were quite good in handling the volume at full but the subwoofer distorted very badly. If you do not want loud sound then this speaker should suffice to your surround sound needs. Although sadly I have to say that I will pass up on them.

Features	85	Overall	**77**
Aesthetics	85		
Sound Quality	70		
Value for money	70		

Pros: Price
Cons: Sound quality
Supplied by: Proton Technology [011] 486 0748
ERP: R 550
Internet: www.prototech.co.za

This is a rather smart looking speaker set from Proton. It has a silver colour scheme and I liked the fact that the satellite speakers were quite small. Each of the satellite speakers (including the center speaker which looks the same) also come with a mini stand. The front covers on the satellite speakers are removable although I do not think they were meant to be used without them.

The subwoofer has a dark grey colour with a metallic silver front panel. The bass produced by this subwoofer is not bad, but as soon as you increase the volume it distorts quite badly. At a softer volume the bass has good definition and should be acceptable if you do often put the volume all the way up.

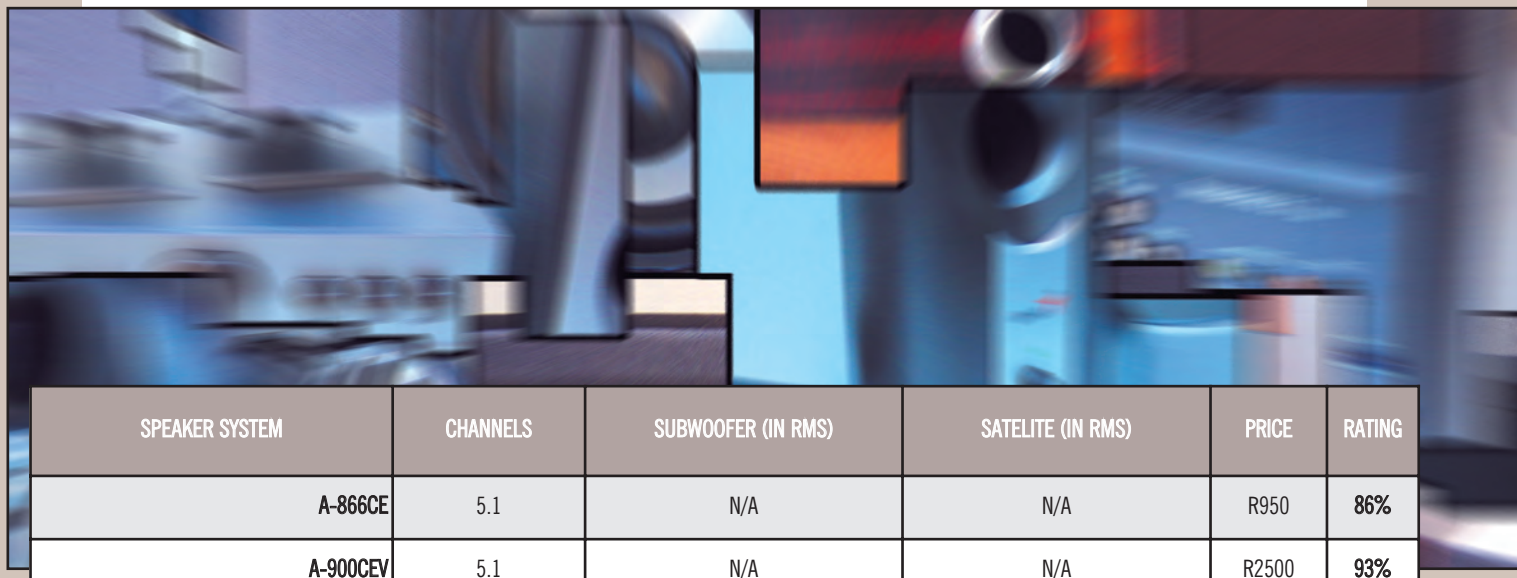
The unit also comes with a control box with which you can adjust the master volume as well as the center, bass, front, and rear speakers. There is also a button to allow you to switch between 5.1 channel and stereo (2 channel) mode.

On the back of the control box you will find 6 RCA audio inputs (front left/right, rear left/right, center and bass). The audio output jack is almost the same, the only difference is that the subwoofer uses the same cable and plug as the A-926C speaker set.

The overall sound quality was sadly a bit disappointing. This speaker set looks great but at the louder volume it starts distorting and the bass looses all its impact. If I were to spend my money I would rather opt for one of the other speakers in this roundup.

Features	85
Aesthetics	85
Sound Quality	70
Value for money	65
Overall	**76**

Pros: Talks the talk but does not…
Cons: Walk the walk
Supplied by: Proton Technology [011] 486 0748
ERP: R 899
Internet: www.prototech.co.za



SPEAKER SYSTEM	CHANNELS	SUBWOOFER (IN RMS)	SATELITE (IN RMS)	PRICE	RATING
A-866CE	5.1	N/A	N/A	R950	86%
A-900CEV	5.1	N/A	N/A	R2500	93%
Creative Inspire 4400	4.1	17 watt	6 watt	R599	87%
Creative Inspire 5200	5.1	17 watt	6 watt	R949	88%
Logitech Z-640	5.1	23.5 watt	5.5 watt	R995	91%
Logitech Z-680	5.1	185 watt	53 watt	R4250	96%
Genius SW-5.1 Home Theatre	5.1	45 watt	15 watt	R1399	88%
Genius Deluxe 5.1-Channel Speakers	5.1	10 watt	3 watt	R799	82%
Jazz Speakers J9929B	5.1	20 watt	6 watt	R1750	90%
Altec Lansing 5100	5.1	22.5 watt	7 watt	R1550	92%
Altec Lansing XA3051	5.1	18.2 watt	5 watt	R1395	92%
A-926C	5.1	N/A	N/A	R550	77%
A-826C	5.1	N/A	N/A	R899	76%

GIGABYTE RADEON 9800PRO 128MB GRAPHICS CARD

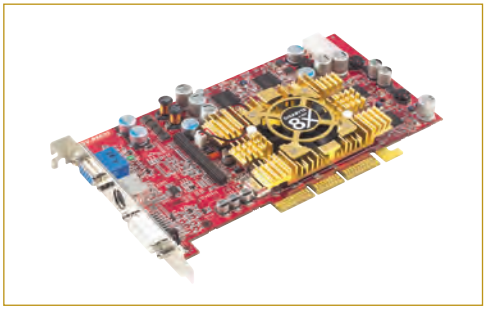
Just when NVIDIA thought it was safe to come out and play ATi have launched their 9800 series. Offering an improvement over their existing 9700 series, ATi once again raise the bar on 3D graphics acceleration.
NVIDIA have met the challenge with FX5900 but concerns over "cheating" in 3DMark 2003 have left a bitter taste in the mouth of gamers. Is this a sign that NVIDIA are more that just a little worried about ATi and that they would do anything to be the 3D leader once again?

