

NAG

NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE

south africa's leading technology & computer entertainment magazine



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FREE
with
this issue
**PlayStation 2
club magazine**



Lazy Gamer's guide to
Tilt Wheel Technology

Previews of Call of Duty &
The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

We look at **Rugby 2004**
on the PlayStation 2

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne
strategy guide [part 2]

Reviews of Homeworld 2, Republic: The Revolution
Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of World War II

Tons of goodies examined in our
H@rdc0r3 Case Modding Feature

PC Xbox GameCube N-Gage GBA PlayStation 2



Special Double Issue November 2003
Special Price: R35.00 (South Africa) / S\$8.90 (Singapore) / RM14.90 (Malaysia)

Demos
Mael Ström: Battle v1.0
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King
Rugby 2004
Eiger Wacht P&A Tour 2004
Warcraft III

Utilities
Aquamark v2
Cool Service v2
Fast Show File Converter
Hogwarts 2003
iG Search Tool
MangaManga
Nemesis

Movies
Merry Christmas (DVD)
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (DVD)

Look On!

November 2003

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TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA:
A LINK TO THE PAST



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Game Boy Advance SP is not available in any of the special designs featured above.

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Black Leather



Platinum

tage!



ergonomic design

HERDBLOYS McCANN-ERICKSON B5081



Metallic Grey



Metallic Blue



Steel Blue



Periwinkle



Metallic Red



Blue Moon

Microsoft®

www.microsoft.com/southafrica/hardware

Starters

(Available October)

Space Colony

Through a series of unique and pioneering missions players will be given the opportunity to combine all the intricacies of running a Space Colony with the most dysfunctional crew ever assembled. A SIM with real personality!

Commandos 3: Destination Berlin

Commandos 3 takes tasty graphics and compelling play dynamic of the series to a whole new level. The game features a new interior engine that enables you to rotate the detailed environments and zoom in and out.

Temple of Elemental: Evil

Travel through new lands and experience the flavour of true adventure. As the story unfolds, adventurers will travel the world of Oerth, discover the besieged village of Hommet, survive the filthy shire of Nulb and ultimately penetrate the ruins of the Temple of Elemental Evil, a beacon of darkness and despair in a world without hope.

xiii

The perfect appetiser – not to be missed, XIII features a conspiracy of epic proportions, and players will unravel clues behind the story's compelling and mysterious events. XIII includes themes of amnesia, in which players must uncover sinister plots against themselves, the U.S. government, and even the president himself.

Empires: Dawn of the Modern World

Bearing the chef's personal endorsement, Empires: Dawn of the Modern World represents the only truly global RTS where players control unique civilizations across a timeline that spans from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Gamers lead their nation's economic growth and military campaigns in their effort to dominate the world.

Hidden & Dangerous

Hidden & Dangerous 2 is a first and third person tactical shooter that builds upon the tremendous success of Hidden & Dangerous. You lead a small squad of Allied soldiers deep behind enemy lines, to carry out secret missions during World War II. The gripping story line takes you to Europe, Africa, Burma, and other locations scattered across the globe. Salad is an optional extra.

Main Course

(Available Early November)

Rail Road Tycoon 3

Players of Railroad Tycoon 3 begin the game with a modest sum of capital at the beginning of the Golden Era of Railroading and expand their empire into major cities, while purchasing the latest locomotives, forcing competitors into bankruptcy, and exploiting the stock market to become the ultimate Railroad Tycoon.

Vietcong: Fist Alpha

Placing you in the highlands of Vietnam, Vietcong Fist Alpha brings 7 brand new single player missions as well as 8 new multi-player maps to expand that jungle experience of Vietnam in 1967. A bowl of rice included.

Uru: Ages Beyond Myst

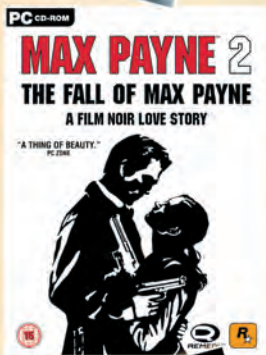
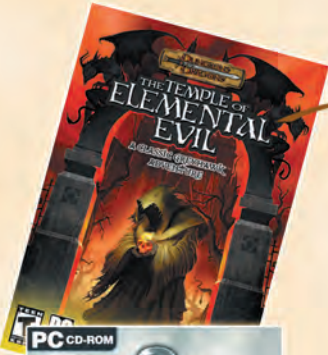
From the creators of Myst and Riven, Uru: Ages Beyond Myst is the next chapter of the Myst franchise and the most immersive and ambitious Myst experience ever created. The single-player game will be bigger, better, and more innovative than any of the previous Myst adventures.

Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne

Now, working together with Rockstar Games' New York-based production team, Remedy has combined Max Payne's hallmark game style with all new innovations and unmatched production values. Max Payne 2 dishes up the salami.

Call of Duty

Call of Duty is an intense first-person action game that allows players to experience the movie-like intensity and gripping combat of World War II as never before – through the eyes of ordinary soldiers, fighting as part of a squad through the chaos of battle.





Dessert

(Available Late November)

Magic the Gathering: Battle Grounds

Platter for 2. Just as in the "Magic" card game, in "Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds" players will choose a duellist and up to two of "Magic's" five colours -- red, green, white, blue, and black -- to attempt to reduce their opponent's life to zero.

Beyond Good and Evil

When Jade takes a mysterious reconnaissance assignment for IRIS, a rebel organization that challenges the official version of events, she must question her own perception of truth. Angered and shaken by what she discovers, Jade begins a harrowing journey to get to the core of the conspiracy.

Legacy of Kain: Defiance

The next chapter in the epic Legacy of Kain series is a cutting-edge action/adventure game featuring more action than ever before. Take control of two powerful and highly evolved vampires: Kain, an all-powerful demigod, and Raziel, a demonic angel of death.

Terminator 3: War of the Machines

Humanity sits on the brink of extinction. The inevitable battle between man and machine has begun. War ravages the land as hardened Tech-Com fighters defend John Connor and others against the mechanized onslaught of the CRS force. Available with a side-order of onion rings.

Far Cry

An accidental hero finds himself on a remote tropical paradise, where a madman plays God; engineering various species of enhanced creatures to replace what he believes is a genetic dead-end... mankind. The game is set around 2020 on a set of tropical islands in the pacific.

Civilization 3: Conquests

Civilization fans will discover intriguing new civilizations, units, wonders, technologies, and abilities to help them triumph in eight professionally designed conquests throughout history. Compete as one of the eight new Civilizations, each with its own powerful leader, unique units and special abilities, and lead your nation to its destiny.

Unreal Tournament 2004

"Unreal Tournament 2004 is the next evolution of the greatest competitive computer game ever created," said Jean-Philippe Agati, senior vice president and general manager of Atari's Los Angeles studio. "The addition of new modes, mods and maps as well as the controllable land-, air- and space-based vehicles, means Unreal fans are getting an entirely new experience featuring devastating vehicular combat and wide scale warfare."

