NAG

NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE

south africa's leading technology & computer entertainment magazine

made in south africa

PC | Xbox | GameCube | PlayStation 2 | GBA

H@rdcor3 Round-up: Steering Wheels | Judge Dredd | The Hulk
Star Trek: Elite Force II | Commandos 3 | Miyamoto Interview

H@RDCOR3 wheels

Win 5x

Lazy Gamer's Guide to...

EYE TOY

WAR of the RING

WARCRAFT III THE FROZEN THRONE

If you didn't get a Cover CD this issue set yourself on fire in protest...

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August 2003 | Volume 6 Issue 5

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Cover: They're back, all those sweet cuddly creatures of the WarCraft universe. This time round they make cookies and knit woolen mittens while they...
Oh, wait, wrong press release. Check out our Frozen Throne review for real details.

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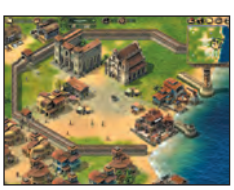
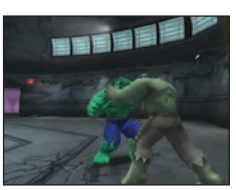
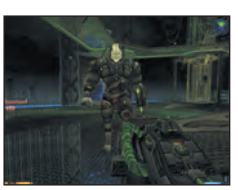

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Total Copy	0.3 MB
Winamp 2.90	2.2 MB
Winamp 3	7.3 MB
Windows Media Player 9 Series for Windows XP	9.7 MB
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XCleaner	0.3 MB
CHEATS	
Cheatbook Database	9.9 MB
May 2003 Update	1 MB
June 2003 Update	1.8 MB
July 2003 Update	1.2 MB
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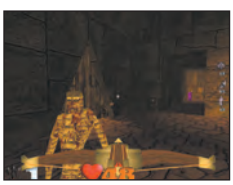

The following companies make the Cover CD possible every month...

without them we are lost.

megarom interactive

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Tick, tick . . . boom!

The one thing I fail to understand each month is why I leave this block of text to the very last hour. I'm writing this under pressure and being creative under the gun never works. This is why you're reading this rubbish instead of some insightful comments about what's in the magazine or how the gaming industry is doing this month or perhaps I should instead pick a fight with a company or a new concept… let us see.

Important stuff you need to know

rAge has moved dates - the event will now be from **10 - 12 October 2003** at The Dome @ Northgate. The reasons for this include us being asked nicely by The Dome if we could move our dates, an alternative music festival called Woodstock and a Jewish holiday. I know there was another good reason but under pressure I forget, it's late and my desk looks like a ground zero straw bunker. Everything you need to know about rAge will be revealed in the September issue.

Screw Up Competition…

This was an interesting exercise / competition - for those of you who don't know what I'm going on about, in the last issue I issued a challenge to all of our readers to see if they could find mistakes in the magazine and the biggest error discovered would win a prize. Well - you people sure know how to pull a magazine apart… I've decided to give up this job considering I have no idea what I'm doing. I was going to publish the results in this issue but they're still coming in at a rate of 2 - 3 a day so I'm going to hold off on this until the next issue.

What are gamers?

I was recently asked to describe a typical NAG reader at a function [*don't worry I was nice - you're not all strange people*]. I rattled off a brief idea of who you lot are based on our survey and other little things I've picked up over the years and it probably won't surprise many of you that you're pretty much just like everyone else. You've probably laughed at someone who collects stamps for a hobby, but then they've probably found what you do a little odd too. This got me to thinking about what exactly we are and I arrived at this brief summary - please feel free to add anything I've missed and send it to: **ed@nag.co.za**.

A higher form of life requires a more complex form of entertainment… Gamers are a different breed. Where else do you find anyone obsessed with their computer this much - most 'normal' people can't wait to get away from the things after work. Being a gamer is like an addiction - you must upgrade, you must have faster, bigger and more, it's important that your machine looks respectable and has the power to kick around a few million polygons. This obsession is why so much more marketing is being directed at gamers these days - we're the only people stupid enough to save up for two months or longer, depending on which side of the trailer park you live, to buy a piece of hardware designed to make their little weekend hobby or full-time obsession look slicker or perform better - and the funny part about all this… we never really get to touch and hold our new purchase for long, you're really buying something that doesn't exist. More MHz, raw power or whatever chipset you've aligned with, it's all conceptual, but that's fine because the next time you run Unreal Tournament or whatever decent 3D game, all that money you spent is immediately justified - too bad tomorrow the next iteration of the chipset is announced and your R5K card suddenly starts 'feeling' old again. The real worrying question, a question that keeps many of us up at night… will we always be able to earn enough cash to keep up with technology? This is probably why nobody has any money for the games anymore - if game developers wanted to sell more games they should just stop improving them… or is this just stupid talk?

Michael James
Editor

Big Winner

This lucky reader won the entire survey hamper... congratulations to Hendrikus Pretorius!

[Actually this is Bob our new network guy - posing for a 'promotional product shot']. Just kidding folks, well done - never before have so many grown men [NAG Staff] cried like babies when all those lovely prizes went walking out the door...

next issue

September is so far away... why bother at all? Hang on, I know - there will be one big thing about the September issue of NAG that has never, ever been done before [by us] - you definitely won't want to miss it! (And no I am not going to tell you what it is - you will have to actually spend some of that hard earned cash of yours and buy it.) We will be loading up the new Tomb Raider game and taking a very close look at Lara Croft. There'll be plenty of information on rAge and some other interesting stuff... miss it not.

The September issue will be on sale: 28th August 2003

caption of the month

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL games

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: **August 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...?

▲ 'Umm... hey, I can see my house from here!' - **nag's best [99.1% lame] effort**

june winner

▲ 'This was the last time the twins' mother let them bake with flour.' - **Craig**

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Support 8X AGP Direct X 9.0
Cinematic quality special effects and studio quality color
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Top Prize

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tech news:

Apple's new-generation Power Mac G5

Apple has introduced its next-generation Power Mac G5 range. Three models will initially be available in 1.6GHz, 1.8GHz and dual-2GHz variants. New features include AGP 8X and PCI-X support, and up to 8GB of RAM. The systems also include a SuperDrive (DVD-R/CD-RW), 80GB or 160GB hard drive and the choice between GeForce FX 5200 Ultra, Radeon 9600 Pro or Radeon 9800 Pro for graphics. The units also carry an unprecedented number and variety of ports.

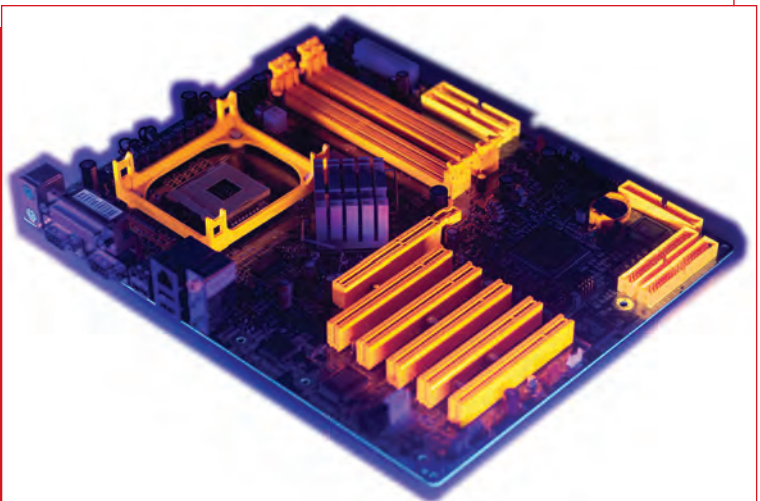
Creative LX200 Digital MP3 Player

Creative's new digital MP3 player, the LX200, features 256MB of storage. It supports MP3, WMA and ADPCM for dictaphone use. Its battery allows 10 hours of operation, and it can record around 16 hours of audio. It can be recharged via USB. The device is compatible with all Windows platforms newer than 95.

Amaze Entertainment adopts IMS LIPGen

Amaze Entertainment, of Harry Potter game fame, have licensed Interactive Multimedia Solutions' LIPGen technology. The software processes recorded human speech, either live or synthesized, to yield precise facial movements to match, including random facial gestures such as eye movements, blinks and the like. The software even works in most languages. www.IMS3D.com

Motherboards for mobile gamers



DFI has launched the LANParty series of motherboards. The range will include support for Intel and AMD, and both boards support 8X AGP, Serial ATA, ATA-133 IDE RAID, Gigabit LAN, FireWire, USB2.0 and 6-channel audio. The boards also contain many UV-sensitive coloured components, yielding a unique look when illuminated with black light or such. The boards also feature a front panel for connecting USB and other devices, and a harness and bag accommodating a keyboard and mouse.
These motherboards will be distributed locally by Axiz.
www.dfi.com

Xbox to switch to ATI?

Current rumour has it that Microsoft has dropped nVidia in favour of ATI for purposes of providing the graphics processing for the next generation of the Xbox. Although the fact that ATI are already teamed up with Nintendo for the next version of the GameCube, it is not unthinkable that Microsoft may opt to ally with Nintendo against the console market leader, Sony.

Nintendo's Game Boy Player

Nintendo's Game Boy Player has recently been launched for $49.99. The Game Boy Player attaches to the underside of the GameCube and enables you to play more than 1,300 Game Boy games on your TV through the GameCube console. Using the GC's console controller, WaveBird wireless controller, or a Game Boy Advance you simply pop the Game Boy Player startup disc in the GameCube, plug in a Game Boy or Game Boy Advance cartridge, and you can wallow in gaming nostalgia till your TV tube blows up!

Nokia's most advanced phone yet

Toward the end of the year, Nokia's upcoming 6600 will become available in foreign markets. The triband phone will also be able to record video and sound, take photos, play back RealPlayer content and browse the Internet, powered by Symbian 7.0. It will carry 6MB internal memory and a 32MB Flash card slot, and a joystick, interestingly enough. Other features include Bluetooth, infra-red port, voice-activated operation and a battery providing 2-4 hours of operation or 240 hours of standby.

Let's twist again...

Scientists at Sony's Interaction Lab in Tokyo have developed a prototype of a PDA-type device that uses no buttons, switches or any other conventional input devices. The device, currently nicknamed Gummi ("rubber" in German) functions by receiving its input from a touch-sensitive screen and a casing that can be bent in order to issue commands. The advantage of this system is that it can be implemented in devices too small to feasibly carry buttons or the like. Another aspect that is being developed is a vibrating screen that will provide tactile feedback to users of touch screens.

Counter-Strike headset released

Valve and Plantronics have collaborated to release a headset designed for use specifically with Counter-Strike. The unit is based on the Plantronics DSP-500 headset, and it features USB connectivity that allows it to be used without a sound card. As with most of Plantronics's designs, this one features a microphone boom and an in-line volume control.
www.plantronics.com/valve/

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Klipsch GMX A-2.1

Klipsch has released the GMX A-2.1, a speaker set designed for people who desire high quality sound but lack the space for a surround system. The set consists of two two-way satellites featuring a 3-inch woofer each, a subwoofer containing a 75 Watt amplifier, and a control deck. A range of inputs and outputs are offered on the central unit, and basic controls are evident on the front.

Nanotube memory

US-based Nantero is developing a technology based on carbon nanotubes, microscopic devices based on the vacuum tubes of early audio electronics. Once fully developed, the technology will allow manufacture of chips with capacities of around 10 gigabits. Furthermore, the memory will be non-volatile, and much faster than current non-volatile memory types. The proposed chips can be manufactured using existing silicon manufacturing methods, meaning that very expensive refitting of facilities will not be required. The first of these devices should be appearing in about a year-and-a-half, and the technology is expected to be fully developed within three years.

GBA music player

Datel Design & Development has released a digital music player for the Game Boy Advance and GBA SP, called the Advanced Music Player (AMP). The package includes a playlist editor, "skinning" options, a keypad lock option to prevent accidental button presses, the facility to share music via a GBA link cable and cables and software to allow the downloading of songs from a PC to the AMP cartridge.

Samsung's SCH-X820 hybrid TV/phone

Samsung's SCH-X820 is a mobile phone that is also capable of receiving colour TV broadcasts. This is made possible by a new antenna that the company has developed, which is able to receive both cellular phone and TV signals. The device can store up to 50 frames of captured footage, which can be used as a screensaver. It features two displays, can run for 115-235 minutes of active use and has a standby battery life of 135-385 hours. It is available in Cyber Blue or Metallic Silver, and you can be sure it is not cheap!

Methanol-fuelled laptops

NEC Corporation has completed a prototype of a laptop computer running on a methanol fuel cell rather than a battery. When fully developed, the technology will provide far longer operating times. The first of such laptops will become available next year, from NEC and Toshiba. Within two years, we should be seeing the advent of fuel-cell-powered PCs that can run for 40 hours without refuelling. The methanol-fuel method allows the generation of electricity without the generation of pollutants.

GameBoy Advance SP cases

Mad Catz has released two cases for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance SP. The ArmorCase SP is made of aluminium and caters to the storage and transportation of a console and several game cartridges, and is available in several colours. The ExecuCase SP is aimed at users who prefer a business-like appearance, being made of a puncture-resistant synthetic leather.

SideWinder range discontinued

A continuing decline in sales of controllers for PC games, largely a result of the fact that most PC games are designed with a keyboard-and-mouse configuration in mind, has led to Microsoft discontinuing its SideWinder range of peripherals. Of course, Microsoft will, however, still support such devices in their operating systems.

Panasonic SL-SX320 portable CD player

The new SL-SX320 portable CD player is available in a blue or silvery finish. It features a wired remote control and 45 second shock protection. Using three alkaline batteries the unit delivers 33 hours of operation.

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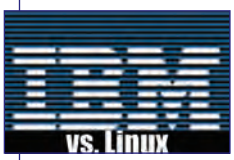
SCO vows to fight Big Blue to the finish



It seems that the SCO Group is determined to win its intellectual property case against IBM no matter the cost.
Senior VP of the company, Chris Sontag, admits that the upcoming trial against Big Blue might go on for several years but that the company is willing to stay the pace. However, industry sources believe that a prolonged court case could result in more legal fees than SCO could possibly afford. Earlier this year, SCO sent a warning to 1 500 large companies using the Linux operating system saying that they may be violating its Unix rights. AT&T originally developed Unix in 1971, but after several changes in ownership SCO bought the rights in 1995 from Novell. Meanwhile, IBM had developed its own version of Unix called AIX.
SCO maintains that part of the original Unix source code was transferred from Unix to AIX and then to the free Linux operating system. It even went so far as to revoke IBM's license to use Unix technology in March.
The pending court case even has the Linux community in a huff. Some prominent open source developers have demanded that SCO reveal the code under contention so they can rewrite their software to exclude the offensive code. But then getting SCO to reveal the code probably equates to asking Microsoft to go open source.

Windows can remain Java-free (for now)

On the topic of Microsoft, the software behemoth recently won a legal victory against Sun Microsystems. A US appeals court ruled that Microsoft would not have to incorporate Sun's Java programming language into Windows.
However, the court upheld a lower court ruling that Microsoft had broken an earlier settlement between the companies and had infringed on Sun's copyrights. Sun is not about to let the ruling stop them and will now press its case with the US trial court, unless of course the companies can reach a settlement. A date has not yet been set for the trial, but Sun executives expect it to begin in 2005. Nothing like planning for the future.

Game ratings grow up

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) will introduce a new rating system next month (September) that gives detailed information on the kinds of violence that appears in games. Games containing violence will from September 15 fall into one of four categories.
"Cartoon Violence" will apply to games where animated characters get blown asunder. This is basically your "Elmer Fudd blasting Bugs Bunny into oblivion with a sawed-off shotgun" variety of game.
"Fantasy Violence" will be used in cases where the situation is clearly distinguishable from reality. Of course, this takes it for granted that most of us know what is real and what is not. But then, should aforementioned example of Bugs Bunny also not fall into this category, especially if it is the bunny doing the killing? The classification could also be slightly misleading since some people will take it to mean violent situations they fantasise about.
The "Intense Violence" label is categorised by games that feature realistic-looking depictions of human injury or death. Presumably, forthcoming titles such as Half-Life 2 and Quake III will feature here.
Lastly, "Sexual Violence" covers the depiction of rape. Except for Phantasmagoria, I cannot recall any game that is likely to feature here.
Additionally, the ESRB will change its "Mature" and "Adults Only" ratings to show the minimum recommended ages for each of those categories. The ESRB says these new ratings will be implemented to keep it up to date with the increase in more mature-orientated titles and older gamers.

Command & Conquer Generals Zero Hour

Electronic Arts has announced an expansion pack for Command & Conquer Generals which will be released late this year.
Players will wage a global war to become the ultimate General of modern warfare as they square off against the world's most elite commanders. An all-new Generals Challenge mode will allow players to control any of 9 distinctive armies in battle through 9 computer-controlled Generals. After defeating the AI Generals, players will have the ability to select conquered armies to play online.
"The Generals Challenge mode adds an exciting new dimension to the RTS play experience," said Mark Skaggs, executive producer EALA. "Players will have a host of new units to play with and new strategies to learn as they battle against the top Generals in the world."
Selecting from an arsenal of new high-tech weaponry and a wide variety of new units, players will employ whatever it takes to remove enemy Generals from power. With new weapons such as the US Specter Gunship or Global Liberation Army (GLA) combat motorcycles, players will have all the firepower they'll need for global domination. Three new campaigns featuring 15 new singleplayer missions challenge gamers to destroy the U.S. fleet in the Mediterranean, root out a splinter cell in Cairo, infiltrate a U.S. intelligence building, or send in special operatives to capture weapons of mass destruction.

pc news:

New Publisher Appears

A new European games publisher has emerged, called 4AM Entertainment. The company will enter the market with three titles, which are to be released well before Christmas. The said games will be a role-playing game called The Fate, a 3D horror adventure titled WhiteDay and a real-time strategy title named Jurassic Wars: Evolution. An as-yet unnamed dance-related product is also expected before the end of the year.

Everquest Expansion

A new expansion pack is under development for Sony's EverQuest, titled Lost Dungeons of Norrath. In addition to the to-be-expected additions and enhancements to current monsters, NPCs, tradeskills and environments, it will also feature a new dynamic dungeon system that will provide personalised encounters.

Battlefield: Vietnam

Electronic Arts have announced that a full sequel to Battlefield 1942, titled Battlefield Vietnam, currently under development at Digital Illusions, who made the original, will be available sometime next year. The game will portray the importance of helicopters in the Vietnam War, and will allow players to fire from moving vehicles. Like its predecessor, Battlefield Vietnam will support games of up to 64 players via LAN or Internet, as well as a single-player campaign.

More Detailed Video Game Ratings

The Entertainment Software Rating Board, which rates the maturity level of computer game content, has refined its rating system by the addition of new content descriptors. Other improvements to the system include clearer, bolder labels and more specific definition of ratings for mature content.

Cross Platform Online Games

A technology called the Asgard Gaming Community is nearing completion at TerraForge. This technology will allow game developers to create online games that can be accessed from any platform that will support the given game, be it a PC, console, Mac or PDA, for instance.

Multiplayer Mod for Half-Life 2

The creators of the Half Life mod called Sven Co-op have begun planning development of a Half-Life 2 version. Valve will assist in the process. Odds are that the mod will only be available for the PC version of Half-Life 2.

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OPEN MIND FOR BUSINESS

Title Bout Championship Boxing

.400 Software Studios' upcoming Title Bout Championship Boxing will be heavily based on past and present boxers. The game will include comprehensive statistics of past and present boxers, and will allow players to set up "what-if" scenarios. It is expected to be released late this year.

WarCraft Board Game

A company by the name of Fantasy Flight Games has acquired the rights to publish a board game set in the WarCraft universe. The game, which is expected by Christmas, will be expandable, and will seek to capture the real-time aspect by making time a resource.

Alone in the Dark Film

A film based on the game Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare is in production, starring Christian Slater in the role of Edward Carnby.

Pirates! to use Gamebryo Engine

NDL's Gamebryo 3D graphics engine will be employed in Firaxis's upcoming remake of the 1987 hit Sid Meyer's Pirates! The new engine will make possible a more immersive experience.

Terminator 3: Rise of the Robots

Atari expects to have its upcoming Terminator 3: War of the Machines, in production at Clever's Games, ready later this year. It will have a single-player mode and support for up to 32-player multiplay. The single-player campaign will begin with the character as the Terminator, a part of SkyNet's forces, and later progress to the point where the Terminator is reprogrammed by humans to fight against SkyNet. Eight classes will be available for each side.

Battle Mages

Buka Entertainment's upcoming Battle Mages, in development at Targem, will be ready toward the end of the year. Set in a fantasy world, it will combine elements of real-time strategy and role-playing, and will feature a non-linear progression.

New Carmageddon

SCi appears to be gearing up to publish a new Carmageddon game in 2005. No other information has been released at this time.

727 Professional

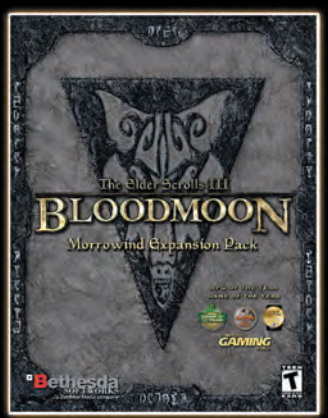
Just Flight have released Captain Sim's an expansion pack for Flight Simulator 2002. Called 727 Professional, it deals exclusively with the Boeing 727 aircraft, and features an incredible amount of detail. The expansion pack was produced with the cooperation of 727 personnel, and in accordance with 727 documentation. A patch will soon be released to allow compatibility with Microsoft's upcoming Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight.

Chaos Legion

Capcom's upcoming Chaos Legion, originally planned only for the PlayStation 2, will also be available on PC later this year. The game will blend aspects of action adventure and role-playing genres. As yet, it is unknown whether the PC version will boast any additional features.

Etrom: The Astral Essence

An Italian-based game developer, PM Studios, has announced an action role-playing game called Etrom: The Astral Essence, due for release in early 2004.
"Etrom is not just a game, it's a universe," said Fabio Belsanti, managing director and lead designer at PM Studios. "We are creating a serial project that will become an infinite adventure for those who love fighting and dreaming in mysterious lands. Along with the 3D game we have developed a classic pen-and-paper RPG system that the fans may purchase by Q4 2003. Etrom is also a comic, the issue zero will be released with the RPG System. We're really proud to offer the public such a multi-faceted product"
Etrom: The Astral Essence will feature characters and enemies reminiscent of those found in both traditional fantasy and futuristic role-playing games, so alongside the usual array of dragons and demons, players will find themselves being confronted by tanks and robots. Weapons in the game will also have an eclectic feel, with axes and spells available for use alongside heavy machineguns, bazookas, and the like.



The Elder Scrolls: Bloodmoon
This Morrowind Expansion Pack takes you to the frozen Island of Solstheim where the Empire is establishing a new mining colony - a venture being threatened by the prophecy of the Bloodmoon and rumours of werewolves. You'll have a choice of stories to follow and have the opportunity to defend the colony, take control over how the colony is built up, and eliminate the werewolves. Or, you can decide to join the werewolves and become one of them...

R 249

PC CD

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console news:

Everything or Nothing

James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing is on its way to PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube and Game Boy Advance from Electronic Arts in a few months. The game will feature accurate likenesses of and voice-overs by the cast members of the film.

Asterix and Obelix

Atari is at work on Asterix and Obelix XXL, which will appear on PlayStation 2 and GameCube in time for Christmas in Europe. The game is to be a roaming beat-'em-up that will allow the player to control both Asterix and Obelix simultaneously, pitting them against dozens of Roman antagonists at a time.

PSP Price Revealed

SCEE (Sony Computer Entertainment Europe) boss Chris Deering spoke to French publication Los Echos on the PSP and PSX, revealing that the handheld unit from Sony will be far cheaper than the speculated €300-€400. Instead, it's priced below that of portable DVD players at around €150. He also confirmed that the unit will be shipped to European retailers late next year.
He was less revealing, though, on the upcoming PSX, saying its more likely to appeal to technical folk.

Airborne: Liberation

The 60th anniversary of D-Day, 6 June 2004, will see the release of BattleBorne Entertainment's and Interplay's Airborne: Liberation. The game will be a third-person action title set in the days of and following the invasion of Normandy during World War II. The title will feature both single and squad-based combat elements, and will offer the player a selection of elite forces to choose from at game start. Airborne: Liberation will be available on a variety of console platforms.

Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness

Eidos have revealed that Angel of Darkness is to be the first in a Tomb Raider trilogy. The next two parts will appear on PlayStation 2 and PC in one-year intervals.

I-Ninja

Animated filmmakers Don Bluth and Gary Goldman have been signed to create and direct the in-game cinematics for Namco's I-Ninja action game which will be released on PS2 and GC at the end of this year. The team is planning to combine high-end CGI graphics with meticulous hand-painted environments for the in-game movies, and will also be utilizing their years of experience to provide direction for the development of the I-Ninja character and the game's storyline.

scores and release dates:

PC Web Scores

Title	New Age Gaming	gamespy.com	gamespot.com	pc.ign.com
Elite Force II	85	82	7.9	8.4
Blitkrieg	82	69	7.1	8.2
WIII	WIII	88	9.2	9
GTA Vice City	88	93	9.3	9.3
Port Royal	78	75	8.5	8.4
The Hulk	68	69	7	8
Tropico 2	WIII	88	7.4	8.4

Selected Title Release Dates

Empire of Magic		
PC	Strategy	August 1
World Championship Snooker 2003		
PC	Sport	August 1
Fate		
PC	RPG	August 7
Dragon's Lair 3D		
PC	Action	August 15
Pirates of the Caribbean		
PC	RPG	August 15
Breed		
PC	FPS	August 29
Heaven and Hell		
PC	Strategy	August 29
No Man's Land		
PC	Strategy	August 29
Homeworld 2		
PC	Strategy	August 29
Lords of the Realm III		
PC	Strategy	August 29
1914 - The Great War		
PC	Strategy	August 29
Tron 2.0		
PC	Action	August 29
Prince of Qin		
PC	RPG	August 29
The Great Escape		
PC	Action	August 29
Chaos Legion		
PS2	Adventure	August 6
Freaky Flyers		
PS2 | Xbox	Action	August 6
Loose Cannon		
Xbox	Action	August 6
Pro Beach Soccer		
Xbox | PS2	Sports	August 8
Silent Hill 3		
PS2	Adventure	August 8
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild		
PS2	Driving	August 8
Street Racing Syndicate		
Xbox	Driving	August 8
The Lost		
PS2	Adventure	August 8
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder		
Xbox	Action	August 8
ChopLifter: Crisis Shield		
PS2	Simulation	August 13
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness		
PS2	Role-Playing	August 16
Droopy's Tennis Open		
GBA	Sports	August 16
Futurama		
Xbox | PS2 | GC	Action	August 16
Madden NFL 2004		
PS2	Sports	August 16

Console Web Scores

Title	New Age Gaming	ign.com	gamespot.com	gamespy.com
Burnout 2 [PS2]	90	9	8.3	93
Timesplitters 2 [PS2]	80	9.2	8.7	89
SOCOM: Navy Seals [PS2]	79	7.5	8.9	70
Midnight Club II [PS2]	83	9.1	8.4	90
WarioWare [GBA]	92	9	9.1	91
Eternal Darkness [GC]	89	9.6	9.4	87

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.

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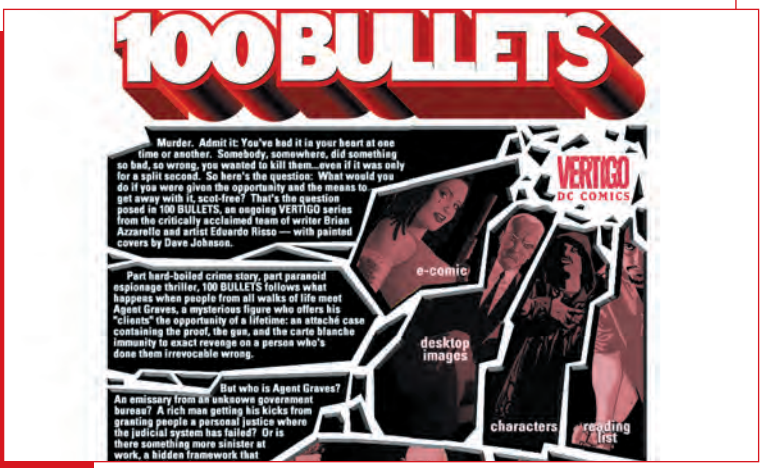
Champions of Norrath

Sony Online Entertainment and Snowblind Studios are at work on Champions of Norrath, an upcoming action-RPG for the PlayStation 2 set in the EverQuest universe. The game will feature a single-player mode and a free online component that will allow up to four players to adventure together. Five playable characters will be available, and the game will boast randomly generated dungeons and around 50 side quests. Champions of Norrath: Realms of Everquest is expected to debut in a few months.

Haryy Potter and the Sorceror's Stone

Electronic Arts has announced that Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone will be released for Xbox, PlayStation 2, and GameCube later this year. The game is in development at Warthog Games in UK and will be an improved version of the game that was released for PC and PlayStation back in 2001.

100 Bullets

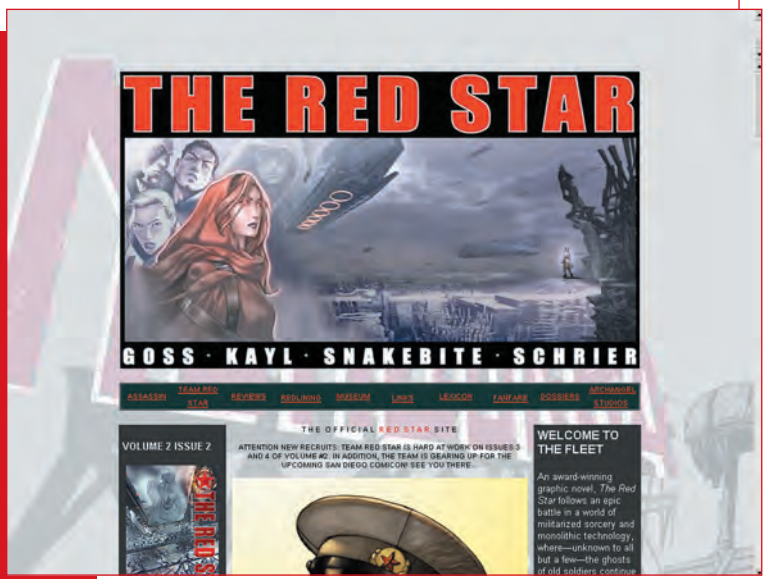


Acclaim Entertainment and DC Comics have signed an agreement granting the video-game publisher rights to produce a game based on the comic publisher's 100 Bullets. Dealing with the exploits of one Agent Graves, a mysterious figure who offers various people the chance to avenge personal wrongs, the game will challenge players to think before they shoot and to explore the moral implications of their actions. The game will be available next year on PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube.

Colin McRae Rally 4.0

Brace yourself to tear around the rally course in late September, when Codemasters plan to release the Playstation 2 and Xbox versions of Colin McRae Rally 4.0, the next title in the acclaimed series that has been dominating the rally genre for a few years now.
The game is taking the series a step up with the predictable improved graphics and new course, accompanied with 20 cars, 8 game modes, lots of multiplayer modes, a custom rally builder, pre-rally briefings and other things to make the rampant beating hearts of rally fans go all warm and fuzzy.

The Red Star



Acclaim Entertainment has signed a deal with Archangel Studios to bring the latter's computer-generated comic series, The Red Star, to console game audiences. The game, as is the case with the comics, will be set in an alternate fantasy world modelled after the Soviet Union. This unusual blend will combine socio-political elements of modern history with fantasy elements such as sorcery. The game will be available next year on PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube.

Xbox Hacking Group Mod Details

Xbox hacking group Free-X have released details on how to run Linux on the Xbox without needing to make any kind of hardware modification. In the former week, the group told Microsoft to release a boot-disk for the Xbox that will enable Linux to run, or else they will. Of course, Microsoft haven't responded, and the group released details on how to boot the Xbox using a writable CD. The method exploits an Xbox Dashboard bug, and allows for unsigned software to be run on the console, meaning that users will be able to load pirated games and unofficial third-party software. Microsoft haven't responded, but a lot of people in the industry view Free-X's move as akin to blackmail.

Oddworld

Oddworld Inhabitants have begun work on a new title in the Oddworld series, to be released on the Xbox. As yet, no release information has been made public.

Donkey Kong Record Shattered

Record monitors Twin Galaxies have announced that a man from Redmond, Washington named Steve Wiebe has shattered the existing Donkey Kong record with a new one of 947,000. The record was confirmed by Twin Galaxies after watching a 2 hour video tape of the game. Wiebe is no newbie to the gaming world, though - last year he became the first person acknowledged by Twin Galaxies to have passed the 1 million points mark in Donkey Kong Junior.
"The feat was recorded on videotape so future generations can see how it was done," explains Walter Day, Chief Editor of the forthcoming edition of Twin Galaxies' Official Video Game & Pinball Book of World Records. According to the company, Donkey Kong and Pacman are the two most hotly contested games in their ranking system.

inbox:

Will the suffering never end?
Please do not delete this message. This is truly a worthy cause - please pass it on to as many friends as you can. When is enough really enough - it's time to make a stand.
Please sign this petition and put a stop to "Walker Texas Ranger" episodes on Sunday nights.
Jimmy

Ed: *We arranged a little surprise for you - here's an autographed picture of him and his dog. Why are you watching TV on a Saturday night anyway? You deserve everything you get… even Chuck Norris.*

A Radeon by any other name...
What's with hardware manufacturers (specifically NVIDIA and ATI) going out of their way to make their hardware look aesthetically pleasing? It's not as if the card won't go from its box straight into my machine, never to be seen again unless something goes wrong (or an upgrade takes place). It is offensive to the informed computer user that companies will try and lure us to buy their hardware based on the way it looks, instead of focusing on how it performs and the benefits that we will derive from using it. They are, in effect, calling us a bunch of ill-educated louts! Even for people with open cases or cases with windows, these flashy cards will rarely be seen unless someone makes a concerted effort to get a closer look.
Or maybe this is all a futuristic move towards a time when the insides of a machine will be more easily accessible (and therefore more visible) than they currently are.
Whatever the case, I think it's unwarranted. (Spoken like someone who will never be able to afford one of those damn sexy cards!)
Morgue [FLB]

Ed: *I say - if you're going to buy a piece of hardware that costs upwards of 6K it better look like a Ferrari. Jewellery companies have been making millions of bright and shiny objects for years, I guess this was inevitable. Next up, women in skimpy clothing on your 3D card… hang on too late… I just remembered the NVIDIA Pixie. As an 'informed user' you shouldn't be dazzled by shiny heat sinks and orange boards but rather by price and performance.*

Anyone got a light?
Firstly, I'd like to congratulate you on a great Anime section. It's nice to give Anime some recognition!
To my point: lighting in games. Please don't give me that "It adds to realism/atmosphere" argument. Now, if I were the leader of a secret government organisation/terrorist group/any other really evil villain, while designing my base I would make sure (for my henchmen's sakes) that people were able to see a bit further than 5 centimetres in front of their faces.
It's just not practical! How are you supposed to catch heroes breaking in if you can't see them? Or are video game villains all prone to forgetting to pay their lighting bill? I can understand the dim lighting in places where it is vital to the game (e.g. for hiding) or in places like dungeons, but my house, for instance, is not continuously bathed in shadow. What is the point of having fantastic graphics if it is too dark to see them? I await your sarcastic and all-knowing answer (which will probably show me to be a total moron compared to your infinite wisdom, because a female's opinion is not to be trusted).
ChickenPie

Ed: *Right on the female opinion. Why do you girls always want everything bright and shiny - what's up with that? I really think poor lighting covers up inferior graphics - like old restaurants.*

I have been robbed
Recently I decided to sell my computer (AMD XP 1700), so I place an advert in the paper and get a phone call. This guy says he's going to do an electronic transfer, (fine by me) so that afternoon I check my bank balance, right things are looking good I am R 5800 richer. 2 hours pass and the guy's brother comes to pick it up, so I show this guy everything and off he goes. Next day I'm off to order my AMD XP 2400, everything is going as planned [except having to wait two days for my computer]. I get back home and to my utter disgust I find that the guy deposited the cash with a cheque (which he had now cancelled). I only had their cellular numbers which were obviously switched off. Now I am left with an empty desk in my bedroom. I hope that with this letter I can warn anyone who is going to sell their computer to insist on cash! (I think this letter really needs to be seen, I'm sure you can fit it in amongst the boring letters about mouse dirt and the complainers.)
CyBeRmAn

Ed: *Consider everyone warned.*

Here's a concept that works!
I think you should have 2 pages on CGI artwork in your magazine where you could show off some artwork? Just an idea - you should also have a feature called Inside NAG: Meet the Staff. I can't understand why you want to hide yourselves so badly. Are you guys that ugly or is the Ed scared of how many people want to kill him

James Donaldson is working on more advertising for NAG...

lEttEr of thE momEnt

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

Games: satanic
As I was going through all the mail the other day, a "headline" caught my eye in the local newspaper that read, "Children in Satan's grip." My first thought was "Satanic cult mutilates children in demonic stew ritual". Imagine my surprise when I found that it was about gaming! In particular games like Hitman 2: Silent Assassin and Unreal II: The Awakening. After reading this crazed journalist's ranting and raving about, and I quote, "... Children between the age of 14 and 16 are playing games like Hitman 2 where you're a ruthless assassin maiming and killing people..." and "... Unreal II: Awakening where these children act out satanic rituals of blood letting and blood sacrifices to Satan..." I have no problem with the Hitman 2 comment. Given it has blood and gore in it, but there is an option in the game where you can disable the blood and gore, not to mention the age restriction that Hitman has. What really hacked me off was the comment about the "ritual blood sacrifices" to Satan in Unreal II. I don't know which Unreal II this journalist saw (if he ever saw the game) because having clocked Unreal II myself, I didn't see or partake in any "sacrifice of blood to Satan". Articles like this portray gamers as possessed mass murderers in training, being brainwashed by the games they play to create a legion of evil for Satan himself. It's just not on!
My question being: All of these people that call games, where you slay demons (kill them, not worship them, by introducing them to the wrong side of a rocket launcher) "satanic", would they call a game where you go to heaven and kill all the angels "good Christian entertainment"...?
PSi_ENTITY

Ed: *I like your last point - you get a free 'satanic' game! You must remember however that you can never argue with people like this - you need to accept their point of view and turn the other cheek my brother.*

What kind of humour do you find funny - do you laugh at fart jokes or are you more the clever riddle type joke person? Reality jokes are also fashionable these days and then there are people that enjoy the odd dumb joke. No matter what types of person you are there is always one kind of joke that gets the big laughs and here it is.
Two cucumbers are playing poker at a round table, an egg walks under the table and one of the cucumbers says, "Hey egg! Where you going"? The egg replies, "I'm going for a haircut". This joke is actually funny, you won't get it right now but keep telling it to people and they will laugh at you.