You know it's going to be a good day when a Radeon 9800Pro gets dropped on your desk for an extended review. Gigabyte has been quick to market with their 9800 part, although they have followed the ATi reference design to the tee (not always a bad thing). ATi have been dominating the high end graphics market for some time now, so I thought it best to compare the newer 9800 against its older brother the 9700.
As you can see the 9800 which is essentially the same part as the 9700 has a decent performance edge over its predecessor. ATi have managed to push all they can out of the R350 GPU, breathing new life into the Radeon range. This is really impressive considering the R350 is based on older 0.15 micron technology and DDR-1 (single channel DDR) memory. Add another 5% to 10% gain when overclocked and you have a performance monster at 428/380.

9700 vs 9800

Benchmark	Ati 9700Pro	Gigabyte 9800Pro
3D Mark 2003 (1024*768)	4737 marks	5479 marks
Quake 3 Arena (1600*1200)	253.6 fps	275.8 fps
Serious Sam 2 (1600*1200)	98.2 fps	102.4 fps
AquaMark (1600*1200)	49.1 fps	55.8 fps

Gigabyte bundle a number of software titles with the 9800 (these include Heavy Metal F.A.K.K 2 and Serious Sam), none of which even remotely demonstrate the power of the 9800, Gigabyte have also thrown in PowerDVD XP and their own drivers and overclocking utility. The 9800 like all new graphics cards requires external power, this comes in the form of a standard 4 pin power connector, if you don't connect the power the card will beep and display a warning message.
The Radeon performed well under all situations and I was able to play every title I have currently at 1600*1200 without any noticeable frame loss, the odd one out was Counter-Strike where I experienced frame loss at 1024*768, either the CS engine is not optimized for ATi or it's a driver issue, this problem seems to affect every Radeon card I have tested. If you want the fastest card on the block then the Gigabyte 9800Pro is a good choice although I wouldn't expect it to stay there as long as the 9700 did. Having the best card is a pricy option at the moment with the 9800 weighing in at around R6000, graphics cards have become the single most expensive item in a computer system.
Gone are the days of R85 video cards but then I guess storage and cpu's have become more affordable. For those where price doesn't matter get a 9800, for those with a bit more sense the 9700 is fast becoming a reasonable purchase.



REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	**MINUS**
The fast got faster	Price
Quickest around	Not a great software bundle

SUPPLIER: Rectron [011] 203-1000
PRICE: R 6 000.00
WEBSITE: www.rectron.co.za

CANON DIGITAL IXUS V3

There are two kinds of camera people - those who like their camera built into their mobile phone, those who like their cameras with more lenses than a paparazzi stakeout, and those who like a nice option in-between. Okay, I can't count, but that's why I prefer a clever camera.

Digital cameras aren't new to the world, and in fact they are becoming pretty common. Right now you can even get disposable digital cameras in the US and Japan, and the new gimmick on every cellphone is your own little camera. But for real picture quality and features, you usually need to look beyond that and get something beefier.
Canon is a trusty name when it comes to cameras - they've made them for a while, and they aren't as pricy as some ranges. Though I haven't used a Canon model before, the Ixus V3 is a nice model, and the more compact version of their current range. In fact it's very compact, sitting at roughly 8.5x5.5x2.5 - more or less the size of standard tourist cameras.
This could qualify as a tourist camera, since you can't attach lenses to it, and it only has a 35-70mm zoom level. The light-meter, though fairly accurate, is completely automatic, and the flash options are standard, red-eye, flood and off. The battery is a rechargeable block (recharger included) and the camera ships with a 32mb flash card, though this is standard so for a few extra rands on the side you can upgrade it. Though there is nothing significantly wonderful about this camera, there isn't anything wrong with it either. It comes with all the stock features you'd want from a proper digital camera, including the ability to record digital video and the camera comes with a video cable to stream it to a TV.
One reason to consider this camera to its peers is the 3.2 Megapixels resolution, which allows photos of up to 2048x1536 pixels and video of up to 640x480 (21 photos or 30 seconds of footage on the 32MB card at the top resolutions). It's also relatively idiot-proof, since a lot of the time it's a matter of point-and-shoot, which means anyone can do this.
The major downside, the price. At a solid R6999, it's not exactly a tourist camera price-wise, but that's always been the drawback of digital cameras. And as a camera, unless you plan to go lower on the resolution or only stick to the 21 photo limit, you'll either need a bigger flash card or a computer in the vicinity. Also, it's USB and there is no indication for Firewire or that the software supplied will work on a Mac.
There's nothing extraordinary about the Ixus V3, but not much wrong either. If you are in the market for a new camera, and you are looking digital's way, it's a good option.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Compact design	Expensive
High pixel res	32MB flash card
Dummy-proof	Low zoom

SUPPLIED BY: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
PRICE: R 6 999.00
INTERNET: www.tvr.co.za

WESTERN DIGITAL RAPTOR 36.7 GB DRIVE

For ages now we were promised that serial ATA drives were going to be faster than their IDE counterparts, no one has delivered until now. Western Digital have launched their Raptor drive to prey on the weak serial ATA market and show us where we can expect serial ATA performance to take us.

high-end hard drive comparison

	WD360GD	IBM180GXP
SYSmark2002 Office	166	166
HDTach Average Sequential Read	55.1 MB/s	45.5 MB/s
HDTach Average Sequential Write	33.5 MB/s	27.7 MB/s
HDTach Random Access Time	8.1ms	13ms
IOMeter Desktop Total I/Os per second	190	150
IOMeter Desktop Average I/O Response Time	337ms	424ms
IOMeter Web Server Total I/Os per second	199	143
IOMeter Web Server Average I/O Response Time	5109ms	6181ms

SCSI performance at almost E-IDE prices is what Western Digital have promised with their Raptor range, besides a few hiccups with preview samples that had write-cache disabled, Western Digital have delivered on their promise. Spinning at 10,000 Rpm and sporting an 8mb buffer has equipped the Raptor to attack the enterprise market as well as targeting the hardcore gamer and the digital imaging brigade. Add a 5 year warranty to the mix and you have the perfect drive, well almost.

Server operators looking for a budget enterprise offering need look no further, as the Raptor would make the perfect RAID drive, gamers might be driven away by the small size of the drive but reconsider it for your primary drive and add a 240 gig IDE drive for storage and you have performance coupled with storage space.

Windows XP and games load up a whole lot quicker (even Unreal 2 seemed to load really fast), guess my 5400RPm drive is something of a dinosaur. It seems that Office applications don't run any faster on the Raptor, I'm guessing that SYSMark 2002 just doesn't stretch the capabilities of the drive enough. The more information and work you throw at this drive the better it seems to perform as you can see from the table when comparing the IO Meter Web Server I/O test (199) and IO Desktop I/O test (190).