Wine List

(Available December)

Neverwinter Nights: Hordes of the Underdark

Neverwinter Nights: Hordes of the Underdark will include a new 20-hour single player campaign, designed for high-level characters and set amidst the famous city of Waterdeep and the foreboding Underdark from the D&D game's Forgotten Realms campaign setting.

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

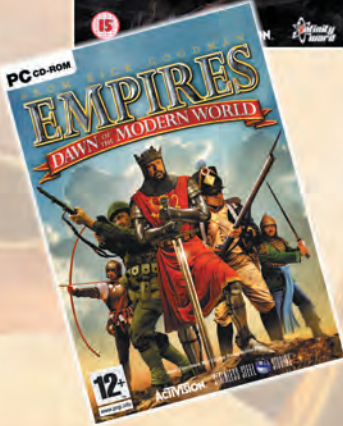
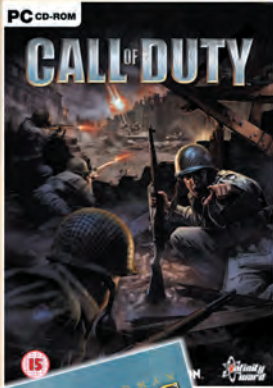
"With Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, Ubi Soft and Jordan Mechner are channelling their combined talents to breathe new life into the action/adventure genre. They're creating rich characters, white-knuckle action and a plot with more twists than the exotic, elaborate castle featured in the game," said Serge Hascoët, Editor in Chief, Ubi Soft Entertainment.

Lock On: Modern Air Combat

Feel the power of commanding a modern jet fighter. Fly a variety of combat aircraft in the most graphically rich, audio intense game environment ever created for a combat flight simulator. Lock On: Modern Air Combat combines a broad scope of play that includes a dynamic campaign system, an immersive combat environment, and in-your-face action.

Lords of Everquest

Lords of EverQuest brings the best elements of the real-time strategy (RTS) world together with the epic storyline and depth of the legendary EverQuest fantasy role-playing game (RPG). By capitalizing on the rich history, detailed characters and literally hundreds of monsters found in EverQuest, and building upon successful feature sets of the RTS genre, Lords of EverQuest creates a revolutionary gaming experience.




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62



Cover: The future of plastic surgery.

We take a look at what 'artificial' women might look like in a 1000 years. No really - this is some nice artwork from the game Homeworld 2.

CONTENTS

REGULARS

Ed's Note	12
Technology News	14
PC News	18
Console News	20
Inbox	24
The Domain of The_Basilisk	26
Rampage	28
alt.gaming	30
Anime	32
Lazy Gamer's Guide: Tilt Wheel Technology	34
Freeloader	36
Community.za	40
The Awards	58
Leisure Reviews: Books	100
Leisure Reviews: DVDs	102
Legacy: Indiana Jones	106
Internet	108
Send Off	110

PC REVIEWS

Homeworld 2	60
Battlefield 1942: Secret Weapons of World War II	62
Enclave	64
Age of Wonders: Shadow Magic	66
Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader	68
Republic: The Revolution	70
Galactic Civilisations	72
Indycar Series	74
CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	76
Starsky & Hutch	76
Xplosiv Budget Titles	78

FEATURES

X03	38
H@rdcor3: Case Modding Round Up	86
WarCraft III Frozen Throne Strategy Guide - Part 2	104

HARDWARE

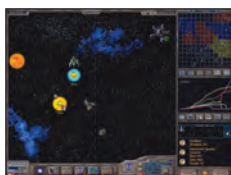
Genius Digital Camera Round Up	94
Soltek SL-5600-XD Graphics Card	95
Sennheiser pc150 headset	96
LiteOn External Combo Drive	96
Genius Netscroll+ Mini Traveller Mouse	98
Genius MaxFire G-12PS Controller	98

PREVIEWS

Call of Duty	48
Broken Sword	50
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	52
Empires: Dawn of the Modern World	54

CONSOLE REVIEWS

Rugby 2004 [PS2]	80
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb [PS2]	82
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance [GBA]	83
Giants: Citizen Kabuto [PS2]	84
The Great Escape [PS2]	84
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour [GCN]	85





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without them we are lost.



COVER CD

DEMOS

Head Over Heels	14.6 MB
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	123 MB
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	84.4 MB
Space Colony	122 MB
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	85.4 MB
Worms 3D	67 MB

MOVIES

Extended Matrix Reolutions Trailer	47.8 MB
Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King Trailer	19 MB

UTILITIES

Aquamark v3	62.6 MB
Final Fantasy XI Benchmark Version 2	54.2 MB
Flash Movie Pilot Extractor	0.6 MB
Foobar 2000	1.1 MB
GG Search Tool	1 MB
MessengerSubstract	0.2 MB
Nostrium	7.1 MB

ESTIMATED TOTAL 690 MB



Source pie hacked

Valuable code goes poof...

Enough pie for everyone - it's a fact, just ask your closest NAG representative. Also in the news we're happy to report that next month on the NAG Cover CD you'll find all the Half-Life 2 source code you need plus Quake IV leaked artwork and because we're such nice guys - the patchy leaked DOOM 3 alpha (not).

/Continued on page 223

Competition

Can they be considered competition or is there enough pie?

I've had many informal conversations with international publishing representatives, overseas PR companies and various other 'gaming industry' folk [I was going to put, alumni but that seemed a little anal] and one thing is clear. The South African gaming industry is almost too busy hatching plots, worrying about 'the competition' and trying to outdo each other that the resultant war is stunting the growth of this countries entire industry. This obstructive thinking and behaviour also extends down to a primitive retail culture that cannot see beyond their self-importance and the bottom line [you know who you are]. The message is simply this - there is more than enough pie for everyone. It's futile wasting time and energy on everyone else - no matter what you do you will never get a gamer to buy a game he doesn't like. We're on the brink of great things here so let's not screw it up.

Sauce

While desperately trying to come up with an interesting and or insightful topic for this part of the magazine, it was suggested (by a daring NAG worker bee) that I only stick to one topic in the Ed's Note instead of jumping around and leaving a flitting, instead of meaningful, few words on some hot gaming issue or personal crisis. The topic that came up in the 'suggestion' was Valve's leaky source code and my angle on the topic was supposed to be comparable security issues right here in sunny ZA, what with the banking sector's computers either falling over

every other month or being hacked to bits by initially smart but ultimately dumb computer cyberpunks. I'll concede on the suggested topic but not a chance in hell will I stick to a single topic - I really don't know all that much about gaming these days to be able to hold my own in any casual

conversation let alone a massively public forum like this. I prefer to hide my ignorance and lack of knowledge behind sarcasm and reams of typed text like this. It's almost a crime how easy it is to get away with things like this - just kidding, I'm actually very smart.