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.

because of his sarcasm? We want to see the NAG offices and you guys. I always wondered how the NAG toilets look like.
Jeansy

Ed: *See… the toilet part is why we're too scared to start a regular office tour… come to rAge in October and you can stare at us all day [behind heavy security].*

Internet
Your Euthanasia Award on the website page is a great idea - I'd love to see it become a fixed feature. You can even get readers to submit sites, and you guys can select the best of 3, stating why each sucks and why the top one won the Award. It would remain a small section/box.
Morgue [FLB]

Ed: *That idea was actually my idea that James didn't like but reluctantly did in that one issue - he then just conveniently 'forgot' to do it again and now he's reading this going, "damn… I'll never be this smart, this is why he's the Editor and I'll always be just James - it's almost like he can read my mind."*

Constructive criticism for NAG
I buy your magazine regularly and I thought I'd let you know what I like and what I do not like about your magazine.

Things I like...
1. Your caption competition is very cool.
2. Your sarcastic remarks are usually funny although sometimes a bit malicious.
3. Your price is not too shabby at all.
4. The fact that you have no swearing or blasphemy! (Well, I have not noticed if you do).
5. You have a cover CD.
6. Your hardware section is quite handy as well.
7. Your PC and Console news section is good.

Things I do not like...
1. Your cover CD content. More demos are needed please. Patches and drivers are pretty small and therefore are quick to download so if I need them then I can get them without too much stress. Downloading demos is a nightmare to one's phone bill.
2. Your anime and role playing sections are not needed.
3. Some of your reviews seem to be lacking in depth and instead of reading your review and feeling like I know enough to get the game or not, I feel like I have to look at another review.

Kevin

Ed: *Thanks for the comments - some of our reviews lack depth because some of our reviewers lack depth. They're all bitter and disgruntled jaded gamers - you simply cannot expect much from people like that.*

The battle of the gamers
Many people write about the battle between AMD and Intel processors. Yawn! I have read lots of articles about people criticising the processor they dislike (hate is such a strong word) and praising the processor they like. The fact of the matter is that they are still processors and who cares just as long as you get a good smooth play (NB - Intel rules).
The battle I am talking about is that of reverse and non-reverse mouse gamers. From what I have seen most gamers are non-reverse gamers. The reason why I brought this topic up is because no one has ever done a poll or even an article about mice, and if it is better to play reverse or non-reverse. From what I can see at local Internet cafés the reverse mouse players are in the minority. The only reason why I changed to reverse is because my friends always just wanted to quickly play a round or two (note the one or two) and then they just kept on playing. Now with reverse mouse enabled I can play as long as I want and no one bothers me because they just can't play with reverse mouse (clever hey).
Please can you do a small poll just so that we can all see how many people actually play with reverse mouse and are actually good playing this way?
J!NX

Ed: *I don't know about a battle, but, for example, and not because I like talking about myself either, the reason I reverse the Y-axis is probably because I was brought up on Elite and moving a mouse up equals nose down in my mind. I also don't see how it could be good or bad either way?*

The truth is out there
In reviewing those joysticks (May 2003 hardware review), the reviewer mentioned that with a particular joystick, his biggest gripe was the price, and yet the Value for Money rating he gave it was 70%. 70% is a good score for most people - it is considerably above average (50%). If a particular aspect of a product is largely negative, shouldn't the score it gets in that category reflect that? If it's bad, it should get a bad mark, like 30%, not 70%.
Your reviewers shouldn't be scared to tell it like it really is. If the 30% in that category gives the product an overall low score, then so be it. It deserved to be rated that way.
Don't be such corporate butt-kissers :)
Morgue [FLB]

Ed: *We only have one corporate butt-kisser and he doesn't write reviews. Actually, we were just discussing this the other day - once a year I have a meeting with all the freelancers and tell them, over a cheap lunch, that the scores are creeping up and to remember that 50% is exactly average. As a result, in the very next issue all games and hardware are slammed and picked apart for errors… then for some reason a few months later I notice the scores creeping up again and then someone mentions it in a mail and we all go for lunch… again. Maybe I should change the annual luncheon to a bi-monthly biscuit and coffee, if budget allows.*

I dare you to publish this letter fully
Why are gamers openly rejected by "normal people"? We live normal lives, do normal things: go to church, support the Springboks, get drunk, eat, get mad, eat, go to clubs, eat, get drunk, eat, buy magazines, get drunk, eat, get drunk, read magazines, play games, write letters to magazines, get drunk, eat... Well maybe I do understand why we're being rejected...
Necronide

Ed: *A long time ago people who knew how to use computers may have seemed a little weird - this is how it is with genius. Back then if you played computer games people called you names and 'rejected' you because people are usually scared of things they don't understand. These days every monkey and his brother have diplomas, certificates and little pieces of paper telling everyone they are IT literate so the geek label of yesteryear is the badge of honour today. Gamers are just a sub-division of this and thanks to PlayStation it's now cool to be a gamer but nobody today can be as computer literate as those old gamers of yesteryear.*

shorts...

Untitled
Most magazines put dumb letters in their letters section which are always cheerful and the person who replies is usually a goody two shoes. NAG is different.
Jeansy
Ed: *In your ear monkey boy!*

Something Interesting
I read in one of your "smart comments" about people's letters that you were left-handed so I thought I'd give you a useless piece of information - on average left-handed people live nine years less than right-handed people.
Piotter
Ed: *This approach to dealing with your jealous frustrations is just not very brotherly - keep practicing using your left hand, I'm sure you'll improve.*

The best
Could you please tell me which is best for gaming, the AMD 3000+ or the Intel 3.06 with HT?
A monkey called Rizo
Ed: *It all depends on how much money you have…*

Test
This is just a test, seriously, I kid you not.
No name
Ed: *Don't you have any 'friends' you can bother with your new and exciting adventures on the Internet?*

Smile, you're on the Letters Page
Again, an appeal to have a smiley or emoticon on the letters page - is this not possible, or just not desirable?
Morgue [FLB]
Ed: *Anything is possible.*

System Overload
Can someone explain why the System Idle process takes up 99% of the CPU time (in Window XP)?
Morgue [FLB]
Ed: *Because that's all it's doing 99% of the time - nothing.*

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writer: Anton "The_Basilisk" Lines

"HOW MANY ROADS MUST A MAN WALK DOWN, BEFORE THEY CALL HIM A MAN? HOW MANY SEAS MUST A WHITE DOVE SAIL, BEFORE SHE SLEEPS IN THE SAND? HOW MANY TIMES MUST THE CANNONBALLS FLY, BEFORE THEY ARE FOREVER BANNED? THE ANSWER, MY FRIEND, IS BLOWING IN THE WIND. THE ANSWER IS 42." - MegaHAL, AI conversation simulator.

domain of the_basilisk:

In life, you get three types of people: optimistic, realistic and pessimistic. I've chosen to discuss the third one on that list because wherever you go in gaming, locally or internationally, you will come across those negative gamers who, for no apparent reason, seem to hate everything about their own hobby. Of course this makes little sense to me, if you dislike something, why spend hours of your life doing it? And, for the love of NAG, why put the rest of us through it? There is, of course, a massive difference between making valid complaints with the happiness of the gamers and the "good of the game" in mind, and being a crybaby. You'd think people like that would just quit and leave us the hell alone, but no, they insist on continually reminding everyone around them what a terrible time they're having. It seems the Dumb Person Theory is once again applicable.

A Tainted Mentality

Inside the broad category of these pessimists, you get several different types which are easily identifiable by certain common characteristics. All of them, of course, lack a logical reason for their persistent negativity.

The first and possibly easiest type to recognise are the "old-schoolers". In this case, the name says it all. These people will vehemently dislike, without exception, any new game that gets released. Doesn't matter what kind of game it is, or what has come before it. Nothing is ever the same as the "good old days" and after having played the game in question, they will either quit immediately or continue to play while bitching about it twenty-four-seven to the other players. Many Quake 1 fans, unfortunately, fall into this group. They fail to see that while it may have been the best game ever made, it is certainly not the only good game ever made. You get the people who go even further, and say that nothing will ever compare to Kings Quest, Alley Cat, Sopwith, Pacman, Space Invaders or, god forbid, Pong. On the other hand, I'm not sure if these people are so bad compared to the kind I call the "futurist" or "the big hype". They're mad about every upcoming game, preaching its amazing features to everyone. Then when the game comes out, they hate it and start ranting about the next.

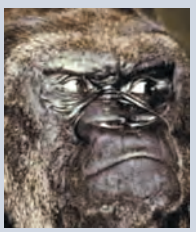
"I say play the game as it stands or don't play at all, it's as simple as that"

Then you get the "pro". This is my pet annoyance, since I'm quite involved with the competitive community. These "pros" will manage to find something wrong with any and every competitive game out there. This weapon's too strong, this race is underpowered, this map isn't balanced, etc. Sure, there may be balance issues when a game is first released, but it's up to the developers to correct them in time. However, these "pros" are surely God, or a manifestation of God, for it is their divine right to say that what does and doesn't make the game more "professional".

Recently, some of the top UT2003 players started whining about how the biorifle and shieldgun were overpowered. Instead of adapting, they moaned so hard that someone wrote a mutator for the game to effect the changes they wanted. This mutator (TWM) has since been adopted by the Electronic Sports World Cup. And now that those two guns have been rendered useless, they're lobbying to tune down the flak cannon. Lowering the power of one weapon will relatively increase the power of the others, and so the game's balance shifts. They're never happy, naturally. I say play the game as it stands or don't play at all, it's as simple as that. The same thing happened with Quake 3 a while back, and someone wrote a mod called Challenge Pro Mode Arena to fix it... which now almost nobody plays.

On the opposite side of the scale are the "casual" gamers. Now there's nothing wrong with playing games purely for fun, but these people will steadfastly refuse to play anything even remotely competitive. They will only play free-for-alls and if you're lucky, large friendly team games where they can be assured the victory will never depend on them. This is all well and good, until they form an entire community, and then start alienating the new players who actually do want to compete.

"May the heavens have mercy on us all if he somehow manages to get a girlfriend, since he will bring her with to every LAN and brag relentlessly."



Mention the word "duel" to the Unreal Tournament community in South Africa, and you are a heathen! If you cannot stand competition, don't pretend to be a part of the community and lessen the experience for those who enjoy it. Winning isn't everything, but competition can be the spice of life.

Together with the "anti-competition" crowd, is the "anti-esports" crowd - the type of people who will say "gaming as a sport is the stupidest idea I've ever heard" and attempt to put down "pro" gamers at every opportunity that arises. Nevermind they are gamers themselves. Nevermind there are others out there who do treat gaming as a sport and enjoy it immensely.

The rather amusing type of pessimist I call the "serious" gamer is next on the list. He or she gets far too involved in the game, forgetting there is anything else in the world around them. These people are timebombs, and all it takes to set them off is one close final game where things just don't go their way. At this point, they will erupt into a fit of hysterical mania, hammer the desk, throw their keyboard around, swear repeatedly, and curse the very existence of gaming. Many quit after said explosion, and thank God for that, otherwise for the next few months we have to put up with their morbid tales of how if they'd just found the bomb a second earlier they would have won and, of course, how much gaming sucks. There is the possibility for these people to evolve into something even more horrible, becoming either a "conspiracy theorist" who is convinced every organiser of every tournament is biased against them, or the kind that showers the winning teams with compliments to their faces, and then tells everyone else what bad sports and awful people they are.

Some of the less common, but no less frustrating pessimists can be found hanging around outside the gaming scene, instead of being a part of it. The "back seat driver" is the one who will tell all the other spectators about every mistake the players are making and how, if he put the time in, he would own them all! There's also the "wannabe jock" who will tell everyone else what a nerd they are and try to act cool whenever possible. May the heavens have mercy on us all if he somehow manages to get a girlfriend, since he will bring her with to every LAN and brag relentlessly. I also find each game type has its own common complaint. With Quake it's always "UT2003 isn't enough like Quake". With Unreal Tournament its "UT2003 is too much like Quake". The WarCraft players are always saying "I wish we still played StarCraft". And the Counter-Strikers are constantly on about "OMG N00B HEADSHOT CHEETER SCRIPT!! I HIT HIS @#$(@#$* HED BUGGY GAME LAG I'M QUITTING NOW!!!! KTHNX!!!", and rejoining five minutes later.

Just shut up and play, please.

If you have a valid complaint, express it through the proper channels because they are there for that very purpose.

And if your opinion isn't labeled as divine inspiration immediately, don't take it like a four-year old.

"These "pros" will manage to find something wrong with any and every competitive game out there"

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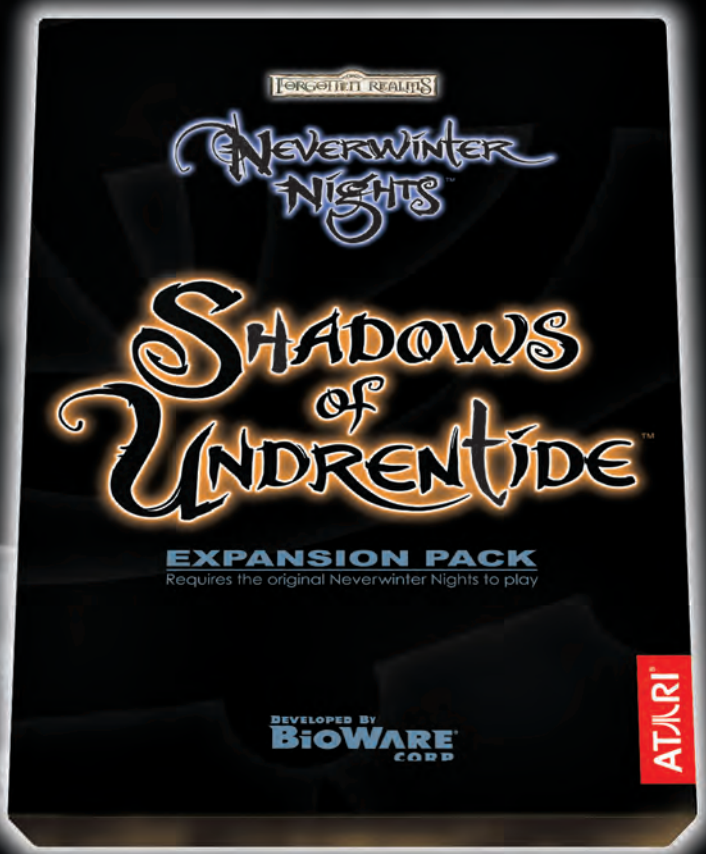

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rampage: Return of the scab

It's really bizarre to be back. No, seriously, this is very strange. After having not written this column for quite some time now (more than a year, at a guess) it is very surreal to once again sit down in front of the PC and hack [*excellent choice of word here, Ed*] out this bit of venom. But hack it out I must, and trust me, hack it out I will.

I decided that this return to print must be heralded by a visit to one of my previous protests. I was rather vehement about it, but it seems that folks have forgotten. See, the other day I was trawling the forum boards (I never say anything, I just sit back and snigger at the stupidity that is rife within our culture) when I noticed that people out there have once again starting sniping at other people for their opinions. Nothing unusual there, but the fact is that the opinion in question is a game review.

Being a reviewer of games (or anything else, for that matter) means that you write an article about the game in which you express your opinion about said title. What you say is what you think. It is not absolute.

As I flip through my trusty Oxford Dictionary (yes, books still exist) I find a few entries that may well interest our disgruntled forum board commentators. The first is: "Review: a critical assessment of a book, play or other work." Read "other work" as computer game for purposes of this tirade, okay? Now a quick trip to the Thesaurus and we see that review is synonymous with both commentary and judgement. Let's go with commentary, shall we, because judgement sounds far too arrogant and I prefer to leave arrogance up to The_Basilisk. "Commentary: the expression of opinions…" Aha! Opinions. Which are "a formal statement of advice from an expert" but are also "a personal view." Let's put it all together.

Reviewers state their opinions about a certain product. Simple as that. But I must ensure that you get the word Opinion here. Opinion.

Now, everyone is entitled to their opinion, and they are entitled to state said opinion. That's one of the cornerstones of democracy. However, when the statement of these opinions gets off target, things get a little messy.

Attacking someone else's opinion with your own is perfectly within your rights. It is completely justifiable and, provided you have two brain cells to scrape together and the rubbish you write makes a little sense, it's a good thing.

But attacking a person based on their opinion is not cool, folks. Let's be brutally honest here. Calling Joe Soap a moron publicly because you don't agree with one of his opinions is childish, immature, low, weak and down-right disgusting. Oh, hang on, I just described seventy-five percent of the gamers out there. What was I thinking?

My mother always told me: "if you haven't anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."

Not that I paid that advice any attention, but let me put it to you this way. People have the opinion (there's that word again) that gamers are generally anti-social, self-important, arrogant teenage know-it-alls who think that they have life figured but are still wondering about that strange hair that has suddenly appeared…" And going around sniping at people proves it.

Grow the hell up, people. It's the first step to getting a girl-friend.

And always keep this in mind. You may blurt your opinion all over every message board for everyone else to see in the hope that someone actually agrees with your warped view of reality, but Joe Soap gets paid to do that. Makes you think, eh?

letters:

I have deigned fit to actually respond to you ingrates. So, every month, I will answer my choice of letters as part of this page - sort of an interactive thing. Now I know that all the mail I will be getting will be flame-mail, but I live in eternal hope that some intelligent people out there will actually send me the kind of things I am looking for: valid comment, requests for advice and generally nice letters, so that I can be nice back. Here is an example of what I mean:

Dear Ramjet,
I am a great fan of yours. In fact, I am your greatest fan. I have every one of your articles tacked up above my bed and I have painted a fantasy portrait of you on my ceiling. I wish that I could be with you right now, to bask in the aura of your brilliance.
I was wondering if you could help me with a problem that I am having. My voice has suddenly become much deeper, and I am growing hair in strange places. I have started to notice girls (they create strange stirrings within my being) and yet they find me unattractive because my face is covered with repulsive pustules and my hair is greasy. I think it has reached time that I must reproduce, but to make offspring, I need a woman by my side.
Your prowess with the ladies is legendary, so I was wondering if I might humbly ask you for some of your invaluable and insightful advice.
Your biggest fan,
The_Basilisk

See, now isn't that a nice letter? Send things like that, and you will not only see them in print, but you will also get an answer written by me personally (or whoever I can bribe to do it at the time.) Take advantage of this great opportunity to tap my vast pool of knowledge and experience. Why suffer through the School of Hard Knocks when I can knock you instead?

All correspondence can be sent to ramjet@nag.co.za. I will not accept snail-mail (this isn't the freaking Stone Age) and I will appreciate it if you actually check your spelling.

Additionally, the all mighty Ed and I will select one letter addressed to him every month, which I will respond to on this page, just for a laugh.

Yes, that's right. I am back. (Insert evil laughter here.)

suckermail:

nicked from the ed

After reading several of your reviews in the May03 issue, it struck me that some of the criticisms were decidedly familiar between reviews; have your reviewers ever considered the likelihood that when they award negative criticism to a game for being repetitive or unoriginal, it probably stems from the inordinate amount of games-playing that they engage in? For the non games-reviewer, features in Game A might NOT be so similar to Game B and Game C, especially if they don't play Games A, B and C. Not everyone has the budget (or time) to play all of the games released. Specifically, most FPS and platform titles are slated for not being original, and being very repetitive. For most of your readers, this may not be a factor, especially on the limited budgets that most of us have. I think your reviewers need to bear in mind that although the games they play might seem bland and lifeless, especially after hours and hours of gameplay on end, the majority of NAGs readers may disagree.
At one with the force
Morgue [FLB]

If a game is unoriginal, it's damned unoriginal. Besides which, most gamers tend to play a limited variety of game genres. That means that they probably will play A, B and C, particularly in the (likely) event that the player is a pirate. Add to that the fact that reviewers have to take all players into account...

Ramjet

Disclaimer: The staff and management of NAG deny any knowledge of what is going on in this article. We only publish it because the author sits in the office with thirty kilos of C4 strapped to his chest. And he won't go away. We tried to lure him out with beer and pizza, but it didn't work.
If you are reading this, please call the police. We need help. We are desperate, because not only is he dangerous, but he also smells like the inside of a Siberian salt mine strip club...

What's the similarity

between a fashion outlet,

a fast food restaurant

and a sports store?

nothing

except their hardware

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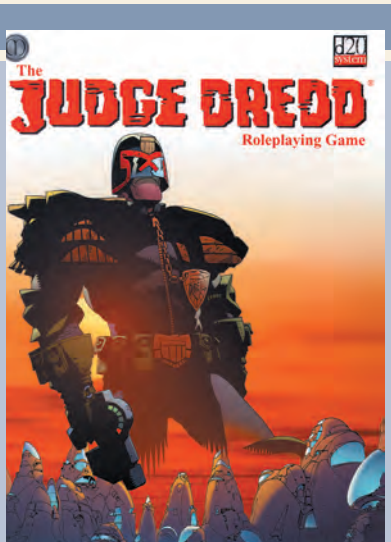
writer: Walt Pretorius

role playing:
Rope weaving and other skills

The Game Master has, as we already know, a daunting task ahead, what with the need to create maps, generate NPCs, put together an enjoyable story and present it to the players, and referee the whole lot in a fair manner. This last element - being fair - is probably the hardest challenge of all. How does one remain unbiased?

A GM may often find themselves swinging the game in favour of the players and, when the players figure out that the GM is constantly being nice to them, the challenges of the game slowly dissolve into a bunch of overly simple encounters.
The secret is something I like to think of as rope. As in "give them enough rope and they will hang themselves."
Players are incredibly adept at getting their characters into trouble. A smart mouthed player may make the wrong comment in a bad situation. Or an overconfident player may decide to attack the creature that you meant them to avoid (and is far too strong for the party to handle). This is all rope. And the GM needs to know how to weave it.
Take, for example, everyone's favourite fantasy game: Dungeons & Dragons. There is more than enough opportunity to include rope in each and every game session. The rules would have characters face creatures that they can handle, and this is fair enough. After all, trapping first level characters in a cavern with a Greater Red Dragon is a bit unfair. But this doesn't mean that those low level characters won't ever encounter such a powerful creature. Let me explain.
If our fantasy setting is to be believable in terms of the way we define our own world, there would need to be complex ecosystems in place for the planet (read as "setting") to function correctly. This is obvious. And, Dragons are as much part of the food chain as any other creature. Putting the low level characters in a situation where they cannot avoid the Dragon would be considered unfair.
However, having the Dragon around and letting the players get themselves into that situation is rope. The GM has provided a situation where the unmanageable foe is present, but he has not forced the players to do anything about it. They get themselves into trouble. And there is nothing unfair about that. It may be a little underhanded, because players will always push the button that says "Do Not Push" and we know this as GMs, but it isn't unfair.
Rope is a fantastic way to teach players to know the limitations of their characters. It is also a great way for overconfident players to learn their lessons.
Remember, though… if you put rope in, and the players put their character's heads through that big old noose, it is still the GM that has to trigger the trapdoor, as it were. Allowing those self same low level characters to trounce the big bad Red would be ridiculous. More likely the Dragon will kill half the party and use the other half as napkins and toothpicks. Sometimes a GM needs to harden his heart.

the Judge Dredd rpg



It is a sort of unwritten rule that every role playing group should have the Dungeons & Dragons third edition rules lying around somewhere. This cornerstone of the art of RPG is a necessity. Particularly when you consider the fact that it now forms the core of the d20 system (which we discussed a bit of last month).
Even if they have only the Player's Manual, they can go out and buy something like this month's review product: the Judge Dredd Role Playing Game. Yes, that's right, you can take to the streets of Mega City One as either a law maker or breaker in this d20 system title.
As with many of the other d20 titles, this is not the first time we have seen the Judge Dredd setting used for the basis of a role playing game. The previous incarnation of the game was a well loved and much sought after book (very difficult to find here in South Africa) but the game failed after a while (as many great games have).
Now the setting is revived, and is carried by the very competent, complete and flexible d20 rule system - basically it uses D&D 3rd edition rules, with a few changes.
The biggest problem with a game like this comes in with the setting itself. Judge Dredd has been around for a good many years, and he has a huge amount of fans around the globe. Now, if you are the GM of this particular setting, you better know your stuff - if one of your players knows the setting better than you do, problems may occur… "hang on, that's not right!" kind of stuff.
Thankfully the rule book itself is rather full of vital information - it doesn't contain everything, but with a little added research (reading comics!) the GM should handle everything just fine.
Players will, of course, want to play the famous characters from this comic series, but this should be discouraged, as with any other game. Have them make their own characters, whether judges or perps, and the game will be just that much more enjoyable.
Overall, great stuff. It's a fun and intriguing setting, and the game itself offers a lot of potential for the resourceful GM.

REVIEWED BY
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius
The Judge Dredd Role Playing Game

PLUS	MINUS
Needs only one other book	Expensive
Familiar setting	Players may get picky!

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by Anton Lines

Now comes the hardest part...

Learning Japanese, Part 4

Grammar. Sentence structure. The nightmare of many an English scholar in high school. The good news is that Japanese has a distinct set of rules with very few exceptions, and if you follow these rules, you won't go wrong. And in this respect, it is actually one of the easier languages to learn. This section is aimed at those who want a real understanding of the language. If you are not one of those people, I will be getting into more specifically anime-related linguistics after the grammar section is finished.

Word order is highly important to most languages. In English, the subject comes first, then the verb, and then the object. For example: "The artist (subject) drew (verb) a picture (object)." In Japanese, the verb comes last unless there is a question marker afterwards. (We will discuss forming questions next month). While you can follow the order "subject-object-verb", it is not essential due to the sentence markers. There are four postposition marker words (marker that comes after the word it's marking) that are important to Japanese: the subject marker "ga", the object marker "o" (easy to remember), the possession marker "no", and the topic marker "wa". While this may seem a little confusing, it's really quite straightforward.

Let's take the example used earlier, "The artist drew a picture." In Japanese this is: "Gaka ga e o kaita". "Gaka" (artist) is the subject of the sentence, indicated by the marker "ga" directly after it. "E" (picture) is the object of the sentence, indicated by "o". "Kaita" (drew) is the verb. You'll notice that Japanese doesn't use the English articles ("the", "a", "an").

When you want to say something like: "The artist drew my picture", then you have need of the possession marker. In English this is often shown by use of the apostrophe (e.g., someone's). Possession is indicated in Japanese by three words together: the owner, the possession marker "no", and the object belonging to the owner. For example: "Watashi no e" (my picture). So our sentence: "The artist drew my picture," translates into: "Gaka ga watashi no e o kaita."

Don't forget, you still have to put in the object marker "o" after the possession phrase.

The topic only comes into play if the sentence is found in context, if something relating to it has been said before. The topic of the sentence can be either the subject or the object.

Basically, it is what's being talked about, or what's most relevant in the sentence. For example, if I ask: "what did the artist draw?" the topic is "my picture". If I ask: "who drew my picture?" the topic becomes "the artist".

The topic marker "wa" replaces either the subject or the object marker, and it is advisable to put the topic at the beginning of the sentence. So then, "What did the artist draw?". Well, "Watashi no e wa gaka ga kaita." ("Wa" is now in place of "o", and the topic is at the beginning).

Noir

Of the selection of animes with a distinct focus on female main characters, Noir is possibly the most notable. Mireille Bouquet is a young, talented freelance assassin operating out of France, who discovers that her target, a girl named Kirika Yumura, has some kind of link to the death of her parents. Mireille's family were part of a powerful syndicate in Corsica, and only she escaped when they were murdered. Kirika, surprisingly, has exceptional skill with a weapon and no memory of her past. The two join forces to discover what or who exactly brought them together. Through several dubious assignments, contact with an underground society known as Soldats, and the arrival of another young assassin, Chloe, who calls herself the "true Noir", they slowly uncover the events of the past.

However, while they are partners for the timebeing, they have an agreement that Mireille will complete her original assignment, and kill Kirika after it is all over.

The strongest attribute of Noir is the intrigue it manages to create, slowly unveiling more and more until the full picture emerges into the light. It is brutal in its execution, with no-holds-barred scenes of violence and death. However, blood and guts are not the focus of this show at all. The violence is used only as a means to advance the story, which is well written and gripping. Something else that makes it quite unique, is the French / European angle being done in an anime. This is as unusual as it is effective, and it seems the writer and director did their research well.

The main drawback, however, is the direction itself. While there are some breathtaking scenes, the complete overuse of closeups and tilted angles do get very frustrating. The story drags a little in certain places, and I felt other important parts were over too quickly. The characters on the other hand are immediately likeable (fans of Japanese schoolgirls will enjoy Kirika), diverse and well-rounded, tackling the emotions involved with being an assassin with sensitivity and insight.

A very solid series overall.

Genre: Crime / Drama / Women
Year: 2001
Producer: Victor Entertainment
Format: Series
Episodes: 26
Language: Japanese with English subtitles
Availability: Uncommon

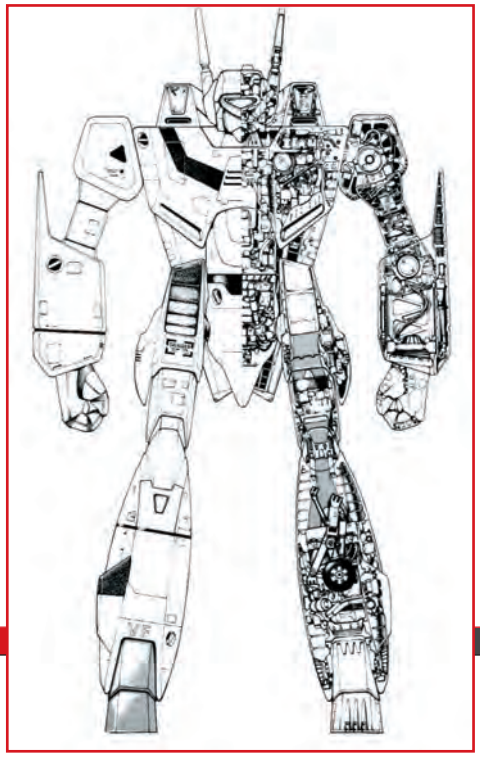
Concept	8
Story	9
Soundtrack	9
Characters	7
Animation	8
Translation	7
Total Score (out of 100)	85

Mech my Day!

Mecha... Something uniquely anime, and just so damn cool!
Remember those early TV shows we used to watch as kids? Things like Robotech, Voltron, G-force?
Well if you don't then you're just too damn young :)
Anyway the one thing they all had in common and the one thing that made them stand out were the Mecha.

The definition of Mecha, well loosely put is a large mechanical machine (usually a giant robot of some kind capable of transformation).
In Robotech they were the VF-1 Veritech fighters which looked just like your average F-14 fighter plane, but with the flick of a switch they became awesome humanoid robots capable of sizing up to the alien threat (I'm sure you all remember that the race of enemy aliens were giants?); not only could it transform into a giant robot it could also transform into "Guardian" mode, a half way mix between a fighter jet and a robot allowing for less speed but more maneuverability as well as vertical take off and landing capabilities.

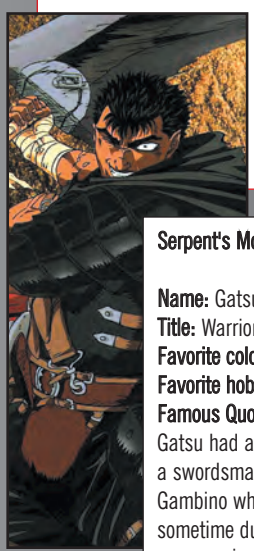
Voltron had a completely different kind of Mech - Voltron (which .. for all you Otaku out there was just like Robotech a combination of more than one completely separate Japanese series spliced into one) used the many mecha to create one giant mecha formula.
There were 5 different mechanical lions piloted individually which, on their own, were rather potent but when combined created a Super-Mech capable of destroying just about any alien threat thrown at it! Mecha are still common in modern anime and have become more advanced and detailed.
One only needs to watch some Full Metal Panic, or catch the first episode of Macross 0 to understand the level of complexity now found in anime Mecha. There's just something seriously appealing about climbing behind the controls of a giant robot loaded with weaponry. Below is a short list of my personal newer mecha anime favourites:



1) Full Metal Panic
2) Macross 0
3) Vandread
4) Dual

Keep an eye on the Yomikaki (Black Blade forum) for more on Mecha, we're also keeping an eye on real mecha development in Japan.

Serpent



Serpent's Monthly Character Bio

Name: Gatsu
Title: Warrior/Century Slayer
Favorite colour: Red... definitely red
Favorite hobby: Swinging his massive sword around
Famous Quote: GRRRRR!

Gatsu had a harsh upbringing, his parents were killed and he was left to die... a mercenary by the name of Gambino found him abandoned and raised him as a swordsman, however Gambino became angry with the fact that Gatsu was becoming such a strong warrior and tried to kill him in his sleep... Gatsu killed Gambino whilst defending himself and had to flee. Years passed on and left Gatsu wandering the wilderness, a wandering mercenary for hire. It was sometime during this period that Griffith spotted him. Griffith is the leader of the mercenary force named "the band of the hawk", the most reputable band of mercenaries in the known kingdom. Griffith wanted Gatsu to join his band and challenged him to a duel, if Gatsu lost he would belong to Griffith and to his band of the Hawk, if he won he could go free but due to Gatsu's inexperience he lost to Griffith and joined the Band of the Hawk. Wielding his incredibly huge sword (size of a Cadillac) he quickly rose through the ranks, with Griffith's trust in him he became the leader of the Hawk's raiding party.... Gatsu was in for a bumpy ride, his new friend/leader Griffith has an ambition that can only lead to trouble, he wants his own kingdom and is willing to stop at nothing to get it!

Serpent

what do we do about hentai?

Well well well, here's an issue that stirs up another raging debate within the otaku community alone, never mind anywhere else. Hentai - what do you make of it?
You all know what this word means, right? Well here's a bit of trivia, how about how it gets its meaning? Anyone..? Well, here's the answer. The word is made of two kanji, "hen" and "tai" (incidentally, these are the ON readings as the two kanji form a compound, for anyone who knows what that means). The kanji, "hen", means strange or weird or unusual and the kanji, "tai", means body. Well, you can see now how it works together to get the english translation of pervert or perverted, in a sexual sense that is.
It seems to me that you get two types of otaku, those who don't mind or like hentai and those who think that anyone who likes it should be slaughtered.
Since I'm against any kind of high horse attitude, I'd immediately side with those who like it, just to get in the face of those who try to oppose it on ethical grounds.
My attitude is "whatever floats your boat", if someone likes hentai anime with multi-membered monsters doing strange things to girls dressed in small amounts of something transparent (though I don't really see how anyone could), then that's their business.
The strange thing is that those who like it aren't the ones starting the arguments, it's those who claim to be violently opposed to the stuff that seem to know where it is, what it is called, what it contains and exactly which parts to protest about. Those who like it usually go and get if from there after those opposed have pointed it out.
This is particularly true of a certain someone I've heard about who posts on a certain forum and uses a certain trans-gender name, I'm led to believe.
I'd have joined said forum a while ago if it wasn't for this certain off-putting presence.

KnightGainax

lazy gamer's guide:

Lazy gamers are, by definition, lazy. But they also like trying new things, like the Eye Toy for the PlayStation 2. So, to make their lives easier, and to help them stay as lazy as possible, we present the incredibly low energy guide to...

Cheating with the Sony PS2 Eye Toy

Stand really really really really really close
The trick is getting close enough to fill the screen, but not too close, which will end your game...

Aquire a Michael Jackson sequined glove
Shiny things are picked up by the Eye Toy much better than normal, tasteful garments. The louder, the better...

The white shirt waltz
Wave a white shirt at the Eye Toy in an indiscriminate manner. This will confuse the thing, as it will automatically assume that you're doing the right thing...

Multiplayer
Many hands make Eye Toy easy, as some wise sage once said. Get lots of friends to crowd around the camera and wave their hands about. Beware: eyes can be lost using this technique...

For a more in-depth look at this device, see our hardware section later in this issue...

Herewith pictures of physical features that may make playing the Eye Toy easier.

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ON THE CD

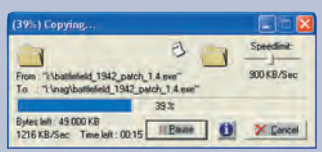
THE ORIGINAL FREELOADER

total copy / browser hijack blaster

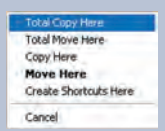
total copy

Windows has a problem in that when it copies files, it doesn't do it at optimum speed, not to mention that when you copy large files, you need to let it run, regardless. Total Copy solves all of these hassles. First off it's much faster than the conventional way of copying files. And as an added feature you can pause a copy process, and resume it later. You can also adjust the speed the copy should take place at.

While these might sound rudimentary and pointless, it's not when you are copying large files that can take from several minutes to even an hour to copy on your machine. Copying files tend to slow a machine's performance, so it's good to keep control over the job at hand.



To use Total Copy, simply install it. Then, right-click and drag the files in question, and select Copy with Total Copy. A box will appear, showing the progress of the copying, and allowing you to pause the copy or set its speed.

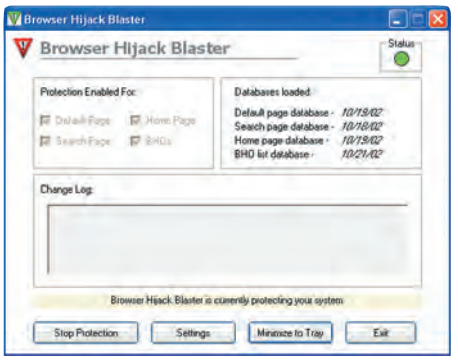


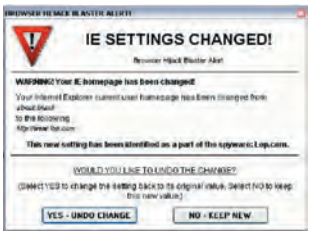
XBlaster: Password Screen

If you use an easy password, you're more likely to see it cracked. Of course, the likelihood of someone deciding to crack your password is quite rare, unless you have something really important that someone wants.

Still, it's a good precaution to have decent passwords, and the password creator does just that. Simply specify the length and security level, and the password is generated! These can be quite complex, though, so you might want to go find a password minder to keep track of all of them.