I'm hoping that now that Western Digital have shown the way with the Raptor we will see a bigger drive (very punny haha) from all sectors to start utilizing the benefits of Serial ATA and delivering a faster desktop solution to the masses.

Bigger Better Faster ought to be the hard drive markets maxim of choice.

what is serial ata?

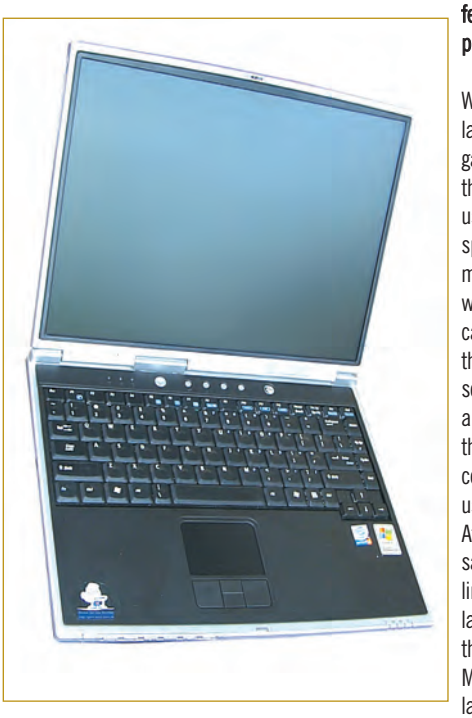
Serial ATA is a serial link -- a single cable with a minimum of four wires creating a point-to-point connection between devices. Transfer rates for Serial ATA begin at 150 Mbps. One of the main design advantages of Serial ATA is that the thinner serial cables facilitate more efficient airflow inside a form factor and also allow for smaller chassis designs. In contrast, IDE cables used in parallel ATA systems are bulkier than Serial ATA cables and can only extend to 40cm long, while Serial ATA cables can extend up to one meter.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Price	36.7 gig capacity
Speed Demon	
Serial ATA as it's meant to be	

SUPPLIED BY: Drive Control [011] 887-8927
PRICE: R 1 785.00
INTERNET: www.wdc.com

ASUS M2400E LAPTOP

"Everything is getting smaller, except my overdraft!" That's the tagline of the age, but for some reason this seems to be going backwards. Even laptops are getting bigger by the day, but they try and keep them compact while shoving as much as possible inside. Bulging with features, but can it play games?



Why am I reviewing a laptop? As far as gaming machines go, they are pretty useless, unless you spring for one of the models that come with the accelerator cards. And even then they aren't ideal. The screens tend to have a lower refresh rate, the keyboard is compact, sound is usually an issue.

At this point, I'd have said something in the line of "but this laptop", but that's not the case. The Asus M2400e is a nice laptop though, and I've had some first-hand experience dragging it around E3. It's slimmer than most laptops and not the most stylish looker either, but it's got everything you need onboard for when you are away on business or sitting in your lounge.

It comes with a DVD-Rom which also doubles as a writer, and has XP Pro installed on it. It has onboard sound (SIS), exterior Multimedia keys, built-in modem and lan ports, as well as the standard SVGA port and a 37 GB harddrive. Onboard you'll find a SIS 650 and 192 MB ram backing a Pentium 4 2 Ghz chip.

So it's quite fast and convenient.

The battery has around 3 hours of running time on it, and the machine has auto-standby and the other perks you'd expect. A more common feature on laptops these days is the shortcuts program and the special function keys associated with it. There are onboard hardware keys for accessing mail and the web, and last but not least a touchpad with scroll up and down buttons intact.

So what's so special about the laptop? Nothing really, but I've always found laptops pretty boring machines. They are highly functional, though, and therefore great for anyone who needs portability vs. the ego of owning a beast that defies the weight-carrying capacity of your desk.

A gaming machine it isn't, though. I only bothered trying one game on it - C&C Generals - and the performance was really poor, mainly because the onboard graphics card is probably not really in any sort of gaming league, not to mention that games seem to drain the battery much faster. While I'm sure something sprite-based will perform a lot better, it's rather obvious 3D gaming isn't meant to be on this little machine.

The 15" screen is great for watching movies on, though, but that's not such a special feature, since most laptops have some sort of DVD support. Still, it was a worthwhile companion for a week, and it didn't let me down.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Sleek design	Nothing special
Feature-rich	

SUPPLIED BY: Proton {011} 486-0748
PRICE: R 15 999.00
INTERNET: www.prototech.co.za

LABTECH WEBCAM

While this is something of a saturated market, more and more people out there seem to be trying out new designs for webcams. This is probably due to the increasing demand for such devices, which are proving to be a popular way of communicating with people around the globe.

The visual aspect of the communications allowed by these devices, coupled with improved internet lines and the like, add an almost sci-fi quality to the information superhighway… or at least, so it seems. The truth behind the matter is that, while there are lots of webcams out there, the majority are rather mediocre. Only a few could be considered anything above average.

Labtec's new Webcam is, at first look, securely within that category. After closer examination, this judgement proves to be correct.

Aesthetically, this small camera is rather pleasing. That's about the best point about it. Small enough to sit in the palm of your hand, the Labtec Webcam is a discreet device, well and tastefully designed. It seems a little flimsy though, and a drop or hard knock may smash it into a number of tasteful pieces. It weighs next to nothing too. While this may initially inspire worries about positioning the camera (it has a rather heavy cord that may interfere) the device has proven to be quite stable. The non-slip rubber base provided with the unit allows for a wide variety of position options, and the cord, while not completely dismissible, doesn't provide too many problems.

Had the performance of this device been a little better, I would have sung its praises. However, the Labtec Webcam only supports resolutions of up to 640x480, and at a rather poor quality to boot. The device does not handle low light conditions well, despite a rather large amount of adjustment options.

This particular device would be great for those needing an inexpensive webcam, and who were not too worried about picture quality. It has a number of useful functions like the obvious instant video messaging, video recording and motion sensor capabilities and, while the video quality is certainly not of the highest, it does do the job passably enough.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Size	Feels flimsy
Versatile	Low resolution

SUPPLIED BY: Logitech
PRICE: $25.00 [approx. R349.00]
INTERNET: www.logitech.com

DFI LANPARTY NFII - NFORCE 2 SOLUTION

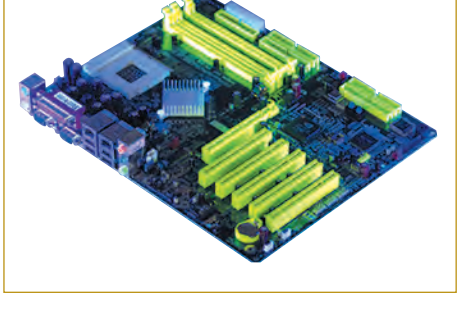
Ok so you are as confused as I was when I saw this product, what the hell is a LanParty in a box? Just add water and you will have an instant 50 person LAN Party? Erm not quite. I'm guessing that the marketing person at DFI wanted us the buying public to associate their new all in one kit with LAN Parties and what we like to do at LAN parties. Yes that's it, show off our outrageous new case mod with funky lighting.