Regardless I do feel it's a shame that the source code for Half-Life 2 has been leaked onto the internet, the real crime here is that we're probably going to have to wait another six months for the game to hit retail because of it. So, if you do somehow know the moron that did the initial cracking of the barn door securing this valuable chunk of data - give him a slap to the coconut. In terms of implications beyond the gamers, both hardcore and casual, there are a few software vendors that have been exposed - these companies license their source code to companies like Valve who use this middleware to cut development time. This also represents a serious blow to Valve in terms of licensing their Source Engine to other companies long after Half-Life 2 has been through the budget bin cycle. The good that might come of this is a quicker cycle between Half-Life 2 and 3 and a whole host of really good looking but sub standard shareware games in the next few months. Feel free to send any insightful comments to usual address - letters@nag.co.za.

Happy gaming - you know you deserve it...

Michael James [Editor]

FR33!
PlayStation 2 Club Magazine

Bundled with this issue of NAG is Underground Station - say a big thanks to the boys and girls over at PlayStation. This probably won't happen again soon - so make sure you subscribe.

The December issue is an odd one - all the latest games arrive when we're the most busy with it forcing us to pull a few late nights [playing games] - does life suck or what?! Already there are heaps of games in for review and we're expecting a few big ones towards the end of the month - can you say Max Payne 2, or how about Counter-Strike: Condition Zero or Freedom Force or Breed or... the list goes on - let's hope they all arrive in time...

**next
issue**

The December issue will be on sale: 27th November 2003

Winners

The coffers are low...

We've got a few interesting competitions planned for the next few months - wait and see.

caption of the month



Bee fun knee

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

Your job is to see if you can come up with an even funnier caption and send it to: ed@nag.co.za

Subject: **November 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...?



▲ 'Don't squeeze the trigger... don't squeeze the trigger... don't squeeze the trigger...' - **nag's best [83% lame] effort**

september winner



▲ 'Man, the dogs on this planet must be huge!' - **Bennie Crous**

nag magazine

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tech news:



Nokia 7600

Nokia's latest offering, the 7600, is a full-featured high-end toy with full imaging, music and video capabilities. As well as supporting GSM900/1800, it is also Wideband Code Division Multiple Access (WCDMA) compatible. WCDMA networks allow features heretofore unseen on mobile phones, such as advanced video streaming, although they drain more power from the phone.



The P30 smartphone from BenQ will be powered by Texas Instruments's OMAP1510 processor, which combines high performance to drive the phone's Symbian operating system while keeping battery usage low. The phone's other features include an integrated camera and MP3 and MPEG-4 video playback.

BenQ's P30 smartphone

Rio Nitrus

The Nitrus is the first portable MP3 player equipped with a 1-inch hard drive. The unit can store 1.5GB of data on its drive (around 20 hours of MP3 at the most commonly used bitrates) and is very light and slim. It boasts a better battery life than usual and great ease of use, but lacks a radio tuner, recording function or carry case.



NVIDIA's upcoming NV38 and NV36 are almost ready. The NV38, which will be marketed as the GeForce FX5950 Ultra, will be an up-scaled version of the FX5900. It will be slightly faster, although in most other regards it will be the same. Furthermore, it appears that the cooling technology has been refined somewhat by means of a larger fan that can therefore run at lower RPMs, resulting in significantly less noise. The NV36 will be the cheaper, more basic version, and is expected to be somewhat slower, although still very respectable. NVIDIA is still finalising various aspects of both solutions, and have released very little definite information, but this is expected to be rectified by soon after you read this.

NVIDIA NV38 and NV36



news bits ...

Wireless GBA multiplayer

Nintendo has announced plans to release a wireless multiplayer adapter some time next year. The first games to support this device are the Fire Red and Leaf Green Pokemon games, although subsequent titles will also offer support, of course.

Nintendo console for China

Up till now, the leading gaming console manufacturers, Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft, have avoided the Chinese market due to its notoriety for piracy. However, Nintendo recently announced plans to release a video game player in China. Presumably, this device will be resistant to piracy.

Gaming Pentium 4

Intel's upcoming Pentium 4 Extreme Edition will run at 3.2GHz and has been optimised specifically for gaming applications.



First 5.1 headphones

Zalman has released an innovative product - a set of headphones, the ZM-RS6F, which carry three speakers in each earcup and deliver true 5.1 surround sound. However, this can only be limited in its trueness, as much of surround sound depends on the fact that as one turns one's head relative to the sound sources, the positioning effect is created. Nevertheless, these units are reported to deliver very high quality sound and do manage to reproduce multi-channel sound imaging.

LG Electronics GSA-4040B

This competitively priced drive is the first on the market to support all five DVD formats, including DVD-RAM, although it won't accept DVD-RAM discs in protective cartridges. DVD-RAM is unusual in its ability to record and play back simultaneously.



Asus DiGiMatrix

Asus has released a powerful barebone system with an emphasis on multimedia applications. The DiGiMatrix is around one-sixth the size of typical desktop systems, and is fitted with a wide range of video and audio outputs. It is also able to allow playing of CDs, MP3s and radio without entering the operating system, and carries a card reader compatible with all major types of portable memory cards. Almost anything on the DiGiMatrix can be done by means of a remote control, so this system is truly designed as a computer doubling as an entertainment system. Specifications include: Intel Pentium 4/Celeron 2.4GHz, FSB533/400, 2 DDR333/266 DIMM slots that can handle up to 2GB together, combo DVD-RW drive, 8 USB 2.0 ports (4 front, 4 rear) and comprehensive networking consisting of 10/100Mbps, Gigabit and 802.11b Wi-Fi.



Gateway DVD player with wireless 802.11b

Presented in a striking mirrored finish, Gateway's latest DVD player offers access to photos, music and video over a wireless network (a model that works on a wired network is also available.) A drawback of this device is that, currently, it supports MPEG-1 and MPEG-2 only, but the manufacturers have announced that an upcoming firmware upgrade will allow playback of various other formats.



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Archos AV320 video recorder

This portable video player sports a 20GB hard drive, large enough to carry around 370 hours of music or 40 hours of video. It has a built-in screen for viewing video, and can interface to standard TV and audio devices. Given its range of features and the high image quality it provides, the AV320 is a very expensive toy indeed!

Samsung's TV-enabled smartphone

Samsung has released a range of TV-enabled smartphones consisting of the SPH-i700, SGH-D700, SPH-i500, SGH-P705 and SGH-E715. Their specifications differ slightly, being aimed at different sectors of the market. Some feature the Symbian operating system, and some offer TV support, although this is in NTSC format and therefore irrelevant where we live. As always, Samsung are delivering devices that are absolutely state-of-the-art. Needless to say, Java, WAP, MP3 playback, image capture and video are among the list of other features that these handsets sport.



Intel XScale

Intel has announced XScale technology, which is a range of processors for use in next-generation cell phones, PDAs and other wireless devices. Codenamed "Bulverde", the chips are aimed at enabling such devices to capture higher quality pictures, extend battery life and improve multimedia performance. The chips are expected to be available in the first half of next year. Additional information is available at www.intel.com/pressroom.

Joytech's Xbox monitor

Joytech has released a 6" TFT colour monitor for use with the Xbox console. In addition to providing an excellent image, it also delivers 3D surround sound.