One of the most annoying features of the Internet is the ability of sites to hijack your browser. Everyone's experienced these at least once: pop-ups that cover your entire screen, browser controls disappearing, or the more common events where a site changes your homepage, default page or adds itself to your bookmarks list.





Even though most of the latest browsers have security features to combat these, it's still a good idea to have some sort of a watchdog looking out for the integrity of your browser. Browser Hijack Blaster is a free tool that sits in your system tray and monitors any such changes made to your browser. When a site tries to do something illicit, it will pop up a warning message, and ask you if this should be allowed. Most of the time, it's not what you want to happen on your machine, and you can instruct it to block the change.

Though it's not a feature-rich program (the ability to list specific sites as malicious would be nice), it does the job it intends to do, and it does it well.

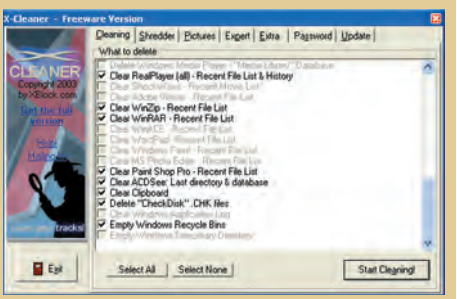
It might not work on all browsers, but the more commonly used ones (those of genus Internet Explorer, Netscape or Mozilla) seem to work along with it just fine.

XBlaster: Main Scanner Screen

Xblaster's central function is to remove Spyware. Though you could opt for the larger and more feature-rich ADAware, Xbrowser does well in a pinch, especially since it's only 300kb in size, plus it doesn't need any installation. But be sure to update your definitions, just to be safe.

You can browse through the myriad of options to scan for and leave the scanner to do its job. This version of Xblaster is free, but there is a deluxe model, and some of the features of the program are not available to non-paying users.

Running the XBlaster scan will remove Spyware as well as system footprints, such as your browser history and such.

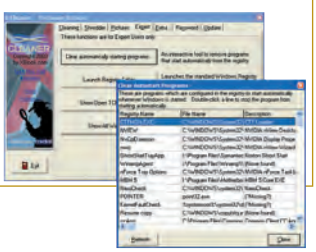


XBlaster: Expert Screen

The Expert screen is very useful, if only because it gives you access to the launch programs in windows. These are applications that launch at the startup of Windows and usually sit hidden in your memory.

By browsing the list, you can enable or disable the startup apps. It's a good precaution to scan this list, since some of the Spyware apps out there load up during startup. Of course, on the same note, the section is called 'Expert' for a reason. A lot of the functions listed there are essential services that Windows uses. It's also fair to note that you get better programs whose sole function is to check and remove startup programs. But as a quick-fix measure, XBlaster's version does well.

The other three buttons either launch the Registry Editor or are only available in the Deluxe version.



XBlaster: Shredder Screen

One thing Windows does not do is efficiently delete files. It might seem like it, but in reality a data recovery program can find those supposedly gone files again. Everyone has some files, though, that they don't want anyone else to see. This is where XBlaster's Shredder is very useful. Simply drag the files you want deleted onto the shredder and they will disappear forever.

XBlaster: Misc

XBlaster has a few options extra, but you'll need to pay for them. One is the nifty picture finder that scans a drive for pictures - including cached pictures. Then you can specify which you wanted to delete. The Extra section has a few useful links that you might want to look at, and the Update link lets you check for the latest version of the program.

PC CD-ROM

Ghost Master®

NAG
NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE
AWARD OF MERIT

89%
NAG Review

Once you've made it to the afterlife, does it really matter how much mischief you cause? Ghost Master lets you watch over and scare the bejesus out of mere mortals in classic horror-inspired scenarios such as The Blair Wisp Project and Deadfellas among others.

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Miyamoto

writer: James Francis

Shigeru Miyamoto as a name might not ring a bell with a lot of South African gamers, but his games will. He is responsible for most of the Nintendo legacy, having created characters such as Mario, Link, Donkey Kong, Pikmin and many more. Right now he's the head game designer at Nintendo and regarded by CNN Style as the Spielberg of gaming. Not only that, but he is regarded as a genius. These are assertions thrown around a lot in entertainment, so I was naturally skeptical as I stepped into the meeting room. But it took a mere hour of eight journalists interviewing him during this years E3 in Los Angeles to change my mind.

Pacman?

Off the bat, the first question asked was about Pacman, the innovative remake he is working on for the GameCube and Gameboy Advance. Of course, if he remakes a game, it has to be something unique. "The best part about games from a long time ago is that they were very simple, and it's these very simple elements to the gameplay that allowed large amounts of people to start playing these games." said Miyamoto San. The idea of Pacman appeals to him in that it goes back to the early days of game development - where objectives were easy to identify, as was failure and success. But games have become more complicated over the years to keep gamers happy, and this means objectives have also become more convoluted. "In one sense the games got better, but at the same time they got less simplistic and so fewer people were really able to get in and play them."

Hence the interest in Pacman. "With Pac-Man I think that, even with the same gameplay, it's still fun." he said, "To some people it might seem kind of boring because it's not as extravagant as a lot of games now, but there's still that core element of fun in it."

Another reason why Pac-Man is close to him is the idea of connectivity - a topic that appeared a lot during the interview, as well as with Nintendo in general. It seems that the company has finally realized the true potential between connecting the GameCube and Gameboy Advance, and they are exploiting it to the full. Though several games at the show boasted connectivity, Pacman is probably the leading example of how it really opens up new gameplay possibilities. "By adding this new connectivity structure to the game you are able to take something that many people have played and are very familiar with - Pac-Man- and add new elements and new experiences to it you've never been able to have before.

Games for the kids!

"This year the focus of our show is connectivity and showing off the features and the possibilities that it provides - so I guess in that sense we haven't really shown titles we hope to stand against Grand Theft Auto, something that might try to show next year or sometime after."

This was his response to a question on one of his earlier comments - that one of Nintendo's challenges are to create a game that rivals GTA3 without the violence. It's always been Nintendo's legacy to make family-orientated games, a move sometimes criticized in an industry where the adult gamer is slowly but surely becoming a more important market share. But the focus has always been on gameplay.

"I think Pikmin 2 this year is going to end up being one of our most fun games," he stated, "Obviously Pikmin is a very different concept to Grand Theft Auto, but the underlying idea of being free to do what you want is there and I think that's going to be a popular game for us."

But is it art?

For one of the most talented designers in the industry, Miyamoto's design philosophy is quite surprising. Hideo Kojima, best known for the Metal Gear series, sees himself as an artist. But to Miyamoto it's mostly about the people who play it.

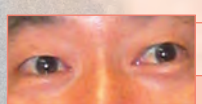
"I personally see what I make as being a product for sale, and not so much as a work of art. When I make a game, it's full of my own expression but ultimately the objective of the game is to make the user happy." He adds that putting them into the market at the right time is the other aspect. But ultimately, it's less about his own expression and more about making people happy.

In fact, he talks as you'd expect a veteran of the gaming industry to speak.

Miyamoto continues to explain that even though developers have to use their artistic talents, such as creativity and finding your own unique nature, at the end of the day they are putting out a product for consumption, and that's what's important.

Of course, there is a flipside to the process, which a lot of developers seem to ignore. "A lot of people will just

"The best part about games from a long time ago is that they were very simple, and it's these very simple elements to the gameplay that allowed large amounts of people to start playing these games."



The future of Zelda and Mario

"It's not that there's a plan for what we're planning to make, what we're going to do is look at our experiments and out of all of them we're going to find the one that's most fun and exciting and can eventually evolve into the next versions of those games. As for what that's going to be I can't say right now. But the thing about games development now is that it's getting more and more difficult to create games because the graphics are so complex and require so much time to create. It's true that we have a team that focuses on an existing sample or an existing model and improving upon that idea and building it into a new type of game. We also have staff that focus exclusively on creating completely new ideas that we've never seen before."

Metroid 2

Miyamoto confirmed that Metroid 2 is in development, but this should surprise no-one after the game's smash hit status, not to mention it winning Retro Studios the Rookie Developer of the Year award.

"What we did with Metroid Prime was gather individual developers and programmers from different areas and put them together into Retro Studios. This was their first project with all of these members working together, and while we were making Metroid Prime we didn't really know what the strengths and weaknesses of the Retro team might be."

It was a gamble that paid off, though. Metroid Prime did very well, partly thanks to the game's legacy but also thanks to a very solid gameplay experience. The project also allowed them to determine the team's strengths and weaknesses. In the same way that Timesplitters 2 was a major step up from the original game, expect big things from Metroid 2. Of course, Miyamoto is being very candid.

"Well, I can't really say a whole lot about what's going to be in Metroid Prime 2, but because they have this experience behind them and they're going to be able to take advantage of their new-found strengths - I think you're going to find the game's going to be a lot cooler."

He also mentions that the one thing missing from the original game - multiplayer, might be included in the sequel. "But," he adds, laughing, "I don't know about any networking, though!"

continue to make games, and they just make sequel after sequel and the gameplay doesn't change much. When we make, say, a Mario game, we always try to find that new idea or that new bit of creativity that goes into the Mario game, so that if you look back at past Mario games and the ones we're doing now they're different."

Miyamoto concedes that games do have very artistic elements. But in the end, games are about entertainment.

"The opera for instance is very interesting and can be fun and a lot of people consider opera to be 'art' and very artistic but really if you get down to it, all the opera is is entertainment. And of course long ago when people were writing plays, when they were writing the script for their own play in their theatre, if the theatre next door suddenly started running a production that was a very similar idea then all of a sudden the scriptwriter would re-write his script completely. So that's probably one of the reasons that you used to see a lot of stories where things wouldn't line up at all and you'd have these crazy stories that didn't match together and people would say: "Oh, that's brilliant artistic expression" but (laughs) really it's probably more often because they were forced to change things at the last second because of other things in the market."

But isn't he compromising himself? "I don't think what I would create would change much, because what I want to do is create things that are going to make people happy and give them enjoyment. But on the other hand I never go out to the market and say "what game do you want?" and then come back to my office and go to work and try and make that game. That's because everyone in the market will say "Oh, I want... what's popular right now".

"I don't think what I would create would change much, because what I want to do is create things that are going to make people happy and give them enjoyment"

A mature Cube?

Onto the GameCube and Nintendo's almost unshakable legacy that their games are for kids. Has the GameCube managed to garner a more mature audience, despite the mass of younger games?

"I think you might be mistaken on the idea that games are just focused on children, and if you look at the GameCube software line-up there's well over a hundred titles that have been released and overall I think there are a lot of games that are not all focused on children." He has a point, if you look at Resident Evil 0 and Splinter Cell. But the mature game headcount is much lower on the GCN than with other consoles. Still, Miyamoto is adamant that the GameCube has a bigger appeal than just for children: "The list is there! Sometimes I wonder if people haven't been caught up by Sony's strategic plan and they're not writing about the titles for GameCube that are out there that appeal to all ages. [laughs] I wish people would write more about them; I hope you all will because there's a lot of games out there for GameCube that do appeal to adults."

Will he ever retire?

Miyamoto has been with Nintendo since 1977 - before

Mario Kart Double Dash

"The nice thing about Mario Kart is that it's a game where the gameplay is so simple that anybody can play it - kids, teenagers, adults, grandparents - so what we wanted to do was try and keep those elements and at the same time make the game look more fun and more exciting, by putting in some of these wacky cars and having fun things going by in the environments. Those are things we could easily do with the GameCube power, so we wanted to take advantage of that and see how we could make the game not only fun to play but also fun to watch as well."

Nintendo online

"Nintendo isn't saying that we're not interested in doing anything online and myself as a games creator, certainly I'm not saying that I don't want to do anything online. What we're saying is that as a business, online is not viable right now and we don't want to go into online unless we make a viable business from that. Until we reach that point, we're not going to go in that direction."

Animal Crossing in Europe

"Localising that game for Europe would be extremely difficult [laughs]. Every country in Europe has different events and different holidays in their calendar. If Europe would be happy with the events in the American game then there might be some possibility in doing that. Would that be okay with people in England? [laughs] Maybe we'll do it!"

him all they made were toys.

But it's been quite a few years now. Is the man thinking of retirement? "There was a time when I thought that maybe if my games completely stopped selling then I might retire, but actually at Nintendo now we've got a lot of young, talented game designers. Maybe once I'm able to train them I'll get to a point where I feel like I can pass the torch on and let them get on with things on their own without me watching over them. Maybe that's the day that I'll retire [laughs]."

And what about a legacy?

"I've been working with a lot of my directors and designers for many years now, and we always talk about my philosophies on creativity and creating new ideas and things like that. In that sense I think there isn't anything particular I would like to focus on trying to create as a legacy...

So long as there's still something I can pass on to them that I think will be positive in terms of the products that we're putting out, it would still be too early for me to retire.

If on the other hand I get to a point where my input is no longer of any use then I guess that's when I've overstayed my welcome!"

His Legacy...

Miyamoto has developed or produced over 76 games...

Nintendo ES
Donkey Kong 1983 | Donkey Kong Jr. 1983 | Donkey Kong 3 1984 | Super Mario Bros. 1985 | Super Mario Bros. 2 1989 | Super Mario Bros. 2: Lost Levels 1986 | Super Mario Bros. 3 1991 | The Legend of Zelda 1986 | Zelda 2: The Adventure of Link 1987

Gameboy
Donkey Kong '95 1994 | Legend of Zelda: Oracle 2001 | Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening 2001 | Mole Mania 1996 | Waverace 1992

SNES
Earthbound 1991 | F-Zero 1991 | Starfox/Starwing 1994 | Super Mario All Stars 1995 Super Mario Kart 1992 | Super Mario RPG 1996 | Super Mario World 1991 | SMW2: Yoshi's Island 1995 | Yoshi's Safari 1993 | Zelda: A Link to The Past 1991

N64
1080° Snowboarding 1998 | Animal Forest 2001 | F-Zero X 1998 | F-Zero X Expansion (64DD) 1999 | Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask 2000 | Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 1998 | Mario Artist (64DD) 1999 | Mario Kart 64 1997 | Star Fox 64 1997 | Super Mario 64 1996 | Super Smash Bros. 1999 | Waverace 64 1996 | Yoshi's Story 1998

GameCube
1080: White Storm 2003 | Animal Crossing 2002 | Doshin The Giant 2002 | F-Zero GX 2003 | Geist TBA | Giftpia TBA | Kirby's Air Ride 2003 | Legend of Zelda: Four Swords TBA | Legend of Zelda: Tetra's Trackers TBA | Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker 2003 | Luigi's Mansion 2001 | Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour 2003 | Mario Kart: Double Dash!! TBA | Mario Sunshine 2002 | Mario Tennis TBA | Marionette TBA | Metroid Prime 2002 | Pac Man TBA | Pikmin 2001 | Pikmin 2 TBA | Roll 'O Rama 2002 | Stage Debut 2002 | Starfox TBA | Super Smash Bros. Melee 2001 | Wario World TBA | Waverace: Blue Storm 2001

Gameboy Advance
Advance Wars 2001 | Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising 2003 | F-Zero: Maximum Velocity 2001 | Mario Kart Super Circuit 2001 | Mario & Luigi 2003 | Metroid Fusion 2002 | Super Mario Advance 2001 | Super Mario World: SMA2 2002 | SMW3: Yoshi's Island 2002 | Super Mario Brothers 3: SMA4 2003 | Wario Land 4 2001 | Wario Ware 2003

"The opera for instance is very interesting and can be fun and a lot of people consider opera to be 'art' and very artistic but really if you get down to it, all the opera is is entertainment"

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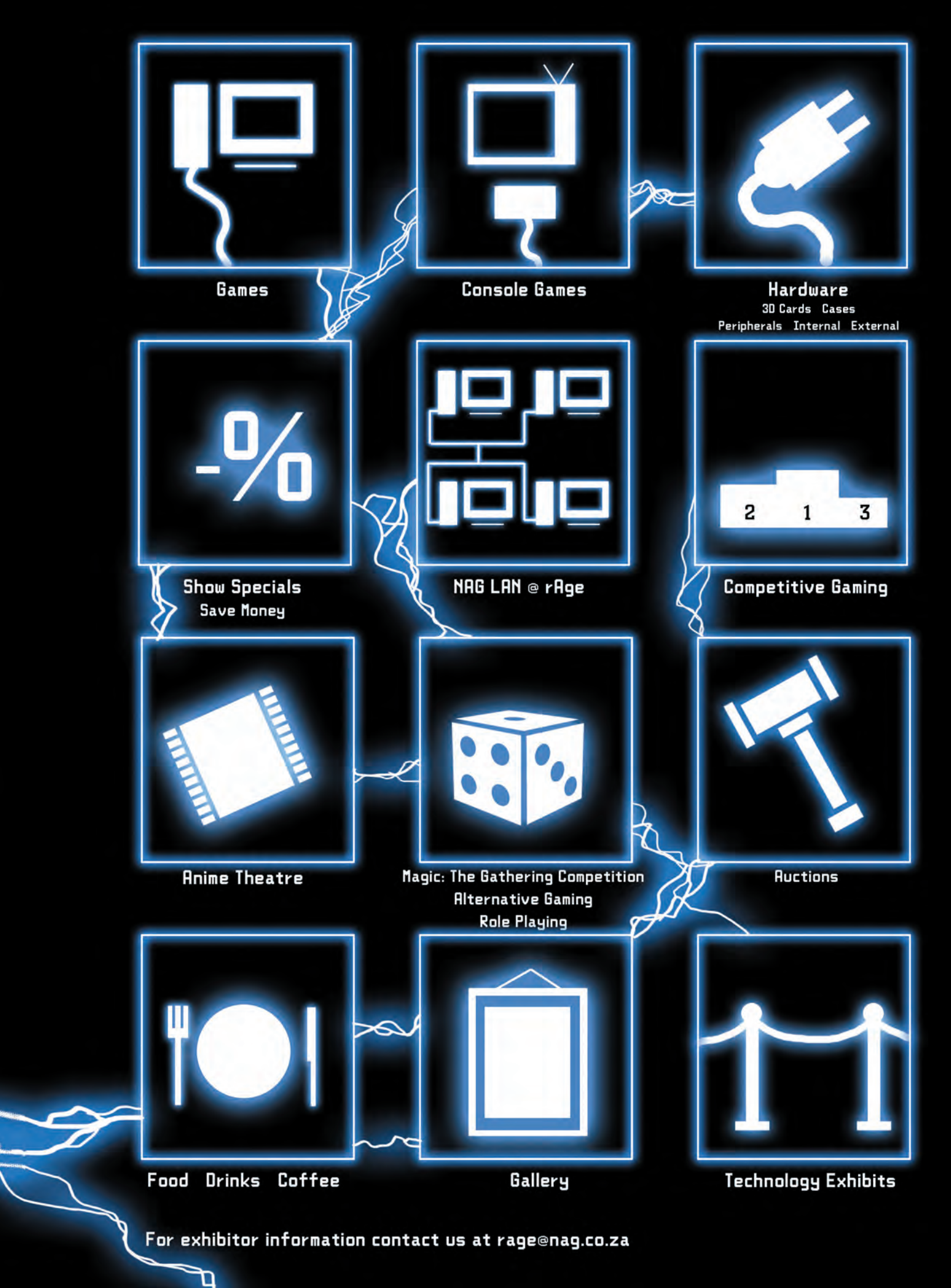
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Save Money
NAG LAN @ rAge
Competitive Gaming
Anime Theatre
Magic: The Gathering Competition
Alternative Gaming
Role Playing
Auctions
Food Drinks Coffee
Gallery
Technology Exhibits
For exhibitor information contact us at rage@nag.co.za

Player of the Month

Name:
Shaun Marx

Occupation:
Scholar

Nick:
Deathsbane

Games:
Counter-Strike | Quake 3

Age:
18

Quote:
"You're making my FPS drop!"

Clan:
Evolve

Achievements:
* Represented South Africa at the World Cyber Games 2001 and 2002
* Top16 Worfaire2001 CS Prelims (Team: GI)
* 1st Place Worfaire 2001 CS Finals (Team: XTC)
* 1st Place Gamers Gate Carousel CS 2002 (Team: Bravado)
* 2nd Place Worfaire2002 CS Prelims (Team: Bravado)
* 2nd Place Gamers Gate Eastgate CS 2002 (Team: DC)
* 1st Place SAIX CS Online League 2002 (Team: DC).
* 1st Place Worfaire 2002 CS Finals (Team: DC)
* 1st Place Mayhem CS Offline League 2003. (Team: Evolve)
* 1st Place Gamers Gate Carousel CS 2003 (Team: Evolve)

<The_Basilisk> How do you personally prepare yourself for major tournaments?
<evolve-Deathsbane> I practice as much as I can against bots, online, teammates and whatever else. Our team practices every weekend before events, the entire day on Saturdays - Sundays. This is done at "Evocity", our practice facility in Boksburg. As for the online, I do that either on dahshur server during the day or kalahari during the night. And teammates, well that is when they come to my house or Evocity and I LAN against them. Luckily we have 2 teams so we get quite a lot of practice in. Bots, I only play these when I really really get bored or feel I'm totally sucking.

<The_Basilisk> You were disqualified from one of the Gamers Gate Quake 3 Tournaments, can you tell us what happened?
<evolve-Deathsbane> Ah, was waiting for this one. I was given a random PC like all the other Q3 players, supplied by Gamers Gate, and whoever's config was still on the machine. Naturally I just set up my keys and started to play. I was on a winning streak of note. The game was suddenly stopped (playing for 2nd place at the time). They told me I was disqualified, no warning, nothing. They pointed out to me that cl_timenudge was -10. I couldn't understand why I was disqualified, because they told me it was fine and I took the command off and beat the person in the rematch. Then they decided to disqualify me, going back on their word.

<The_Basilisk> Tell us about your recent sponsorship.
<evolve-Deathsbane> We have to keep a high profile and advertise the sponsors' products of course. That means playing on their PCs and wearing their clothes with their logos on, etc. We have to behave accordingly, no more outbursts. We are basically professionals for the sponsors now.

<The_Basilisk> Doom 3 or Half-Life 2?
<evolve-Deathsbane> Half-Life 2, of course! I just fell in love with the physics in Half-Life 2. But I'd say it's a very difficult choice. I can really only answer that when I've played both.

A Fuel Injection for Competitive Racing

Rory Mcleod, supplier of the superb Pro Gaming Mousepad and an avid player of PC racing games, has been been lobbying for racing to be recognised as a competitive e-sport since the days of the old GLSA and the Worfaire events.

"Formula One Racing is huge in this country," says Mcleod, "I feel there are a lot of people out there who want to race, but it is not supported as yet." He aims to eventually have racing on the same level as Counter-Strike and the other popular tournament games. At the Gamers Gate DFI LANparty, the first steps were taken in getting the regular players involved. A free competition was run for all the participants, with a custom force-feedback racing chair up for first prize. It was awarded to the second place driver in the competition, "Sergio", after Mcleod put up the fastest time himself. "I've always been a racing fanatic," he says, "been racing sims since '97".

In order to boost the image of competitive racing, Mcleod formed his own two-man professional racing team, consisting of himself and Merilyn Goosen. The team conforms to the real life Formula One format and rules and is now sponsored by NAG Magazine, as well as Samsung, AMD, Gainward and Microsoft.

Mcleod plans to set up his own racing league, where players like himself can find other drivers to challenge and test their skills. The league will be split into professional, intermediate and novice sections, and so he plans to accommodate a wide range of skill levels. Even those who have never touched a racing game before are welcome. "I'm going to be helping the new gamers, giving them tips on how to set up the car," says Mcleod. The league will be advertised on www.langames.co.za and of course in NAG Magazine. "It looks like we are going to support the new EA F1 Challenge 99-02 and Sierra Nascar 2003 at the NAG rAge event. I've also spoken to Samsung about doing something next year, and they came up with The Samsung F1 Challenge which I think will be awesome."

Prospective drivers will need their own computer, with a minimum CPU speed of 500Mhz, 128MB of RAM, and a 16MB Direct3D graphics accelerator. A joystick or preferably a steering wheel is recommended for those who intend to take it more seriously. For more information and good prices on racing peripherals, you can contact Rory via email at thepropad@tiscali.co.za, or alternatively phone 011-452-5970 or 084-371-253.

AMD Sponsor DC-Ignite

The second Counter-Strike team in South Africa to receive a major sponsorship is Damage Control's Ignite. The team have performed consistently well since they were formed in late 2002.

To give you a bit of background information: the players were recruited for DC by Gandalf when his Octane team split up after the World Cyber Games. Two came from the old Tainted Mentality team which had also disbanded a little while before. After a period of getting used to each other's playing styles, they began to beat the other recognised clans on a regular basis. They entered the Mayhem Offline League 2003, finishing in fifth place due to missing one of the fixtures. At 1000manLAN, Ignite lost a close winner's bracket final against Evolve, and went on to place second overall. They also secured a solid third at the Gamers Gate Electronic Sports World Cup Qualifier last month.

The team, consisting of Tyrone (Explicit) and Christopher (Apocalypse) Lautre, James (Prem) and Graham (ReBs) Schwikkard, and Harry (Incin) Apostoleris, have received processors from AMD, as well as sponsored clothing. In return, Ignite will represent AMD at every major LAN and competition they attend. The sponsorship will be reviewed every three months, when AMD will decide if the players require new equipment.

"I went to AMD's website, looked under the contact list and emailed them about it," said James Schwikkard, the team's manager. "I explained what we do and what we could do for them. Alex Mann from AMD emailed me back and offered to sponsor us AMD chips."
Hopefully this shows the increase in sponsor interest in South African E-Sports, and will no doubt serve as motivation for the other top teams to strive for the results which will land them the same sort of beneficial deals.

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mayhem
www.mayhem.co.za

LAN LORE:
Mayhem is officially boycotting GTA! No, not the game you fool! Not too long ago Mayhem was the victim of Grand Theft Auto, some one decided that it would be a good idea to steal a car from the parking lot at a Mayhem event.

In response to this Mayhem are putting a 4 phase plan into action to combat vehicle theft.

Phase 1:
The installation of flood lights in the back parking area. The front parking area will become a drop off zone, all cars will have to park at the back. An armed guard will be placed in the back parking area to watch over the cars at all times. This guard will check for car keys and the Mayhem car pass. Mayhem will start using a car pass as of 19 July. Any one wanting to park at the event will get a car pass from registrations. If the guard in the parking area does not see car keys as well as receive a car pass, the car will not be allowed to leave the parking area.

Phase 2:
The main gates will be locked in the evening. Anyone wishing to enter the grounds will have to either ring the bell, phone Mayhem staff or contact someone inside. We realise that this might be an inconvenience for parents collecting children, but we ask you to please bear with us.

Phase 3:
Several cameras will be linked to the Mayhem intranet. This will allow players to link to the intranet and see what is happening in the parking lot.

Phase 4:
The installation of a sand bag bunker and two Machine guns.

For more info on what we are planning with security at Mayhem feel free to check out www. mayhem.co.za

MAYHEM WAR ON VIRUSES PART 2:
How can you get infected at LANs?
- Copying infected files from people
- Sharing your PC
- Not having anti virus running

Virus protection at LANs.

Create a folder on your PC called Dump or Download. If you intend to copy anything from any one, copy it into that folder. That way if you have copied something that is infected with a virus, you have a good idea of where it is and you will be able to delete it without losing any thing else.

Keep shares to a minimum. The less things you share the better. Never ever give anyone full shares to your PC. A full share is when someone can copy things TO your PC. If you are not planning on coping anything you can simply remove file and printer sharing. This means you will not be able to share anything. Other people will also not be able to find your PC on the network. You will however still be able to play games. If you have any questions about shares, sharing and that sort of thing feel free to ask any of the Mayhem staff. You can e-mail questions through to staff@mayhem.co.za

Anti virus gooood. If you do not have one, get two. Gamer or not if you have a PC you should have anti virus. Go and buy one now, as soon as you have installed it update it on the net. It does not matter how new your anti virus is, treat it as if it is out of date, chances are it will be.

Wen you are at a LAN, always have your anti virus on. If you are using Norton, F-prot or F-secure, ask any of the Mayhem staff and they will help you get the latest update at the LAN.

These are all very basic things, but they will help you to prevent getting infected. Next month look forward to a few tips on what to do if you think you are infected by a virus.
For more info or viruses go check out www.mayhem.co.za

DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR:
16 August - Mayhem VIP LAN
23 August - Mayhem open LAN

GAMING ISSUE OF THE MONTH:
(Brought to you by Mayhem and MegaRom).

If you are having trouble running GTA Vice City in Windows 2000, check which service pack you are running. GTA Vice City will NOT work in Windows 2000 unless you are running service pack 3.

Vapour[CHKNHD] Cluck!
Mayhem the quest for GTA, to remain a game and become a reality. In so doing making the world a safer place for cars of all makes.
staff@mayhem.co.za

Live from the Gamers Gate DFI LANParty!

It all sounds rather familiar, doesn't it? A high-profile competition and The_Basilisk is once again playing tournament director for Unreal Tournament 2003. However this time around I was informed a month in advance and the servers I was promised were actually there. For those of you who have been following my recent campaign against poorly organised gaming events, you will be happy to know that this was not one of them. In fact, it was the most enjoyable and atmospheric LAN since Worfaire 2000.

So what did Gamers Gate do right? For a start, they hired Mayhem. I had the pleasant experience of working alongside the most professional and dedicated wire pullers in the country. It is hardly surprising that the network was flawless, and while the power was not perfect, there was less downtime than almost any other event in the last two years. The problem arose (and this is the only finger I have to point) at the registration desk. For whatever reason, Gamers Gate decided to allow an additional fourty people into the venue when it simply could not support that many (also resulting in some accommodation problems). However, the power was remedied in about forty-five minutes, as the Mayhem staff drove off to the nearest town to buy additional electrical equipment. In my mind, that goes above and beyond the call of duty, and serves to show that there are at least a few people in this world with a commendable work ethic. (Vapour once again deserves the award for highest stress levels).

Len Nery has certainly got his sales-pitching skills down to a fine art, and I was thrilled to see the remarkable sponsor presence at the event. It definitely adds something positive to the mix when the exhibition stands are bustling with representatives who seem eager to talk to the gamers. The corporate heads themselves were there, walking around, discussing their products and the industry, actually interested in what people were doing. There were three operational big screens which ran consistently throughout the weekend, not to mention the sheer number of additional activities going on inside the venue. The Carousel has proven to be, despite the inconvenience of being in the middle of absolutely nowhere, a comfortable and flexible location.

The tournaments got underway as close to their scheduled times as I have ever seen. With the exception of time lost due to the power problem I mentioned above, everything proceeded according to plan. Competition in all three official disciplines was extremely fierce, and as you know, the winners are now off to France to represent our country at the Electronic Sports World Cup.

Kudos to the players, organisers and sponsors alike. I look forward to the next Gamers Gate event.

▲ Evolve - Counter-Strike Winners

▲ The SA team leaves for France

Ok… so there you have it in a nutshell. Not much more I can say apart from "Anton…. What are your banking details…? :)

Gamers Gate would like to thank DFI LanParty, Axiz, Logitech, MegaRom, Vivendi, Wen-Chen, D-Link, Intel, NAG Magazine and Wolfen Productions for their support and sponsorship towards SA gaming. For those of you that weren't able to be there you can check out the action on the video which is on this months Cover CD under the 'Movies' section. The Editor kindly dropped his trousers and… Censored* Well, just know that after some begging for some space on the CD… you have it… Thanks Mike!! :)

In next months Gamers Gate article we will bring you the lowdown on the Electronic Sports World Cup Grand Final which took place in France. As I sit here typing up this article the winners and a Gamers Gate representative have now been in France for one day and are getting ready to play their first competitive matches. For all the results go to www.esworldcup.com

Ok… So you want to know when the next competitive LAN event will be?

RESULTS		
Counter-Strike	**WarCraft III**	**UT 2003**
1.Evolve - AiM	1.nf-sWoop	1.42::Livid
2.Seven E-sports Stars	2..Juvenile[NDC]	2.42::Mburr
3.Damage Control: Ignite	3.nf-Zick	3.C@sper|HR|
4.Evolve B	4.nf-Manichean	4.Zero-1
5.GRG	5.Vetoll / sooK	5.[NDC]Fanaticism

The Samsung World Cyber Games!! It will be taking place in the next few months so keep an eye on www.gamersgate.co.za for final dates and venues.

Oh… Remember rAge is coming!!!! October is just around the corner!!!
We hope to see all of you there for an event that promises to be the next best thing after seeing the Editors hairy legs… :
If you would like to be added to the Gamers Gate database and receive regular e-mails pertaining to the happenings in the competitive gaming scene, please mail len@gamersgate.co.za with the subject heading 'database'. Your mail address will not be given to anyone and you will not be sent junk advertising from 'xxx-R-us-incorporated', simply news from Gamers Gate.

Cheers, till next month…
The Gamers Gate Team
www.gamersgate.co.za

It seems as though gaming in South Africa is rapidly dividing itself into two main categories: The super-l337 competitive and the moderately-owned free for all. With competitive gamers vying for the top spots at every competitive event, I sometimes wonder what happens to the newer or less-experienced gamers that are brave enough to enter a competition, and then after struggling through a round or two, become so discouraged that they are hesitant to enter any more events - competitive or non-competitive.

Along the same vein, what happens to the new gamers who have never even attended a LAN? Obviously everyone needs to start somewhere, and with this in mind, we have decided to go back to the point where every gamer and potential gamer will be able to get together, try out the games they have never tried before, meet new people and generally have a fun LANing experience.

G8Keeper will therefore be hosting several smaller LANS where the emphasis is on having fun and relaxing. The idea is to get regular gamers to bring their friends with them - people who have never tried gaming in the LAN environment before (yes, they are out there!). This way there is no pressure on "performing" at a particular level. Game if you want to game, chat if you want to chat, recruit new posters for your favourite forums…

Hence we have decided to call these events the RELAX! LAN's. Scheduled to take place in Randburg, the RELAX! LAN's will be hosted on the following dates throughout 2003:

16 August 2003
20 September 2003
8 November 2003
13 December 2003

All the RELAX! LAN's will be held at the same venue in Ferndale (see our website for map and directions), and will last the entire day Saturday, from 8:00am to 10:00pm. Registrations for the RELAX! LAN's will be done through the www.langames.co.za website, where you can sign up in advance for the events you would like to attend. (Keep in mind that the maximum number of gamers that our venue can hold is 150, so book early or sign up on our website to receive our newsletters and thereby be reminded as each event comes up.)

For more information, go to www.g8keeper.co.za and have a look at the 2003 Events Calendar, which will also give you more information on our various future events and escapades.

You will also be able to see some pictures and read other gamer's thoughts on the first RELAX! LAN, which was held on the 5th July at our new venue.

While you're perusing our website, take a look at the pictures and notifications of the Competition Winners from the EA/G8Keeper 1000manLAN held earlier this year. We managed to get a picture of every winner, and even if you were not a part of the competition, we got some erm, "interesting" pictures of other gamers and general public throughout the weekend.

The idea is to inject the fun back into gaming for new and seasoned gamers and at the same time bring new gamers into our world - the world where numbers are our language, where an avatar describes our personality. The world where everyone is welcomed owned and then taught to own. Where fowl, animal and something resembling human co-exist in relative harmony (well, in theory anyway).

Till next month!
G8Keeper Crew

What can one say about the LANs that have gone before, after the Gamers Gate June LAN? Precision, perfection, fun, laughs, spirit, great atmosphere are some of the words that spring to mind.

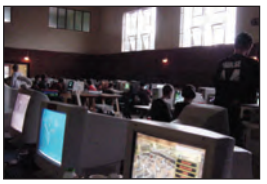
My weekend started slow with having to fulfill my spousal tasks on Friday and some of Saturday morning with the "new release" (commonly referred to as a baby) and the wife. Only arrived at the venue at 1 pm the Saturday to hear of people saying that I just missed power problems experienced in the morning. The first thought that sprung to mind was "ag no, didn't someone plan for this", but as usual no one was turned away after having traveled all that distance. The venue was pushed to more than 100 over the previous high-water mark. So power problems, though not appreciated, should've been expected and were resolved before anyone could actually kick up a stink. The competitors tell me, it was a scheduled lunch break. :)

After having traveled so far and then to hear that "bad news" before I even set up my PC got me thinking what the gamers would say about the power on the forums. I have seen how unforgiving gamers are but it all worked out rather smoothly from a competition side, and all the compo games I am told, (frankly I could not care much for competitions, I was there to have fun, not stress) ran without delay and fairly on time. Even Vapour had a sense of humour (unlike his usual self) by coming to the event in a skirt. *Giggle*

So, how was the rest of the event that did not include competition? Playing Tower Defense and Tribes 2, that was basically my weekend in a nutshell. The open LAN area was fun, we weren't excluded from the rest of the event, and while the people with the clipboards tightly controlled that party, we had perfection on the network side. The after party (and the Cheyenne Saloon) I gave a miss this year, having underage Jewish boys begging for beers was bypassed for a more mature party where it started off with the CHNKHD devolution (as I said, mature, right?). As usual everyone blamed the other one for making him/her drink the previous day, people blamed their competition losses on people forcing alcohol down their throats and respect to not have minors was shown all around. Really a great crowd and a good reason to LAN.

If you are thinking that I am being biased, and giving rave reviews because of any other ulterior reasons, just ask any of the 400+ gamers who were at the event that weekend. In short, I can see people fighting to get a spot at the next event later this year - hopefully I can suck some VIP tickets from the organizers for the next event.

TadMadLad



June saw the Thundercity LAN take off at the Cape Town International Airport. Held in the Thundercity hangers this LAN is aimed at getting competitive LANing off the ground in the Western Cape. Enough of the airplane metaphors and onto the real business of telling you what happened.

As this was the first TC LAN it was more for organizing the basics than for the actual competing. As such the only real competing that took place was on Saturday night as the various CS teams got down to test out the competition format. The WarCraft 3 players also put in a good showing however not on the same scale of the Counter-Strikers. Thanks need to be given to [HZO]Judge Dealer for organizing the CS tournament, officials and servers. Thanks to those that volunteered their time for the other events such as WarCraft 3 and Quake 3 as well.
On the Saturday afternoon before the CS competition got underway a general meeting was held where format and the appointment of organizers, officials and prizes was discussed. For prizes it was decided that for each event entered, per person, there will be a entry fee which will be put into a pot which will go to the winner\ winners. For example if there are 20 CS teams then the pot will be R3000.

Perhaps the thing that stood out the most at this LAN is that the local gamers are keen to get competitive gaming and ladder systems going. Feedback at the event and afterwards has been very positive. Though this LAN was only 60 odd people, hopefully as word spreads that there is a serious event out there for competitive gamers in the Western Cape. The event will grow to include the majority of the local clans, and create a thriving competitive community.