The folks over at DFI must be product geniuses (well they came up with the following didn't they?):

1) One motherboard with ultraviolet sensitive PCB's
2) Fluorescent rounded IDE cables
3) UV sensitive slots and connectors
4) Front FX - helps bring connectivity to the front of your PC i.e. USB, IEEE1394 (FireWire to the technophobes)
5) On and Off / Reset switches on the motherboard (now who needs a case?)
6) The PC Transpo - wow what a marvel you can now carry that damn heavy case and peripherals in a neat looking case with strap (beats those homemade solutions hands down)
7) A Case Badge (stating LanParty no less) and thermal paste for those emergency situations
8) On-Board Raid
9) A Genie Bios - guaranteed to max out the performance of your LanParty
10) Live Update - now you too can update your bios, it's got a GUI and everything
11) Dual Network cards onboard (perfect for those surf & LAN dishes)
12) S/PDIF connector (digital sound good/analogue bad)
13) One cardboard box neatly packaged with all of the above

Wow that's a long list I know, DFI have surely tried to think of everything the budding LAN Party goer would want, well except maybe the (insert beverage of choice here) but hey nobody's perfect. DFI is onto something great here, combining all the cool goodies you would buy aftermarket in one neat package. The UV sensitive PCB and rounded IDE cables really look awesome under a UV light (maybe DFI should add this to the LanParty); the Front FX is a great way to get access to those hard to reach ports (can be trouble at a LAN Party, when you pull out someone twice your sizes' power), it gives you instant access to USB or IEEE1394 or maybe plug in a MIC (for some impromptu Karaoke) or your headphones.

DFI have supplied a well featured board offering the latest AMD CPU support built on the reliable N-Force2 chipset. Combined with Dual NIC's onboard, firewire and Digital audio connectors we have the making of a decent LanParty board. Additionally it also has RAID support and one serial ATA connection. More features than you can poke a sharp stick at. We'll have to wait till next month for the performance stats review but all looks very good at the moment, DFI have a reputation for solid and overclockable boards.



Ok so we managed to install this board into our test rig, we then went and used the PC Transpo (it's not a miss print I assure you), this allowed us to easily carry or sling over our shoulder our tower case (when's the next LAN Party?). The PC Transpo seemed very rugged and is a breeze to use; it also has space for your keyboard, mouse and a few odds and ends.

Besides serving us with great marketing lines like "seize the light" "move with style" and "Damage free intelligence" DFI have provided a product that is refreshingly different from anything to cross my desk in ages. LAN Party goers have different needs than corporate or home users and DFI have seen the light and gone where no motherboard manufacturer has dared to go, yes you guessed it "the LAN party".

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Oooh a big box full of goodies	No UV light
It is FUNKY	LAN party not included
PC Transpo is really handy	

SUPPLIED BY: Axiz [011] 237-7000
PRICE: R 1699.00
INTERNET: www.dfi.com

SOLTEK SL-86SPE-L INTEL SPRINGDALE MOTHERBOARD

Intel has moved their front side bus support to 800 MHz and we managed to get our hands on one of the first Springdale-PE motherboards from Soltek. Does 800 MHz coupled with DDR400 make a big performance difference? Let's go take a look.

Soltek have designed a board with almost everything you could desire, the only glaring item missing is IEEE 1394 (firewire) support, considering the price point though this omission is not that serious. Soltek build extremely solid boards that are to the most extent quite user friendly although finding my way around the bios to overclock wasn't an easy chore, although once I found my way round adjusting the front side bus or core voltages it was a breeze.
Soltek have provided the bare minimum for this board and I miss getting serial ATA power converters that I sometimes receive with other Mainboards. The PCB is finished in a white/silver and is great for that case window, come to think of it I don't remember the last time I received a board finished in the standard colours. Soltek are also kind enough to label their front panel connectors properly, something every manufacturer should do (especially since I'm an expert at losing my motherboard manuals).
Performance wise the Soltek board is right up there with offerings from Gigabyte and Abit, overclocking is a rather simple affair but it falls just short of the ability of the new Abit range. Feature wise this board could do with an extra 2 on-board USB ports to make up for the lack of firewire support, since many of the boards it's competing with are offering these features as standard.
Games and benchmarks rocket along with the Soltek Mainboard powering a 3.00 GHz (800 MHz) Cpu and a Radeon 9700 Pro. Quake 3 performance was in the 300fps range for all resolutions up to 1280*1024 and gave a respectable 3dMark 2003 result of 6583 marks. Soltek have delivered a decent solution for the new Intel chipset, I'm just wondering if the lack of features will cause people to buy elsewhere.

the specs

CPU
- Intel Pentium 4 processor based on 0.18μ core, 400 MHz FSB and mPGA478
- Intel Pentium 4 processor based on 0.13μ core, 800/533/400 MHz FSB and mPGA478
- Intel Celeron processor based on 0.18μ core, 400 MHz FSB and mPGA478

Chipset
- Intel Springdale-PE (865PE + ICH5)

Bus Frequency
- Features 800/533/400MHz Front Side Bus setting
- Dual Channel 400/333/266MHz
- DDR400, DDR333, DDR266 compliant
- Supports AGP 8X/4X

ICH5
- Supports ATA-100/66/33 transfer protocol
- Provides 6-channel AC'97 Audio
- Support for eight USB 2.0/1.1 Ports (max.)

Memory
- 4 x 184-pin DDR DIMMs
- Max. 4GB memory supported

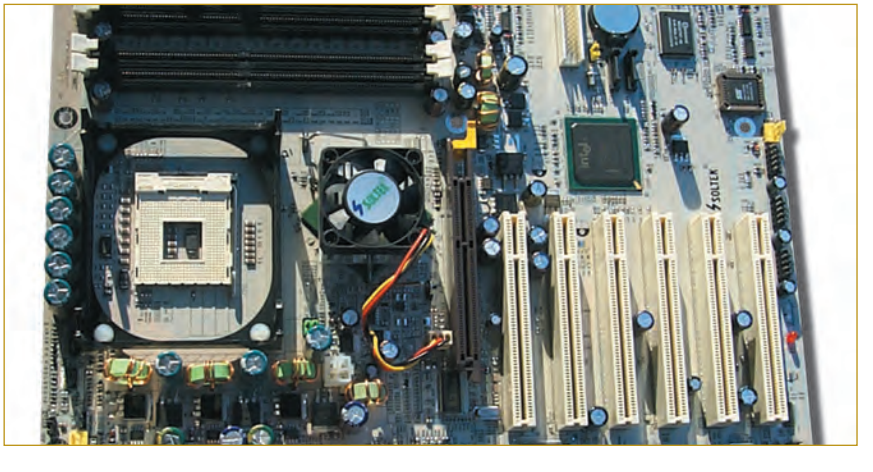
On-Board E-IDE
- 2 x PCI Bus Master ATA 100/66/33 IDE ports (up to 4 ATAPI Devices)
- 2 x Serial ATA connectors support 2 Serial ATA HDDs (66/100/133)