New Xbox peripherals

Microsoft has released coloured controllers for the Xbox. The units are available in blue or green. In addition, Microsoft has released the Xbox Wireless Adapter, which allows players to use the Xbox Live service wirelessly.



news bits ...

Logitech celebrate rodent milestone

Logitech, which shipped its first mouse in 1982, recently shipped its 500-millionth mouse. The company stated that they produce around 6 million mice every month, and an independent research firm estimated that over half of all PCs shipped since 1982 were equipped with rodents from Logitech. The half-billion mice shipped to date would circle the Earth 1.5 times if strung end-to-end, and would fill 48 Olympic-size swimming pools.

Air-cooled mouse

Nyko Technologies have released an Air Flo air-cooled mouse for the PC that is akin to their console controllers featuring the same technology. The mouse, which is quite ordinary in other respects (2-button, scroll-wheel, optical) sports a fan that blows air through pores in the exterior casing to cool and dry the hand.

American Research ARC ZPC

A nifty PC design reminiscent of Creative's eGear of a few years ago, this desktop PC makes extensive use of laptop technology. This is both an advantage and a drawback, as the unit's hard drive delivers a meagre 4200rpm, but this is offset by size implications. The ZPC is equipped with a strong selection of expansion ports, including USB and audio both at front and back. A serious weakness of the system, however, is the fact that the on-board graphics cannot be upgraded by means of a plug-in graphics card. American Research Corporation have also released a range of peripherals such as monitors, keyboards, speakers and the like that match the ZPC's black or silver finish.



PS2 gaming in the car



Joytech, a European company, has released the In Car Adapter for the PlayStation 2. This device allows a PlayStation 2 console and a Joytech colour monitor to be powered by a standard car lighter socket. It includes failsafes to prevent draining the car's battery excessively.

Motorola's latest phones

Motorola has released the V500 and V600 mobile phones. Both feature quad-band functionality, a built-in digital camera that can be used to attach photos to caller IDs in addition to traditional uses for cameras, Bluetooth connectivity and downloadable MP3 ring-tones. The V600 is also "skinnable" - a set of interchangeable exteriors provided with the unit can be used to customise the unit's look. Both models should be available as you read this, with the V500 retailing at around R3000 and the V600 for around R3500.



Logitech's new PS2 controllers

Logitech has released two new controllers for the PlayStation 2. The Extreme Action Controller is a luxury model featuring leather grips and gold-plated connectors, while the more down-to-earth Action Controller sports rubber grips and regular connectors.

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Lord of the Rings RTS



Electronic Arts have announced an upcoming real-time strategy title set in the Lord of the Rings world, titled Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle Earth. The game will use the C&C Generals game engine, and will allow players to take either side in the conflict.

Serious Sam 2 and Serious Engine 2

The developers of Serious Sam 2 have announced that their Serious Engine 2 game engine is developed enough to allow the pace of development of Serious Sam 2 to accelerate. They also announced that they expect the game, which has been in development since the release of Serious Sam for Xbox, to be ready around the middle of next year, for PC and Xbox.

ER games

Legacy Interactive is at work on two games based on the television show ER. The games will present players with ethical dilemmas, life-and-death decisions and romantic entanglements. The first game is expected next year, the second the following year.



Postal 2: Share the Pain



Postal 2 from Running With Scissors will be expanded later this year to include multiplayer functionality. The expanded version will be titled Postal 2: Share the Pain, and will be available stand-alone or as a downloadable add-on for owners of the original.

Silent Hill film

Konami's Silent Hill has been picked up by Davis Films with a view to producing a movie based on the game franchise.



Square Enix's near-future plans

At a recent press conference, Square Enix announced plans for several new games, with the emphasis being on online and mobile phone play. Ambrosia Odyssey will be an action RPG for the PlayStation 2 supporting online and offline play, and will be available some time next year. Also scheduled for next year, the currently tentatively titled Front Mission Online will be available for PC and PS2, and will allow players on both platforms to interact. Its theme will be mech combat. The original Dragon Quest and Final Fantasy games will soon be available, in Japan, for use on I-mode phones.

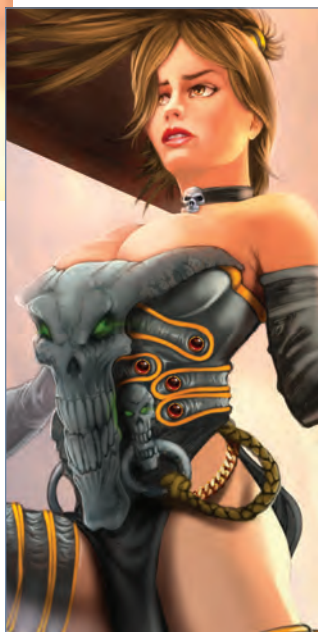
Free C&C online game

Players can find C&C: Comanche on EA.com, a free game played through a Web browser. It allows players to control a Comanche helicopter, requiring them to protect caravans, rescue hostages and blow up bad guys.



NAG Cover Contest Winner

The long awaited winner of the NAG "Design-a-Cover" contest has finally been selected from a huge amount of entries submitted by our more creative readers. Although the competition was steep, the final winner emerged as Corlen Kruger of Johannesburg, who provided us with this rather lovely piece of artwork. The decision was made to use the design for the cover of NAG's rAge RAG, a publication given away to visitors of the first ever rAge exhibiton at the Northgate Dome in October. Congratulations to all who entered.



Space Hack



Due for release by middle of next year, Space Hack is set to be a science fiction themed action RPG with play dynamics reminiscent of Diablo. The story is set upon a starship trapped in a space warp and infested with hordes of monsters that must be hacked through.



Runner Up - Nik Felbab



Runner Up - Scott Harris



Runner Up - Nick de Bruyne



Runner Up - Michael Smith

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console news:

Gran Turismo 4 slips



Sony's upcoming Gran Turismo 4 has been delayed. Originally planned for release in time for this year's Christmas season, it is now expected some time next year..

Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children

Square Enix is working on Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children. Contrary to what you might deduce from this, this will not be a game, but a film. Rendered totally in CG, it is expected to run about an hour long, and will be released around the middle of next year, though at present it is unknown how it will be marketed and distributed.

The Nightmare Before Christmas

A sequel to Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas is on its way from Capcom in the form of a PlayStation 2 game. It is planned for release in October next year, and is a third-person adventure mixing elements of hard-core action and puzzle solving. Early sample graphics appear to capture the feel of the film rather well.

Nina

Namco is working on an action-adventure game entitled Nina, after the Tekken character who is its protagonist. The game will take place on a ship, with Nina using both her fighting skills and stealth in order to carry out an investigation. She can also use weapons that will be waiting to be found in various locations, as in any adventure game. The game will be available for PlayStation 2 some time next year.

Jade Empire



A role-playing title called Jade Empire is currently being developed for Xbox by BioWare and Microsoft, where you roleplay as a martial arts master. The world is based on mythical China and will include monstrous creatures with whom you will do battle.