As usual June Organized Chaos went off without a hitch, the new power setup designed to accommodate the huge increase in numbers performed fantastically with there not being any hiccups in the power at all.

OC is becoming known as a good LAN to get great BF games as another full server game came down to the last five tickets, similar to that at the recent Paarl LAN. Adding to the BF excitement were some new faces to OC, in the shape of members of the online clan [SS]. This addition has led to much trash talk between the online and offline players and the gauntlet has been thrown down for the July OC. Online VS Offline, to the death.

In this spirit of competition three tournaments were held. A Black Hawk Down FFA which went to [SS] Enigmata, a WarCraft 3 double elimination 2 VS 2, which was won by [SR] Supreme and [SR] Standash and a C&C Generals double elimination which was won by BellBoy. These tournament winners walked away with copies of BF1942, Raven Shield, Splinter Cell and Unreal Tournament 2003. At the prize giving the gamers were asked what kind of prizes they would like to see at future events. The overwhelming majority was that hardware such as CD writers, blank CD's and memory would be good prizes to get.

Once again OC proved to be a most enjoyable LAN with just about every game being played, including old school death match, with Guilty Gear X and Worms World Party both making an appearance. The August OC events are Thundercity on the 1st- 3rd, and Organized Chaos from the 15th to the 17th.

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

The_Basilisk looks at NAG's really Awesome gaming event

New Age Gaming Magazine recently announced that it will be organising a large-scale LAN event during the second half of this year, aiming to set new standards in enjoyment and professionalism. I sat down with Michael James, editor of NAG, to discuss the event in more detail, and to address a few of the issues that usually concern me about these type of events.

We first spoke about the vital statistics of "rAge". It is important to note that the event has been rescheduled to the weekend of the 10th - 12th of October. The reasons for the date change include issues surrounding the rental of the venue, and that the original dates conflicted with both Woodstock (the largest alternative music festival in South Africa) and Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year). Needless to say the change is for the better, allowing everyone to attend without complications. rAge will take place at The Dome @ Northgate, which has previously proved its worth as a gaming venue with Worfaire 2000 and 2001. It is central and well known, provides for all the needs of large-scale events, and also has excellent secure parking facilities. The NAG LAN will be running as part of a gaming and technology expo, which will hopefully be bringing in many new spectators. The NAG LAN itself will allow for 650 entrants. Food will be available from the vendors inside The Dome, and Northgate Shopping Centre is just around the corner. At the expo you can expect to see the latest in gaming and information technology, as well as some exciting product launches (details will be announced at a later stage). The NAG staff will also be there to meet the fans.

The event will cost somewhere in the region of R150 for the LAN participants, and around R20 (children get in free) for spectator entrance, including admission to the expo. The actual costs will be announced soon, but I don't expect them to differ much from the abovementioned, which are the standard costs of entrance these days.

The key question to ask was about NAG's ability to host gaming events. While Michael admitted that the magazine itself has no previous experience in this field, he also assured me that the best organisers in the business will be working on rAge. Mayhem will be setting up the network and power and running the servers, and Gamers Gate will be running the competition. The event and expo planning will be handled by a professional event company - a first for South African gaming. NAG will be playing the role of bringing everything together, and has a name to live up to as a trusted publication. The event will serve as part of NAG's expansion plans, and its efforts to get more involved with the multiplayer gaming community. Michael made it clear that it is in the magazine's best interest to ensure the event is as successful, if not more so than we expect. All possible problems will be over-compensated for, and the event staff will be on hand at all times.

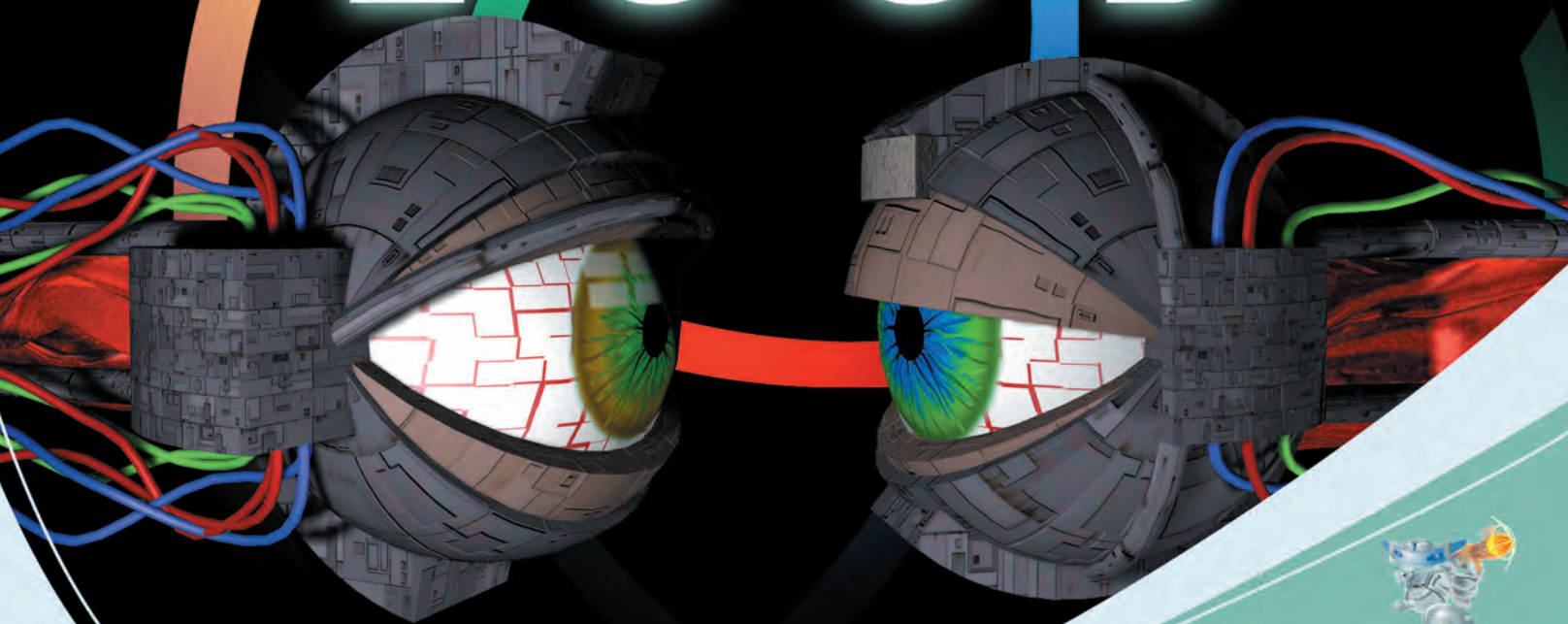
Spectators will be accommodated as a priority, given the expo-nature of rAge. This includes several large-screen projectors which will feature important games. A commentary team is currently being assembled, so that hardcore players and newcomers alike will be able to understand and share in the excitement. The competitive games will be determined by local popularity and tournament support overseas. As such, we can expect the regulars of Counter-Strike and WarCraft 3 (The Frozen Throne). In addition, a retro-gaming festival featuring possible titles such as Quake 1, StarCraft and Action Quake 2 is being looked at.

Plans are being made for advertising in mainstream media, and the preparations for rAge were started several months before the initial announcement. This shows that no stone is being left unturned.

With the people and sponsors who are involved, and the professionalism I anticipate from them, it is safe to say this is likely to be the best large-scale event ever.

SAMSUNG

WCG
world cyber games
2003



dont blink!

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Microsoft

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL

Logitech

TALKING ABOUT DEATH

developer: rebellion [] **publisher:** vivendi universal [] **distributor:** tba
release date: tba [] **genre:** fps [] **internet:** www.rebellion.co.uk
platforms: pc | ps2

Coming soon to a PC near you - all out prosecution of those who dare break the law! After a dissapointing movie and a few stale games, it seems that the most feared Judge from Mega-City One might finally see justice done. We sat down with Rebellion and asked about the upcoming shooter.

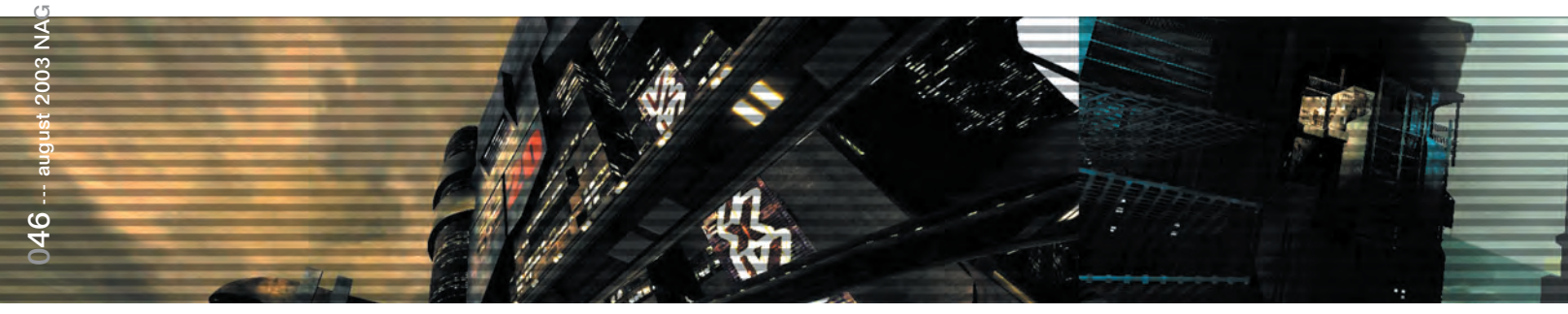
Judge Dredd never removes his helmet, right?
Yes, we are sticking closely to the 2000AD comics, so the game has quite a bit of dark humour in it. As Judge Dredd you have to deal with a whole range of criminals or perps in the vast sprawling metropolis of Mega-City One.

Dredd will have his Lawgiver with all six bullet types. What other weapons are in the game?
You start with a powerful weapon - the Lawgiver Mark III, which comes with 6 different ammo types - Standard Execution, Armour Piercing, which is good against robots (and also goes through multiple perps!), Ricochet, which is great in small confined areas, Hi-Ex for awesome explosive power, Incendiary which sets people on fire and finally Heat Seeker, although of course Heat Seeker doesn't work against the Undead (unless you set them on fire first). You can also use the Lawrod Rifle, which is a great sniping weapon, a powerful shotgun called the Arbitrator, plus Stumm Gas Grenades. The gas chokes and incapacitates perps, making your task of arresting them that much simpler. There are also a whole range of citizen weaponry including the all-powerful and highly expensive Laser Rifle, the Spit gun (tremendous rate of fire but not very accurate), Stump Gun, Grenade Launcher… you name it.

How involved were 2000AD in making the game?
We have created our own unique story, which 2000AD is happy with, involving the main characters from the comics - so Hershey and Psi Judge Anderson are there, for example. But you don't have to be a 2000AD fan to appreciate the plot. Its quite an intense, dark story which evolves as you play as Dredd, responding to the mayhem that is created by the escape of the Dark Judges. We have included many of the most popular locations from the comics such as the Nixon Iso-Cube Penitentiary, the Grand Halls of Justice, where you start the game, the Smokatorium, and Resyk - where your body goes when you die to be recycled into useful things for Mega-City One. Their motto is "We use everything but the soul!"
I can give you a brief outline of the story...Professor Icarus, in charge of the Regen retrovirus at PetRegen, brings dead pets back to life. He is so successful that he decides to see if his serum has regenerative powers in humans. Unfortunately the unintended side effects turn these humans into aggressive creatures with a thirst for blood! Anyone bitten by them rises a few hours later as an undead. The Judges struggle to contain this sudden outbreak of vampire-like creatures in Mega-City One, predicted by the Psi-Judges. A vehicle carrying vampires crashes into the Nixon Penitentiary, where the Dark Judges are held in their ghostly form. Dredd rushes to help but in the ensuing chaos the Dark Judges overpower their remaining guards and escape. In an occult ceremony the high priest of the Death Cult supplies the Dark Judges with human bodies - they are once again in physical, undead form. Drokk! As Judge Dredd, the most feared and respected of all the Judges, you must not only put a stop to the horde of undead infesting the city but also deal with the hysteria and carnage dealt by the Dark Judges.

Tell us a bit about the engine you're using. The idea is to bring across a very graphic-novel feel. What's it called, how long have you been working on it, and what makes it so special?
The Asura engine, which has been developed in-house over the past two years, was designed from the start to maximise the potential of each of the next generation consoles as well as being scaleable on the PC - so that it would run perfectly well on low spec PCs, yet also take advantage of higher end machines with the latest graphic cards by automatically adjusting a number of attributes such as the level of detail. In addition the engine is capable of real time dynamic lighting - set a zombie on fire in the Ryder Megamall and note how his burning body lights up the room!When you hi-ex someone, the ragdoll physics cause their body to go flying through the air and land in a realistic position according to what they land on, so if a perp is shot standing next to a barrier, for example, the body will end up draped over the barrier. Asura also makes sure there is no clipping, so you won't see parts of bodies sticking through floors, walls or objects. In addition to all the flying cars, massive city and special effects, we have loads of people on the screen at any one time. When you start the game there are 16 demonstrators to arrest in front of you, plus Street Judges and citizens, so the engine is capable of handling many people at once, essential really to bring the sprawling Mega-City One alive. Finally the engine is using a unique Graphic Novel Renderer, which places a specular highlight around characters. Whilst many companies are going for a cel-shaded look which can make games look a bit flat, we are going for a sophisticated graphic novel look which really makes the game feel like it is coming straight out of a comic. As a result of all of this, our engine blows away the competition.

What bad guys can we expect?
Well to begin with you have a whole host of crazed gangs such as the Hoods, who are the criminal equivalent of menial robots: numerous and none too bright. Then there are the Scrawlers who tag walls to increase their territory, Cybergoths and Suits and a whole bunch of other gangs. Into that mix are injected



hordes of Vampires and Undead that are infesting the city, and finally you have the Dark Judges, Death, Fire, Fear and Mortis. They originally hailed from a world much like Earth, in a parallel universe. Obsessed with sin, Judge Death declared that life itself should be deemed a crime, since all crime is committed by the living.
The Dark Judges judged (i.e. killed) everyone on their planet until it became the desolate Deadworld, and then moved onto Mega-City One. They are currently being held in their ghostly form in the Nixon Penitentiary.
In all there are over 60 different character types in the game, to fully create a futuristic city that is alive and teeming with people.

The game has an interesting way of making sure you don't shoot every potential perp that comes your way. It also has group dynamics that means bad guys might give up or attack you based on your actions. Tell us a bit more about that.

As you play Judge Dredd, you have sworn to uphold the law. Because crime is so rampant in Mega-City One, law courts were done away with and you are judge, jury and executioner!
One of the novel gameplay features is the Law Meter, which measures how well you are playing as a Judge. If you arrest people, for example, it goes up, but if you kill innocent civilians it goes down, so you generally have to challenge people and get them to surrender. However if they have friends around, you may suddenly find yourself in the midst of a huge gun battle, at which point you can return fire legally without worrying about a drop in your Law Meter.
Whilst you are patrolling the streets, you may see a citizen commit a crime from such minor misdemeanours such as tagging a wall, littering or smoking, to major felonies like bank robbery, assaulting a Judge etc. You can then attempt to arrest them for this crime. There are a multitude of ways of getting people to surrender - you can sneak up behind them and stick a gun in their back, or shoot the gun out of their hands (although you'll want to arrest them before they get their hands on another one), or you can shoot their leader. If you can somehow affect their morale, they are also more likely to surrender.
Overall, I think the arrest mode works really well. Its quite satisfying if there is a part of Mega-City One which is overrun by a gang, to go in and arrest them all - you get a real sense of accomplishment because you've cleaned up that part of the city.

Will there be fatties, batgliders and mutants?

Fatties are in there with their belly wheels to help them move around! By popular demand we also have undead Fatties. As for batgliders and mutants well we couldn't put everything in from the comics, and we had to pick those characters tied to the storyline, but who knows, maybe in Dredd 2…

Who can we expect to see from the Judge Dredd world?

For one thing, the environments in Mega-City One are huge. We have built vast areas of futuristic Mega-City One crammed with citizens, gangs, flying vehicles, robots- you name it. If you explore every nook and cranny, you'll uncover secondary objectives, which you may want to fulfil to fully complete the game and unlock bonus arcade games. You can also play through the entire immersive storyline cooperatively with a friend.
On top of this there is intense 4-player splitscreen multiplayer mayhem. We have created a whole wealth of new customisable multiplayer games which you can play with up to 12 enemy bots.
In addition to traditional deathmatch games, there are exclusive new modes such as Informant, where one of you is an unarmed informant protected by a Judge, who has to make it to a safe house whilst the other team have to wipe the Informant out.
You can unlock 12 bonus arcade games such as Zombie Apocalypse where you start in a block swarming with undead, who are trying to eat your brains. You have 5 minutes to survive!

Block Wars is a multiplayer option in the game. How will that work?

Each team controls a block (or building), and you fight with heavy weaponry such as Grenade Launchers against another team to dominate both blocks, with missiles and explosions going off everywhere - true madness.

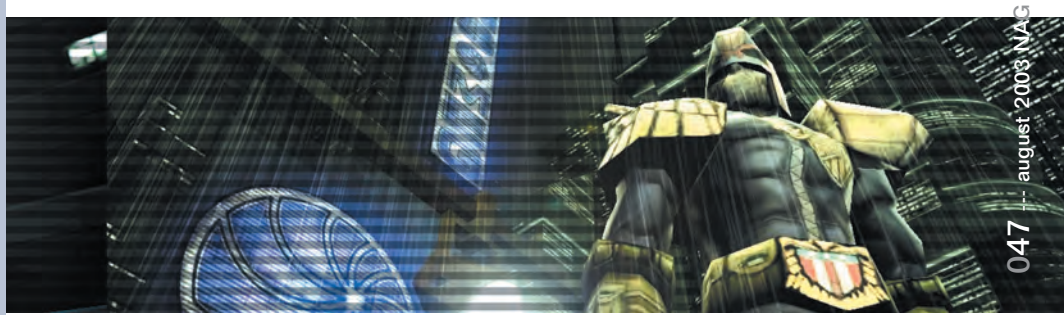
The game seems to be shaping up nicely. If it does well, can we expect other 2000AD games to appear? Maybe Strontium Dogs, Missionary Man or Rogue Trooper?

We are currently considering a Rogue Trooper game. Personally I think it would be great to see a game based on Chopper the Surfer - surfing around Mega-City One evading the Judges and racing against other people would be cool. Watch this space...

who?

REAL NAME:	Joe Dredd
ALSO KNOWN AS:	"Old Stoney Face"
PLACE OF ORIGIN:	Mega-City One
OCCUPATION:	Senior Judge
KNOWN RELATIONS:	Rico Dredd (Brother, deceased); Vienna Dredd (niece)
FIRST APPEARANCE:	Prog 2, 5th March 1977

Judge Dredd is the longest-running, best known and most popular strip ever to appear to 2000AD. Although Dredd didn't make his debut until Prog 2, he has only been absent from the Galaxy's Greatest Comic a few times since.
His adventures have spilled over into a daily newspaper strip (Daily Star), his own annuals, specials and monthly megazine and in 1995 a Hollywood version of Judge Dredd. He has featured in several board games, computer games, inspired at least two hit records and emblazoned whole wardrobes of T-shirts.



developer: liquid entertainment [] **publisher:** vivendi universal [] **distributor:** tba
release date: late 2003 [] **genre:** real time strategy [] **internet:** www.lotr.com
platforms: pc

writer: James "Ring, ring... Ring, ring - answer it don't wear it" Francis

Lord of the Rings: The War of the Ring

The War of the Rings? Vivendi have a lot of making up to do when it comes to their slice of The Lord of the Rings pie. But while buying flowers for every gamer that played their first LOTR game might be an option, creating a stunning RTS with the Battle Realms development studio at the helm could be a much smarter approach.

Milking a franchise is a time-honoured tradition in any form of entertainment, and the games industry is no stranger to this, even though we've probably never seen bigger spin-offs of movies, books and comics than we have witnessed in recent years. And in the midst of all of these licenses being churned into gamedom is the Lord of the Rings world. Every so often two game companies seem to land with more-or-less the same license, and this happened with Electronic Arts and Vivendi Universal, the first taking the movie license and the latter taking those of the book, courtesy of the Tolkien Foundation.

Of course, our money would have been on the book versions: they have so much more to work with, and they are more likely to appeal to the larger base of fans out there, even those disgusted by whatever small, yet unforgivable (in their opinion) crimes the movies commit.

Not to mention that movie games generally are redundant rubbish.

But lo' and behold as EA surprised everyone with the excellent, if short-lived, Two Towers game and the even more impressive Return of the King, appearing soon enough. But the success of that game barely paled the horrible gaming experience that was Lord of the Rings, Vivendi's offering.

Thankfully, action was taken, heads were chopped and an entire development studio was fired for what has to be one of the worst games made last year. This year VU are back in earnest to make proper LOTR games. It seems they are taking more than one leaf from EA's (but thankfully not LucasArts') book and are churning out several games under the license. The only RTS and probably the most notable of these is Lord of the Rings: War of the Ring.

The Realm or War

When the game was demonstrated at E3, developer Liquid Entertainment had only done roughly a year of work on the game, but it's shaping up nicely. This is perhaps because they are the same developers behind the extremely underrated Battle Realms. But fans and critics of Battle Realms and its expansion alike will find that a lot of experience and polish has gone into the LOTR RTS.

The RTS has very little to do with the movies, apart from that they take place in the same world. But Liquid has taken the opportunity to do research into Tolkien's world and concentrate on events around the three books instead of exclusively inside them. This also means that the backgrounds of several key characters such as Borimir and Legolas are looked at, as well as characters people who've only seen the movies might not be familiar with.

It's hard to quite explain the passion Liquid

has for creating this title. "When we started Liquid, there were two franchises we said we'd love to work on: Star Wars and Lord of the Rings," said Edward Del Costillo, project leader of WOTR. So this is a labour love for them.
The game consciously avoids the events in the movies, and instead focuses on areas and events mentioned in passing. But it still goes down to the classic battle between good and evil. You'll either be on the side of light featuring soldiers from Gondor, hobbits, dwarves and elves, or you can be on the side of evil with such units as orcs, stone throwers and cave trolls. Each side has around 12 units, corresponding to units on the other side to keep things balanced.

The Story of a Ring

While the ring has a significant role in the world of Tolkien, the saga of Sauron itself spans much further. According to Del Costillo, a lot of research has gone into the game to find new avenues to explore. The game takes place roughly at the start of the third age, but not exclusively in the timeframe of the books. This means that playing the RTS won't be a simple matter of reliving the battles you imagined in your head or perhaps saw on screen, but instead aims to fill in those gaps that were more likely interesting to fans of the book than anyone else.
Does this mean it's not accessible to mainstream RTS players?
Of course not, is Liquid's response. While War of the Ring is based on Tolkien's world, it is foremost a RTS game. Units can gain experience and perform better in battle, terrain gives advantages and battles need to be managed in order to defeat the enemy. While hoarding a lot of troops across the map is the usual tactic, Liquid have opted for the lower unit count option, something familiar to gamers who enjoy WarCraft III or C&C: Generals. The norm for warfare games are thousands of units on the battlefield, but WOTR intends to limit it to around 200 units, with optimum battles sitting at 50 on 50.

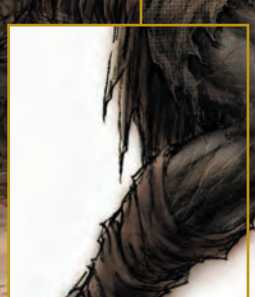
The World of the Ring

As you might have guessed from the screenshots, the game is in 3D. But as per usual the screenshots can't do any justice to the game. The world is fully 3D and apart from height advantages, line of sight and the usual features now becoming customary in RTS games, the game also allows for realistic wind and water physics, deformable terrain, real-time weather effects and so on. Wind, for instance, will

the third age?

While any avid Tolkien fan might be able to tell you about the Third Age en masse, the rest of us aren't that clued up. There are essentially four ages in Tolkien lore.

- The first age ended with the defeat of Morgoth, the original bad guy from the world.
- The second age ended with the epic battle everyone knows about when Sauron, servant of Morgoth, lost a few fingers and his favourite ring.
- The third age ends during the beginnings of the War of the Ring, when Gollum gets released from Mordor and Bilbo settles with his elfish chum Elrond.
- The fourth Age, though, only starts when Elrond leaves Middle-Earth.



affect how arrows fly, but it also adds more cosmetic touches such as waving grass and spider webs.
It goes a step further, though. When the hordes run around, they seem to flow over the terrain, making wide turns and resembling something of a locomotive with ugly, green legs. The light side's units, on the other hand, are much more organized and tend to make sharp turns and approach things more logically.
Another small touch with the units is that they have somewhat different movements, randomized by a walking algorithm. This means that even if you have a clutch of soldiers moving around the landscape, they will appear to stumble around differently, instead of looking like an army of clones.
This might sound a bit like the Battle Realms engine, but the technology has been built from the ground up, and only the expertise that was gained in creating Battle Realms and its expansion was what legacy went into WOTR. The game also allows for large, destroyable objects, such as taking out bridges and such, but these are quite reliant on the story, so you can't simply chop down everything in your path.

In fact, the story sequence is quite important in the game. While War of the Ring has resource gathering, Liquid decided to keep it minimal, since it didn't contribute much to the world that Tolkien created. There are two types of resources to gather: ore and organic. The first is for making weapons and armour, and the second feeds your army, but in the most rudimentary sense. In short, they prefer you out on the battlefield instead of having to build bases and worry about where your next meal is coming from.
The game is full of scripted events, and although I can't say if this will be featured a lot, it did show up a few times during a game. Objectives change as you progress through the map and you find new things to do, ranging from rescuing prisoners to creating a base to taking back the fallen tower of Dol Guldur.
An interesting game dynamic is that even if you fail certain objectives, the game might still continue. For instance, in one mission we were shown how a horde of Orcs storm Osgiliath. After they lose, your reinforcements still arrive, but they are at a disadvantage, because the orcish horde didn't clear enough of the map to effectively mine. You can still play, but it's a lot tougher.
The game also has several powerful units. When demonstrated, we were treated to seeing a Balrog stomping across the battlegrounds whipping smaller units in its wakes. It's probably safe to presume that Ents will feature on Gondor's side. Each side also has animals that can be mounted, such as horses and Wargs, but only by the soldier units.
Not all the missions have this dynamic mission structure, since it has to suit the story, but it illustrates Liquids intentions of going beyond simply making a stock-standard RTS with Lord of the Rings thrown in for good sales potential.

C&C: The Ring?

A lot of what was shown in War of the Ring isn't that new, but a lot of it is unique. And even the features taken from other games are not done in the sense of plagiarism but rather for intension of quality. It would have been easy for Liquid to simply slap together a standard RTS, and it would have sold. But after only a year's work the game is shaping up to be quite something, and the attention to detail should keep most Tolkien fans happy while still delivering a solid gameplay experience for RTS fans.
Who knows, maybe Liquid will even receive the recognition they so richly deserved two years ago.

library of the ring

Tolkien wrote quite a lot on the subject of Middle Earth, not to mention the spans of books by other authors on the subject. But to give you an idea, here's a list of books he was responsible for:

The Hobbit
The famous story of Bilbo Baggins and how he found the one ring.

The Lord of the Rings
A three volume epic about Middle Earth re-uniting to, yet again, beat Sauron and destroy the one ring.

The Silmarillion
Tales of Middle Earth before the dominance of man (i.e. before The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings).

Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth
Edited and published by his son Christopher, the book contains a lot of formerly unpublished tales written by Tolkien, some unfinished.

The History of Lord of the Rings
His son Christopher decided to bundle everything the man has written on the subject of Middle Earth into one boxed set - enough to make any Tolkien geek's eyes mist over.

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developer: techland [] **publisher:** strategy first [] **distributor:** tba
release date: Q1 2004 [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.chromethegame.com
platforms: pc

writer: James 'Priest' Francis

Chrome

It's really hard to dislike a game when you enjoy it. But it's even harder when you know there's another title due that improves on nearly every aspect of the beta you are grueling through.

The whole point of life is to have regrets, but to work past them and move on. But there are some regrets that you neither want to give away nor wanted to have in the first place. The reason I have regret over playing Chrome is that I played Far Cry first.

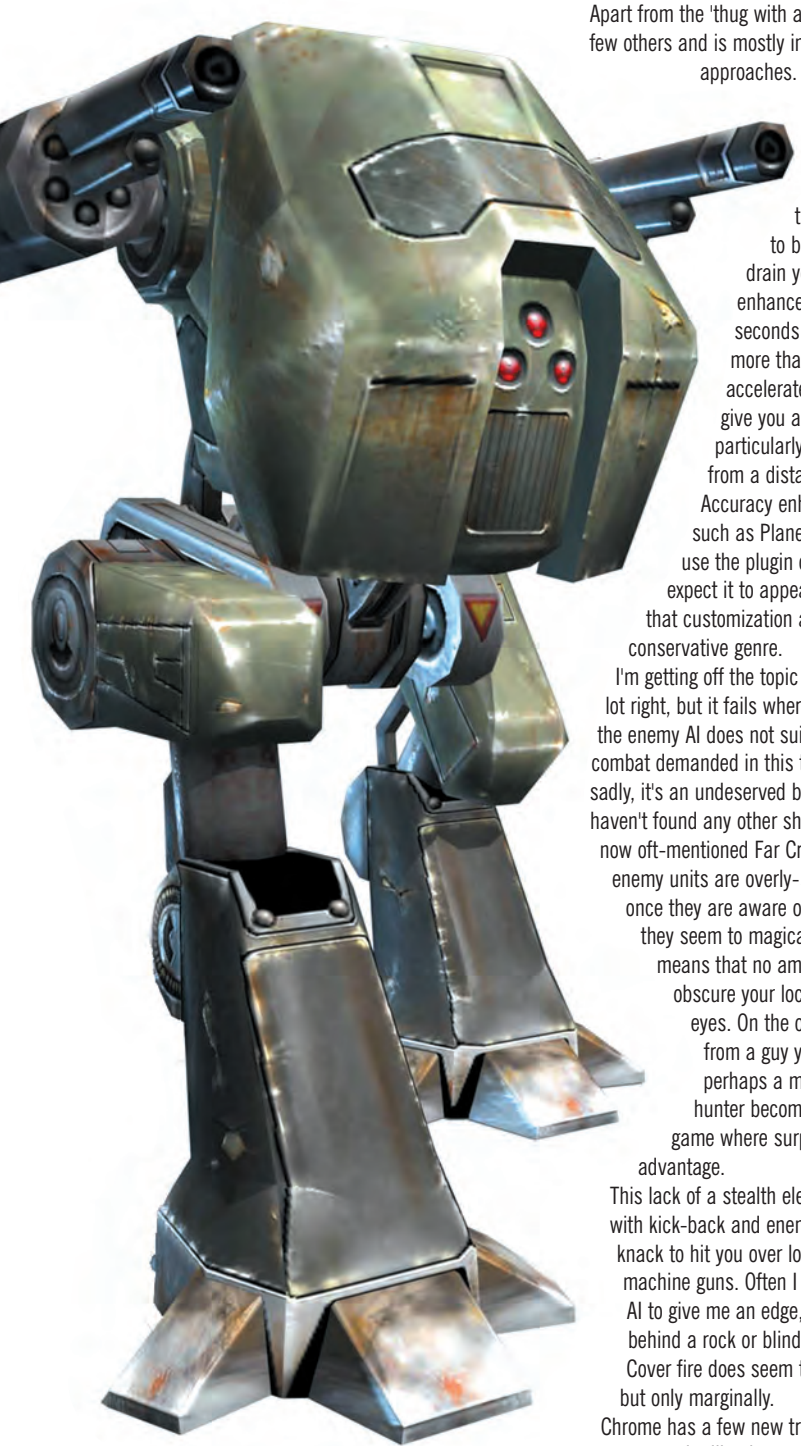
Why should this be an issue? Not only are the two not related - it would be very unfair to liken one game to another in a preview when neither have been released yet. But Chrome really wanted me to play Far Cry.

The relation seems obvious at first - both are quite deeply based on jungle combat and random enemy patterns. But the connection lies a lot deeper. There are two kinds of shooters that draw my attention - the type with pre-scripted events ala Half-Life or Undying, and the type that allow you to do anything ala Delta Force or Battlefield 1942. The first type has been perfected to what can pretty much be regarded as cookie-presser material - it's not really that hard to make a vibrant game, providing you have scripted events. The latter is a tougher challenge, though, since it throws in the unpredictability of a player's movements. It's usually also a half-baked success, especially if enemy AI isn't up to scratch, as we saw in Delta Force: Land Warrior. Chrome is going for a mixed approach. Though there are no scripted events, and the enemy team AI seem rather solid, it can't seem to break out of the mould free-roaming shooters have fashioned for themselves. Far Cry, on the other hand, seems to have broken the mould and fired the sculptor. I'm not saying Chrome is a bad game - in fact it's a pretty impressive game. It's just that I know that much better is on its way.

Still, no need to be this harsh, since I'm prematurely shoving Chrome into a category it doesn't quite belong. To argue that Chrome is a free-roaming FPS would be wrong. It uses elements from the genre, but it still has a rather set course to it. To finish a mission, you will have to kill most of the bad guys on the rather extensive maps. I'm also being unfair to the game since it does not do anything worse than other titles. As a matter of fact, it improves on them.

Developer Techland is no stranger to developing this type of title. In fact, some players would know them for the flawed diamond Codename: Outbreak. If that title caught your attention, then Chrome would definitely be a must-get, since it's a pseudo cousin to the sci-fi shooter. This time around, though, you are a space mercenary who has uncovered a plot involving space pirates, corporations and truly cruel intentions for the more innocent or ignorant at heart. It all starts with a simple space mission, but it soon escalates into something more frantic, as our good hero shows that money is not the only thing on his mind.

▲ Hazards of alien worlds, number 39845: The exploding pomegranates of Xentaron IV



Apart from the 'thug with a heart' cliché, Chrome has few others and is mostly inventive in the world it approaches. A nice addition to the genre, though it has appeared before in the likes of Deus Ex and System Shock, are cybernetic enhancements that your character can access to boost his abilities. These do drain you and running an enhancement for longer than a dozen seconds or so will harm you. Boost up more than one and the rate accelerates. On the flipside, they do give you a decided edge. I was particularly fond of taking out enemies from a distance thanks to my Zoom and Accuracy enhancements. Recent games such as Planetside have already started to use the plugin concept en masse, so you can expect it to appear more and more, just to add that customization aspect to a pretty conservative genre.

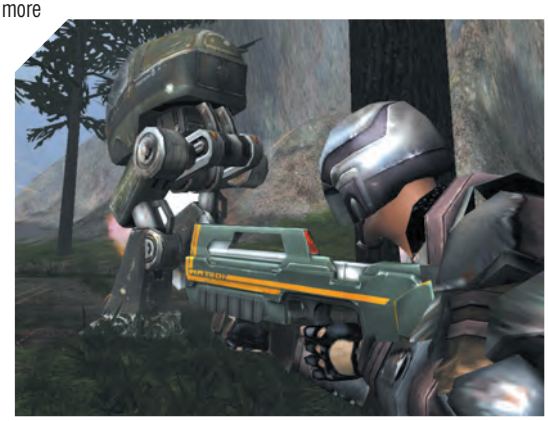
I'm getting off the topic here, though. Chrome does a lot right, but it fails where I've seen Far Cry do right: the enemy AI does not suit the guerilla-style combat demanded in this type of game. And sadly, it's an undeserved black mark since I haven't found any other shooter (apart from now oft-mentioned Far Cry) do this. The enemy units are overly-sensitive and once they are aware of your presence, they seem to magically know where you are. This means that no amount of jungle cover can obscure your location to their making, prying eyes. On the other side sits you, taking fire from a guy you cannot see, apart from perhaps a muzzle flash. Suddenly the hunter becomes the hunted, and this in a game where surprise is the obvious advantage.

This lack of a stealth element is made worse by guns with kick-back and enemy units with an uncanny knack to hit you over long distances with automatic machine guns. Often I have to hope for poor game AI to give me an edge, such as a unit getting stuck behind a rock or blindly running into my bullets. Cover fire does seem to have an impact, though, but only marginally.

Chrome has a few new tricks for everyone, though. I quite like that you can raid bodies for supplies, bullets and weapons, and the fact that you have a limited inventory make it more tactical which weapons to carry. On the flipside, thanks to the thick grass terrain that covers most of the three levels in the beta, I kept losing enemy bodies - it's not that easy to find a cadaver in undergrowth, and it would be nice if the developers included a way to spot bodies after they've been taken out. The maps are generally varied with woodlands or jungles, and there are plenty of vehicles on some to toy with. The weapons also seem varied enough, but I was annoyed that you rarely can lug more than one around. Carrying a sniper rifle alone leaves no space for anything else worthy of firepower. And grenades seem to always fly a specific distance. The aspect that annoyed me most, though, is that seemingly traversable terrain isn't - you can't run or even crawl up most slopes. There aren't any leaning keys either, so playing peekaboo with a guy obsessed on ventilating your skull isn't an option. At least the small radar is a blessing, since it tells you if there's something coming.

I'm not annoyed with Chrome's potential, I just happen to know that there will be better out there and that this shooter is probably the last of its kind, providing Far Cry blows us away. If the latter ends up sucking, though, Chrome will be the one to get, providing the AI and physics get a few nips and tucks. And even if FC blows me away, Chrome has every chance to be my number two.

▲ "Alright sir... that innocent forest creature will no longer be a threat to anyone!"



▲ Ralph realised that he should have opted for walker duty today...

developer: pyro [] **publisher:** eidos [] **distributor:** tba
release date: Q4 [] **genre:** strategy [] **internet:** www.eidos.com
platforms: pc

writer: Derek De La Fuente

Commandos 3: Destination Berlin

The Commandos series from Spanish developer Pyro Studios grows and becomes more impressive with each subsequent release. Expectation is high for Commandos 3: Destination Berlin and with this in mind Derek dela Fuente spoke with Ignacio Pérez Dolset, Studio Director and Lead Designer on the title, to find out all the new concepts and ideas that plans to capture our imagination.