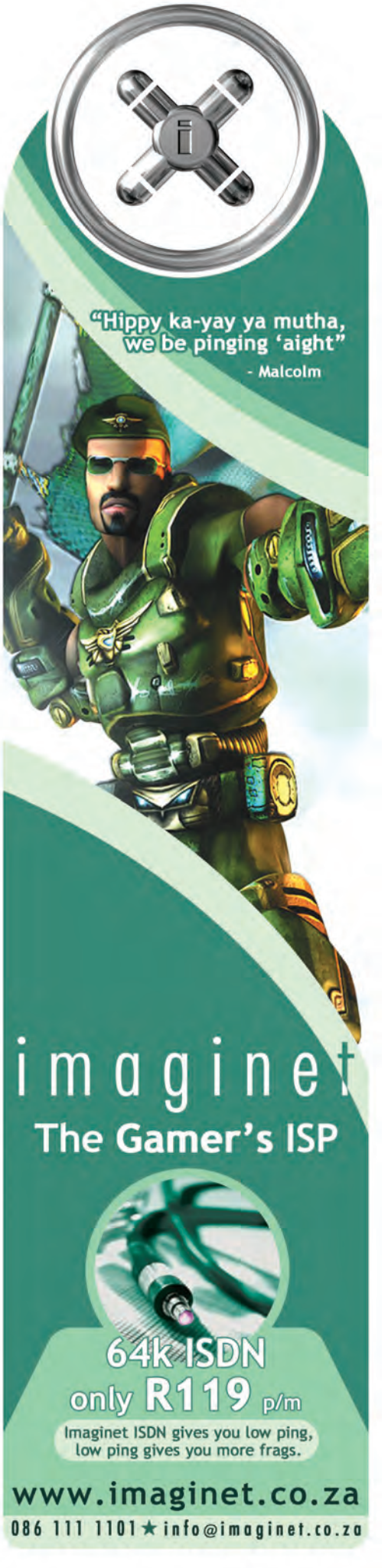
Expansion Ports
- 1 x Floppy Port
- 2 x Serial Ports
- 1 x Parallel Port
- 1 x PS/2 Mouse connector
- 1 x PS/2 Keyboard connector
- 8 x USB 2.0/1.1 Ports (2 integrated, 6 via additional cables)
- 1 x Audio/Game Port
- 1 x LAN connector (SL-86SPE-L only)

Special Features
BIOS overclocking control of FSB, voltages. RedStorm OverClocking

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Price	No Firewire
Looks	Bios confusing

SUPPLIED BY: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
PRICE: R 1098.00
INTERNET: www.soltekusa.com





reviewer: Walt Pretorius

The Matrix Reloaded
Various Artists

It is very important that the soundtrack of a film captures the spirit of the film - at least it is to me. Featuring acts like Linkin Park, Marilyn Manson, Rob Zombie, Rage Against the Machine, Oakenfold and Fluke, this double CD screams Matrix as soon as you hit the play button. While the first disk features the songs featured in the film, the second disk has more of the film's original score, created by Don Davis, Rob Dougan and the phenomenal Juno Reactor. If you claim to be a Matrix fan and do not own this CD, you're fooling yourself. You should have bought it ages ago! (**Gallo**)

Meteora
Linkin Park

Linkin Park are back, and this time it's not a remix album. In fact, the band's second studio album could be said to be better than their stunning debut. Here's something that will have fans going crazy. But the world's hardest boy band may come across a little too aggressive on their new album for those who thought they were cool just because everyone else did. Meteora is darker than their previous work, and may raise an eyebrow or two. However, it shows a wonderful progression for the band, and speaks volumes about a bright future. (**Warner**)

Say You Will
Fleetwood Mac

It's weird. Just when you start forgetting about a band, suddenly they jump back with eighteen new tracks. Fleetwood Mac are back after a good long time with a brand new album. No, they're not trying to get new fans - this one is aimed at their millions of fans around the world who still love their music to this day. It's classic Mac, with layered vocals, driving beats and more than a little darkness to some of the tracks. Great stuff for the fans and, while I'm sure it's not their intention, this album should win them a few new fans (particularly those that like a retro feel to their music.) (**Gallo**)

Old House Tunes, Vol 2
Various Artists

Remember Everybody Everybody by Black Box? I must admit that it's the only song on this CD that I recognised the name of. But, in listening to the CD, one is transported to a different time - a time when house music was still experimental, still finding its roots. And that, I must say, is a fascinating time to revisit. Of course, some people who claim to enjoy house won't enjoy this (the same kind of people who don't realise that folks like Mozart and Tchaikovsky influenced what we listen to today.) However, the true enthusiast will find the pleasure in this nostalgic CD. And remember - house is fickle. Old house tunes are not that old, really… (**Gallo**)

Home
Simply Red

Simply Red are back again, and I am sure that fans around the world will be doing cart wheels and back flips in celebration. I wish I could say the same. I have never been much of a fan (I admit it) but I can at least find the merits of things I don't enjoy much. However, there is so little originality on this album that you wouldn't be able to tell it apart from any other work by this band. I must say that they are a good band, but they seem to never evolve musically, which is very disturbing to me. Oh well, there always has to be one critic, doesn't there? (**Gallo**)

American Life
Madonna

There are two reasons why artists survive in what is a very vapid and "flavour of the month" industry. The first is when they are timeless. The second - the category that Madonna falls securely into - is when they can adapt and change with the times. The combination of her talent and her ability to read and understand musical trends makes Madonna one of the most successful artists ever… and she is bound to be around a whole lot longer. This new album features mixtures of dance and hip-hop beats with sounds that fit perfectly into this months particular flavour. A sterling performance from a true diva. (**Gallo**)

Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness
Martin Iveson and Peter Connelly with the LSO

It's not often that we get a sound track from a game to have a listen to. And this one will be prized by collectors - trust me folks, you will battle to get hold of this.
A lot of effort is going into the new Tomb Raider title, including the full orchestration and recording of 8 sound track pieces for the game. This is impressive stuff and, while it may be musically full of the kind of cliches that make movie scores a little tough to stomach outside of context, it is a brilliant effort on the part of all involved. (**Eidos**)