Spawn: Armageddon



An action-adventure from Namco based on Todd McFarlane's comic book Spawn should be hitting the shelves around the time you read this. It is being released for a range of consoles.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND



PlayStation 2



ACTIVISION

AVAILABLE DEC 2003*

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Nintendo expects first half loss

Thanks to the foreign exchange rate, in particular the poor Dollar price, Nintendo, who keep a lot of their cash reserves outside of Japan, have re-adjusted their one year forecast, dropping its full-year forecast by ¥5 billion, and projecting a loss of ¥3 billion for the first half, which ended in September. Originally the company expected a profit of ¥15 billion for this period. Nintendo is still set for a profit this year, but have re-adjusted this from ¥65 billion to ¥60 billion (€464.4 million). The company is still doing well, but this is an embarrassment for Nintendo, who are not used to posting loss figures.

Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance gets cheap

Midway's hit gore-laden combat sim *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance* has joined both the Playstation 2 Greatest Hits and the Xbox Platinum Hits series, plus it will get into the Gamecube Player's Choice series later this month. This means the game will be available overseas at a cool \$19.99.

Mammon reveals himself in Spawn

Fans of Todd McFarlane's comic series *Spawn* will be anxious to get their hands on the upcoming game *Spawn: Armageddon*, currently in development over at Namco. Known for guiding *Spawn* from the shadows, very little is known about the shadowy character, and the game intends to explore him further, revealing his role in the *Spawn* universe. Comic series creator Todd McFarlane says that revealing Mammon is something that he has wanted to do for a very long time. *Spawn: Armageddon* will serve as the medium to reveal more about this elusive character for the first time. *Spawn: Armageddon* is being released on multiple platforms later this year.

Mammon reveals himself in Spawn

Sony have announced what music will be shipping on their upcoming EyeToy: Groove title. Without further ado, a selected list:

- Madonna - Music
- Kool & the Gang - Jungle Boogie
- Sister Sledge - We Are Family
- Jamiroquai - Deeper Underground
- Jamiroquai - Canned Heat
- Las Ketchup - The Ketchup Song
- Five - Keep On Moving
- Sugarbabes - Overload
- Junior Senior - Move Your Feet
- Village People - YMCA
- The Jacksons - ABC
- Mis-teeq - All I Want
- The Commodores - Machine Gun
- Groove Armada - Superstylin
- Living Joy - Don't Stop Moving
- Liberty X - Jumpin
- Elvis - A Little Less Conversation
- Fatboy Slim - Praise You

Pikmin 2 slips



Nintendo's upcoming *Pikmin 2* has been delayed till as late as middle of next year. The company cited quality control and polishing of the game as reasons for the delay.

Hollow



In development at ZootFly for PC and Xbox, *Hollow* has been described as a first-person shooter set in an alternate 1970s world wherein World War II did not take place. Of novelty value is the fact that each mission will end with a movie-style sequence put together from the player's finest moments. *Hollow* is expected to be complete by the end of next year.

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scores, charts and release dates:

PC Web Scores

Title	New Age Gaming	gamespy.com	gamespot.com	pc.ign.com
Homeworld 2	82	83	8.7	9
BF1942: Secret Weapons	82	78	8.2	8.8
Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader	84	65	6.5	6.8
Republic: The Revolution	85	68	6.9	7.2



www.musica.co.za

CHARTS

- 1 PS2 **Crash Bandicoot 5**
- 2 PS2 **Grand Theft Auto II Platinum**
- 3 PS2 **Tekken 4 Platinum**
- 4 PS2 **Rugby 2004**
- 5 PS2 **Getaway Platinum**
- 6 PS2 **GT Concept 2002 Platinum**
- 7 PS2 **Gran Turismo 3 Platinum**
- 8 PS2 **SSX Tricky Platinum**
- 9 PCCD **Sims Superstar**
- 10 PS1 **Grand Theft Auto Collectors Edition**
- 11 PS2 **Dragonball Z Budokai**
- 12 PS2 **James Bond Agent Under Fire Platinum**
- 13 PS2 **WRC II Extreme Platinum**
- 14 PS2 **Tomb Raider Angel of Darkness**
- 15 PS2 **WW Cruch Hour**
- 16 PCCD **Grand Theft Auto Vice City**
- 17 PCCD **Sims Ultimate Collection**
- 18 PS2 **Burnout Platinum**
- 19 PS2 **Enter the Matrix**
- 20 PCCD **BF1942 Secret Weapons of WWII**

Chart information supplied by Musica for the period 1- 30 September 2003

Console Web Scores

Title	New Age Gaming	ign.com	gamespot.com	gamespy.com
Rugby 2004 [PS2]	71	7.3	5	n/r
Indiana Jones [PS2]	71	6.6	4.8	80
The Great Escape [PS2]	55	5	6.1	n/r
Giants [PS2]	74	8	8.3	84
Final Fantasy Tactics [GBA]	75	9	8.2	94
Mario Golf [GCN]	85	8	8.3	78

Selected PC Release Dates

Magic: The Gathering Battlegrounds	Strategy	03-Nov-2003
Terminator 3: War of the Machines	FPS	03-Nov-2003
Joint Operations	Action	03-Nov-2003
Pax Romana	Strategy	04-Nov-2003
Lord of the Rings: Return of the King	Action	04-Nov-2003
Dead to Rights	Action	04-Nov-2003
Far Cry	FPS	11-Nov-2003
Lords of the Realm III	Strategy	11-Nov-2003
Beyond Good & Evil	Action	11-Nov-2003
Uru: Ages Beyond Myst	Adventure	11-Nov-2003
Contract J.A.C.K.	FPS	11-Nov-2003
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	FPS	14-Nov-2003
Crusader Kings	Strategy	14-Nov-2003
Supreme Ruler 2010	Strategy	14-Nov-2003
Star Wars: Knights of the old Republic	RPG	18-Nov-2003
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	Action	18-Nov-2003
Galidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	Action	24-Nov-2003
Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	Adventure	25-Nov-2003
Inquisition	Adventure	25-Nov-2003
Lord of the Rings: War of the Ring	Strategy	25-Nov-2003
Drake	Action	25-Nov-2003
Need for Speed: Underground	Racing	25-Nov-2003
Dungeon Siege: Legends of Aranna	RPG	25-Nov-2003
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Action	25-Nov-2003
Lock On: Modern Air Combat	Simulator	02-Dec-2003
X2: The Threat	Simulator	25-Nov-2003