This ground breaking tactical strategy series has already sold more than three million copies worldwide and who knows how many more there will be. Once you have a winning formula, why stop?
Many members of the Pyro team are avid World War II fans and after 7 years working on the Commandos games they have become experts on this subject matter. They now can boast of having accumulated and read hundreds of books, watched an endless amount of movies and documentaries, etc. This kind of meticulous researching ensures the right amount of authenticity, the correct look and, above all, perfect game play that has resulted in them being perceived as experts in producing strategy war games.
Many improvements have been made. One that will intrigue gamers is that the presentation and graphical look of the game has been one of the main focuses. If there are any areas of the game which may have suffered more than most, it's the graphics, although many will say that is unfair because gameplay is always the challenge. Amongst these is Ignacio. "I do not agree with this statement as the feedback we have had on Commandos game graphics has been outstanding. Many people agree that Commandos 2 was a benchmark for graphical quality. A different thing would be those expecting 3D graphics, as Commandos makes a limited usage of 3D graphics. Anyway I believe that Commandos 3 will again reach a new quality benchmark for PC games using 2D and 3D graphics. We have put a lot of effort into this with a team of graphic artists of 20 people working over two years on the game."
Other important aspects within the game have also had a makeover. Commandos 3 features a new interior engine that enables you to rotate the detailed environments and zoom in and out. And this is merely one of many extended areas of technical enhancement. With a comprehensive list of improvements and redesigns you could easily think the whole essence of what is the perfect formula for a strategic game is being tinkered within unnecessarily, but Ignacio disagrees. "Commandos 3 is a very new game compared to Commandos 2. I would say that more than 75% of the technology is brand new. The game has a full new engine for building interiors, as mentioned, and many enhancements on the outdoor engine. We are also incorporating within Commandos 3, for the first time, the usage of 3D cards which has allowed us to bring into the game lots of new graphic improvements."
"Commandos 3: Destination Berlin features more detailed, smaller maps providing more action orientated missions that form part of an overall campaign. A strong narrative drives the story via cinematic briefing screens. The gameplay will also incorporate completely new gaming situations including ambushes, assaults, level bosses, as well as classic Commandos gameplay. It will also be more accessible than previous games in the series."
One of the main aims for the team is to ensure that the player is totally immersed and at no time will tedium set in. Whereas Commandos 2 could have been seen as a somewhat linear experience, Commandos 3 has been meticulously designed. Surprise, intrigue and plenty of variety top the Pyro list, as the lead designer stated: "Mission design is completely different. Only 20% of the missions will feature a traditional Commandos gameplay style. The rest, although with the same [set of] rules of Commandos games, will have to be played in a different way."
Commandos 3 has three main campaigns: Stalingrad, Central Europe and Normandy, where your elite band of six squadron members will venture into. (There will be fewer characters in the game than in Commandos 2. Six characters this time but with more skills and possibilities than characters in previous Commandos games.) Each of the campaigns encompasses many different tactical situations and they can be played in any order. It will feature scenarios unseen in previous Commandos games and will take you to the Stalingrad battlefields of the Eastern Front, the heart of the Reich in the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin and the D-Day assault at Omaha Beach. For the first time ever in the series, there will be a deathmatch multiplayer mode for up to eight players where you can use your tactical skills to play online or across LAN. There will be approximately 20 missions encompassing timed missions, ambushes, assaults, seek and destroy missions or purely defending an area. There will also be plenty of new weapons, vehicles, and skills this time: big machine guns, antitank guns, sidecars, etc.
Commandos 3: Destination Berlin may sound like every area of the game has been improved but optimization would be a better description. The Commandos series has received various kudos for the way it has believable events that are highly detailed and move through intricate and well thought out scripts. This all remains the same, but with a host of new added features. In all honesty, this can't fail!

▲ Jack tries to crash a Nazi foam party...

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Wario Ware, Inc. [GBA]

"I think there should be AA meetings for people caught in Wariowares - this is an epidemic waiting to explode."

Ed Francis

92% — NAG Award of Excellence

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne [PC]

"What was a noticeably under-hyped release has turned into a fascinating game."

Anton Lines

91% — NAG Award of Excellence

Burnout 2 [PS2]

"One can't help but get a rush out of firing the turbo up a blind rise on the wrong side of a freeway."

Adam Liebman

90% — NAG Award of Excellence

Eternal Darkness [GC]

"…if you have a tendency for not sleeping after a scary movie, expect sleepless nights after this game…"

Ed Francis

89% — NAG Award of Merit

Ghost Master [PC]

"It is called Ghost Master, and it will have you dying with delight."

Walt Pretorius

89% — NAG Award of Merit

GTA 3 Vice City [PC]

"Hey, it's GTA 3, just prettier, more stuff to do, and more swearing and bad people doing bad stuff."

James Francis

88% — NAG Award of Merit

Devil May Cry 2 [PS2]

"The game reminds one of an anime movie, where everything is bigger, better, faster and just so much more THERE."

Walt Pretorius

88% — NAG Award of Merit

Star Trek Elite Force II [PC]

"Essentially what the player is offered are lots of missions with killing everything that moves and very little scientific data gathering."

Iwan Pienaar

85% — NAG Award of Merit

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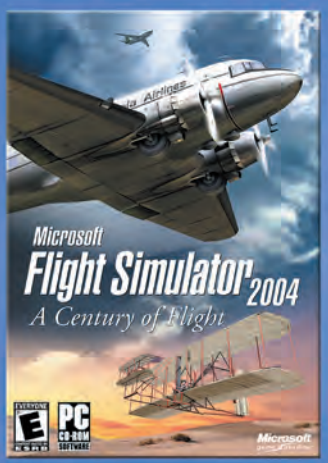
Microsoft® Flight Simulator 2004

A Century of Flight



Drawing on 20 years of experience developing award-winning software, the Microsoft Flight Simulator team commemorates both the centennial and its own aviation milestone with the release of Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004: A Century of Flight.

New Features

- Dynamic weather system based on realistic atmospheric physics, with true three-dimensional clouds that form and dissipate, and automatic real-world weather updates when you're connected to the Internet.
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- Enhanced interactive air traffic control (ATC), including traffic at all airports around the world (including non-towered airports), altitude changes en route, pop-up IFR clearances, and precision and non-precision approaches to multiple runways.
- Interactive 3D "virtual" cockpits—tune radios and operate key aircraft controls and avionics by pointing and clicking in the virtual cockpit view.
- Scenery improvements, including taxiway and runway signs, enhanced auto-gen 3D objects, more high-detail airports, and improved lighting and sky effects.
- Garmin 500 and 295 series GPS with colour moving maps and airport/facility information. Improved full-colour map view with terrain display.
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Curtiss JN-4D "Jenny" 3D Virtual Cockpit

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Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis"

On December 17, 1903 at 10:35 a.m., Orville and Wilbur Wright changed the world in just 12 seconds. Their historic journey over the dunes outside Kitty Hawk, N.C. launched a century of aviation innovation. Nearly 100 years later, Microsoft Flight Simulator joins leading aviation associations, historians and enthusiasts in celebrating the world-altering invention of powered flight.

Microsoft game studios™

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developer: blizzard entertainment [] **publisher:** vivendi universal [] **distributor:** nu metro (011) 340-9300
price: R 249.00 [] **genre:** real time strategy [] **internet:** www.blizzard.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Anton "The_Basilisk" Lines

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne

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Blizzard Entertainment is a company that has become famous for its game expansion sets. First there was StarCraft: BroodWar, then Diablo II: Lord of Destruction, and now WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne. This new expansion has continued the excellent tradition of adding tons of new features, new graphics, new units, and a new story that easily surpasses its predecessor's.

There are so many aspects to discuss I'm not quite sure where to begin. You begin the campaign as Maiev, the Night Elf warden who once watched over the demon hunter Illidan.

Since her prisoner was set free, she has been on a quest to recapture him. The story progresses from there into the Alliance campaign (which sees you playing more as the Blood Elves than the humans) and then to the Undead campaign, the plot revolving around (you guessed it) the Lich King's frozen throne.

The Orc missions are not part of the story, but detail Thrall and his kind's adventures in their newfound kingdom. These missions are approached in a role playing fashion, very similar to the RPG mods for the original game. The missions for all four races are original on levels we have never seen before. Amongst the usual "destroy this base" or "reach this waypoint" the designers have included things like level bosses, missions where you literally play war games against your opponents, puzzle solving exercises, and the ever-popular tower defense.

▲ Lots of pretty lights to add to the mayhem...

new race heroes

Human - The Blood Mage

Cursed with an addiction to magic, the Blood Elves live to avenge the destruction of their homeland Quel'Thalas. The Blood Mage is a powerful wizard with the abilities of casting flame attacks, banishing units to the ethereal plane (which renders them unable to attack), stealing mana from other units for themselves, and summoning a powerful flying phoenix.

Undead - The Crypt Lord

These kings of the undead Nerubian spider kingdom are immensely powerful, armoured, but slow moving heroes. They have the abilities of hurling enemy units into the air with a line of spikes, returning melee damage back to their attackers, raising carion beetles from corpses on the battlefield, and summoning a swarm of vicious locusts that both damage enemies and heal the Crypt Lord.

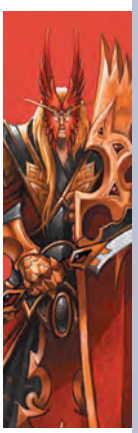
Orc - The Shadow Hunter

Most respected and feared by the Orcish horde and its enemies, is the cunning Shadow Hunter. These trolls can heal their allies in a wave of magic that jumps from unit to unit, turn enemy units temporarily into critters, create serpent wards to attack their enemies, and cast the "Big Bad Voodoo" which renders all units around them invulnerable for thirty seconds.

Night Elf - The Warden

The purveyors of high justice in the Night Elf kingdom are called the Wardens. They have the abilities of throwing a fan of knives at all nearby enemies, teleporting short distances in and out of battle, throwing poisoned daggers which slow units and damage them over time, and summoning an avatar that raises invulnerable spirits from dead units.

The landscape has been enriched with several new and beautiful graphics in the tilesets and units (although the short, lacklustre cinematics are a drawback) and the additions to the soundtrack are perfect.
The largest improvement is the addition of an entirely new playable race, the Naga (only playable in single player, but the Naga heroes can be purchased at the Tavern in multiplayer). These mysterious snake-like sea beings have mastered the art of water combat, and are most interesting to play with.
The advent of ship combat (which we have not seen since WarCraft 2) puts a whole new spin on certain missions, where you battle your enemy's fleet.
But if your enemy happens to be the Naga, they will not be needing one.
This expansion has exceeded my expectations through and through.
What was a noticeably under-hyped release has turned into a fascinating game.



multiplayer

In Competitive Play
Blizzard have always shown they are interested in their games being competitive, and as such have improved the multiplayer tenfold. The randomness that many Reign of Chaos players were complaining about has been all but eliminated (item drops specifically have been made fair). The addition of the new heroes and units adds a dimension of strategy that we will only fully comprehend months from now after the players have had a chance to experiment. The game has been made much faster as well, with the cost of everything across the board being reduced by 15%. It is possible now to use only one hero, as a single hero receives experience bonuses. The item shops that you can build in your base further serve to reduce randomness, as well as the fact that all key items that creeps drop can now also be purchased at the neutral marketplace. Another neutral building of note is the Tavern, which allows you to hire neutral heros from the single player campaign such as the Naga Sea Witch and the Dark Ranger. The old popular maps have been remade to include the Frozen Throne features. Damage and armour types are more balanced, and there is truly a use for every unit. By the same token, no unit is unstoppable - everything has a counter. Heroes now do hero damage, which makes them slightly less powerful against smaller units. The races are as balanced as they have ever been, but still Human seems to have a slight advantage. Undead is the second most popular online, followed by Orc, and then Night Elf.

A Demonstration Game

To get an idea of how the new game plays competitively, I approached nf-sWoop and nDc`Juvenile (1st and 2nd at Gamers Gate) to play a demonstration game. They both agreed to play a random race, on one of the new Frozen Throne ladder maps, "Twisted Meadow".

As the game began, we saw Swoop as Night Elf and Juvenile as Undead. Both players followed standard Reign of Chaos build orders, although Swoop's first hero was the Warden. Juvenile chose to stick with the old reliable and chose a Death Knight. They both began to creep adventurously and by chance, Juvenile's Death Knight stumbled upon Swoop's army while he was attacking a group of gnolls. Instead of running, Juvenile lurked about in a cheeky fashion, stealing the dropped item and running back to his base with it. However, Swoop used the new "blink" ability to teleport his Warden after the Death Knight, killing it.
Swoop purchased his second hero, the Naga Sea Witch, from the neutral Tavern building. Juvenile summoned the Lich as his second. They proceeded to level up their heroes with creeps (Swoop making good use of faerie dragons and mountain giants, and Juvenile with obsidian statues), running into each other twice. Juvenile town portalled out both times. With the game at a deadlock, they decided to expand. Swoop found Juvenile's expansion early, destroying it and leaving him in an awkward defensive position. As Juvenile's Death Knight was killed, he once again retreated to his main base.
Swoop pushed the advantage, killing Juvenile's Lich, destroying his main base and winning the game.

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Minimum Specification
Pentium II 400 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 8 MB D3D Video Accelerator 550 MB HHD

- ☺ Great variety
- ☺ Loads of new features
- ☺ Excellent multiplayer
- ☹ Disappointing cinematics

Summary
A near-perfect follow-up to the fastest selling PC game ever. The Frozen Throne includes a host of new units, buildings, campaign types and strategy possibilities. The single player is enthralling, challenging and varied, and the multiplayer community are already singing its praises as a balanced, in-depth competitive title.

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top blizzard employees resign

In what has come at a very awkward time, with Vivendi Universal's current attempts to sell its games division, the co-founders of Blizzard North - Erich Schaefer, Max Schaefer and David Brevik (responsible for the Diablo series) - and the company's vice president, Bill Roper (who was largely Blizzard's press representative) have left to pursue other opportunities. Roper confirmed speculation that their decision was influenced by Vivendi's corporate management, as they were not happy with their level of involvement in the company's direction. The four have worked closely before as a creative unit. The Schaefer brothers are artists and David Brevik is a programmer - they have all headed up various Blizzard projects.

developer: ritual entertainment [] **publisher:** activision [] **distributor:** megarom (011) 805-7303
price: R 299.00 [] [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.st-ef2.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Star Trek Elite Forces II

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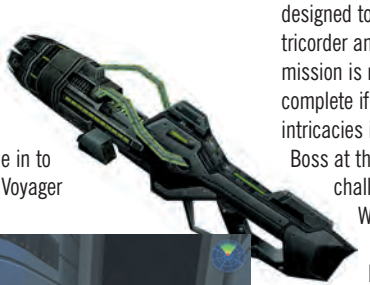
Games based on movies, television series and comic books are for the most part drab affairs that are only trying to cash in on a popular license. It seems the Star Wars and Star Trek licenses have suffered the most from terrible games. However, the arrival of Star Trek Elite Force II might just be able to change that way of thinking.

In Elite Force II, you reprise the role of Alex Munro, the leader of the Hazard Team formed by Voyager during its time in the Delta Quadrant. The tie in to its predecessor, Star Trek Voyager Elite Force, is nicely done. This is mostly due to the fact that the first mission you have to complete is to help Voyager escape from inside a Borg Sphere and return to the Alpha Quadrant.



Before starting, the player can opt to go on a training course with Tuvok, the Vulcan weapons officer of Voyager. While short, it covers areas a player will need to be familiar with. The first mission is also probably designed to enable the uninitiated to get used to the tricorder and the basic weapons of the game. This mission is not very difficult, but it does take a while to complete if you are not entirely familiar with the intricacies involved in dealing with the Borg. Also, the Boss at the end of the level should prove to be quite challenging for newcomers.

When the tie-in mission is completed, Voyager returns to the Alpha Quadrant where the Federation decides that the Hazard Team is superfluous to requirements and disbands it. Munro is put in charge of tactical classes at Starfleet Academy, while the rest of the team is given assignments in distant parts of the galaxy.

It is two years before captain Jean-Luc Picard of the USS Enterprise spots Munro whilst he is busy with a class and identifies his talent. Picard assigns Munro to the Enterprise where he is charged with reforming the Hazard Team. Suffice it to say, the rest of the game stays true to the spirit of the Star Trek universe and offers the player some interesting challenges along the way.

▲ "Quick, anyone know where the toilet is?"

▲ "So, did your mother pick out your clothes for you?"

While Elite Force II is a fairly standard frag-fest, it does offer the player the chance to interact with some of the crewman of the Enterprise between missions. Getting to explore the ship should be fun for the Trekkies amongst us, but unfortunately not enough of Enterprise is accessible to explore. I suppose the developers did not want players to spend too much time in the holo deck when they should be completing missions.

Due to its nature, the game is very linear. This is not such a bad thing since the presentation of the game reminds one of watching a Star Trek Next Generation television episode. On the negative side, the developers wasted a golden opportunity with the tricorder. It seems the tricorder can only be used when the developers think it should be used. Essentially what the player is offered are lots of missions with killing everything that moves and very little scientific data gathering.

Another minor irritation is the fact that Elite Force II is still using the Quake III engine. While the environments are beautifully done, it still gives a slightly dated feel to the game.

Star Trek Elite Force II is a much better title than its predecessor. It also uses the Star Trek license very well so all gamers but the most hardcore of Trekkies should be pleased by it. Even if Star Trek is not your thing, this title is worth the purchase if just to offer you something different to the standard first-person shooter fare.

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 600 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB Video Accelerator
1.2 GB HDD

☺ Star Trek universe	☹ Star Trek universe
☺ Back story	☹ Quake III engine
☺ Weapons	☹ Glorified shoot 'em up

Summary
While far from perfect, Star Trek Elite Force II is a first-person shooter that might appease fans of the Star Trek universe. Even people who do not like Star Trek might enjoy this title as it offers something different than the usual fare. It is just a pity that the developers decided to keep the Quake III engine.

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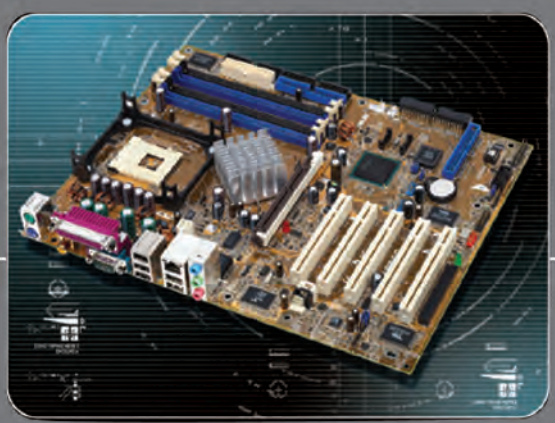

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ASUS® HEART OF TECHNOLOGY

developer: sick puppies [] **publisher:** empire interactive [] **distributor:** wwe [011] 462-0150
price: R 299.00 [] **genre:** management / strategy [] **internet:** www.empireinteractive.com
platforms: pc | xbox | ps2

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Ghost Master

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It's a cold and windy night. Everyone sits around the table on which the Ouija board is laid out, ready to contact a spirit world that nobody is even sure they believe in. And then the pointer moves, and everyone wonders if the person next to them moved it as a joke… just before they realise that every fear they ever entertained is about to come to full and terrifying fruition…

Empire Interactive have never really produced something to make a gamer sit up and say "Wow!" That is until now. Along with developers Sick Puppies, they have released a management title with a difference. It is called Ghost Master, and it will have you dying with delight.

As far as originality is concerned, Ghost Master is way up there. It does remind a little of Dungeon Keeper, but things are a little different this time around. Instead of building a dungeon to challenge and thwart brave adventurers, Ghost Master puts the player in control of a team of apparitions that sport different powers and different personalities. And the aim of the game? To scare mortals, of course! The player is required to (generally) scare the living daylights out of the mortals in the structure that the mission takes place in. I say structure because it isn't all haunted houses in this game - there are boats, hospitals… even a police station in need of a few good spirits.

And not every mission needs the player to be ultra-scary. Some are a little more thought provoking, requiring the player to scare off some individuals while keeping others around, or trying to entice mortals to perform tasks that will further the goals of the undead.

The game works simply enough - each spirit is effected by a certain element, be it emotion, murder, water, thoroughfares or anything like that. These spirits can be "fettered" to objects or places that represent these concepts in the real world. And then the fun begins. Each spirit has variable power levels. The more powerful the trick the ghost is doing, the more plasm (the only resource in the game) is used up. The more frightened the mortals are, the more plasm is generated. This basic principle is very simple, making the game really easy to play - leaving lots of room for fun.

Additional ghosts can be added to the player's team by freeing spirits bound to the earthly realm. Every mission has at least one of these, and special plans need to be made to free these trapped souls. Not freeing them does not mean you fail the mission, but it does help to have the extra variety of spirits at your disposal.

Ghosts can also be improved between missions by granting them with new powers. These powers are bought with gold plasm, which is awarded to the player after each mission according to how well the mission was played.

Ghost Master is addictive and tons of fun to play. Personally it is going down as one of my favourites for the year (although the year is still quite young). It offers a wide range of performance options, making it ideal for players with lower end machines and, when pushed to the max, is a rather pretty game, full of special effects and girls in see-through sleepwear. The models are a little blocky up close, but from a distance everything looks really great!

This is a really original title - it is a breath of death air for the management /strategy genre.

▲ A house full of spirit... literally! A team of ghosts sets about scaring the mortals witless

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Minimum Specification
Pentium II 450 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator 570 MB HDD

- ☺ Original
- ☺ Fun
- ☺ Pretty
- ☹ Can be very frustrating
- ☹ Some poor models

Summary
Here's something different. Take control of a bunch of ghosts and scare the hell out of the living! This game is great fun - it is a tongue in cheek management title that will have you giggling as you inflict terror on your victims. Challenging sometimes and always fun, this is one that management fans will really enjoy!

89

So what if their PC has a dinkydonk with 6 mag shmag and a 600 blot spoogle chop?

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developer: nival interactive [] **publisher:** cdv [] **distributor:** wwe (011) 462-0150
price: R 299.00 [] **genre:** real time strategy [] **internet:** www.cdv-blitzkrieg.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Blitzkrieg

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The thunder of tanks is only drowned out by the whining scream of Stuka dive bombers delivering their deadly payload. All around confusion abounds as the Panzers of the Third Reich speed their way towards swift and devastating victory. Never before has war been fought like this…

CDV return with yet another World War II strategy title. No, it's not the next instalment of Sudden Strike (although at a glance you may well think that it is.) This time developer Nival Interactive have entered the scene, and they bring with them a few refinements and a few new ideas to a genre that is proving quite popular for the German publisher.

The similarities between this title and Sudden Strike are too few for them just to be coincidental. The interface is almost identical, and the shortcut keys are virtually all the same. The backgrounds and units smack of Sudden Strike, although they are a little improved. In short, it seems that Nival based their entire idea upon Sudden Strike, and then attempted to improve on the title.

And improve they did. Blitzkrieg is a fine strategy title, far more forgiving than Sudden Strike ever was. There are more ways than one to successfully complete the missions in this title, and the variable difficulty setting is a big plus. You don't have to be a tactical genius to finish this one (although common sense does help).

The missions can (at times) get a bit stale - the usual "batter the enemy with artillery and then storm in with armour" tactic may be very effective, but it gets a little old when it's the only thing you are doing. However, many missions do make this tactic redundant. A little more precision is required in them, which makes for an interesting and welcome change in the pace of the game.

Another new feature is the advancement of both the player (through military ranks) and of certain key units.

▲ Artillery softens up the enemy while armour lies in wait...

As they advance, their skill improves. Additionally, their "hardware" can be upgraded - new tanks and field guns become available after almost every mission.

My only real criticism lies in the limited number of random missions within the game. You may find yourself replaying the same scenario a few times over, albeit with different surroundings.

However, three long campaigns, an improved AI and more varied air support does make up for this in a big way.

If you enjoy strategy that doesn't involve base building and resource gathering, or even have an interest in the rich history surrounding WWII, this is a title you should certainly consider.

▼ A wide variety of air support can prove vital to the success of a mission - like dropping troops well behind enemy lines

historical facts

Hitler's Blitzkrieg (which basically translates to "lightning war") was used to great effect in the early years of World War II. Based on speed and surprise, the tactic utilised light tanks along with infantry units and air support. It's main aim was to create panic within the civilian populace of attacked areas - the sudden "hit and run" style strikes of the tactic would cause doubt, confusion and rumour among them, as well as force them out of their homes. Large civilian movements cause havoc for defending armies trying to move their forces to the front.

Blitzkrieg was devised by a German army officer called Hans Guderian, when he told Hitler that he would, using this new tactic, reach the French coast within weeks, should an attack on France be ordered. The German High Command scoffed at the idea, saying that it was impossible.

However, Guderian's tactic proved incredibly successful, and was the major contributor to Germany's early successes during the war. The following excerpt was written by an unknown French soldier who witnessed the Blitzkrieg first hand: "The pace is too fast……it's the co-operation between the dive-bombers and the tanks that is winning the war for Germany."

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Minimum Specification
Pentium II 366 MHz | 64 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 8 MB D3D Video Accelerator | 2.4 GB HDD

- ☺ Improved AI
- ☺ Unit and player advancement
- ☺ Long campaigns
- ☹ Repetitive random missions
- ☹ Little tactical variation
- ☹ Not very original

Summary
Stand back Sudden Strike, here comes Blitzkrieg. This World War II based strategy title improves where its predecessor left off, and makes for very enjoyable and engrossing play. It may get a little tactically tired at times, but there is enough variation to keep the player interested. Good graphics, a competent AI and lots of action are the order of the day.

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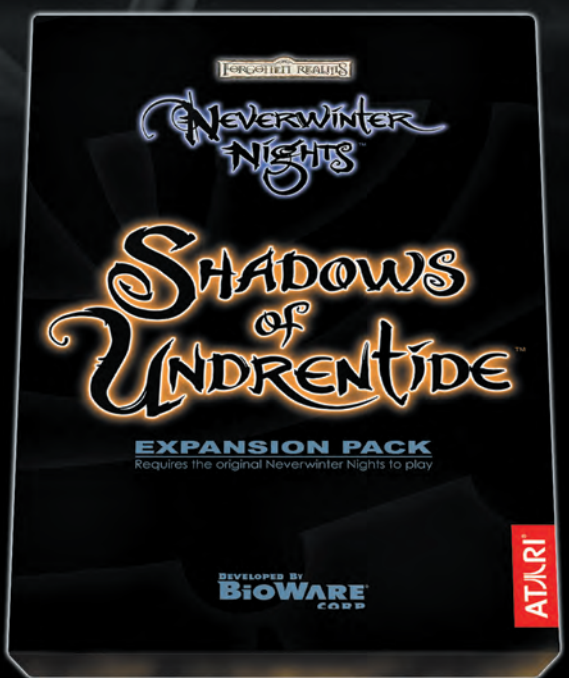

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The joker's decision if final is deemed fit to decide. No corrosion will be adhered in to legal action. Only 1 [one] entry per person. Only blah de yoyo morality carpe deem Pluto.

developer: rockstar north [] **publisher:** take two interactive [] **distributor:** megarom (011) 234-2680
price: R299.00 [] **genre:** third person action [] **internet:** www.rockstar.com
platforms: pc | ps2

reviewer: James "Priest" Francis

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City

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It's the 80s! Synthesizers! Loud clothes! Bad hairstyles! And all the cocaine your credit card can carry! Incidentally, that's what got you into this mess in the first place. See, the mob wants a foothold in the coastal haven of Vice City, and you're the thug being given the job, alongside a crooked attorney who arranged a cocaine deal with some Columbians. But during the deal there's an ambush and only you and the lawyer escape alive. So here you are - no coke, no money and a rather angry mob boss. But he owes you a favour, so you are allowed to live long enough to get him his money back.

This story will lead you across Vice City, a gangster's paradise, where the Puerto Ricans run the show. It's a great place for a criminal to kickstart a new career. Unofficially, you can regard Vice City as a prequel to GTA 3. The game takes place in the 80s, and it's flavoured to match exactly. From ditzy 80s tunes on the radio to retro cars to bad fashion sense. But the real beauty comes in the gameplay changes.

The first has to be bikes. These went missing from the series in GTA 3, but have made a come-back, and come in the form of Vespas, scramblers, Harleys and superbikes. Of course, these aren't called as such, but you get the idea. You can adjust the balance of a bike, meaning you can wheelie the cycle, or do one of those cool brake-manoeuvres that lifts the back of the bike. These might be the most obvious changes, but they go far deeper. For one, Vice City looks really good.

The world is brighter and more vibrant, and the city has more life to it. The cars look better, the people say more and react more randomly. Okay, you can't swim yet, but at least there are more boats to steal.

Then there's the aspect that you can change clothes to avoid the cops (it drops 2 stars), the ability to rob stores, jump out of a car or off a bike, do proper drive-by shootings and shoot out the tyres of vehicles. The same goes for you, though - nothing is quite as annoying as trying to control your superbike at high speed when a cop just shot out the back tyre.

You are also now able to buy property, which ranges from giving you a spot to save to giving you extra cash to use. This becomes more vital later on as you need to buy property in order to finish the game.

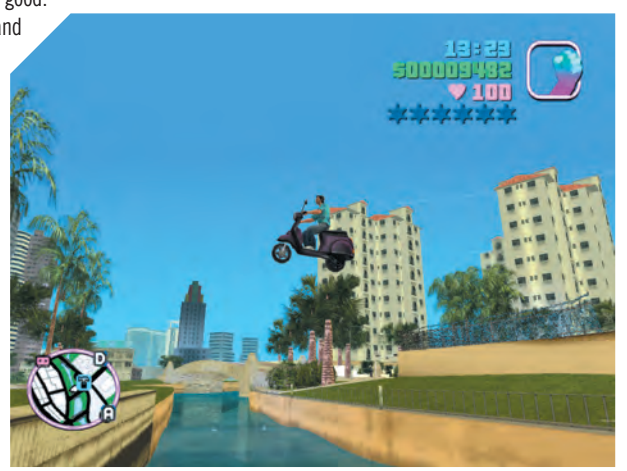
The game itself also runs a lot smoother than GTA 3 did, though I'd advise to get a faster hard drive if your graphics don't stream properly.

The game is still as rude as always, with no moral base to speak of. Prostitutes and pimps are all over the place, and you still do rather illicit jobs. Home, sweet, home indeed! As for the mini-missions, you can also act as a Pizza delivery boy, plus pizza stores have arrived as health havens. Health costs cash, though, so be careful. Hey, it's GTA 3, just prettier, more stuff to do, and more swearing and bad people doing bad stuff. How can something so wrong be so right? Who cares?

▲ Being a gentleman, he opened the door for the lady... before throwing her onto the ground and stealing her car...

▼ "I may have a crap dress sense, but I also have a bazooka... any more comments?"

▲ Ambition - the good, the bad and the ugly...



▲ No matter how outrageous the stunt, there is Nothing cool about a scooter...

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 800 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator 915 MB HDD

☺ Killer graphics
☺ Dangerous bikes
☺ More laws to break
☹ Smaller than GTA3

Summary
Don't see this as a sequel - it's too small. It's just a game that extends on GTA 3 and makes everything better and more fun. If you ever felt guilty about all the murder, mayhem and general lawbreaking you caused in GTA3, give this one a wide miss.

88

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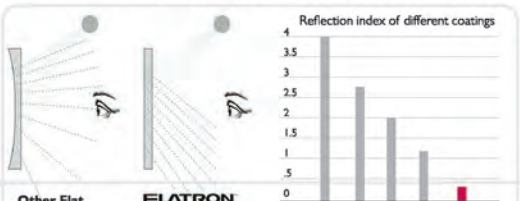

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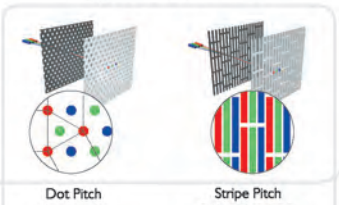

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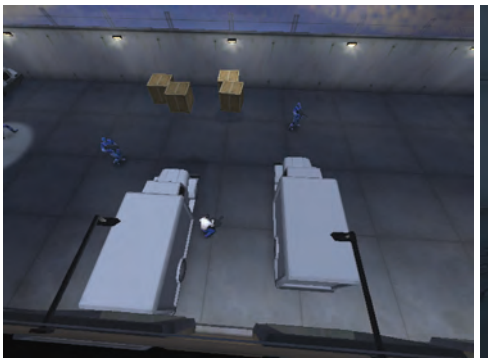
developer: radical entertainment [] **publisher:** vivendi universal [] **distributor:** nu metro (011) 340-9300
price: R 280.00 [] **genre:** action [] **internet:** www.hulkgames.com
platforms: pc | xbox | ps2 | gc | gba

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius



The Hulk

NOW AVAILABLE
@M Musica

As the year wears on we see more and more games based on films coming to the fore - especially films that are based on other media, like comic books. Licensing does create a wonderfully recognisable game, with characters we can identify from elsewhere… but when does it get too much? Should a game based on a film be just another game, or should the developers pull out all the stops on a title that is almost guaranteed to do incredibly well in terms of sales?

The Hulk bursts his way onto your PC monitor in all his green glory, and fans of either the comic series or (more likely) the movie will be gobbling this up. But what should have been a truly brilliant game (at least making it worth all the money it will undoubtedly make) has turned out to be rather mediocre.

My personal prejudice against games ported from other platforms immediately kicked in when I started the Hulk up for the first time. Keyboard only controls and limited save game slots are the order of the day here, and while simple control and limited saves may be fine on a console, they don't really have much of a place on the PC.

I suppose that one has to be realistic when looking at this title. I mean, really, what does the Hulk do other than smash things and beat bad guys up? Playing a title like this, it would be foolish to expect complex puzzles and the like. However, the whole "Hulk smash" thing does get very tired before long, leaving the gamer feeling like something could have been added - anything…

OK, true, it is more like "Hulk smash, Banner sneak, Hulk smash." The game does feature missions in which the player controls the more docile side of the character, and these generally involve stealth style missions - when a big green giant would be a little too conspicuous for proceedings. But the game still falls flat due to its lack of story (of course it has one, but it's rather weak). And it has nothing to do with the movie...

The nicest thing about this game is that virtually anything on screen can be broken (or at least damaged.) This goes with the territory, I guess, seeing as how the Hulk is little more than a green ball of rage. But the violence in the game is mindless, and after you have beaten your one hundredth victim to a pulp, the limited attack styles and repetitive nature of the AI gets a little old. I suppose expecting more from a title like this would really be a little unrealistic. But we are gamers, damn it, and we are a demanding sort. Even something small like including the cell-shading used in the in-game movies in the game itself would have been better. However, I am sad to report that the game supporting one of this year's biggest cinema releases is not much more than OK. It's great for venting a little frustration, but most people are going to want something a little more stimulating than this title. Developers must realise that pretty effects and mindless violence are not enough anymore.

▲ Bruce decided to demonstrate the correct technique for stage diving...

▲ William lit a match at the precise moment that the Hulk's large bean and chilli dinner kicked in...

▲ "Dude, I think that I've got something in my eye... check it out for me, if you would be so kind..."

▲ Although the make and model were fine, Bruce disapproved of the colour...

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 700 MHz | 192 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
1.8 GB HDD

- ☺ Mindless violence
- ☺ Hulk smash!
- ☺ Pretty effects
- ☹ Limited control
- ☹ Limited save slots
- ☹ Gets old quickly

Summary
Released on the back of the Hulk movie, this port is a series of repetitive episodes in which the player either sneaks around as Bruce Banner, or smashes everything as the Hulk. Limited control, limited save slots and a distinct lack of story are the hallmarks of this title, and the action soon gets rather boring. Fun for a while, but without much more merit than that.

68

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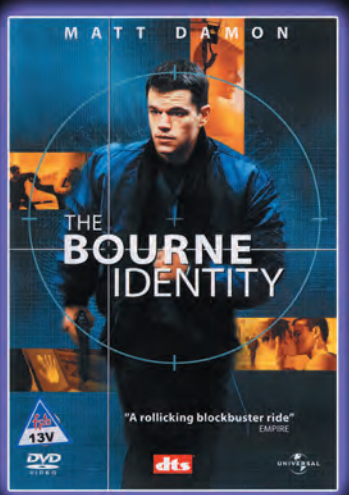

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Gateway Theatre of Shopping, Durban 031 - 5664722 Durban International Airport, 031 - 4081177

developer: black cactus [] **publisher:** empire interactive [] **distributor:** wwe [011] 462-0150
price: R 299.00 [] **genre:** real time strategy [] **internet:** www.warriorkingsbattles.com
platforms: pc

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

Warrior Kings: Battles

NOW AVAILABLE
@M Musica

The feudal system of the Middle Ages was a severely hierarchical structure. Local lords were vassals to greater authorities, who in turn answered to kings and the like. The common man's lot in those days was quite grim, as peasants were issued lands belonging to their lords to work, and in return the peons lived off the surplus produce left over from usually very high taxes. Lords would live in manor houses, often fortified, while the working classes lived outside these protective perimeters. Now, here's a game that depicts this type of social structure while embellishing it with a fantasy background.

Warrior Kings - Battles is set in a world modelled after medieval Europe. The game map is quite reminiscent of European geography, and even the various lands' names are mostly derived from Latin names for those old provinces.
Although the game's background stories (yes, the plural is intentional) feature many far-fetched, fantastic themes, the game's depiction of medieval warfare is fairly authentic. The emphasis in Warrior Kings is on sound battlefield tactics, and the player is called upon to effectively combine light and heavy infantry, light and heavy cavalry, siege weapons and logistical units. Each of the abovementioned units has its own defined function, for example, light infantry (archers, mainly) is great for thinning out advancing columns of heavy infantry, while heavy cavalry counters light infantry very effectively.
While waging war in Warrior Kings, it is also important to deploy forces in appropriate formations, and to make use of terrain to shift the odds in one's own favour. Line of sight also plays an important role.
As is the case with all real-time strategy titles, one must build up an infrastructure to produce and support the military. The centre of a player's "base" is a walled town with one or more outlying villages. The player's manor house (later upgraded to a keep, castle and, ultimately, palace) is initially in the centre of the walled town, and must be protected, as its loss spells defeat. Structures that can be built fall into two categories: civic buildings must be built inside the walls, while rural buildings can only be placed outside. As a game progresses, the city will grow.
Resources follow a fairly standard mode, with a few differences. Food, materials and wealth are the primary resources. Food is handled in a more realistic fashion than in most RTS games - the number of farms does not dictate any limit on units; instead, it influences the income of food, which gets stockpiled. It is entirely possible for an army's support cost to exceed production, in which case the stockpile will dwindle proportionately. Materials are gathered by the collection of wood and stone, with the former yielding double.
Wealth is accrued in two ways: gold can be mined, when available, and shops can be built that will convert materials into wealth; the latter method is the dominant one, requiring the player to set up an economy.
The course of a campaign unfolds on a continent map very suggestive of Europe. The map is divided into territories, much like in a game of Risk, and each territory offers something in the way of spoils of war and more permanent benefits.
Spoils of war are seized when a territory is captured, while a territory's other attributes will influence subsequent games; for example, many territories increase a player's maximum population cap.
Warrior Kings - Battles offers an innovative take on the real-time strategy genre, as it more faithfully recreates warfare and society in medieval times. This game is not for lightweight players - a sound understanding of field tactics is required, in a less abstract way than games such as WarCraft or Generals. However, the realism comes at the cost of pace and accessibility.