Campus Classics Vol 4
Various Artists

I must say that the Campus Classics series, presented by 94.7 Highveld Stereo, are among my favourite compilation albums. And here comes number four. Obviously, as the series has worn on, the pickings for the best songs have dwindled, and the choice of tracks on this particular CD is quite varied and sometimes a bit strange. However, tracks by artists like Cyndi Lauper, Madness, Robert Palmer and Natalie Imbruglia make this a worthwhile listening experience. Be warned - this one is for the old fogies trying to hang onto their past. Don't look for modern stuff here. These are, as the title implies, classics. (**David Gresham**)

Ringo Rama
Ringo Starr

Now here's a name that we haven't seen on a CD for a hell of a long time. Ringo Starr, the drummer of the Beatles, has released an album called Ringo Rama, and I must admit that I had absolutely no idea what to expect when I started the player on this one. With Ringo himself playing drums and doing lead vocals (as well as guitars and stuff on some of the tracks) and featuring the talents of people like Eric Clapton and Shawn Colvin, it's a mixed collection of feel good rock with a strong Beatles influence. (**David Gresham**)

Later… Louder [DVD]
Various Artists

The second Later DVD offers the viewer a host of reasons to watch and enjoy: Foo Fighters, Queens of the Stone Age, Metallica, Sonic Youth, The Jesus and Mary Chain, Rollins Band, Alice in Chains and Porno for Pyros, to name but a few. The music is varied and the live performances offered on the DVD are ecclectic, but it's all loud, full of attitude and wonderfully entertaining. You will also find interviews with names like Metallica, Garbage and New Order (among others) as well as an exclusive interview with Dave Grohl's smash hit act, the Foo Fighters. If you like your music on the dark side, this is a great investment! (**Warner/Gallo**)

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GA-8PENXP [Intel 865PE chipset]

GA-8PENXP is the ultimate solution for the latest Intel® Pentium® 4 processor with 800MHZ FSB and Hyper-Threading Technology. Powered by the Intel high performance 865PE chipset and a variety of cutting edge technologies, GA-8PENXP is designed to be the full function platform with excellent performance. The architecture of 800MHz FSB, AGP 8x, Dual Channel DDR 400, provides promising framework for excellent performance, while the innovative Dual Power System 2 (DPS 2) enhances the computing power and system stability. This platform features Intel® PRO/1000 CT Network Connection and delivers optimized network throughput & platform performance. The Serial ATA, IEEE 1394 Firewire and IDE RAID are integrated to provide superior I/O performance and data protection. GA-8PENXP will definitely deliver the uppermost platform with unprecedented computing power and rock-solid stability.

Supports 800MHz FSB Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology

Leveraging the Intel® 865PE chipset to support 3GHz+ P4 CPUs on 800MHz FSB, Intel Hyper-Threading Technology and advanced features, the GA-8PENXP Ultra delivers a full-value, highest performance solution for today's most demanding tasks.

Dual Channel DDR 400 Memory Architecture

With double the bandwidth of your system memory and hence boosts the system performance to out perform any memory existing solutions in the market. The GA-8PENXP allows you to handle memory-intensive tasks with ease.

AGP 8X Graphics Interface

AGP8X the new generation VGA interface specification that enables enhanced graphics performance with high bandwidth speeds up to 2.12GB/s. With a bus of 533MHz, AGP8X is twice as fast as AGP4X.

GIGABYTE Patented Technology Dual Power System 2 (DPS 2)

Featuring the new VRM 10.0 specification this technology delivers a highly durable power design for the new generation Intel® platform.

Intel® PRO/1000 CT Network Connection

Achieve 2x Gigabit performance through Communication Streaming Architecture (CSA) and enable ASF 2.0-based secure remote management with the Intel® PRO/1000 CT Network Connection.

Serial ATA Interface

Serial ATA is the next generation ATA specification that provides scalable performance for today and the future. With up to 150MB/s data transfer rate, Serial ATA is faster than current Parallel ATA, while providing 100% software compatibility.

Texas Instrument IEEE 1394 Firewire Interface

A highly anticipated interface which enhances PC connectivity for consumer electronics A/V appliances, storage peripherals and portable devices.

GigaRAID IDE RAID Controller

Supports RAID 0(Data Striping), RAID 1(Data Mirroring), RAID (0+1) and also JBOD function, delivering both data protection and data fetching performance to meet intensive applications demands.

GIGABYTE Xpress3 Series Software

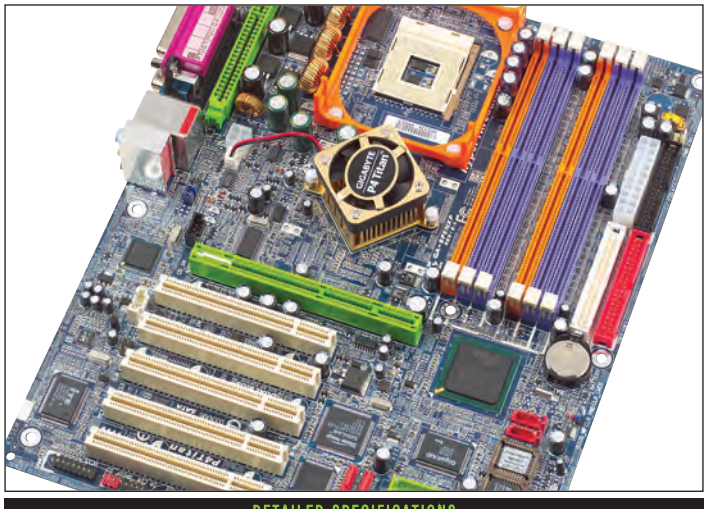
The Xpress3 series software includes 3 unique software features, 1. Xpress Install for easier driver installation, 2. Xpress BIOS Rescue for restoring the BIOS back to its original state if the BIOS has crashed, 3. Xpress Recovery - a revolutionary software feature that will backup or restore system files through a BIOS function.

High quality 6-channel AC'97 audio with S/P-DIF function

An integrated Realtek ALC655 AC'97 audio CODEC chip enables users to experience seamless high quality 6-channel audio while watching movies or playing games. With a new Jack-Sensing feature users won't have to worry about how to install speakers correctly anymore.

AT A GLANCE

- Supports 800MHz FSB Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology
- Supports Dual Channel DDR400 architecture (ECC)
- AGP 8x with AGP Pro interface for excellent graphics performance
- Gigabyte patented technology Dual Power System 2 (DPS 2) design
- Integrated Serial-ATA interface
- Integrated GigaRAID IDE RAID Interface
- Integrated Intel® PRO/1000 CT network connection



DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS

Processor
Socket 478 for Intel® Pentium® 4 processor.