Selected Console Release Dates

Barbarian	GBA GC	Action	Nov 3
Bloody Roar 4	PS2	Action	Nov 4
Cat in the Hat	PS2 GBA Xbox	Action	Nov 4
CIMA: The Enemy	GBA	Role-Playing	Nov 4
Downforce	GBA	Driving	Nov 4
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	PS2	Action	Nov 4
Frogger's Adventures: The Rescue	PS2 GC GBA	Adventure	Nov 4
Lupin the 3rd	PS2	Action	Nov 5
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	PS2 Xbox GC	Adventure	Nov 5
Robocop	GBA	Action	Nov 5
Rogue Ops	PS2 GC	Action	Nov 5
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	PS2 Xbox	Simulation	Nov 5
Star Wars: Flight of the Falcon	GBA	Action	Nov 5
LOTR: The Return of the King	Xbox PS2 GC GBA	Action	Nov 5
True Crime: Streets of LA	GC Xbox PS2	Adventure	Nov 5
UFC: Sudden Impact	PS2	Action	Nov 6
Whiplash	PS2 Xbox	Action	Nov 6
Crash Nitro Kart	PS2 Xbox GC GBA	Driving	Nov 11
Dragon's Lair 3D	PS2	Adventure	Nov 11
ESPionage	PS2	Action	Nov 11
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Xbox GC PS2	Strategy	Nov 11
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	PS2 GC GBA	Adventure	Nov 11
Mafia	PS2	Action	Nov 11
Mario Party 5	GC	Puzzle	Nov 11
Medal of Honor Rising Sun	PS2 Xbox GC	Action	Nov 11
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	PS2 Xbox GBA	Action	Nov 11



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@ WORK AND PLAY IN THE DIGITAL DECADE

What better way to spend a Sunday afternoon than banging out this text - I have no life. Feel sorry for me and I'll open up and tell you my sad sorry story. It all started one day when I was still young, the sun was hell and the birds were droning... I had my whole life ahead of me. Now I'm old and I know there are parts here and there that just don't work like they used to, I don't always look my best and if you dig around in the cracks you're going to find unpleasant things. Still, in spite of it all I go on - they only ever miss me when I'm gone. - Your keyboard.
If you thought that was dumb go here - www.nag.co.za.

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.
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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.nag.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.

probably end up storming into a post office, and gunning down the clerk because her hair looks funny. And that plod who bought the NAG because of the cover, hey buddy this isn't Hustler, you don't buy it because of what's on the cover. You should buy it because you are a loyal NAG reader - some issues are going to be better than others. Deal with it. Better yet, go see a therapist. I'm sure he'll care for three fifty an hour. And that Salami who can't wait to get his grubby little fingers on the Le Tour de France, what's the world coming to? Unless you're riding down a peak at 300 km/h, hitting the other riders with bicycle chains and jamming baseball bats into their wheel spokes I don't see the point. Just like people who buy the Bass fishing games, be honest - how exciting can that be? They will probably bring out a force feedback fishing reel to complete the, I'm a twat and don't have anything better to do look. Well that's it, I'm off to the post office. Tell the monkeys in the basement they're doing a great job.

Sway

Ed: Hey, how did you know we have a room full of monkeys banging out all this rubbish each month?

Monkey No Like!

What I'm about to say does not mean that I do not like NAG anymore, I still love the magazine but there is just some stuff that you guys still need to work on. Firstly, it seems like there's a growing fad in the NAG offices to publish the same people on the letters page issue after issue after issue leaving the general letter writer [does this mean you? Ed] frustrated after 6 months of attempts for nothing, then the enraged letter writer writes a letter that goes something like this, "why do you never publish my letters, I've written to you guys so often and put a lot of thought

into my letters and I never get a reply!". Now for some strange reason you guys at NAG will then publish the sob letter leaving the letter writer thinking, "Oh, now they publish my letter, my sob letter, the one time they actually publish my letter is the letter that has no real point or what I really would like to have said on the letters page" which means that this reader's [just say my, I and me, Ed] 5 minutes of fame on the letters page has been spent on a letter enquiring why his [sigh, Ed] letters never get published and furthermore reduces his chances of ever getting published again in your magazine, so why don't you expand your letters page? Or at least try to recognize the names of writers that keep appearing in your Inbox instead of just publishing the same people over and over! The second thing: In the multiplayer section of your magazine, can you please try and do an overview of a gamer that is over the age of puberty!? I'm so sick and tired of looking at zit faced 16-17 year olds who don't have jobs and a life so all they do is play all day and become experts at their choice of games. Why don't you guys try to find more "older" gamers that have jobs but also have great talent at the games of their choice, this to me is a real achievement, To be able to juggle your job and game practice and manage to become skilful at the game you're playing! So please give this Monkey a banana and make him happy!

A Monkey Called Rizo

Ed: Here you go, see... being published is overrated, I know many people who will do anything to get their name in print and then I also know a few people who don't want their name in print, but the truth is that most of us dream about writing great articles in our favourite magazine but can't commit to more than a few paragraphs which is why my Inbox is full of long letters that were

going to be great articles that are now just letters that I can't print because they are far too long - if only they had just kept going or after the first ten lines just stopped we'd have a lot more published writers out there now. Now where would you like your banana put?

NAG - September - 2003 - Cover CD

Just wanted to say how glad I was to see Beneath a Steel Sky on your Cover CD this month. I used to play all those classic quest games but I never got my hands on BASS. So after how many years I could finally play and finish the game. And I loved it. So two thumbs up! If you don't mind, could I make a request? I'd really like to be able to play more of these games. One I haven't played as well is, "I have no mouth, but I must scream". If you could maybe add that game to your classic section next month?

Paul Beetge

Ed: I was very surprised by how well Beneath a Steel Sky was received. I'm always on the lookout for classic games, especially if they're free. Have a look at the Cover CD this issue- we've got Head over Heels on there - a real golden oldie with an updated look. Just hang in there, soon enough everyone will want a slot on the bandwagon and before you know it hundreds of these older games will be released free.

[A fan writes in, Ed] Anime and the ar53hol behind it

I always read the anime section and I sort of like some of the anime you talk about but when I saw this month's section and saw that you were giving Dragonball Z a 32 out of 100 because you think it is a bad name for anime after you watched just one episode. How can you say it is a load of nonsense and almost put you off anime. If it was that bad not so many people would have

asked you to review it; almost all of the people I know watch Dragonball Z and all of them like it. So keep your 32% and stick it up your <edited> because you cannot give a score like that to something you just watched one time. I'm a proud fan of the Dragonball Z and Pokémon series and millions out there are too and now you come and write all this load of <edited> because you think you can put us down and watch what you think is anime. I'm not going to be reading this section of NAG anymore because it looks like you don't now what you're doing. I wonder if you even know what anime is and if you have more than 32% brains.

Silver Dragon

Ed: Here's the deal, if you can get enough people together with a few pitch forks and burning torches I'll give you his physical address and we'll set a date for the lynching - my only requirement is front row tickets, right here next to Ramjet.