▲ An advanced city featuring most facilities

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Minimum Specification
Pentium 733 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8x CD ROM | 16MB D3D Video Accelerator 800 MB HDD

- ☺ High authenticity
- ☺ Challenging
- ☺ Dynamic tech-tree
- ☹ Slow pace
- ☹ Graphics appear quite dated

Summary
An unusual title offers the serious strategist a uniquely authentic battlefield command experience and a historically accurate depiction of medieval society. This is not for the casual gamer. The game's pace is such that it will provide many hours of entertainment, but is unlikely to yield multiplayer intensity to satisfy everyone.

70

developer: digitalo [] **publisher:** arush entertainment | groove games [] **distributor:** tba
price: $39.99 [±R 310.00][excluding shipping] [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.devastationgame.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar

Devastation

IMPORT
NOT AVAILABLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The year is 2075 and Earth has been devastated. Corrupt corporations control the remaining technology and rule what is left of society with an iron-fist. The police have been replaced with pacification squads that maintain order for the ruling syndicate, Grathius.
The only hope for freedom is a small group of resistance fighters made up of gang leaders, mercenaries and ex-military operatives. You play as the resistance leader who must assemble an army and travel the globe to restore peace and sanity in a very dangerous world.

This is the story of Devastation, the latest first-person shooter (FPS) developed by Digitalo.
You are probably thinking that this is just another FPS trying to hide behind what seems to be a very clichéd story. Well, you would be right.
It seems that I have become increasingly critical on new titles. Sure, you can say that I have become jaded. I guess you could even say that I have become blasé about reviewing games. This is not the case. Think about it. I get paid to play games, form an opinion based on my experience with similar games in the genre, and explain in a page or so why the title is good or bad. Reviewers need to set aside their personal feelings about a title they know they are going to hate and find something objective to write about. Of course, when you review a title that you know you are going to like you will also need to set aside your feelings and examine it from an objective (is this a cool buzz-word or what?) angle.
We are all human (well, most of us) and we do make mistakes. Most of us learn from these mistakes and will at least try not to repeat them. The reason for this meander into the psyche of a reviewer (not a pretty sight is it?) is to explain why I become annoyed at publishers who insist on releasing sub-standard titles. It seems to be an unwritten rule that you must release a title that will require at least two or three patches to make it play properly. Devastation is a case in point. The title is almost unplayable without the latest patch. The patch fixes everything from multiplayer glitches to sound changes for weapons. Perhaps the developers did not think it was a problem to have the title go gold when all the guns sound the same?
It is all well and good to get broadband users to download a patch of 67MB, but us poor dial-up sods are going to struggle. Graphically, this title uses what it calls a modified Unreal engine, but I cannot remember Unreal looking this bad. The characters look awful and what is worse, the bodies of the enemies you kill disappear. On a positive side, the environment fits in well with the post-apocalyptic nature of the story.
Another nice touch is the ability to use almost anything you can lay your hands on as a weapon. This can range from broken bottles to empty oil barrels. If you are a gun aficionado then Devastation is for you as there is a plethora of firearms to choose from.
During the first few missions you are on your own, but gradually you get to build up a squad of soldiers to command. Initially, the commands you can give them are of the defend, fight, follow variety but that changes during some of the more difficult levels. Of course, path finding is a nightmare so more often than not you simply tell your squad to wait behind while you go kill everyone in sight.
Devastation is a game that tries to be different but fails dismally. There is a distinct feeling that the game was released before anyone could quality-test it and that is its ultimate downfall.

▲ Don't worry, he'll disappear soon

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 700 MHz | 256 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 32 MB Video Card with T&L | 1 GB HDD

- ☺ Interactive environment
- ☺ Tries to be different
- ☺ Many weapons to choose from
- ☹ Buggy
- ☹ Awful voice acting
- ☹ Disappearing bodies

Summary
Devastation can be summarised as a first-person shooter that tries its best to be different. Unfortunately, countless bugs and indifferent graphics end up being too much for the title to overcome. Some fun multi-player options and an interesting squad-system save this title from total ignominy. However, do not expect the next Unreal or Quake when playing Devastation.

65

developer: ascaron [] **publisher:** bigben interactive [] **distributor:** wwe [011] 462-0150
price: R 299.00 [] **genre:** strategy [] **internet:** www.ascaron.com
platforms: pc

reviewer: Adam "Madman" Liebman

Port Royale

NOW AVAILABLE
@M Musica

Set amidst the 16th and 17th centuries, Port Royale sees you trying to forge a living in the New World, and living up to your aspirations of becoming Governor. Your primary tools to achieve this? Trade and piracy - arr, matey, there be an interesting concept for a strategy game - but have Ascaron got it right?

At the outset of Port Royale, you choose to be affiliated with either Spain, Holland, England or France, all of whom were, at that time, vying for control of the Caribbean and its surrounding areas. Then, after choosing which point in history to start playing from (anywhere from 1570 to 1660 - this affects how much territory each nation owns), you're told to start making your fortune, with only a single ship and a small bundle of gold. The majority of your earnings will come from shipping goods from destination to destination, as the buying and selling prices fluctuate on a complex economic model, in line with supply and demand of the goods in question. As soon as you've earned a reasonable amount of gold, you'll be able to start your own businesses which produce goods from raw materials, as well as upgrading your fleet until it contains the maximum of 10 convoys each comprising 10 ships. Fortunately, you'll also be able to assign trade routes to your convoys, automating the process of buying and selling goods, and taking some of the burden of micromanagement off your hands. Along the way, you'll also be able to outfit your ships with cannons, allowing you to plunder and sink the ships of your enemies for additional profit (and bonuses from your own government for aiding the war effort, providing you've purchased a "Letter of the Marque" from a Governor, which also prevents your reputation from decreasing with opposing nations). There are also bounties on the heads of local pirates which you'll be able to cash in on. There is also a story element running through the game, concerning the murder of your character's parents, and your character also gains experience points and levels through battles and trading. Unfortunately, however, Port Royale does feel extremely daunting at first, and although there is a tutorial on offer, it doesn't teach you the finer points of the game, resulting in a rather steep learning curve at first. If you do, however, persevere through the slow process of getting into the game, you'll find the play dynamic can offer more hours worth of entertainment than you can shake a peg-leg at. Graphically, Port Royale boasts well detailed towns, colourful landscapes, and well animated-battles, while the sound track complements the sea theme quite well - voice acting, however, is sorely lacking, and would undoubtedly have improved the overall experience of playing Port Royale. Ultimately, Port Royale is certainly a worthwhile strategy game, particularly for those less inclined to war-orientated games, but starting out is a very slow process indeed, and leaves one with the unshakeable feeling of having been thrown in the deep end; you will often find yourself enduring moments of frustration when trying to figure out why you're unable to construct certain buildings even though you do have the requisite funds, or why your trade routes cannot be activated when you're sure they're properly set up. If you have the patience to spend enough time with Port Royale to figure out the intricacies of the game, however, you're almost sure to find it a rewarding experience, particularly if you have an affinity for some swashbuckling action.

▲ Rush hour was hell in the Havana CBD

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Minimum Specification
Pentium III 450 MHz | 64 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 16 MB DirectX 8.1 Video Accelerator | 500 MB HDD

☺ Challenging
☺ Deep play dynamic
☺ Graphics
☹ Daunting at first
☹ No voice acting

Summary
Port Royale recreates the 16th Century colonisation struggles well, with a realistic economics model for trading, and allows the player a choice of being a trader or plunderer. Good graphics and a complex and rewarding play dynamic make this a worthwhile game, but the learning curve is steep, and it takes quite a bit of time to get into the swing of things.

78

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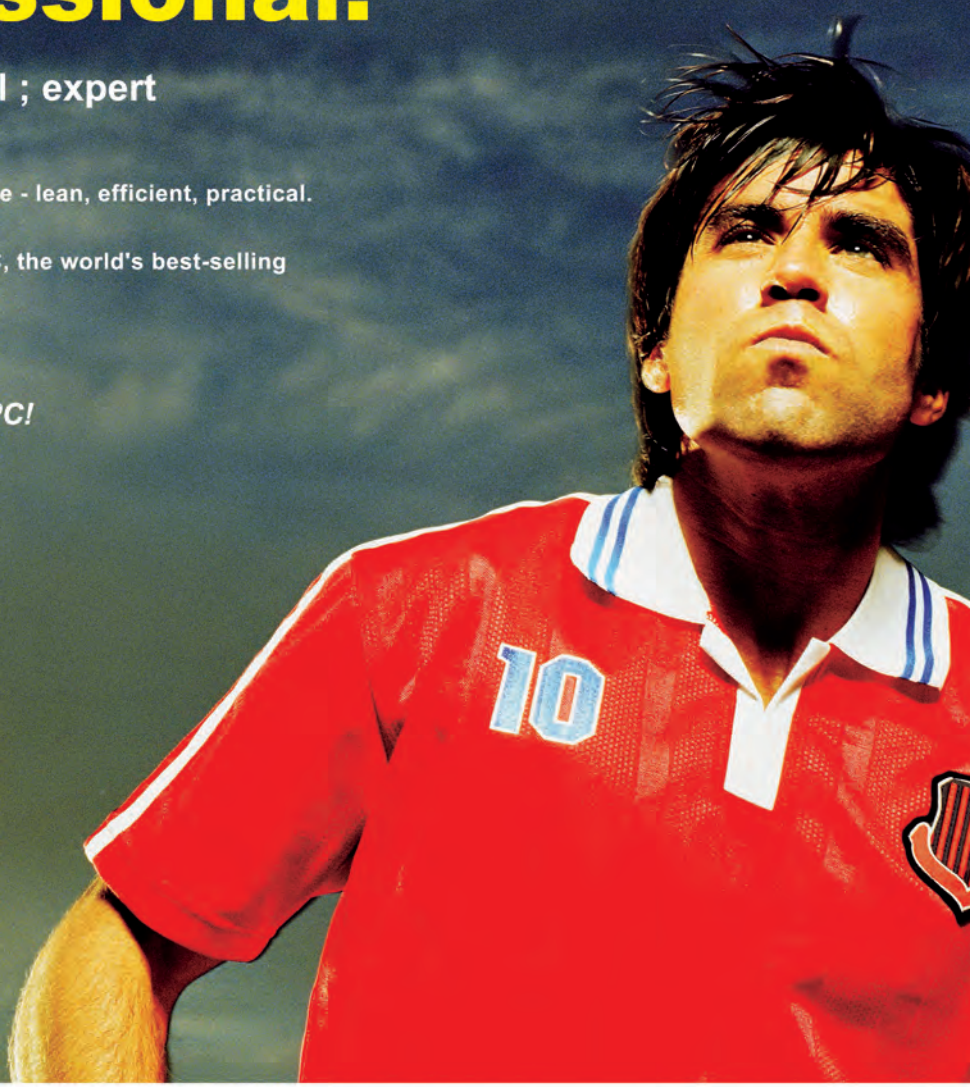

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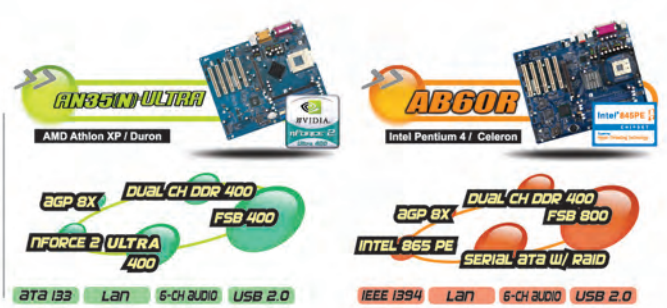

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developer: capcom [] **publisher:** capcom [] **distributor:** ster kinekor (011) 445-7900
price: R 489.00 [] **genre:** third person action [] **internet:** www.capcom.com
platforms: ps2

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Devil May Cry 2

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In a world turned to hell, who better to save the day than the son of a demon? Years ago Sparda, demonic demon hunter, saved the world… and now the same task falls to his son, Dante. But demons are tricky and tough. Will this hero be able to save the day against the worst that the netherworld has to offer?

The first thing that strikes one about this game when you set it spinning in your PS2 is that it seems quite like the Resident Evil series in a number of ways. That would be because it comes from developers Capcom, who have time and again proven their worth in the console based third person action market. And while there is a similarity, it is rather fleeting. The game loses any semblance to its cousins pretty soon. While the subject matter may be grim, Devil May Cry 2 is an action packed romp in which the player controls both Dante (the son of Devil May Cry's hero, Sparda) and a mysterious "protector." He (Dante) is part demon, while she (Lucia, the protector) is possessed of angelic power. While many other Capcom titles were of the survival horror type, there is little doubt that Dante is enough of a bad-ass to make it through anything the game throws at the player.

The action in this title is intense. Able to attack with swords and firearms, Dante is a demon killing machine. The game reminds one of an anime movie, where everything is bigger, better, faster and just so much more there. Astounding leaps, brilliant fighting moves and a cool as ice attitude all make up the hallmarks of both characters, reinforcing the whole anime feel.

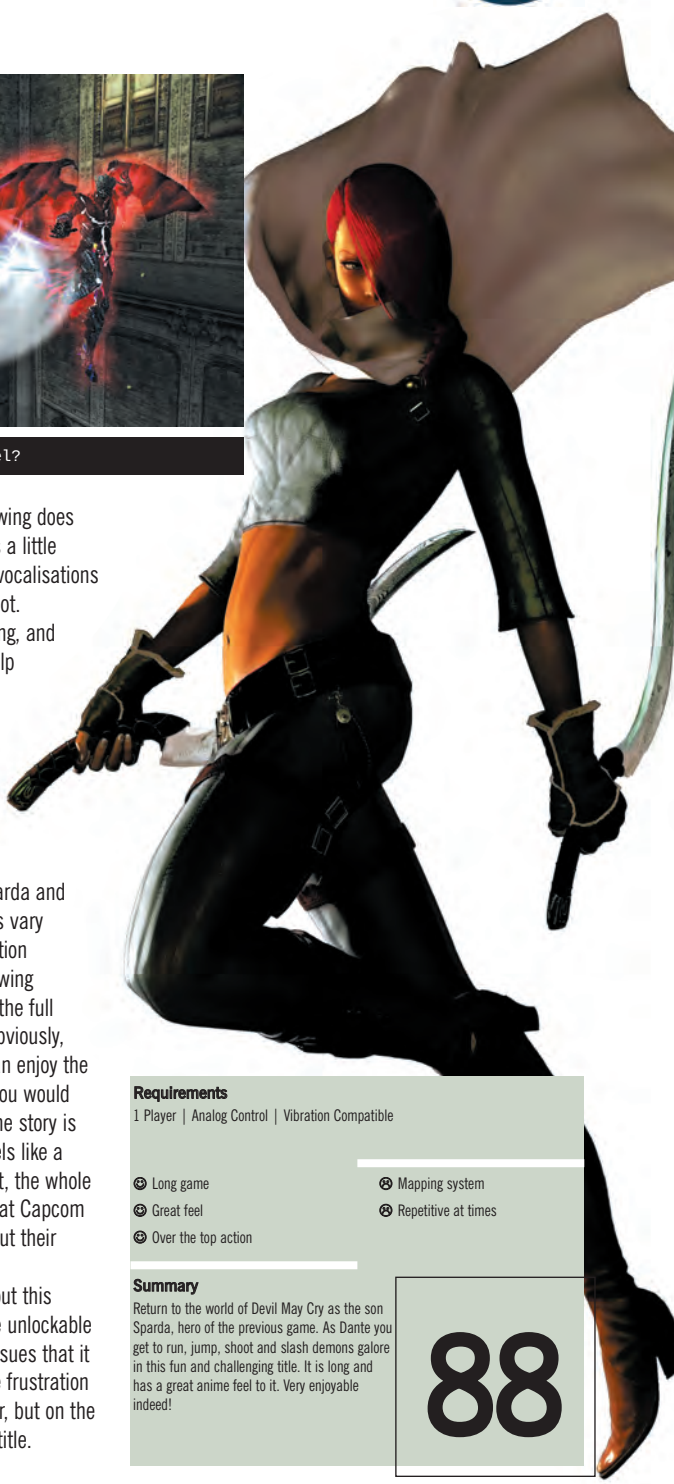
▲ Do demons need Diesel?

It's hard to find fault with this title (and seeing as reviewing does entail finding fault, I did try). The action gets a little repetitive after a while, and the character's vocalisations are very few - although they get repeated a lot. Additionally, the levels may get a bit confusing, and the rather vague mapping system doesn't help with that in the slightest. The player may wander around a level for hours without finding what he's supposed to be doing. Other than that, this is a stunning title, with lovely graphics, a great story and, oh did I forget to mention, steaming heaps of action.

The game comes with two disks (one for Sparda and one for Lucia) and while the stories vary slightly, there is a great correlation between the two disks, allowing the player to be filled in on the full picture of the game. And, obviously, this also means that you can enjoy the game for twice as long as you would with any single disk title! The story is intricate and once again feels like a typically anime tale - in fact, the whole game is full of the things that Capcom fans have come to love about their action adventure titles.

There is little not to like about this game (except maybe for the unlockable Diesel fashions.) The few issues that it does have may cause some frustration or distractions for the player, but on the whole, this is a very sweet title.

▲ "I like the sky and the whole gothic feel. Very nice. But these birds have to go!"



Requirements
1 Player | Analog Control | Vibration Compatible

☺ Long game
☺ Great feel
☺ Over the top action
☹ Mapping system
☹ Repetitive at times

Summary
Return to the world of Devil May Cry as the son Sparda, hero of the previous game. As Dante you get to run, jump, shoot and slash demons galore in this fun and challenging title. It is long and has a great anime feel to it. Very enjoyable indeed!

88

developer: rockstar [] **publisher:** take 2 interactive [] **distributor:** ster kinekor (011) 445-7900
price: R 451.00 [] **genre:** racing [] **internet:** www.rockstargames.com
platforms: pc | ps2 | xbox

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Midnight Club II

NOW AVAILABLE @M Musica

The roar of engines down a deserted city street send the police scurrying after two supped-up cars… squealing tyres, hair raising turns, and generally hazardous behaviour; welcome to the world of illegal street racing.

It seems that Rockstar Games cannot actually produce a title that has anything to do with the right side of the law. In Grand Theft Auto, you are a thief and general thug. In State of Emergency, you instigate riots and cause civil unrest. And in Midnight Club II, you race cars illegally through public areas. Makes you think about these guys, doesn't it?

However, as questionable as the motives behind these games may be, Rockstar have a knack for producing good titles. And Midnight Club II falls right into that category, without any trouble whatsoever.

Based in fantasy versions of Los Angeles, Paris and Tokyo, this game puts the player at the controls of incredibly fast street vehicles (be they cars or bikes) in some of the most hair raising races ever seen on the PS2. The player begins by trawling for opponents. A quick flash of the headlights, and the race is on - follow your chosen opponent to a designated starting spot, and the action begins.

Races vary in their execution too. Ranging from standard "the fastest survive" races right through to a maze like "hit the checkpoints in any order" style of event, Midnight Club is full of variety and challenges for those who enjoy great driving sims. The physics are fairly accurate, the pace is fast, and the action is full of mayhem as other traffic, pedestrians and cops enter the picture.

Midnight Club II makes one think of a more refined, driving only version of Grand Theft Auto, where pink slips are the prize. It's a fun title that can be very frustrating at times. Racing fans should enjoy this take on the genre.

☺ Racing variety
☺ Great physics
☹ Can be too tough

83

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developer: zipper interactive [] **publisher:** scee [] **distributor:** ster kinekor (011) 445-7900
price: R 709.00 [] **genre:** third person tactical shooter [] **internet:** www.scee.com
platforms: ps2

reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

SOCOM: Navy Seals

NOW AVAILABLE @M Musica

With technology streaming ahead at a massive pace, new concepts and ideas in gaming are becoming an everyday thing - hardly as exciting as they would have been a few years ago. But there comes a point where technological advancement and infrastructure clash, when things become either impractical or impossible. For the PS2, that point is SOCOM: Navy Seals.

What we have here is a very well constructed, beautifully made third person strategy game for the PlayStation 2. The player controls a team of Navy Seals (through orders and the rest, while controlling the team leader physically). SOCOM is a great single player game - challenging and realistic, with brilliantly complete controls and a wide variety of functions and actions for the player to perform. Shipped with SOCOM: Navy Seals is a rather nifty and innovative device: a headset, made by peripheral masters Logitech. This headset plugs into one of the USB ports of your PS2, and is principally designed to support this game's rather nice multiplayer feature. But this is where the problem comes in, at least for us here in South Africa (and a number of other countries too, I would think).

To use this device, you need to link your PS2 up to the Internet and find some other guys to play with. The four man team then uses the headset to communicate with each other. Very nice, if you have the facilities for it. Here in SA we don't, making the headset nothing more than window dressing. True, some of the in-game sound plays via the headset speaker, but it just isn't the same. There is no real need for it. While the single player version of the game is great, it really is meant for a multiplayer environment, which we sadly cannot take advantage of.

☺ Great graphics
☺ Challenging
☺ Realistic
☹ A bit tough at times
☹ No PS2 Internet support in SA

79

developer: criterion games [] **publisher:** acclaim [] **distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 549.00 [] **genre:** racing [] **internet:** www.burnout2.com
platforms: ps2 | xbox | gcn

reviewer: Adam "Madman" Liebman

Burnout 2

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

NOW AVAILABLE @ M Musica

The original Burnout was the first real attempt anyone had made at simulating a rush hour journey down South Africa's very own N3, and though underrated, it was certainly a highly entertaining title. The sequel brings back all the goodness from its predecessor, and throws in some more, making this one of the most addictive and exciting arcade racers available.

Much like Gran Turismo, Burnout 2 requires you to earn a license before it allows you to actually race against anyone, however the tests you'll have to pass are vastly different from anything you've encountered before, with lessons broaching the all-important subjects of driving against the flow of traffic, powersliding through corners, and passing other cars as closely as possible without so much as swapping paint. To break it down, the more recklessly you drive, the quicker you can fill up your boost meter, which allows you to fire a NOS burst, not dissimilar from the sort of thing we've all seen in 'The Fast & The Furious', which in turn lets you chew up the opposition on the race track. You are further rewarded for achieving "Burnout" - i.e. making it through the duration of the turbo boost (around 15 seconds) without crashing. There is a large variety of vehicles on offer, ranging from hatchbacks to stock cars and supercars, none of which are licensed, but are quite obviously rip offs of easily recognisable vehicles, and in order to win some of the later races, you'll need to unlock the faster vehicles, since the AI is always a tough opponent, and there seems to be a catch-up mechanism in place, which prevents you from building up a dramatic lead over the competition, even if you do succeed in boosting throughout most of the tracks.

In terms of visuals, Burnout 2 cannot be faulted. The frame rate never misses a beat, the backgrounds are all beautifully detailed, and the crash sequences boast spectacular special effects, leaving you with a very satisfied feeling, particularly after causing $35-million worth of damage. The sound effects are also excellent, with everything from gear changes to the turbo boost immersing you in the Burnout 2 experience, and the pumping soundtrack that speeds up when you fire the nitrous boost adds to the adrenaline rush. On the whole, Burnout 2 is undoubtedly one of the most entertaining and addictive arcade racing games I have played, with a large single player mode, and much exciting rivalry on offer in the multiplayer department. One can't help but get a rush out of firing the turbo up a blind rise on the wrong side of a freeway, and anyone looking for a genuinely thrilling arcade racer will not be disappointed by Burnout 2 - this one is definitely a keeper!

- ☺ Truly entertaining
- ☺ Superb graphics
- ☺ Re-play value
- ☹ Can't save replays
- ☹ No official license

90

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developer: free radical [] **publisher:** eidos [] **distributor:** ster kinekor [011] 445-7900
price: R 699.00 [] **genre:** first person shooter [] **internet:** www.timesplittersgame.com
platforms: ps2 | xbox | gcn

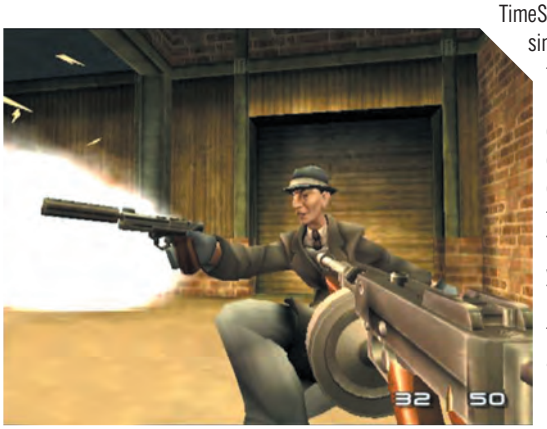
reviewer: Walt "Shryke" Pretorius

Timesplitters 2

NOW AVAILABLE @ M Musica

Alien invaders threaten all of creation! Again! They have stolen the Time Crystals and have scattered them throughout time, and it is up to you to find them, be it in the 19th century, or the 30th. So grab your gun, head for the time portal and get ready for an action packed romp through the ages…

One of the original FPS titles for the PS2 (in fact, one of the first PS2 titles ever) is revisited in TimeSplitters 2.



Once again we enter the world of jumping through time to get things done. The player's character assumes various personas in various ages, including the 19th century, the 1930's, the late twentieth century and the far future - at least in story mode. Other modes (like the quick action game and the multiplayer modes) allow the character to experience all the weapons of the game in one setting, regardless of the time in question.

TimeSplitters 2 does not feature the best single player game, but this is because the game is heavily geared towards multiplayer modes. Up to four players can play the game (using a multitap, of course) and it even sports a level editor, so that you can make new maps to use in games.

TimeSplitters 2 is fun, but unless you're going to play with other players, you will not reveal the game's full potential. Its design towards multiplayer has left the single player aspect of the game a little lacking. As fun as it might be, consoles still tend to be solitary platforms - a split screen has never been the best way to play a FPS game, after all. In the end, the popularity of this title will come down to personal taste.

- ☺ Level Editor
- ☺ Fun
- ☹ Limited single player game

80

developer: nintendo [] publisher: nintendo [] distributor: futronic (011) 315-0079
price: R 499.00 [] genre: arcade puzzles [] internet: www.nintendo.com
platforms: gba

reviewer: Eddie "Hairball" Francis

WarioWare, Inc.: Mega Microgame$

Step aside Snake and Bumper, WarioWare, Inc. is here. This is probably the most addictive and engaging game I have ever played. And it only uses about two buttons. It is a collection of small, reflex based games, centred on an unimportant story.

Basically you have to 'battle' your way through characters to eventually get to Wario. Each character gives you challenges, consisting of games ranging from hurdle jumping to slurping up a lugie before it hits the floor. This is achieved by repeatedly bashing buttons or timing the bashing to a tee. All the games are unique in their own right and quite fun.

These games are surprisingly difficult. It will take you hours and hours of playing over and over before you get all the games right. And the worst part is that all the games come up randomly, so it is never the same. Every time you finish a game, the speed increases, the things you need to catch become smaller, the hurdles move closer together, and there are more flies and a smaller swatter. Having only four lives per stage doesn't help either - one screw-up could mean you lose the level.

The fun part of the title is in the fact that it starts fast, it stays fast, and ends fast. The longest game is round-a-bout five seconds long and the shortest will last an entire second. The boss levels are longer, but even they only last about ten seconds. When you finish a stage, you get to move to the next character and you can open a VS. game. These games are based on the same concept as the rest of the games, but they are for two players, each using either the L or R button. These don't have time limits, but are best-out-of-three games.

Some of the games are older Nintendo titles, 'remixed' into WarioWare. These extra games, and all the games you have played in the stages, are opened and can be played over and over - a good way of practising. The only downside to WarioWare is that you can only have one saved game, so keep that younger brother away.

- ☺ Addictive
- ☺ Fast
- ☺ Varied
- ☹ Requires super-human concentration

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developer: nintendo [] publisher: nintendo [] distributor: futronic (011) 315-0079
price: R 499.00 [] genre: action adventure [] internet: www.nintendo.com
platforms: gba

reviewer: James "Priest" Francis

Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

What is it about elves that fascinate us so? Even Link, one of Nintendo's oldest creations, is of the pointy-eared nation of wood-dwelling folk, and it seems so is our esteemed Princess Zelda.

The Legend of Zelda has always been a pseudo RPG where you gain more health and weapons as you progress through the game world. Instead of it being a side scroller, everything happens from a top-down perspective. You also have a mostly-free run of the game world, though new areas allow themselves to be opened. In each area you'll find ample enemy units to kill and things to do.

If Golden Sun was Baldur's Gate, Legend of Zelda would be Diablo II. This is Link's first original game on the GBA, but I have a nagging feeling it's little more than a conversion of a former title. This is mainly because the graphics are not as impressive as the aforementioned Golden Sun. That said, the game world is quite vibrant and colourful. Your terrain varies from grasslands to villages to rocky mountains to forests. Then there are the ever-present dungeons, castles and other places to find more bad guys and gems.

The main quest? Find three medallions and eventually find the sword that is destined to kill the bad guy. In between all of this, you can go about finishing sub-quests that will land you new weapons and skills. The bad guys range from soldiers and archers to moving statues, and strange desert-crawling monsters. Once you get bored of running all over the kingdom doing quests you can have a few friends over with their own GBAs and game cartridges, you can link up and play The Four Swords, also included on the cartridge.

Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past is a fun title, providing that's what you are looking for. Personally I had fun bashing around, but the game lacks a clear quest structure, so often I had little to no clue what to do and had to run around until I spotted something interesting. If you are really patient, this might not be a problem, but the developers could have easily solved this by adding a few lines of text in the vein of "Go there, get that". Four Swords is a much less cerebral affair, but as I said, you need more than one GBA and cartridge.

- ☺ LOZ on the GBA
- ☺ Open-ended world
- ☺ Lots of action
- ☹ Unclear objectives
- ☹ Repetitive
- ☹ Average graphics

79

developer: fromsoftware [] **publisher:** activision [] **distributor:** futronic (011) 315-0079
price: R 599.00 [] **genre:** 3rd person action [] **internet:** www.activision.com
platforms: gc

reviewer: Eddie "Hairball" Francis

Lost Kingdoms II

In the past, when face-to-face with an oversized gerbil sporting a bad attitude and some serious fangs, we could blow it up, shoot it, drive over it, steal its car or chop it to bits. These were all fun options, if you like a hands-on approach. Lost Kingdoms II opts for a more 'summon something bigger than the enemy and watch him die' approach.

In Lost Kingdoms II, you play the part of Tara Grimface, the estranged sister of Queen Rashiannu, ruler of Argwyll. Basically, there couldn't be twin sisters in the running for queen, so your mother abandoned you, but she gave you her Runestone. This is where the fun begins. You find out what a Runestone is used for - summoning Weapon, Summon, Independent, Helper and Transformation creatures - by throwing a card on the floor. Think of a combination between Soul Reaver, Magic the Gathering and Pokémon, and you would have the most accurate picture of this game. This is a third person action game with a difference, the biggest one being that you cannot attack your enemy directly. When you enter a stage or level, you have the option of building a deck. Your deck can consist of thirty or less cards. These cards range between attributes, each having an effect on the other. While in the level, you play cards using the A, B, X or Y buttons and you have to run around choosing the right card at the right time and kill almost everything. But killing your enemies isn't enough; each time your cards, the enemy or you are damaged, crystals are dropped. These crystals are used to replenish your mana (needed to cast cards). So here you are, running around your opponent like a mad rabbit, throwing cards at him and trying to pick up all the crystals.

Apart from the crystals there are blue and red Fairies. They can appear at any time, and are very important. The blue ones can restore HP, replenish manna and give cards; they're also quite scared, so they tend to fly away from you. The red fairies are more civilized, they like you and give you interesting tips along the way. Added to all this, there are effects like Poison and Paralysis. These are dependant on the creature or enemy and can affect you, your creatures and enemies.

During the game you can find new cards in chests, by killing certain creatures, by capturing a creature in a capture card or buying them from a card shop - there are over two hundred cards to collect. All your cards are re-useable, but only once you exit a level. Outside levels, you have the world map, from where you travel. Both you and your cards pick up experience through the game, and can level-up eventually. Each level has creatures with different attributes. Before entering a level, a status screen appears, giving a short summary of the level and the attributes of the creatures with-in it. Here you can customise your deck to better suite the level.

The game has a Vs. mode, where you can bet up to three cards that will be added to the winner's deck and single player campaign. The story is not as intense as other titles, but so much concentration goes into your decks, that it saves the game. The levels are filled with smaller challenges that can earn you more cards, but each level also opens up to three more levels. It is quite easy to get to the last level within a few hours, but impossible to pass. Every inch of this game needs to be opened before you are even close to the level needed to defeat the last level. This game requires hours of playing, looking for cards, testing combinations, and strategies on how to use them.

▲ "Running out of cards... need to buy a booster pack! Need to buy a booster pack!"

talking about strange

It's quite weird, but your character, Tara, never says anything. Through-out the entire game her dialogue is fulfilled by the other characters. Instead of you explaining your past to them, they will come to a sudden realisation and explain it to you. "Oh, I see, your mom, the queen, abandoned you, and you joined a band of rouges and you are now looking for your sister, who has the god-card..."

Requirments
1-2 Players | Up to 10 memory slots

- ☺ Sound
- ☺ Concept
- ☺ Flexibility
- ☹ No auto save
- ☹ Frustrating at times

Summary
Lost Kingdoms II is a well rounded game, giving hours of enjoyment in a rather unique way. The game itself takes some getting used to, but will not disappoint. If you love card games, you will love Lost Kingdoms II. If you love killing things in spectacular fashion, you'll love it even more.

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developer: silicon knights [] **publisher:** nintendo [] **distributor:** futronic (011) 315-0079
price: R 542.00 [] **genre:** action horror [] **internet:** www.eternaldarkness.com
platforms: GCN

reviewer: Eddie "Hairball" Francis

NAG NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE AWARD OF MERIT

Eternal Darkness

Do you like Chuthulu? If you do, then you'll definitely like Eternal Darkness. You basically have to find out how and why your grandfather died, by exploring his mansion. During this you find the "book of the dead". When you read the book, you get to play the characters in the stories, whose stories tie up with each other and eventually lead back to you. This tome also allows you to cast an entourage of spells. The story of Eternal Darkness will keep you glued to the controller for days.

Apart from a captivating narrative and great graphics, the game boasts a quite unique feature: insanity. Apart from health and mana you have your sanity to think of as well. Sanity has been done before, but not like this. Apart from statues looking at you or books flying across the screen in-game, the game can also affect you outside. It takes control of your TV, it changes volume and colour, it mutes and has been reported as being able to change channels. This feature can really freak you out. The more sanity your character loses, the more the effects start appearing. For the rest Eternal Darkness is a stock standard third person action title. Combat ranges from melee and swordplay to elephant guns and pistols. There are also four runes: red, blue, green and purple. These are used as spells, each affecting you, your weapons or the assortment of creatures and gods attacking you. The only real downside to this game is that you play through each level more than once, but with different characters. This can make the game feel repetitive. But it is saved by the action and the massive story. Unfortunately the game is rather easy and doesn't take too long to finish, but it is worth while. It looks good, plays like a dream and keeps you guessing from beginning to end. And if you have a tendency for not sleeping after a scary movie, expect sleepless nights after this game, especially if you have a 5.1 system to go with it.

☺ Intense gameplay
☺ Great sound
☺ Insanity dynamic
☹ Feels repetitive
☹ Too easy
☹ Too short

89

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developer: shiny [] **publisher:** infogrames [] **distributor:** wwe (011) 462-0150
price: R 529.00 [] **genre:** action shooter [] **internet:** www.enterthematrix.com
platforms: pc | ps2 | xbox | gcn

reviewer: Eddie "Hairball" Francis

Enter The Matrix

In 1999 the Wachowski brothers released a movie that had a phenomenal effect on movies, and 2003 saw the much awaited sequel, Matrix Reloaded. With this follow-up came the reason why some people are allowed to make games, and why others shouldn't even try.

Enter the Matrix is by far as unimpressive as the movies were impressive. The only thing that even remotely saves this game is the Matrix connotation. Ok, granted, if you are a Matrix fan, it is quite fun playing Naomi and Ghost's stories, something the movie missed out on, but that about covers all the pro's in the game. The graphics are far worse than expected from a story highly dependant on them, the characters seem to have forgotten their 'wire-trick' gear on, or just never took the hangers out of their coats. They have an amazing ability to climb ladders without actually holding on to them and Jackie Chan was obviously never asked to help with the martial arts, because each character has three moves - one punch, two kicks. No "wax on, wax off".

Ok, so you have guns, but Max Payne would still kick their hacking butts when it comes to fire power. Good old Max has written the book on bullet time that these clowns never read. Naomi does all the driving in the game, in two different cars, both sporting brand new octagon wheels (I wonder if Schumacher will change to them next year?). And yes, the driving is as cool as the graphics. Ghost is the better marksman, so he does all the shooting, taking out cars with two shots. Hey, at least we have Vice City. If all movie games are going to end up with the same "pro's" as Enter the Matrix, well, then maybe movies should stay just that and not try to dwell in the realms that others have a far better command over. Hopefully Matrix Revolution won't take Enter the Matrix as an inspiration. And is it true that people are hiding their copies, rather than admitting that they bought it?

☺ Hmm, nothing

☹ The entire game

45

H@RDCOR3 wheels

writer: Tom "Fr00tC@k3" Taylor

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

Benchmarking

Although the racing game genre is not my favourite, I enjoy a good racing game just as much as the next guy. For this months roundup I compared 9 racing wheels, which are available locally. Each of the PC-based racing wheels were tested on a variety of racing games. The titles I played to test the PC based wheels were Toca Race Driver, Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2, and V8 Challenge. For the PS2 racing wheels I played Gran Turismo 3 and Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2. I considered each racing wheel's response time and the way in which it handled sharp corners. For the Force Feedback wheels, the power and accuracy of the Force Feedback was important. The floor pedals had to feel comfortable when using them and I preferred the ones which were closer to the real thing. Most of the wheels had gear shift pedals which were situated behind the wheel, in some cases these were more like buttons than actual pedals and they did loose some points in the ergonomics score box because these did not function as well as the conventional paddles. I got a tad annoyed with some of the racing wheels because of the clamp which fastens the wheel to a desk. The desk my PC stands on is a run of the mill kind of desk yet I had trouble clamping some of the wheels onto it. I can only imagine how many other people are faced with the same dilemma. If this was the case then the racing wheel lost points in the features category. For the most part though I rated the wheels on the collective impression it presented after a couple of laps on the games I played.