Chipset
Intel® 865PE MCH
Intel® 82801E
Intel®82547EI Gigabit Ethernet Controller
Silicon Image Serial ATA chip
Texas Instrument IEEE 1394 chip
GigaRAID controller chip
Super I/O: ITE I/O IT8712F chip
Realtek ALC655 CODEC
2 x 4M bit flash ROM

Front Side Bus
800 / 533/400 MHz FSB

Memory
Type: Dual Channel DDR 400 / 333 / 266 support
Max capacity: 4 GB
DIMM slots: 6

Internal I/O Connectors
1 x FDD
4 x Serial ATA
2 x IEEE 1394 pin header
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
3 x cooling fan pin headers
CD/AUX in
1 x Game port pin header

Expansion Slots
1 x AGP Pro slot
5 x PCI slots (PCI 2.3 compliant)
1 x DPS slot

Rear Panel I/O
4 x USB 2.0 ports
1 x RJ45 LAN port
1 x LPT port
2 x COM ports
Audio (1 x Line-in / 1 x Line-out / 1 x MIC) ports
PS/2 (Keyboard/Mouse) ports

CPU/AGP/DIMM setting
CPU FSB / Multiplier / Vcore Voltage adjustable via BIOS
AGP Voltage / Clock adjustable via BIOS
DIMM Voltage / Clock adjustable via BIOS

Power
ATX power connector and ATX 12V connector
Power-off by Windows 98/ Me/ 2000/ XP shut down and switch

Form Factor
ATX
30.5cm x 24.4cm

H/W Monitoring
System health status auto-detect and report by BIOS Hardware detecting and reporting for case open, power-in voltage, CPU voltage, and fan speed.

BIOS
2 x 4M bit flash ROM, enhanced ACPI feature for PC98/Win98/Win2000/Me/ CE/XP compliance, Green, PnP, DMI, INT13 (>8.4GB) and Anti-Virus functions IDE#1~#2, SCSI, LS120, ZIP and CD-ROM bootable

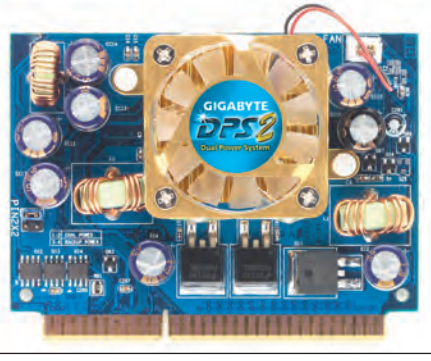
Other Features
Suspend to RAM (STR)
Supports USB KB / MS wake up from S3

Bundle Software
@BIOS™, Easy Tune™ 4, Q-Flash™, GMC™
Norton Internet Security 2003
- Norton Anti Virus™
- Norton™ Personal Firewall
- Norton™ Privacy Control
- Norton™ Parental Control
- Norton™ Spam Alert

GIGABYTE Windows Utility Manager
Adobe Acrobat Reader

Driver
Intel chipset driver
Intel®PRO/1000 CT LAN driver
Silcon Image Serial ATA driver
GigaRAID IDE RAID driver
REALTEK audio driver

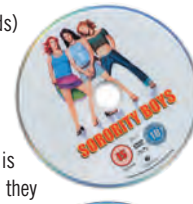
GIGABYTE Patented Technology
Dual Power System 2 (DPS 2)



reviewer: Jarred Krombein

Serving Sara

When Sara is served divorce papers while she is in New York, she is stunned. Not about to lose the fortune she amassed with her self-serving Texas husband, she makes an offer to her process server, Joe, that sets them off on a wild trip across the country.
The combination of beauty and baffoon does not gel well in this uneven comedy. Elizabeth Hurley is stunning to look at but Matthew Perry will only ever be seen as Chandler (Friends) and any other role is wasted as it is only a wanna be.
Only for those who are into looks and by that I mean Elizabeth.



Sorority Boys

Three friends who live in a frat house are charged with stealing the money they have been taking for a cocktail cruise. The boys have no money and dress up as girls for what is supposed to be one night. It turns out to be the rest of the semester when one plan after another to prove that they did not steal the money does not work out. In the process they realise that they treat the girls terribly and try to help them.
This movie is lame and should be watched with your eyes closed and you snoring.

Changing Lanes

An attorney (Ben Affleck) in a rush to make a court appointment, accidentally collides with an alcoholic insurance salesman (Samuel Jackson), who is also in a rush for a court appointment involving the custody of his children. The attorney leaves the scene of the accident and strands the salesman, causing him to miss his custody hearing. During the process of the post-crash discussion, the attorney accidentally drops the papers he needs to present in court. The judge gives him until the end of the day to present the papers and thus begins a cat and mouse game between the proponents.
Highly entertaining thriller that I was not looking forward to seeing, but really enjoyed and can highly recommend. (Ben is still acting like a dork and he is getting worse.)

Die Another Day

The story begins in the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea with a spectacular high-speed hovercraft chase and continues via Hong Kong to Cuba and London where Bond must unmask a traitor and prevent a war of catastrophic consequence. Hot on the trail of the principle villains, Bond travels to Iceland where he experiences first hand the power of an amazing new weapon before a dramatic confrontation with his main adversary back in Korea where it all started...
Its Bond, need I say more? Well yes, it has Halle Berry. Don't have to ask me twice to watch this movie (and it is fun and enjoyable, what a bonus).

Rat Race

A betting-obsessed casino mogul and his group of just as bad billionaire associates, sets up a new kind of gamble in a race for $2 million hidden away in a locker. They enlist the aid of eight people who happen to be residing in his casino at once.
A clean cut lawyer, a disgraced NFL referee, two inept brothers, a determined mother and daughter, a narcoleptic Italian immigrant, and a desperate father embark on a series of misadventures to obtain the money regardless of what it takes.
This is the funniest movie I have seen in ages. My sides hurt from laughing and that is no lie, ask any of my friends who were laughing with me. Take this movie at face value and you will have laugh lines for ages.

Bad Company

When a CIA agent is killed during a nuclear arms purchase, his partner Oakes, recruits his twin brother, Jake Hayes. Jake had no idea he had a twin brother, let alone that he worked for the CIA. Jake, a.k.a. Michael Turner, has nine days to fill his brother's place. However, the enemy terrorists learn of his secret identity and kidnap his girlfriend/fiancée. He has to rescue them and save New York City from an imminent nuclear terrorist act.
It is really disappointing to see quality actors like Anthony Hopkins star in hogwash like this. And it's even more disappointing when they are not even desperate for money.

Training Day

Jake Hoyt wants to become a LAPD Narc agent. But that might be hard as he works with LAPD Narc agent Alonzo Harris for the next 24 hours. Alonzo is an LAPD veteran who has been working the Narcs for over a decade, but his ways and techniques of becoming a Narc agent are questionable, if not corrupt. As the 24 hours go by, Jake observes Alonzo's methods, and in the madness, Jake tries to solve all the twists and turns, trying to figure out who really is the enemy here.
This is the one that Denzel won the Academy Award for. Don't ask me why, I don't think his acting was that great. On the flip side the film is extremely good and entertaining and other awards should have been given to the film, like for its story.