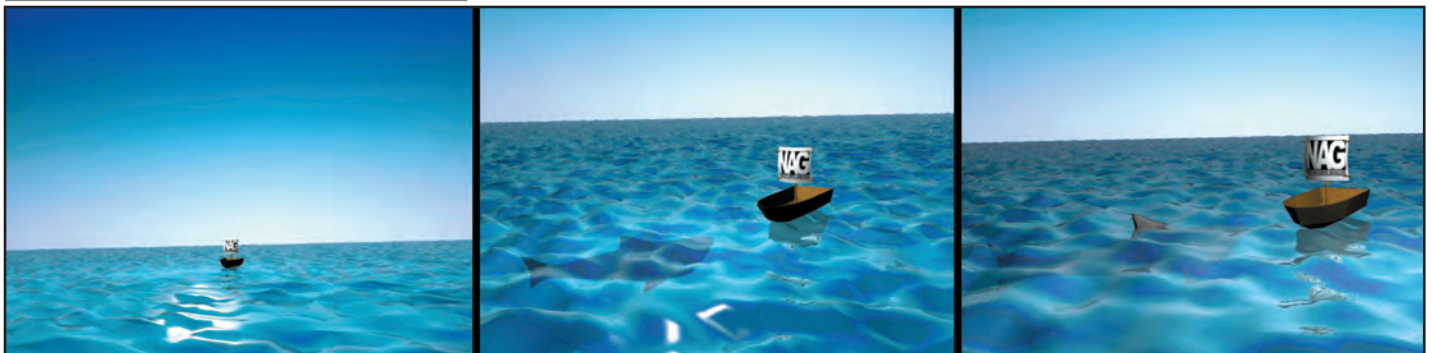


short...

[This came in on SMS - I'm not sure what to make of it, Ed]
If I buy a black computer (black casing, monitor, etc.) won't it get hotter than a white computer.
SMS

Ed: I don't know, logic dictates that the colour shouldn't make a difference but we all know that bacteria doesn't like green and the black and white issue should only make a difference outside in glaring sunlight. So, yes, if you're planning on installing your computer outside make sure it's white. I can't say I've ever seen a totally white PC case... and I mean like cow exploded dairy white - the kind of white that makes your eyes water - you know... white!

More art from Ingmar Buchner



domain of the_basilisk:

The Upgrade Age

▶ The development of our human society follows an interesting curve. In the early days of man (and woman, for possible feminist readers) we would move from era to era over thousands of years as we slowly grew more advanced as a species. We progressed through the Stone Age, discovering fire and the wheel, the Iron Age, the Bronze Age, and so on. These transitions took a very long time, where moving from the previous epoch to the next was a gradual process. There was no single event that triggered the change - historians cannot point to a specific date and say, "At that moment, we entered such and such age." But as things got more recent it started to take less than a century for times to change, and soon we had entered the colonization age and the industrial age. Into the 20th Century, development sped up rapidly and we had the nuclear age, the space age and the make-love-not-war age in quick succession. All of this brings us to the point where we find ourselves today. Most experts on sociology would call it the information age, but I believe we've gone even further. We seem to enter a new age every other year.



▶ Your PC, now...

buy a new 3D card or processor if it doesn't make a difference in the performance of their favourite game or graphics program. The ongoing battle between nVidia and ATi is an ideal way to illustrate the point. Here we have two companies very aware of their dependence on major game releases. Some time ago, John Carmack announced (possibly obliviously, or possibly well-attuned to the

impact that it would have) that Doom 3 would run better on nVidia's chipsets than it would on ATi's. Almost immediately, nVidia saw a huge upswing in sales. At that point there was only one thing on the minds of consumers - "what do I need to run Doom 3?" ATi fought back cleverly by forming a partnership with Valve for Half-Life 2. We are now being assured by top Valve executives that the GeForce FX is going to struggle with

apocalyptic titles, that the world's economy was on a global slowdown? Economists couldn't put their finger on why consumers weren't putting out the cash like they used to. Of course it's very clear to us as gamers that they were all hoarding money for that upgrade. The gaming industry is one of the largest in the world. As I mentioned in a previous article, it has already surpassed Hollywood. And when nearly every consumer in that industry is saving up to buy the latest graphics card and some new (faster) RAM, just so that they can play Doom 3 and / or Half-Life 2, it is easy to see how it adds up. People forsake food, other forms of entertainment, even leaving the house (the price of petrol ain't peanuts, as they say) in order to save those valuable few Rands (or whatever currency they happen to be using). With this, we see living standards drop, and a society filled with starving, unshaven, un-bathed gamers begins to emerge.

Social interaction also undergoes great upheaval in the upgrade age. Friendships are strained and competition between individuals in a group increases to an unhealthy level. A certain infamous psychologist would probably have referred to it as penis envy, others would call it the battle of the dominant male (or female) in the pack. Everyone knows what I'm talking about, right? A group of friends arrives for a LAN and one of them has just upgraded. Whoever it was will most likely arrive fashionably late (the entrance is important), and will put their PC down on the table with remarkable gusto, grinning from ear to ear. It only takes a few seconds for everyone else to realise what has happened, and then the friends are all swarming around the upgraded box, checking the size of heat sinks and discussing GPU specifications. The owner of the upgraded machine has claimed his/her place as the leader of the pack... for now. However, there is always a person among the

"With this, we see living standards drop, and a society filled with starving, unshaven, un-bathed gamers begins to emerge."

It is quite obvious that the next era to come upon us will be the "doom3/half-life2 age". We've all been aware of this for some time, what with all the hype and anticipation both games have created. Both of them will be improving game technology in leaps and bounds, and you can be certain you're going to need some pretty hefty hardware to play them in all their glory. The "upgrade age" is not just one era of development, it can be broken down into several. With every major software release that incorporates new hardware technology, people flock to the stores to purchase what they need to be able to run the "next generation game". Before, we have had (among many others) the "quake age", the "half-life age", the "warcraft III age", and the "ut2k3 age". Depending on genre preference, releases such as these saw consumers banging down the doors of hardware distributors around the globe. For a year, Unreal Tournament 2003 has been pretty much unrivalled in terms of graphics, but new standards are always set sooner or later. After D3/HL2 we can expect game graphics to improve overall, as the other developers try to compete (a good example being Far Cry) or pay to use the better engines. I believe this constitutes an era change. Not everyone will see it at first but, as I shall explain, it is a massive event that affects the world's economy, social interaction and general standard of living.

Hardware manufacturers who think they have anything to do with the demand for their products are deluding themselves. It is decided, almost entirely, by the latest big game or application. Very few people are going to

Gordon Freeman's latest adventure. GeForce owners may be forced to run the game with an older version of Direct X (8.1), which will disable a large amount of the eye candy, unless they are prepared to accept very low frame-rates. This does even things out between the companies, but it creates a huge rift through the gaming community. The question has simply become - "which one do I want to play more?" It affects the economy in several ways. Since we are nearing the first of the two release dates (Half-Life 2 was originally set to ship September 30th, but according to game retailers, an October / November date seems a lot more realistic), the sales of PC hardware are starting to skyrocket. The population of planet earth is upgrading. But does anyone remember, a little way back, before we got close to the imminent arrival of these



▶ Your PC, five minutes later...

group who will not stand to see someone have a better machine than him. Come the following week, he will have hardware that makes the previous upgrade look like a 286. And there is never only one of these people in a group, no, as long as gamers have money, they will upgrade. This carries on, tensions strung high within the group, until everyone has no cash left, one person is crowned "teh mastah" (Eat my 1337

sp33k and suff3r, R4mj3t!), and everyone forgets about the struggle completely because Half-Life 2 has just hit the shelves.