The racing wheel is not a gaming peripheral that enjoys as much popularity as the joystick. Probably the main reason for this is that not everybody likes car-racing games, even some gamers who do, would rather use a joystick or their keyboard to control the car than purchasing a dedicated controller. Some good news is that racing wheels have dropped quite a lot in price and you are able to buy one for just under R500 these days; sadly the fact remains that a steering wheel has only one use while the joystick can be used for many different game genres.

After I looked at all the products in this months H@rdcor3 roundup, I tried to define the perfect racing wheel because most of the racing wheels I tested this month were great but every single one lacked a feature or three.
The first feature my Taylor-made (pun intended) racing wheel must have is a clamp that can be fastened onto a table of up to 10cm in thickness. Many of the racing wheels in this roundup had a limited clamp size thus I was not able to clamp them to the desk on which my PC is standing. The second feature I would love to see is Force Feedback floor pedals. The Force Feedback will create a vibration equal to the type of engine in the car you drive; I would just love to "feel" the vibration of a V8 Chevrolet under my feet. The floor pedals must also feature a clutch pedal and there should be a separate gear stick with an adjustable arm, so that I can hook it onto my chair. Another feature, which must be car dependant, is the rotation ability of the wheel. If you are able to turn a wheel at a full 360-degrees in a real car then my racing wheel must be able to do so as well.
When some big company decides to produce this perfect racing wheel I will make sure that in every box they stick a pine tree shaped air freshener which you can hang from the rear view mirror in your real car, with a cheesy phrase like: Gamers do it with Force Feedback.

NAME	PLATFORM	FORCE FEEDBACK	PROGRAMMABLE BUTTONS	GEAR SHIFT PADDLES	INTEGRATED GEAR KNOB	WHEEL DIAMETER	MAXIMUM CLAMP WIDTH	INTERFACE	PRICE	RATING
Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Racing Wheel	PC	No	6	Yes	No	26cm	5 cm	USB	R469	87%
Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel	PC	Yes	6	Yes	No	26cm	5 cm	USB	R1599	87%
Logitech Formula GP Racing Wheel	PC	No	4	Yes	No	25cm	3.5cm	USB	R469	83%
Saitek R100 USB Sports Wheel	PC/Mac	No	2	Yes	No	26cm	5 cm	USB	R599	79%
Genius Speed Wheel 2	PC	No	6	No	No	25cm	6.5cm	Game Port	R499	83%
NAG AWARD OF EXCELLENCE Genius Speed Wheel Force Feedback	PC	Yes	6	Yes	No	28cm	6.5cm	USB/Game port	R999	89%
NAG EDITOR'S CHOICE Logitech Driving Force	PS2 (PC compatible)	Yes	10	Yes	No	26cm	3.5cm	USB	R899	90%
Williams F1	PS1/PS2	No	10	Yes	Yes	26cm	n/a	PS jack	R699	89%
Deezilltrax M2	PS1/PS2	No	8	No	No	6cm	n/a	PS jack	R350	86%

Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Racing Wheel

PC

This steering wheel is slightly older than it's Force Feedback brother and apart from the rubber grip on the Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel and the Force button in the center, the two are identical. On the front of the wheel there are 6 buttons on either side of it and right behind these buttons there are 2 gearshift pedals (again I would have preferred to see these raised like those found on the Saitek R100). To improve the grip there are grooves on the wheel and it also features thumb grooves which allows for a comfortable hold onto the wheel.

The all black look is quite appealing but a hint of colour would have done no harm. The rotate ability of this steering wheel is about 110-degrees confirming the fact that these two models are from the same mould on the production line.

The floor pedals are raised from the base and offer an acceptable level of resistance. The heel-end of the base of the floor-pedal is comfortable and I had no hassles with it.

This unit connects to the computer via a USB cable and Windows XP allowed for an easy plug and play installation.

I thought this was a great non-Force Feedback steering wheel; I only had one gripe though, the adjustable table clamp is only able to clip onto tables which are less than 3 cm thick. This meant that I could not connect it to the desk my PC is currently standing on and I had to clamp it onto a smaller table which caused some annoyance.

It is safe to say that this steering wheel is a great value-for-money device, and if you do not want Force Feedback take this one into consideration.

Features	85
Ergonomics	88
Value for money	89
Game Playability	89
Overall	**87**

Pros: Price
Cons: Adjustable table clamp
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000
ERP: R 469
Internet: www.microsoft.co.za

Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel

PC

The Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback wheel features 6 buttons and 2 gear shift paddles; this wheel also sports a soft red rubber on either side of the wheel and it has thumb grooves built into it on the right places allowing for a firm and comfortable grip.

The middle of the steering wheel sees a button with Force written on it, when this wheel is connected to a power socket using the supplied AC adapter the Force Feedback will be activated and the letter Force will light up. Pressing this button again will switch off the Force Feedback if it gets to intense or for whatever other reason. I found this quite useful as, in some sections of the games I played, the Force Feedback interfered with my "superior" driving skills. The gearshift pedals, situated right behind the 2 sets of buttons on the front of the wheel was easily accessible, although, I must add I would have preferred them to be more like the pedals on the Saitek R100. The wheel is able to turn about 110-degrees to either side which is standard for most steering wheels today.

The floor pedals feature 2 pedals which are raised from the platform it is built on and has just enough resistance to make it feel realistic. The heel-end of the floor pedals are grooved to prevent your feet from sliding off and being raised makes for a much better driving experience.

This unit connects to your PC via a USB connector, Windows XP picked up the Sidewinder Force Feedback immediately and I did not have to install the drivers. The drivers are however required for older versions of Windows. I enjoyed using this steering wheel, its Force Feedback was powerful enough for me to battle with the turns but sadly it was not as responsive over the finer details likes bumps in the road and it had a very high price tag.

Features	89
Ergonomics	89
Value for money	80
Game Playability	90
Overall	**87**

Pros: Force Feedback
Cons: Price
Supplied by: Microsoft [0860] 225-567
ERP: R 1599
Internet: www.microsoft.co.za

Logitech Formula GP

PC

Logitech is undoubtedly one of the best manufacturers when it comes to any type of PC peripherals (/me dreams about the Logitech Z680 speakers). Looking at their racing wheels, this statement could not be closer to the truth. Sadly Logitech South Africa seems to be out of stock on their Force Feedback steering wheels for the PC platform but we'll make do with their non-Force Feedback model.

The Logitech Formula GP is a sporty looking racing wheel with its black and yellow finish. Being an entry-level unit there is not much to this wheel, but for racing it will do the job effortlessly. The wheel hosts 4 buttons on the front and has 2 gearshift pedals, of the 4 buttons situated on the front one the two top ones are difficult to reach when the wheel is held in a comfortable position. The 2 gear shift pedals which are, as always, situated behind the 4 front buttons are not raised as high as I would have liked but they worked well enough for me to oversee my preferences. Because this is an entry-level unit, the wheel does not have a great rotation degree and is only able to turn up to about 97-degrees to either side.

The floor pedals are average for what they are and look quite sporty as well. The heel-end of the floor-pedals is not as big as the ones from Microsoft but is well designed and comfortable to rest your feet on. The Logitech Formula GP connects via a USB cable to your PC. The driver CD contains profiling software, allowing you to set various profiles for your games as well as the online communication software Roger Wilco and a demo game, a futuristic version of the classic Archanoid, called Ricochet.

I enjoyed using this racing wheel and I would recommend it, but taking all factors into account, the Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Racing Wheel would be my wheel of choice.

Features	81
Ergonomics	86
Value for money	80
Game Playability	85
Overall	**83**

Pros: Price
Cons: Buttons
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000
ERP: R 469
Internet: www.logitech.co.za

Saitek R100

The very first thing I noticed about this racing wheel was that the base that clamps onto a table was very small. This is a great feature as it does not take up a lot of space and you are actually able to switch between steering wheel and keyboard in a game without un-clamping the wheel first, if you have limited space this will also be of great benefit. The second thing that caught my eye, and another feature I loved about this product was its gearshift pedals, which are situated right behind the steering wheel. These pedals are actually "pedals" and not just buttons, making it closer to the real thing and much nicer to use.
On the wheel there are sadly only 2 buttons and I found it disappointing that the wheel could only rotate about 90-degrees to either side. This made gaming a tad difficult especially in games with sharp corners. The wheel is very comfortable to use and the 2 buttons on it are perfectly placed to be reached with your thumb.
Saitek seemed to focus a lot on size when they developed this product. The foot pedals are smaller than what I would have liked and the pedals itself were not raised to a comfortable level (you actually have to press down on them instead of away from you). I found this method a bit difficult and your feet tend to get tired after a while.
This unit connects to a PC using a USB cable and there are no device drivers in the box, instead you have to use the Windows CD to install this device.
At first I liked the Saitek R100 because of its small form factor but looking at it a bit closer made me change my mind and sadly I would have to say I will pass up on this one.

PC

Features	75
Ergonomics	86
Value for money	75
Game Playability	80
Overall	**79**

Pros: Form factor
Cons: Awkward foot pedals and lack of buttons
Supplied by: V M S [011] 678 3221
ERP: R 599
Internet: www.saitek.com

Genius Speed Wheel 2

Genius seems to be one of the very few manufacturers who still produce gaming peripherals with a 15-pin serial connector (a.k.a a game port). Why? I do not know because the racing wheels they produce offer great value and functionality. The main problem with using a 15-pin D-Sub serial connector is that many of the new PC's do not provide compatibility with it thus closing the walls in on a whole new gaming market. The Genius Speed Wheel 2 has funky green coloured grips on either side of the wheel. Although these look like rubber they are not but they still provide a comfortable and firm grip.
On the wheel there are 6 buttons (3 per side) and 2 status LED's, I was very disappointed not to see any gearshift pedals. The Genius Speed Wheel 3, which will be released soon, does have gearshift pedals built in but for some strange reason you will not be able to use it in conjunction with the foot pedals. You will need to disconnect the foot pedals if you wish to use the gear shift pedals and when the foot pedals are connected the gear shift pedals will not be functional - this is because the gear shift pedals (as we know it) will be used as brake and accelerate pedals.

The foot pedals are similar to the design of the Microsoft products' and offer enough resistance to make it feel realistic. The heel-end has a set of patterns on it making it easier to grip on.
Racing with this wheel proved to be nothing spectacular and if anything its response was quite good, the wheel itself, is only able to turn about 100-degrees to either side though. Sadly the Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Racing Wheel is still a bit cheaper and based on that, plus the fact that it has gear pedals, I would much rather opt for it than this one.

PC

Features	80
Ergonomics	85
Value for money	83
Game Playability	87
Overall	**83**

Pros: Good response time in games
Cons: 15-pin connection | No gearshift pedals
Supplied by: TVR Computers [011] 807-1390
ERP: R 499
Internet: www.geniusnet.com.tw

Genius Speed Wheel Force Feedback

NAG AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Genius Speed Wheel Force Feedback racing wheel is currently Genius's only Force Feedback racing wheel. This unit reminds me a lot of the Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel because the two look so much alike. This racing wheel features a sporty red and black finish, the red being a soft rubber that makes this a very comfortable racing wheel to use.
The Genius Speed Wheel Force Feedback has 6 buttons on the front as well as a "Force" button, which can be used to switch the Force Feedback on or off during a game. The wheel itself has an acceptable rotation angle of about 110-degrees and hosts 2 gearshift pedals that are situated behind it. I would have loved to see a steering wheel with a 180 degree rotation but this racing wheel will suffice to most gamers needs; its foot pedals are exactly the same as those found on the Genius Speed Wheel 2.
This unit has a 15-pin serial connector to connect it to a PC; it also has a 15-pin to USB converter to make it compatible with newer PC's. When I reviewed the joysticks recently I was very annoyed with certain manufacturers because they did not include "fairly" new drivers with their product. By this I do not mean a new release of an already existing set of drivers, I mean something like basic Windows XP drivers. The Genius Speed Wheel Force Feedback is a fine example of this, granted the fact that it must have been produced before Windows XP was released, but I cannot imagine many gamers being happy about the fact that they have to download the core Windows XP drivers from the Internet just to be able to make the product work. The drivers are available as a download from the Genius website and the zip file is 1.29 MB in size.
Genius Speed Wheel Force Feedback racing wheel is a great product, especially when comparing it to the Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Wheel. This one offers exactly the same features and its Force Feedback motor is no weaker than the one found on the Microsoft unit, all this at a R500 cheaper price tag, I would not mind downloading the Windows XP drivers.

PC

Features	89
Ergonomics	89
Value for money	89
Game Playability	90
Overall	**89**

Pros: Force Feedback | Price
Cons: Windows XP driver needs to be downloaded
Supplied by: TVR Computers [011] 807-1390
ERP: R 999
Internet: www.geniusnet.com.tw

Logitech Driving Force

PS2

It's the third month in a row that Logitech's products have impressed me enough to be crowned best on test. Again, well done!
The Logitech Driving Force racing wheel features Force Feedback and a very comfortable wheel with blue rubber where your hands hold onto it. I liked the fact that Logitech include the regular PS2 controllers on the top end of the wheel, allowing you to put the PS2 joystick aside and only make use of the steering wheel to browse and access the menus. The centre spoke of this racing wheel features 2 buttons on either side and 2 more buttons on the bottom spoke which operate as the Select and Start buttons, it also features 2 gear shift pedals.
This racing wheel has 2 clamps, allowing it to be fastened to a table, as well as an attachment to allow you to place it on your lap. Sadly this attachment does not have much grip and I have found on many occasions that it tends to slip off your legs while you are playing. Even though the wheel only has a rotation angle of about 95-degrees it was incredibly responsive and responded well on sharp corners in the games.
The foot pedals are exactly the same as those found on the Logitech Formula GP and it connects to the PS2 console using a USB port. Interestingly enough, because it uses USB, I was tempted into connecting it to my PC. Surprisingly Windows XP detected it as the Logitech Driving Force and as a matter of fact it was one of the best PC racing wheels I have used to date, on both platforms the Force Feedback was powerful and accurate.
If you do not own a PS2 there is a PC only version available called the Logitech Wingman Formula Force GP with an ERP of R699 (also available from Rectron), which does not feature the same buttons on the front of the wheel.
Seeing that this racing wheel can be used on both the PC and the PS2 (although this is not officially stated on the box or in the manual) makes it a great buy for any gamer playing on both platforms and if I were to spend my hard earned cash this would be the product I would buy. If I am buying a racing wheel for my PC I will undoubtedly buy the Wingman Formula Force GP.

Features	91
Ergonomics	90
Value for money	90
Game Playability	90
Overall	**90**

Pros: Strong Force Feedback | Works on PC
Cons: Lap attachment
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203 1000
ERP: R 469
Internet: www.logitech.co.za

Williams F1 Steering Wheel Team Racing Wheel

PS2

If you are a Formula 1 fan, this racing wheel is sure to catch your attention. It is a replica of the official WilliamsF1 Team FW23 Racing Wheel. It looks impressive and it offers the performance to boot. The wheel has 12 buttons down along either side of it and it has a 4-way button in the middle. Some of the 12 buttons on it are the regular PS2 buttons found on the PS2 joystick, there is also a start/stop and reset button which is used to operate the onboard stop watch if you want to be so snazzy as to record your own lap times. The stopwatch takes shape in the form of a 2-line 4-digit LCD. Behind the wheel are 2 gearshift pedals and to the right of the wheel is a gear stick. The wheel is completely covered in a blue rubber making it incredibly easy to grip.
The wheel is able to rotate up to a maximum of 110 degrees, and in the games I played it proved to be responsive but not quite like the Logitech Driving Force. Although the Williams F1 Steering Wheel Team Racing Wheel is not a Force Feedback device it does support Dual Shock, Dual Shock2.
The foot pedals were a tad uncomfortable to use as the base on which they were placed was smaller than most of the racing wheels in this roundup; the pedals were also a bit too close to each other.
What I liked most about this racing wheel was the way in which it fits into your lap, there are 2 adjustable arms which can shift in or out to your liking. The 2 arms fit half way around your legs while the base of the wheel lies comfortably on your lap. Unlike the method used by Logitech for their PS2 racing wheel, the method employed by the makers of the Williams F1 Steering Wheel Team Racing Wheel is the most comfortable I have ever used. If you wish you could also place the wheel on a desk as it has 4 suction cups at its base, which will secure it firmly anywhere on a flat surface.
This was a funky racing wheel to use although it has its short comings, the biggest of which is the fact that it is not a Force Feedback racing wheel. I sadly still prefer the offering from Logitech because of its functionality.

Features	89
Ergonomics	90
Value for money	89
Game Playability	90
Overall	**89**

Pros: Gear stick | Fits comfortably on your lap
Cons: No Force Feedback
Supplied by: MFP [011] 723 1800
ERP: R 699
Internet: www.deeziltrax.com

Deeziltrax M2 Racer

PS2

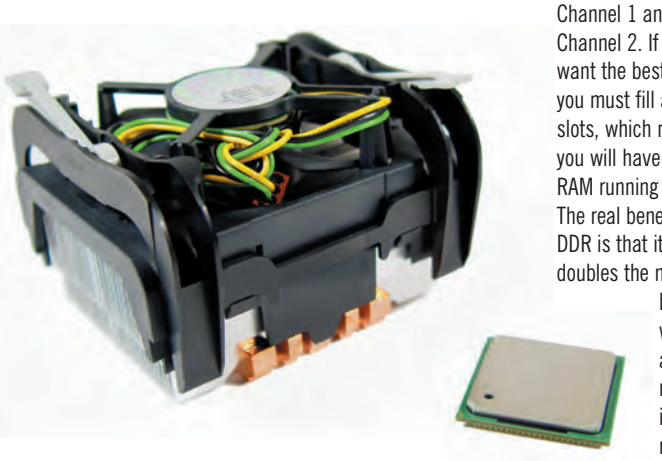
Even though this is not a racing wheel as such, it does feature a rather innovative design aimed at the racing game. This PlayStation controller was fully designed right here in good old South Africa and I have read many mixed reviews about this product. (There is an interview with the product designer in the February 2003 issue of NAG). My first thought on this controller was not a great one but after I have used it I had different feelings. This could partly be because I have large-ish hands and the M2 Racer felt very comfortable in them. The only real issue I had was with the shoulder buttons; they were awkwardly placed and not easily accessible when I held the controller in a comfortable position.
What makes the Deeziltrax M2 Racer stand out from other regular PS controllers is the fact that it has an analogue wheel built in which is used for steering in racing games. Below the wheel is an analogue throttle. Apart from these unique features it sports the same buttons as a conventional PlayStation controller making it very versatile. Built into the device are TorQback vibration motors, which vibrates when a corresponding event happens in a game.
The most comfortable position for this controller was most definitely on my lap or on a table. This allowed me to reach most of the buttons (although some of the buttons were still unreachable) while being able to steer with my one hand.
If you have small hands this product is not for you, unless you place it on your lap. I was impressed by it as a mini-racing wheel and as a PS controller. It obviously can never replace a full size racing wheel but as a portable version it is great.

Features	90
Ergonomics	80
Value for money	89
Game Playability	88
Overall	**86**

Pros: Price | Functionality
Cons: You will need to play twister with your fingers
Supplied by: MFP [011] 723 1800
ERP: R 350
Internet: www.deeziltrax.com

3.2GHz Intel Pentium 4

Ever since AMD introduced its new numbering model, Intel has been trying hard to prove to the world that they are still the market leaders in the processor industry. I think it is safe to say that Intel has done a good job so far in staying ahead in the race for ultimate performance processor. With the recent release of the 3.2GHz Pentium 4 featuring its amazingly fast 800MHz FSB Intel introduced performance levels, which up to now, was only achieved by overclocking.



There were a couple of factors that led up to the release of the 800MHz FSB, 3.2GHz Pentium 4. One of which was the release of two new chipsets a while back; these took the form of the Intel 865P (Springdale) and the 875 (Canterwood) chipsets. These chipsets paved the way for Intel to be able to bring out better and faster processors and proved yet again that Intel also dominates the chipset arena. One of the most significant features of the two new chipsets is that they support the new 800MHz FSB technology featured in the 3.2GHz Pentium 4 and also support newer features such as Serial ATA, Dual DDR, and Hyper Threading. Dual DDR on the other hand is a motherboard-specific feature but almost all new motherboards nowadays support it. It works by providing two channels on which the RAM can be installed, channel 1 is usually the 1st and 3rd slot while channel 2 is the 2nd and 4th slot. To activate the Dual DDR you need two identical sticks of RAM i.e. two sticks of 256MB DDR400, of the same model and manufacturer, each of which must be placed in a different channel. Thus if you have only two sticks of RAM, the one must be placed in Channel 1 and the other on Channel 2. If you really want the best performance you must fill all four RAM slots, which means that you will have two sets of RAM running in Dual DDR. The real benefit of Dual DDR is that it immediately doubles the memory bandwidth when activated; this means that instead of the regular DDR bandwidth of 3.2GB Dual DDR offers 6.4GB of memory bandwidth.

What surprised me the most about these two chipsets was that Intel produced a great performing chipset, which used DDR RAM instead of RDRAM. The Intel 875 chipset predecessor (850/850E chipset) was only compatible with RDRAM; this move by Intel caused some degree of upset by gamers and home users as RDRAM was much more expensive than DDR RAM. Granted the fact that RDRAM was quite a lot faster than DDR RAM, many people including myself, were not prepared to spend that much extra on RDRAM.

Moving onto the processor…

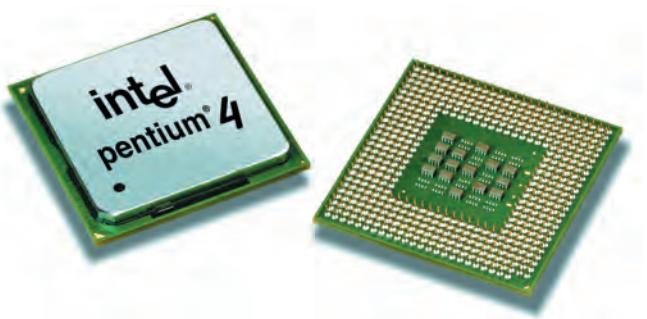
There is not much architecturally new about Intel's latest processor. It uses the 0.13-micron manufacturing process, it has 512KB of L2 cache and still features Intel's NetBurst technology, SSE2 instructions, Hyper-Pipelined Technology as well as the ever popular Hyper-Threading Technology. So what is all the hoo-haa about you ask?

Well for one thing the FSB has been increased to 800MHz, this means that because the Intel Pentium 4 processor has a quad-pumped FSB its system bus is clocked at 200MHz. This also results in a data-per-second transfer rate of 6.4GB into and out of the processor. In order for the processor to fully benefit from the new 800MHz FSB though, the RAM fitted onto the motherboard needs to be DDR400 (preferably in Dual DDR mode). DDR333 can also be used but it will result in your RAM only being able to operate at 320MHz. It's a technical architectural thing, don't ask why, it just works like that.

The second best feature about this new processor is definitely the fact that it runs at 3.2GHz, which makes it the fastest commercially available processor on the market. There is no argument that this processor, coupled with Hyper Threading, will deliver one of the best computing experiences you will ever encounter.

In the week that I worked with the 3.2GHz Pentium 4 I saw a huge performance increase in most of my daily tasks. The test machine I used was the Emerald PC I use for the H@rdcor3 round up, except that I got my hands on an ATI Radeon 9800 Pro and I installed two sticks of 512MB DDR400 RAM. The applications and games I ran executed faster, my Photoshop images rendered in a fraction of the time it usually does and multi tasking proved no strain on my PC's resources thanks to Hyper Threading.

Even though this is the fastest and most incredible processor I have ever encountered it still retails with a hefty price tag of approximately R3500. At this point in time I would suggest you buy the 2.4GHz, 2.6GHz or 2.8GHz Pentium 4 with 800MHz FSB which will retail for a couple hundred rand less. If you must have the latest and greatest though, this is the processor to get, just look at those benchmark results.



benchmarks

Quake III Arena:
Time Demo 1
1024 x 768 - 32 bit: 327.4 fps
800x 600 - 32 bit: 331.8 fps
Time Demo 2
1024 x 768 - 32 bit: 321.6 fps
800x 600 - 32 bit: 323.9 fps

3DMark 2001 SE Build 340 (Default Test): 18150
3DMark 2003 Build 3.20 (Default Test) 5775
3DMark 2003 Build 3.20 CPU Score: 722

Unreal Tournament 2003
2003 1024 x 768 - 32 bit
Flyby: 229.74
Bot Match: 84.08

Unreal Tournament 2003
2003 800 x 600 - 32 bit
FlyBy: 245.98
Bot Match: 84.38

SiSoftware Sandra Standard 2003 SP1 CPU Arithmetic:
Dhrystoone ALU: 9399
Whetstone FPU: 2761
ISSE2: 6162

SiSoftware Sandra Standard 2003 SP1 CPU MultiMedia:
Integer: 14732
Float: 22703

SiSoftware Sandra Standard 2003 SP1 Memory Bandwidth:
Int Buff: 4750
Float Buff: 4807

hyperthreading

For those technically-challenged people out there who do not know what Hyper Threading and Dual DDR is, pay attention.

With the release of the 3.06GHz Pentium 4 last year Intel introduced Hyper Threading. In a nutshell it means that instead of one physical processor, your computer will see two logical processors. You obviously need a compatible motherboard and you would need either Windows 2000 or Windows XP for it to work. In a working environment Hyper Threading will help you by, in theory, being able to handle two instruction threads at any given time. The downfall to this is that the application or game needs to support Hyper Threading to benefit from this. In time though, most software titles will support Hyper Threading and we will all live in a happy Hyper Threading world.

REVIEWED BY	
Tom "Fr00tC@k3" Taylor	
PLUS	**MINUS**
800 MHz FSB Fastest commercially available Hyper-threading	Needs 400DDR to really perform Price

SUPPLIER: Light Edge Technology [021] 510-8270
PRICE: R 3 500.00 (estimated)
WEBSITE: www.intel.co.za

Saitek Freewave Wireless Adapter

Saitek have earned a place in my good books with their wireless peripherals, they seem to realize that everyone hates cables all over the place. Saitek now give us the option to make existing PS2 controllers wireless with their Freewave Wireless Adapter.

Saitek may not be the biggest peripheral company in the world but they are definitely one of the most innovative - from console to PC, Saitek has a lot to offer. Freewave is a nifty innovation that enables you to use any PS2 game controller wirelessly, using RF (radio frequency) at a distance not exceeding 10 meters.

Setup is easily done, you simply plug the wireless receiver into your PS2's game console ports and then power up your PS2; the unit is powered by 4 AA rechargeable batteries, the recharge unit uses the power from the PS2 game ports to charge the batteries and takes roughly 6 hours, this gives you 8 hours of play (depending on how much you use the rumble feature).

Once the receiver is in place you can use the hub to plug in any controller you desire, you can also plug in a DVD remote or any other peripheral by using the Pass-Through port located on the front of the hub which makes it unnecessary to unplug the receiver.

The only downside with the pass-through is that you lose the use of one port on the hub.

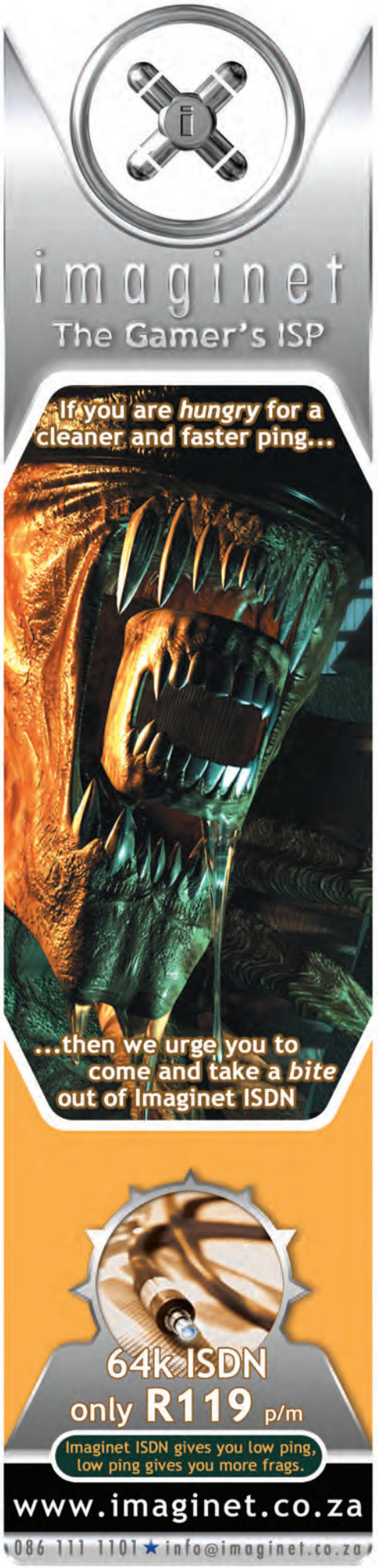
Freewave worked with any controller that we tried and the response was almost 100% perfect, there is no noticeable lag caused by using Wireless (except when battery life becomes low). It is a good idea to get another set of rechargeable batteries as this extends your usage time as you will always have one power pack charging. Saitek has also provided two recharge power packs that slot into the receiver to charge, once the batteries are charged you then plug it into the wireless hub to use the unit.

Saitek has finished the units off in black to match the PS2 colours exactly, the hub has a battery indicator and a button to turn rumble on/off. You don't need to unplug the receiver when you are not playing as the unit will go into sleep modes to conserve battery power.

For those of you with an extensive controller collection looking for a wireless solution, the Saitek Freewave has the answer; it is wonderfully simple to use and gives your console the freedom of wireless, once you add another set of batteries you will be able to use the unit constantly. Simple innovations like this make wireless technology practical.

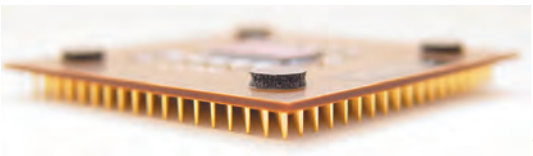
REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Wireless for all your controllers Works well	Nothing

SUPPLIED BY: VMS [011] 678 3221
PRICE: R799-00
INTERNET: www.saitek.com



AMD Athlon 3200+ XP CPU

AMD have finally graced us with their fastest CPU ever produced, the Athlon 3200+ XP (codename Barton). The XP 3000+ & 3200+ were announced more than 6 months ago, so they have taken a while to reach consumer based systems. Is the long wait worth it and will AMD once again offer us the gamer awesome performance for our hard earned rands?

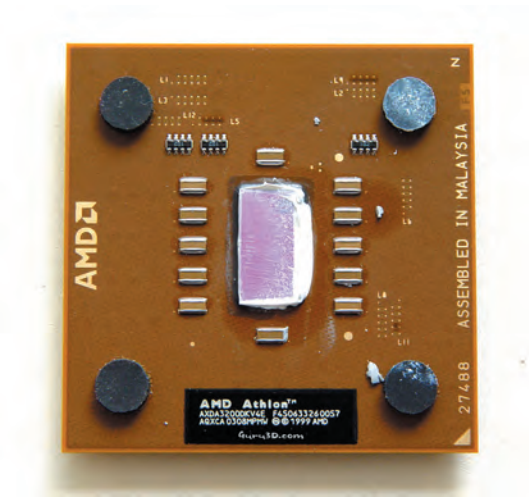


AMD and Intel have been pushing the Ghz barrier for some time now, not that we as consumers mind because we have never had it so good - entry level CPU's are around R500 for a 1.5Ghz piece, this type of pricing was something we thought was impossible 2-3 years ago.

AMD is the price leader when it comes to CPU's - has this hurt AMD to try and always beat Intel to a price point?

AMD needs to sell more of their performance parts for reasonable prices so don't expect cut prices on the new "Barton" range.

If you want performance you are going to have to pay for it, those seeking the best are almost always prepared to pay for it.



Athlon 3200+ runs at a clock speed of 2200 MHz, with this type of clock speed the average consumer would think that 2200 MHz is definitely way slower than the 3000+ MHz offering from Intel, hence the 3200+ moniker. Is the 3200+ fast? You bet it is. Is it faster than Intel?

Well let's just say Intel is no longer the dominant performance part.

This is one fast CPU able to push the latest apps and games to the limit and one that is able to run at decent operating temperatures thanks to a 0.13 micron fabrication. Why can an AMD 3200+ running at 2.2GHz run as fast as a 3.06GHz Intel part?

The answer lies in two places where AMD has a superior architecture to Intel.

The first is the operations per clock cycle where AMD is able to do 9 operations as opposed to the 6 operations that Intel is able to do, the other advantage is the L1 (level 1) cache on the AMD is 128k where Intel has only 20k of L1 cache.

So AMD is able to get more from a lower clock speed, where Intel has to move to a higher clock frequency for the same result.

Okay so enough techno babble, you guys want to know how fast it pushes the latest games, let's just say that I wasn't disappointed. Pairing the XP3200 with the latest ATi 9800 graphics accelerator produced some astounding results.

I was impressed with these results as they were either on par or slightly ahead in the benchmarks I got from a 3.06Ghz Intel running at 533 fsb (front side bus). AMD have made good with increased fsb speeds of 400 MHz for the XP 3200+.

Although Intel have had their fsb speeds up to 800 MHz current memory architecture is only able to support 400 MHz (the current top rate of DRAM) nullifying any advantage except on very expensive RAMBUS solutions (RAMBUS is on it's way out).

Gamers will be able to run everything at a resolution of 1600*1024 with an XP 3200+ coupled with either a NVIDIA 5900 or ATi 9800 graphics card.

Although the focus has moved away from CPU's to GPU's (graphical processing unit) the battle for Processor supremacy is still a very exciting race with AMD and Intel pushing each other to better and faster solutions, all the while offering them at reasonable prices.

AMD Cpu's are normally overclock friendly and hardcore gamers love this; I was not tempted to destroy my only 3200+ review sample so I did very limited testing on the overclockablility of the CPU.

I managed to push the FSB up to 212 MHz giving us a nice 2332 MHz (a 6% improvement). I'm guessing the hardcore overclocker will be able to get a 10% - 12% improvement with decent cooling, but we are reaching the ceiling of the beloved XP range which only makes me look forward to the Athlon 64 which should grace our presence in September 2003.

AMD has a winning CPU on their hands of that I have no doubt, Intel have been very price competitive at the high end of CPU performance so AMD doesn't carry as much of an advantage as at the entry level.

Waiting so long for a decent performance part from AMD was definitely worth the wait, I just wonder how patient many other gamers were?

benchmarks

AMD 3200+ XP Gaming Benchmarks
(all benchmarks @ 1024 unless otherwise stated)

3dMark 2001
17049 marks
7708 marks software

3dMark 2003
5649 marks hardware
2222 marks software

Unreal Tournament 2003
fly-by: 224.7fps
botmatch: 88.15 fps

Serious Sam 2	212 fps
Quake 3	342 fps
AquaMark	106 fps
Quake 1	806 fps

features

Key Architectural Features of the AMD Athlon™ XP Processor:

QuantiSpeed™ Architecture for enhanced performance
- Nine-issue superpipelined, superscalar x86 processor microarchitecture designed for high performance
- Multiple parallel x86 instruction decoders
- Three out-of-order, superscalar, fully pipelined floating point execution units, which execute x87 (floating point), MMX™ and 3DNow!™ instructions
- Three out-of-order, superscalar, pipelined integer units
- Three out-of-order, superscalar, pipelined address calculation units
- 72-entry instruction control unit
- Advanced hardware data prefetch
- Exclusive and speculative Translation Look-aside

Buffers
- Advanced dynamic branch prediction

3DNow!™ Professional technology for leading-edge 3D operation
- 21 original 3DNow!™ instructions-the first technology enabling superscalar SIMD
- 19 additional instructions to enable improved integer math calculations for speech or video encoding and improved data movement for Internet plug-ins and other streaming applications
- 5 DSP instructions to improve soft modem, soft ADSL, Dolby Digital surround sound, and MP3 applications
- 52 SSE instructions with SIMD integer and floating point additions offer excellent compatibility with Intel's SSE technology

400 MHz, 333MHz and 266 MHz AMD Athlon™ XP processor system bus enables excellent system bandwidth for data movement-intensive applications
- Source synchronous clocking (clock forwarding) technology
- Peak data rate of 3.2GB/s
- Support for 64-bit bi-directional data

The AMD Athlon™ XP processor with performance-enhancing cache memory features 64K instruction and 64K data cache for a total of 128K L1 cache. 512K of integrated, on-chip L2 cache for a total of 640K full-speed, on-chip cache.

REVIEWED BY	
Brett "KnightMarE" Hamilton	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Very quick	Still a bit pricey
0.13 micron technology	Maybe took too long to appear
Low heat	AMD 64 coming September

SUPPLIER: AMD [011] 678 3222
PRICE: R4000.00 (estimated)
WEBSITE: www.amd.co.za

Samsung SyncMaster 172B 17" TFT-LCD Monitor

Monitors have progressed in leaps and bounds since the early days of computing. Nowadays, users have a multitude of makes and models to choose from. The emergence of flat-panel technology has spawned a reawakening in corporate spending and even home-users are considering entering this market.

The Samsung SyncMaster 172B 17-inch liquid crystal display (LCD) monitor is a work of beauty. Aesthetics seemed to have been the operative word when Samsung designed this flat-panel monitor.

From the packaging to the wall brackets, the 172B is the kind of monitor you show to friends and colleagues and watch them turn green with envy. The monitor comes in a silver finish. It is also exceptionally thin due to the fact that it has an external power supply.

Thankfully, the power supply cord is long so you can hide away the cables.

In fact, the monitor is so thin you are probably going to worry that it is going to fall over. However, Samsung designed the monitor with a dual hinge stand. This enables the user to increase the vertical height of the monitor as required. The stand folds up tightly against the back of the monitor to simplify mounting the 172B against a wall.

The brackets are sturdy enough not to cause concern that your piece of expensive equipment is going to fall down.

It also features several, silver-coloured buttons on the front of the monitor. While the on-screen controls are standard, they are effective to enable you to change most settings without the need for software drivers.

Unfortunately, the 172B only has an analogue video interface. Having said that, its image quality is of the highest order. For business users, text displays crisp. Even small font sizes on Web sites displayed well on the 172B.