Shrek

In a faraway land called Duloc, a heartless ruler, the midget Lord Farquaad has banished all the fairy tales from the land so it can be as boring as he is. But there are three characters who will stand is his way.
The first is a green, smelly ogre with a heart of gold named Shrek, his faithful steed, a Donkey, who will do anything but shut up, and the beautiful, but tough Princess Fiona whom Lord Farquaad wishes to make his wife so he can become king of Duloc.
With the sequel on its way to us, I thought I would revisit this classic. Shrek is brilliant in all senses of the word and is the kind of film you can watch 100 times and enjoy it better each time. If you do not own this movie, you are a fool.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is set in the Manhattan of the early 1980's and is about a pair of Irish-American brothers who become embroiled in a conflict with the Italian Mafia.
Elijah Woods' try after Lord of The Rings, nice try but no cigar. Give it a miss.

Gosford Park

Set in the 1930's the story takes place in an old-fashioned English country house where a family has invited many of their friends up for a weekend shooting party. The story centres on the McCordle family, particularly the man of the house, William McCordle.
Getting on in years William has become benefactor to many of his relatives and friends. As the weekend goes on and secrets are revealed, it seems everyone, above stairs and below, wants a piece of William and his money, but how far will they go to get it...?
This is an old fashioned Who Dunnit that may not go down well with the younger crowd, so spoil your parents and get this movie for them, watch it as well and you will not be too disappointed.

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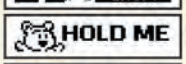
RINGTONES	NOKIA & SAMSUNG CODE	ERICSSON CODE	MOTOROLA CODE
Popeye	10080	14080	18080
Virtual insanity	10081	14081	18081
You drive me crazy	10082	14082	18082
Silent night	10083	14083	18083
Queen of my heart	10085	14085	18085
Turn off the lights	10092	14092	18092
No more drama	10093	14093	18093
Pinky and the brain	10094	14094	18094
Private Emotion	10095	14095	18095
Show Me the Meaning	10096	14096	18096
Star Trek	10097	14097	18097
Simpsons	10098	14098	18098
Stan	10099	14099	18099
Teenage Dirtbag	10100	14100	18100
Thong Song	10101	14101	18101
The Ketchup song	10102	14102	18102
Twasa	10103	14103	18103
Walking away	10104	14104	18104
Who let the dogs out	10105	14105	18105
What about us	10106	14106	18106
We will rock you	10107	14107	18107
Wind beneath my wings	10108	14108	18108
X Files	10109	14109	18109
Thousand miles	10110	14110	18110
Seidonga	10177	14177	18177
Setsokotsana	10178	14178	18178
Siyaiikalento	10179	14179	18179
Summersong	10180	14180	18188
Supalava	10181	14181	18181
Sweetie my lovie	10182	14182	18182
The Rocka	10183	14183	18183
The way Kungakhona	10184	14184	18184
Like a virgin	10041	14041	18041
Ul	10186	14186	18186
Ungawa	10187	14187	18187
Whyc	10188	14188	18188
Yalopa	10189	14189	18189
Zabalaza	10190	14190	18190
Zabokhabo	10191	14191	18191
All out of love	10192	14192	18192
I'm gonna getcha good	10193	14193	18193

OPERATOR LOGOS	NOKIA & SAMSUNG CODE	ERICSSON & MOTOROLA CODE
	20017	24017
	20019	24019
	20020	24020
	20022	24022
	20023	24023
	20024	24024
	20025	24025
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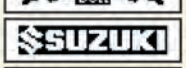	20028	24028
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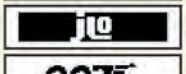
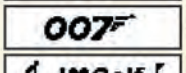
	20073	24073
	20075	24075
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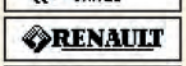
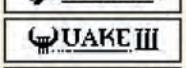
	20092	24092
	20093	24093
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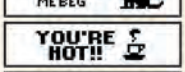
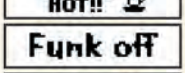
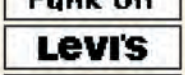
	20111	24111
	20114	24114
	20118	24118
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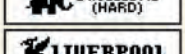
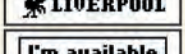
	20129	24129
	20130	24130
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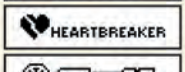	20163	24163

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SHRYKE AND PRIEST ARE LOOKING AT GAME FOOTAGE FROM E3

Shryke: Sheesh! This Half-Life 2 thing looks pretty good, hey.

Priest: Oh, the exploits of Gordon Freeman. Cool, I prefer playing the bad guy in games. It would be like GTA3, but in shooter format.

Shryke: Hey? What do you mean the bad guy? Gordon is actually the good guy in the whole situation... He just got shafted by fate, if you know what I mean.

Priest: Oh please, tell it to some naive gamer who hasn't played the first game. It's always been very obvious that Gordon was one of the guys central to the alien invasion! If it wasn't for his meddling...

Shryke: Have you started smoking crack again, or are you just stupid? Gordon showed up at the place and before he could even stow his gear the aliens showed up. He didn't have time to get involved.

Priest: What? He started the process! He opened the portal! Plus, he's a doctor, so he had to know what he was doing. It's not like they took some bum outside Black Mesa and told him, "Here, go push that button for us." In fact, I bet he was in with the aliens. He just shot a few of them up to fool everyone. You know - have an alibi.

Shryke: OK, true, he did push the button. But he was told to push the button. I mean, really, if he was in charge of the whole thing, he would at least have enough money to buy more fashionable glasses...

Priest: It's a government project, so there was no budget for glasses. See, unlike the Doom guy, who pitched up and found all hell had broken loose and is eating the cafeteria food, Gordon knew all the ins and outs of what was going down. In fact, he might even be an alien. Ever thought of that? Seems awfully covenient - being right there when it happened and still surviving. I think Half-life was a sham - his little story for why he shot all those marines!

Shryke: You ARE on crack! The only reason Gordon would have survived is because of player skill, not because he was in cahoots with the aliens. Sometimes I really have to wonder why I even bother talking to you...

Priest: You know, you seem very passionate about defending this man... [looks at Shryke suspiciously] What's the capital of Gibraltar!?

Shryke: Gibraltar doesn't have a capital, it's a frikkin' rock in the middle of the sea colonised by another country. What's that got to do with anything anyway? And I am not keen on defending Gordon, because I never really liked Half-Life all that much. I am just interested in pointing out that you have your head securely rammed up your tail-pipe!

Priest: I thought Gibraltar was a country...

Shryke: Just like you thought Gordan Freeman was a bad guy, right?

Priest: Aaa, clever ruse! Everyone KNOWS Gibraltar is a country! You're an alien too! Prepare to die! [Priest pulls out a MP5 sub-machinegun]

Shryke: [Shryke screams like a girl and runs like all hell for the nearest portal back to the home world...]

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