Unfortunately, in keeping with flat-panel monitor tradition, the 172B is not great when playing high frame rate games. Ghosting occurs when the action is fast and furious. It is a truly psychedelic experience when you run around Quake and Unreal levels when explosions happen all around you. If you are more of a strategy gamer, then the monitor performs very well.

Rise of Nations look beautiful at the monitor's highest resolution of 1280x1024 running at 75Hz.

While still a bit on the expensive side for an analogue monitor, the SyncMaster 172B is sure to grab the attention of anyone walking past your office or study and it has good image quality to boot.

REVIEWED BY	
Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Image quality	Price
Separate power supply	Analogue
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Eye Toy

It certainly seems that Sony are pushing new boundaries with their PlayStation 2 system. This probably has something to do with the twin threat of the Microsoft Xbox and the Nintendo GameCube. Regardless, the Sony console has seen a number of devices introduced to support new kinds of game play - mice, keyboards, headsets… and now a real first: the Eye Toy.

When one looks at the Eye Toy itself, the first thing that springs to mind is "what's the big deal?" It's a small camera that plugs into the PS2 via USB. In fact, visually, the Eye Toy is nothing special. But the trick is that you're not supposed to look at the Eye Toy - it's supposed to look at you. But more about that later.

Actually, the overall design aspect of the Eye Toy is pretty good, because it looks like it belongs with a PS2, even more so than the standard controllers that ship with the console. Constructed from sturdy black plastic, the Eye Toy even has the ridges that make the PS2 so distinctive. The unit is mounted on a small stand (which allows a fair degree of universal rotation) and has a camera lens on the business end of it. On either side of this lens (which is surrounded by a focus ring) are two lights - a blue one on the right to indicate power, and a red one on the left that blinks when light conditions are poor.

software

There are a lot of games to play on the provided game disk. Most of them are locked (and will become available as you set high scores.) To start off, the following games are available: Kung Fu, Wishy Washy, Keep Ups, UFO Juggler, Plate Spinner, Ghost Catcher. The names of the games are fairly self explanatory, as you can see. Games that you can unlock are: Boxing Champ, Slap Stream, Boogie Down, Mirror Time, Rocket Rumble, Beat Freak.

Still not in the picture? You will be.

The Eye Toy is revolutionary because, unlike the usual kind of cameras we hook to our PCs, it acts as an actual input device - and I'm not talking purely visually. The Eye Toy recognises the movements of the player, and translates them into game commands.

Basically this means that as you move your arms and head (and body, for that matter) the unit instructs the game software according to your actions, and these actions affect the game you are playing. In short, the player becomes the input device.

At the moment there is only one set of games that can be played with the Eye Toy (see the box out on this page) which limits the usefulness of the device a might. However, this "game bundle" is a rather fun collection of simple yet engrossing games that will keep users busy for hours. And besides, seeing yourself on screen is quite a kick.

During the period that I reviewed this device, my house was always full of people. The novelty of the device means that everyone wants to give it a spin. The fact that the Eye Toy is a great "party device" helps - there is something incredibly funny about seeing your friends acting like utter idiots on screen. (Actually, this isn't really the case. If you have the reference of the game, you understand exactly what your friends are doing. People walking past the window, though, are bound to think that some strange kind of ultra-epilepsy convention is going down.)

I must state a stern warning here - you are going to hurt.

This is due to the fact that playing with the Eye Toy is a VERY physical undertaking and, being gamers, we aren't the most sporty types.

But the pain is worth it, because (quite honestly) the Eye Toy is the most fun I have had in front of a TV in a good long time. It works better as a group activity, but its fun on its own just the same.

And the kicker?

The Eye Toy and software to make it work (i.e. the Eye Toy Play game disk) bundled together is going to cost you only R549.00 - around the price of a normal PS2 title.

Whether or not there will be more games that support the Eye Toy in future is anyone's guess.

However, at the price it's a very worthwhile investment.

conditions

You need to get your environment fairly well set up to use the Eye Toy. First of all, you need enough space to play. Knocking over your mother's prize antique vase is probably a bad idea. Light conditions can vary quite widely, but you want yourself to be the clearest thing on the screen… background elements that are very bright (like windows) may interfere. Drawing curtains is a good idea (but mostly because passers-by will think you have lost what little mind you had.) Other than that, the Eye Toy is a breeze to use.

win

Win - Courtesy of Ster Kinekor we have some Eye Toy goodies to give away - the coolest accessories for the active Eye Toy player! To try your hand at getting hold of this prize, answer the following question: Name three of the Eye Toy Play games. Send entries to comp@nag.co.za, with the subject line "Eye Toy."

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	**MINUS**
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SUPPLIED BY: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900
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B'USB MP3 Player

Mp3 players are slowly reaching perfection. It's been several years since Creative released their first Nomad, which cost a small fortune and could hold about half a song. Now it's progressed to the point that every digital company seem to have some finger in the MP3 pie, either with a player or in a cellphone.

The B'USB MP3 Player represents a lot of the changes that have happened over the years, and it's only a few steps away from being the perfect MP3 player. The major change between this and most older players is that it doubles as a USB flashcard. This has a dual advantage - firstly, you can move any data on it, and secondly, you don't need special software or cables to transfer files. The player does come with a USB extension cable, so you don't need to reach round the back of your PC all the time.

Add to that a 128 mb capacity (not upgradeable) and very clear sound. In fact, someone commented it's like a hi-fi in your head. The player also has several equalizer settings, and to add a cherry on top, it also has FM radio support (though that's far from perfect) and can record over 500 minutes of dictation (providing the recorder has the space open for that). The unit also ships with a rather convenient neck strap, complete with built-in earphones. All this powered by one AAA battery which will give you at least 15 hours of continuous play, and this will set you back only R 1499.

Now, the downsides, and there are a few small ones. The player refused to transfer properly on my USB ports, though it works fine on other PCs I tried. The transfer speed is also slower than with conventional flashcards, and I couldn't get the firmware to upgrade, but I suspect this is another USB related issue. Finally, the battery is not rechargeable - a feature quite prominent with most new players. The radio-control is rather gimmicky, and you can't remove it from the neck strip. Its functionality isn't really that vast, either, since it doesn't interact with any of the player's other controls, such as volume, shuffle or skip.

But despite these drawbacks it's a great player. It's easy to use, it has excellent sound, it's lightweight and it improves on pretty much every aspect of the older players. At this rate, it makes no sense why 64MB players with no additional features still retail for over a grand. I doubt this will be the first of its kind that we'll see (a few similar players are already on the market) and I hope to see improved iterations appear soon, but overall the B'USB player is great value for money, providing you need most of those features.

conditions

Key Properties:
- MP3 WMA playback
- Voice recording
- Five mode equalizer (jazz/classic/rock/pop and normal)
- Backlight LCD display
- Dynamic bass booster
- Up to 180 minutes mp3 playback
- 512 minutes of ADPCM voice recording or higher
- Playing time: 12 hours or more

Memory:
Built-in: 128MB

Power:
One AAA battery

PC system requirements:
- Pentium 133MHz or higher
- Windows 98/ME/2000/XP
- 20MB hard disk space
- CD-ROM drive
- USB port
- Mac Compatible

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	**MINUS**
Simple USB interface	Non-rechareable battery
Excellent sound	Slow USB transfer
Feature rich	IO errors on some MBs

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reviewer: Iwan "Da3dalus" Pienaar

book review:

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Welcome to the monthly book review section, the latest addition to your favourite gaming magazine. Here, I will attempt to bring the reader to a higher state of ignorance on books being released in the science fiction, fantasy, horror and IT genres.

What better way to kick off this section than with a review on one of the fastest selling books of all time, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. Released on June 21, book five of the seven-part Harry Potter series has seen readers buying copies almost as fast as booksellers have been making them available. There is little arguing the fact that Harry Potter has become a phenomenon that has taken the world by storm. While the series does have its share of detractors and critics, it has almost single-handedly sparked the resurgence in putting children of all ages behind books.

It has been three years since book four, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, was published. Add the fact that a deadline has not been set for the as yet untitled book six, and you have fans that are soaking up every word of the 766-page read Rowling has put together.

Phoenix is by far the thickest book in the series. It should keep most children and, ahem, older fans busy for some time. Also, due to its size, a lot happens in the book. Important parts of Harry's past have finally been fleshed out and insight is given into why the evil Lord Voldemort wanted to kill the boy wizard in the first place. The book, in keeping with the trend set by its predecessors, is also considerably darker in content than what has been written before. Death is woven tightly into the narrative. How Harry faces it when it emerges on several occasions is part of what makes Phoenix such an interesting read.

Much has been written about the death of one of the main characters in the book. Rowling does an admirable job in describing events leading up to and immediately following the death. However, attentive readers should not be surprised to find out who dies. There are more than enough clues scattered in the story for people to have an idea of which character is not going to make an appearance in book six.

An interesting sub-plot in the novel is the allegory of what could happen when government tries to interfere with education. It does come across as being forced in certain parts, but it is still a nice addition to the novel. Sadly, Rowling still uses the tried and tested formula of the other novels. It starts off with Harry at the Dursley's, something happens to Harry just before he goes to Hogwarts, Harry at Hogwarts, Harry's big adventure and Harry goes back to the Dursley's. Some twists have been added but it is not significant enough to change the feeling that this has been done before.

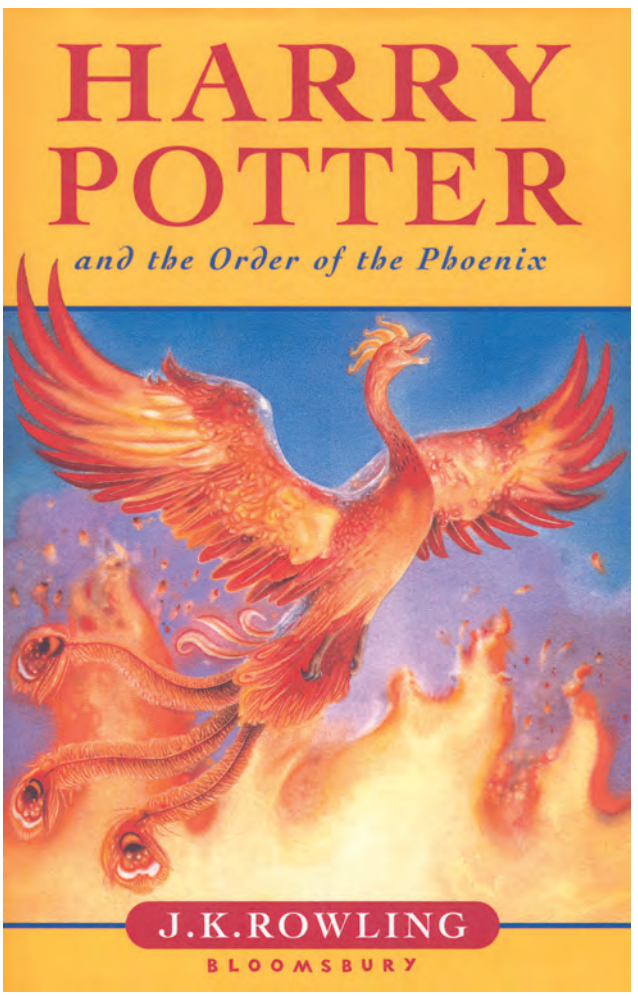
Harry is also a very angry fifteen-year old in Phoenix. Unfortunately, Ron and Hermione do not appear to be going through the same adolescence stage as our young wizard. Admittedly, they have not been through the same tribulations as Harry, but they should at least show some chutzpah at Harry for his attitude towards them.

Overall, Phoenix is an enjoyable read without reaching the heights of some of the previous books. However, it says a lot for a book that no matter what anyone writes about it, it is certain to be a bestseller for some time to come.

j.k. rowling bibliography

Harry Potter series:
Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (1997)
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets (1998)
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkhaban (1999)
Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (2000)
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (2003)

Written for Comic Relief charity:
Fantastic beasts & where to find them (2001)
Quidditch through the ages (2001)



harry potter and the order of the phoenix

Author: J.K. Rowling
Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing
ISBN: 0747551006
Pages: 766
Format: Hardcover
Kalahari.net price (excl. delivery): R269.95

about the author

Joanne Kathleen Rowling was born on July 31, 1965 in Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire, England. Her sister, Di, was born two years later. Rowling started writing from an early age. She reportedly finished and illustrated her first story, Rabbit, when she was six. Following her parent's encouragement, Rowling studied French at Exeter University in order to become a bilingual secretary. However, she soon realised that this was not the career she wanted to pursue and moved to Portugal to be an English teacher. She married a journalist there and her daughter, Jessica, was born in 1993. The marriage soon ended in divorce. Rowling decided to move to Edinburgh to be close to Di during this period. She became determined to finish the wizard novel she started in Portugal and to get it published. Rowling often wrote in restaurants while her daughter was sleeping. She received a grant from the Scottish Arts Council to complete the first Harry Potter novel. When it was completed, she managed to sell the novel to Bloomsbury Press in the UK and has not looked back.

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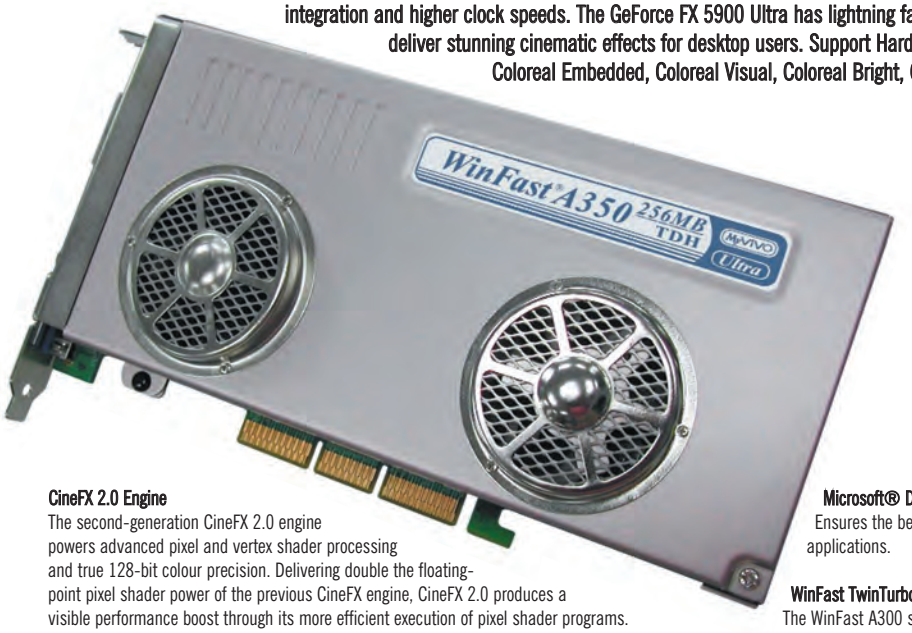

CineFX 2.0 Engine
The second-generation CineFX 2.0 engine powers advanced pixel and vertex shader processing and true 128-bit colour precision. Delivering double the floating-point pixel shader power of the previous CineFX engine, CineFX 2.0 produces a visible performance boost through its more efficient execution of pixel shader programs.

Intellisample HCT
Second-generation Intellisample technology delivers up to a 50 percent increase in compression efficiency for compressing colour, texture, and z-data, and powers unprecedented visual quality for resolutions up to 1600 x 1280.

UltraShadow Technology
This technology powers the next-generation of complex and realistic shadow effects by accelerating shadow generation. Accurate shadows that effectively mimic reality without bogging down frame rates are one of the keys to more believable game environments.

Vertex Shaders 2.0+
With the CineFX engine, vertex-processing capabilities are greatly expanded while programming complexity is greatly reduced, giving game developers the power to achieve any effect imaginable. Fully generalized loops and branches can be data-dependent, giving the CineFX engine a much more straightforward programming methodology than previous architectures. One shader can be written to encompass all the skinning methods and operations, and since the shader can branch on a per-vertex basis, it is not required to break up the model. With these advances, the CineFX engine shatters previous vertex shading limitations.

Pixel Shaders 2.0+
The NVIDIA CineFX engine raises pixel shading to a first-class programmable citizen of the graphics pipeline, and gives developers a host of new capabilities for controlling pixels and producing effects that are only limited by the imagination.

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Microsoft® DirectX® 9.0 and OpenGL® 1.4 Optimizations and Support
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WinFox II Software Utility
Leadtek's unique WinFox Utility is specially design for users to tweak and monitor the hardware condition of their system. Some of the functions include: Speed Runner for over-clocking the graphics core/memory speed, information (PCI-Watch) for system information report and many other useful functions.

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DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS

NVIDIA GeForce FX 5900 Ultra GPU
CineFX II Engine
Intellisample Technology HCT
High-Precision Graphics
nView Multi-display Technology
Digital Vibrance Control (DVC)
Unified Driver Architecture (UDA)
AGP 8X
0.13 Micron Process Technology
400MHz RAMDACs
1.3 Billion texels/ sec fill rate

Graphics Core:	256-bit
Engine clock:	450 MHz
Memory Interface:	256-bit
Memory Bandwidth:	27.2GB/sec
Fill Rate:	3.6 billion texels/sec.
Vertices/sec.:	338 million
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Textures per Pixel:	16 (Maximum in a single rendering pass with 8 textures applied per clock.)
RAMDACs:	400MHz

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music reviews:

0304
Jewel

When Jewel Kilcher first came out she was a fresh breath of air in the world of female vocalists. Now, a couple of albums down the line, that can no longer be said about her.
To stay alive in a fickle music world, she has changed her style, resorting to a slightly dancier, sultrier sound. Now, instead of sounding like herself, she could be mistaken for a whole number of other female artists. And while the songs on this album are good and very enjoyable, it's sad to see the style that made Jewel so unique disappear. [Gallo]

Everything Must Go
Steely Dan

I remember my siblings being into this stuff. Being that they're a lot older than me, and I am pretty old myself, it's weird to think that Steely Dan have, after a very long time, released another album. In fact, it seems that a lot of old bands are releasing stuff this year, including the likes of Fleetwood Mac and Ringo Star. Steely Dan are not what could be called a current band, and this album has more appeal to those who were fans years ago, rather than new listeners. [Gallo]

Fame
Various Artists

Here's an unexpected surprise - a re-release of the film soundtrack for Fame, which is of course based on the hit broadway musical. Whether or not the film is being re-released I don't know, but hearing these songs again sends one on a nostalgic journey through some of the most popular and well loved movie music ever recorded.
I think this may get lost on many younger listeners, but those who are old enough to remember the film (and who might have watched the TV series) will certainly enjoy revisiting the experience of Fame. [Gallo]

Covergirl
Groove Coverage

Here we have yet another pop-driven female vocalist act that is taking a bunch of old songs and remaking them as their own. Groove Coverage is nothing special… in fact, I have heard this kind of stuff so often before that I am growing very tired of it's utter and inexcusable lack of originality. When something like this hits my inbox, I cringe. I must admit that I prefer an act that is more original, not one that rides on the coat tails of a movement. I wouldn't really bother with this band, unless mindless dance pop is your thing. [Gallo]

14 Shades of Grey
Staind

Staind are back after an explosive previous album. This time the album is called 14 Shades of Grey, and it is rather aptly named. It is a collection of 14 tracks that pretty much all sound the same. In fact, aside from intros, there really isn't much to set these songs apart from each other. The net result is an album that does not really live up to its predecessor in any way. Fans may disagree, but there is not much enticing here at all. Sad to say it, but that's the way it is. Let's hope they make a bit of a come back on the next one… [Gallo]

Deftones
Deftones

Ah, the Deftones. Another album from a band that falls into the "love 'em or hate 'em" category of modern rock. This album is typical of the band and will have fans panting, but those who aren't used to the genre may find it a bit jarring. Sudden changes and truly rough sounds are the order of the day, and reading the lyric sheet may get you a little down. However, I can't help enjoying what is on offer on this self titled album. Be warned - you may want to listen before you buy, especially if you don't know much about this band. [Gallo]

X-Men 2
John Ottman

A discussion with someone recently had me deciding that the only composers left are those people writing music for movies - the guys that come up with the score that virtually every film contains. Reviewing film score is virtually impossible, because this music is the one kind that falls into the "personal taste" category more so than any other. These musical pieces either appeal to you, or they don't. However, in trying to look all intelligent, I will say this: the spirit of the film is very nicely captured by this subtle score. It ranges from sad and dramatic right through to triumphant and joyous. [Gallo]

Parts of the Process
Morcheeba

Subtle, smooth vocals and jazzy backing tracks are the order of the day with this album, as one might well expect. Morcheeba aren't really the kind of band that you get down and party to. Instead, this is the kind of stuff that you relax to. It's a nice collection of very smooth songs (eighteen in total) that show case the talent and versatility that make this band one of the most exceptional acts in the world today. The tracks range from very laid back right through to songs that are very poppy and upbeat in sentiment. Great stuff indeed. [Gallo]

Needle Damage
Mixed by Speedy

This CD claims to be progressive trance, but, in truth, it's little more than dark hard house. Trance, folks, does not really feature much by way of vocals - never has and, despite progress, never will. I guess I am being a bit oversensitive about the misnomer but I personally prefer trance to house, so I was very disappointed by this album. Good house, like good trance, is hard to find. At least we can say that for this album - the house is quite different, and very enjoyable. Just don't expect it to be more than what it really is. [Gallo]

Absolute Club Classics V.4
Various Artists

Ok, so we are now officially four volumes down the track on the Absolute Club Classics road, and the pickings are getting a little thin. In fact, that's an understatement. While the first few offerings may have had some really good, nostalgic stuff on them, the best this one has to offer is a rather sad remix of Arrested Developments Mr Wendell.
The Absolute Club Classics series is getting to its end. While this album is still fairly passable, the next one will almost certainly suck entirely. [Gallo]

Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols [DVD]
Sex Pistols

I am in love with what is called "old school punk" - not that the so-called "new school" of the movement has anything to do with punk, but anyway… This is a movie all about probably the most notorious punk band of all time. The Sex Pistols did anything they could to rock the music world boat, and this show case is the perfect demonstration of their antics.
Also included are interviews with surviving band members, which give a new and interesting perspective on this revolutionary act.
If you want to find out about the heart and soul of the rebellious punk movement of the late 1970's, this is the perfect place to start. [Eagle Vision/Gallo]

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reviewer: Jarred Krombein

dvd reviews:

Mr Deeds
After a string of Sandler flops and films that were meant to be funny we have one that hits the right note. Mr Deeds is the one and lets hope it's the start of more of what we have come to expect.
When Deeds inherits controlling interest in a media corporation from his deceased uncle, he's quickly besieged by opportunists gunning for their piece of the pie. When Babe, a television tabloid reporter posing as an innocent small town girl, is sent to do an expose on Deeds, she instead feels herself falling in love. Funny and exactly what you need on these cold miserable evenings.

Brotherhood of the Wolf
In a rural province of France, a mysterious creature is leaving a trail of mutilated corpses across the countryside, savagely killing scores of women and children. Unseen, possessed of enormous strength and a seemingly near-human intelligence, the beast has eluded capture for years. Desperate to end the growing unrest of the populace, the King sends in a renowned scientist and his Iroquois blood brother, an unconventional team whose combined methods and capabilities may finally bring the beast down. But what these men find, when finally confronted with the true nature of the beast, is more shocking than anyone could have anticipated.
Let me say, this film is in English but is dubbed (and not that well), so after 5 minutes I stopped watching. The story line looked really good, so try it out for yourself.

Point of Origin
Based on a true story, this twisting psychological thriller focuses on a serial arsonist whose terrifying six-year crime spree is juxtaposed with the increasingly desperate efforts of investigators to bring him to justice. Charged with investigating many of these fires is Captain John Orr (Ray Liotta), a legendary figure in the Glendale Fire Department, possessed with an uncanny ability to pinpoint the origins of a fire, as well as the devices by which an arsonist may have carried out the crime.
Through a fingerprint left at the scene of one crime and a series of surprise revelations focusing on arsons set in several towns, the task force is able to close in on an unlikely suspect. . . and ultimately crack the case.
Nothing really interesting in this movie, that could have been great but tends to head down straight to TV heaven.

The Bourne Identity
Based very loosely on Robert Ludlum's novel, the Bourne Identity is the story of a man whose wounded body is discovered by a fisherman who nurses him back to health. He can remember nothing and begins trying to rebuild his memory based on clues such as a Swiss bank account, the number of which, is implanted in his hip.
He soon realizes that he is being hunted and takes off with Marie on a search to find out who he is and why he is being hunted.
For a film I had no intention of seeing, I was riveted and have to say is one of the best movies I have seen in a long time. Highly recommended.

Road to Perdition
In Depression-era Chicago hitman Michael Sullivan is known to friends and enemies alike as the Angel of Death. Uncompromising in his work, Sullivan is just as devoted to his private life as an upstanding husband and father of two young boys. But when those worlds collide, taking the lives of his wife and younger son, Sullivan and his surviving son, Michael Jr., leave their sedate home life behind and embark on a startling journey of revenge.
A bit of a flop on the big screen (can't understand why).
This film has to be seen for its acting talent and in-depth plot. A true film that will become a classic over time.

Treasure Planet
The tale follows Jim's fantastic journey across a parallel universe as cabin boy aboard a glittering space galleon. Befriended by the ship's charismatic cyborg (part man, part machine) cook John Silver, Jim blossoms under his guidance, and shows the makings of a fine spacer as he and the alien crew battle supernovas, black holes and ferocious space storms.
Jim is transformed from boy to man as he finds the strength to face down the mutineers and discovers a "treasure" greater than he had ever imagined.
Believe it or not this is a Disney story that does not fit into the familiar mould. It is not the worst we've seen but it should not be given classic status.

City by the Sea
New York City homicide detective Vincent LaMarca has forged a long and distinguished career in law enforcement, but on his latest case, the stakes are higher for Vincent--the suspect he's investigating is his own son.
This murder investigation is drawing Vincent home to Long Beach, the self-proclaimed City by the Sea, where the past has been waiting for him to return.
I hate Robert De Niro as an actor, don't ask me why, but aside from that this is a great film with an even better storyline.
Go and see it now.

About Schmidt
Warren Schmidt is a retired insurance salesman, who at age 66, has no particular plans other than to drive around in the motor home his wife insisted they buy. He's not altogether bitter, but not happy either, as everything his wife does annoys him, and he disapproves of the man his daughter is about to marry. When his wife suddenly dies, he sets out to postpone the imminent marriage of his daughter to a man he doesn't like, while coping with discoveries about his late wife and himself in the process.
GREAT FILM BUT COMES WITH WARNING - GERIATRIC NUDITY RUN. RUN FAST.

Charlotte Gray
A Scottish woman goes undercover to help the French Resistance during World War II, motivated partly by her duty to her country but mostly by her desire to find her lost love who was shot down over France.
Her experiences in Nazi-occupied France, however, change her life forever.
Charlotte Gray is a beautiful film to watch but pretty pictures do not make a compelling film.

Blood Work
FBI agent Terry McCaleb is (Clint Eastwood) one of the bureau's top profilers. He is tracking a particularly nasty serial killer who likes to challenge the agent to come find him with the personalized messages and encoded clues he leaves behind.
If I tell you any more I will be giving away the plot, so I will stop there. Clint Eastwood Fans you may be a bit disappointed as this is not a great movie from such a brilliant man.
For those who want an easy thriller, step forward, you are all welcome.

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All out of love	10192	14192	18192
I'm gonna getcha good	10193	14193	18193

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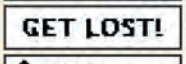	20022	24022
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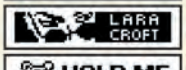	20024	24024
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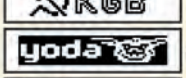	20044	24044
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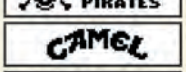	20050	24050
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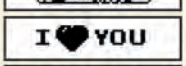	20059	24059
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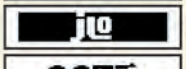
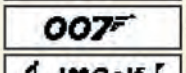
	20068	24068
	20069	24069
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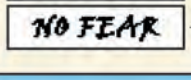	20075	24075
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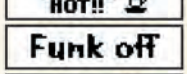
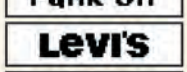
	20111	24111
	20114	24114
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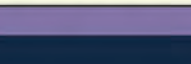	20163	24163

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on the web: Bill sees dead fish

Neurotic Fish

www.fishtanked.com
Sounds like a band, doesn't it? But what we have here is Fishtank, a weekly comic strip about two fish and their conversations. Covering such interesting topics as politics, life, money, eating crap, cannibalism - everything's there.
One of the more intelligent offerings on the webcomic scene, it's also really witty, not to mention well-drawn. The site itself is also a bit of a marvel, and the author has a small following loyally replying to posts and comics. If you need one place a week to go waste office hours on, go visit the fish tank…

A Gates for every browser

www.microsoft.com/billgates/default.asp
Love him or hate him, Bill Gates is an icon of the times which we live in, and either quite a prolific visionary or an extensive bad guy, depending on where you stand in the whole Microsoft debate.
Still, apart from reading his books or catching interviews on TV, there is another means to get into the mind of Gates, thanks to his official website. Hiding inside the behemoth that is the Microsoft website, you can read the man's speeches, published writings, biography and news on the various foundations he heads. The published writings are the most interesting, though.
Of course, you have to suspect some spin-doctoring, and it's hard to not consider how what Gates writes or says can adversely affect markets around the world. Still, whether you love Microsoft or hate them with a passion, it's worthwhile checking up on Gates' writing, if only for the added perspective to how the biggest IT company in the world operates, and how it sees the very world changing.

Waste my time site

www.pagetutor.com/idiot/idiot.html
There's something about a classic: it never quite disappears, even if the original version has already faded away in time. Every now and then you'll see a rehash of the familiar concept, and in this case it's the classic Idiot time waster - something you saw quite a lot when Javascript arrived on the block. Just a warning: If this entertains you for longer than a minute, there's a fair chance that you are an idiot…

Eurogamer gets fancy

www.eurogamer.net
Eurogamer has long been the mainstay of European gaming news, and it's more relevant to our market than any US site could be. That, and it has that trademark dry humour we've come to expect from the British press. But the site's one problem was its unappealing design. That's changed recently with a new jacket for the Brit gaming space. The new Eurogamer is far more colourful, not to mention easier to navigate. It might seem a little daunting at first, but the site has a lot to offer, especially in the forms of their interesting reviews and very frequent news.
If you get your gaming news online, you should have Eurogamer on your bookmark list by now.

Death Rattles

www.prairieghosts.com/apparitions.html
Creep me out, why don't you?
Are we really surrounded by the spirits of the dead, or perhaps the energy signatures of those long passed? Is there even something out there? As with any interest in Earth, the paranormal has a dedicated group of people interested in it, and the things that go bump in the night have their own interested fraternity of investigators. Unlike UFO watchers or folks camping out on the shores of Loch Ness, ghost watchers usually produce material that is bone-chilling, and spirit photography is probably at the top of that pile.
This website has a collection of photos from a variety of sources, and they primarily fall in the category of the unexplained, i.e. no trick photography or tricks of lights to point finger to. Some are blurry, and some have rather clear figures staring at the camera's eye.
It might not have you looking over your shoulder at first, but that long, dark hallway to the bathroom suddenly seems a bit more daunting.

Movie Bloopers

You are anal. Man, you are so, so anal. Or you have a knack for spotting mistakes. Either way, you bet there was something wrong in that movie you just saw. Or you saw it, and you want to tell someone. Badly. Boy, do we have the list for you…

www.movie-mistakes.com
This is probably the first place you should go. Also responsible for a book by the same name, it's the definitive site for general mistakes spotted in movies.

www.nitpickers.com
If anything that remotely seems like a mistake needs to have a dark shadow cast upon with no fear of the people involved, then Nitpickers is your site. It's pretty amazing just how stupid some 'mistakes' are.

www.moviebloopers.com
Now this is a pretty site. And it might not have the selection of the other sites, but it's pretty, and gosh darn'it we like that.
And it even has pictures of the bloopers. We like that too.

www.starwarsnet.co.uk/mistakes.htm
Even the almighty Star Wars series has a lot of mistakes in it. Most of the sites actually have a section devoted to the series, but this site is the definitive source.

www.slipups.com
Exactly what the site says. For instance, Brad Pitt's phantom moving ring in The Mexican.
Apparently it never can decide which hand it should be on…

www.saunalahti.fi/frog1/goofs/index.htm
Nothing spectacular, but it has a nice collection of movies and an easy way to browse them.

directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Movies/Trivia/Bloopers_and_Mistakes/
In Google we trust, and this page has a few sites not listed above.

For more information contact:
sales@nag.co.za or call our team of operators [Len] on 084 594 9909

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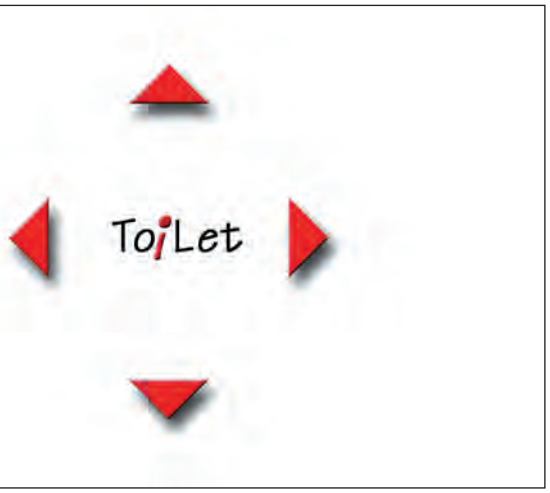

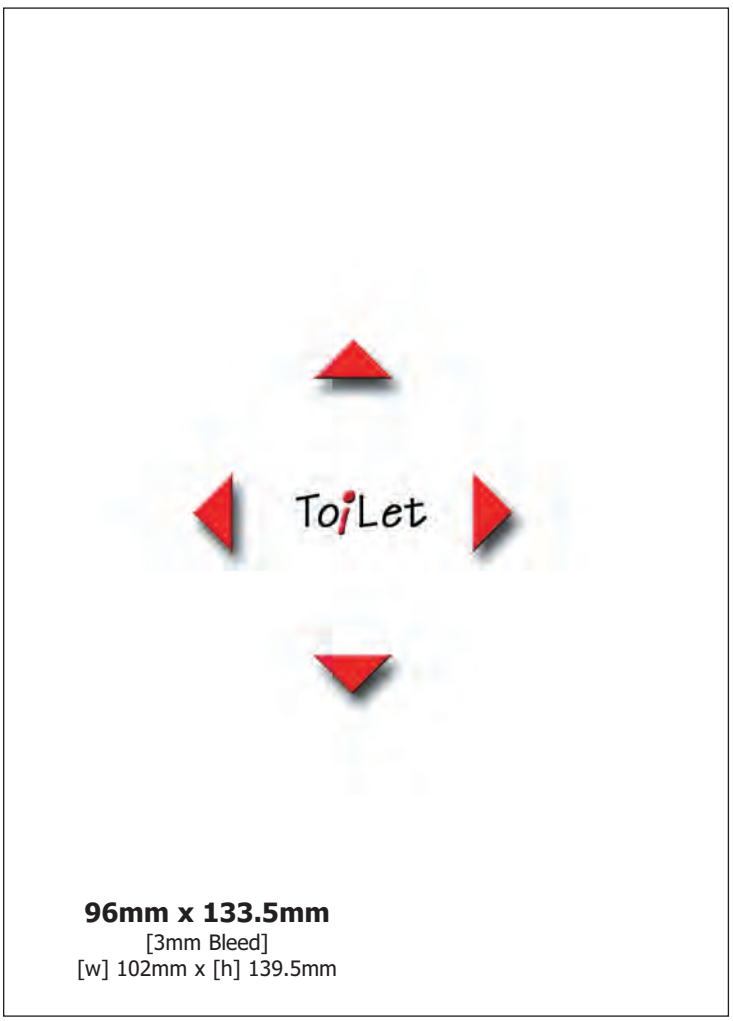

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SHRYKE IS WATCHING HIS DOWNLOAD CRAWL ALONG...

Priest: There you are! Listen, the thing you're always moaning about finally happened!

Shryke: George Michael got a sex change?

Priest: Yup. But that aside - DICE finally released the Battlefield map editor!

Shryke: Cool! I can download it from the site, right?

Priest: Yup. And you only need the 1.4 patch for it to work.

Shryke: 1.4?!? I am still trying to download the 1.2 patch. Wait, lemme check… **(click click click)** My Lord, it's 66 megs!

Priest: Well, it probably does important stuff, like stop tanks from sinking into the ground or being able to shoot someone who is controlling a ship… things worthy of attention in the fourth version of a patch.

Shryke: **(checks some more)** Hey, take a look at this. The map editor is only 11 megs. You need a 66 meg patch to be able to run an 11 meg app…

Priest: Well, at least it's consistent with the Battlefield design philosophy.

Shryke: I wonder when they will release the first patch for the map editor. I mean, I am just going along with track record here…

Priest: They'll probably ship it with the sequel next year, and then release a patch at the same time to patch the sequel and the old patches. The upside to all this is by that time my machine might have actually finished loading the game.

Shryke: It takes long to load because the music is cool. Repetitive, but very "60's military movie…" I wonder if they will ship the Battlefield: 1942 map editor with Battlefield Vietnam?

Priest: Nah, I figure they'll just substitute the German voices with Vietnamese and convince us that Kursk was part of the Ho Chi Min trail. What's Vietnamese for 'Tiger Tank'?

Shryke: **(sniggers)** Dunno. But they won't be saying "schnell, schnell." They's be saying "di di mao." Or maybe they'll be saying "schnell schnell" in a Vietnamese accent.

(checks download) look, I got another 10kb. I hate 56k…

Priest: So, technically, Battlefield Vietnam could be achieved with a really elaborate patch…

Shryke: How big would that be? I don't think my line will be stable enough to download for that long. In fact, I will probably have upgraded AGAIN by the time the download finishes **(pats new computer.)**

Priest: Well, it's just as well it's a sequel and not a patch. I'm beginning to think there are Battlefield patches promised before Duke Forever was even announced.

Shryke: Do you think it will be an actual sequel? Or do you think that maybe it will be six new maps and a bunch of new weapons that perform exactly like the old ones?

Priest: Damn, I'd be thankful if they just did a new intro movie for a change.

Shryke: Yeah, or some new music. Maybe with traditional Vietnamese xylophones or something. Maybe something longer than four bars… wait, something's happening!

Shryke's connection is interrupted again. He tries to slash his wrists with his modem…

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- Provides CPU thermal detect and overheat protection

USB 2.0 | DualBIOS™ | 6-Channel Audio | EasyTune™ 4 | Q-Flash™ | @BIOS†

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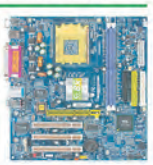

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