"We expect to have an exact release date at the end of the month... maybe." - GAME spokesperson.

(Special thanks to Evil Sheep Clone #42 for his inspiration).

PlayStation®2 



ghost hunter



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rampage:

The voices in my head...

I was a bit stuck for ideas this month. I wasn't entirely sure what the hell to talk about. Then, like a bolt of inspiration from the blue, a letter from someone using the nick Sway arrived in my inbox. And so, for the first, and most likely the last, time ever, I have based my column around someone else's idea. This is what Sway had to say:

Computer games, what influence does it really have on the mind of a child? Some would argue that modern technology is the root of all evil, the Devil himself moving in mysterious ways; these are the people who end up dead as part of some ceremonial suicide while getting too friendly with the neighbours cat, because the voices told them to. Every time an eight year old beats his friend to death with the plug end of a kettle cord or strangles him with a bathtub chain, games get the blame. It's not the games but the parents fault. They stick their kids in front of the television for fourteen hours a day and then they want them to grow up and be model citizens. I will also go nuts if I have to sit and watch Teletubbies all day long, or even worse, Barney the purple headed freakasaur.

Games make you think, you have to plan and strategize, it improves your hand-eye coordination and when you finish a game it gives you a sense of accomplishment. Let's be honest, you will probably see more violence on the seven-o'clock news. If they were to take all the violence, bloodshed and corruption out of the newspapers it will end up looking like newsletters. And then they wonder why society is going to hell in a hand basket. Stop blaming gaming for everything that goes wrong and start giving it the credit it deserves.

The point that is made here isn't something new. But it is something that keeps recurring around the gaming community: the question of in-game violence, and the effect that it might have on those that play games.

I am no psychologist. Hell, I am not that smart. But there is a certain logic that I apply to things which, however twisted it may be, makes a sort of sense. Let's look at it this way: If games are such a bad influence on people, then a whole lot of people (because there are a whole lot of gamers) should be out massacring their friends and relatives... because Quake 3 taught them how. But there aren't. Additionally, as far as I can tell, Quake and those kinds of games don't teach much more than mouse control and a bit of co-ordination, so unless the killing is happening with well aimed

peripherals, I don't see the connection. Which is pretty much what Sway is saying. However, there is an amount of blame shifting in his letter that is not really accurate. Moving the blame from one form of electronic media, or any form of entertainment, for that matter, to another is just redirecting fingers pointed in error in the first place. Perhaps the blame for these things should be properly investigated, before blame is apportioned.

I am not saying that games can't affect people. I am sure they can, just as films and TV can. But I am pretty sure that the seed of insanity must have taken root in the person's mind before hand. No game is that powerful. If they were that influential, there would be many more cases of game inspired violence happening because, short of solitaire, virtually every game is violent in one way or another.

One thing where Sway and I are in agreement (and Eminem, too, might I add) is that parents need to take more responsibility for what their kids are doing. In this hectic day and age, it's easy to get carried away with other matters - leaving the kiddies to get up to all kinds of no good. In fact, this is probably the most important factor when some kid

goes over the edge and blows away fifteen classmates - parental guidance or, more correctly, lack thereof. If the parents pay a little more attention to what the kid is doing, things should work out just fine. I don't mean that the kid should be locked in a small room and never exposed to the kind of things that have been blamed for sending certain individuals off the deep end. Hell, David Berkowitz said Satan spoke to him through his neighbour's dog. Instead, parents should pay attention to the child, and the way the child is behaving. A little psychological help at the right time may prevent a tragedy. Just think of all the good it would have done me...



More REAL letters:

You wanted a letter and now you got one. You SUCK! Why even waste the space of a perfect magazine with your rampage crap? Since you glued yourself to the chair which is stuck to the floor NAG could just move their HQ and you'd be stuck to perish in the lonely office. You make NAG look bad you retard.

All you ever write about is complaints. NAG could put that page to good use such as reviewing more games. Anything is better than your trash. If you must stay at least write useful info. Even the basilisk is better than you. Don't be too chicken not to print this letter

Zer0

Mom, I asked you not to send me letters anymore...

Dear all-powerful Scab dude

I have not the foggiest idea who you are, most likely because I have only been reading NAG loyally for about a year, and so I am unlikely to ever have read any of your articles. However, since your first (well, first of this year) article (August 2003, page

24, a date and page number that I shall treasure fondly for as long as I game *erase* live) I have to say that I was utterly overjoyed.

The inane dribble that has been sprouted forth by the basilisk over the course of the last 12 months - and perhaps even further back in his column was 'excrement' - has taken me to the point of texturing his face onto all the little evil people in Quake 3 and shooting at them. Watching them explode with grim satisfaction. Watching them respawn and shooting them again. Hour after hour after hour...

At last, a ray of hope shines through for NAG readers - a regular with (hopefully) something other than complaints! And, your command of the English language might as well be made legendary. What a cool nick too! Much better than the reptilian scum that has defaced this noble magazine's hallowed pages. Please come and honour us peons at za.shadowfire.org for a few minutes with your infinitely awe-inspiring presence...

Yours truly, your (newly appointed) greatest fan
Corpsious

OK, what do you want? Huh?

suckermail:

requests here...

A lot of people don't know that you can actually play most windows games on linux. There is a program called Winex (www.transgaming.com) that is a windows emulator and lets you play just about any game on linux. They have unfortunately found a way to make people pay for it even though everything for linux is supposed to be free which is having to subscribe to download the packages. If you don't want to pay then you can download the source code for free and try to compile it yourself. I have managed to get my hands on an older version and it works quite well. It would be nice if NAG did an article on linux gaming.

Tom Green

Ok, here...

NAG Linux Article

It's an operating system. It's similar to Unix. It's free. It's pretty fast. It's not as widely used as Windows. You can write your own applications. You have to do your own support when you break it.

Disclaimer: The publishers of this magazine want everyone to know that this guy is utterly daft...



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alt.gaming:

This month in alt.gaming, we take a look at the importance of getting your mana mix just right in your favourite Magic: The Gathering deck, as well as which comics to get for your better half. Additionally, we take a look at the return of an old Dungeons & Dragons favourite, rewritten and revamped for Wizards of the Coast's new d20 role playing system.

Mana makes the magic world go round!

In the fantastic realm of Magic The Gathering, you are cast as a wizard who uses the mystical powers of his lands to summon supernatural creatures and cast magical spells in your conquest to defeat your enemy.

While the creatures and tricks at your disposal are continually changing and evolving, the one thing that remains the same are the five basic land types used to generate the power that is needed to efficiently deploy your strategies: Plains, Islands, Swamps, Mountains and Forests.

Here are some tips to help you formulate a consistent and stable mana base when engineering your deck:

As rule of thumb, 40% of your deck should be land and 60% spells; however, this might vary depending on the number of colours you are playing, the type of deck you are playing (aggro vs control) and the casting cost of the cards that you are playing in your deck.

Most often, a 60 card deck will contain 24 lands. If yours is one of the more aggressive decks around like Sligh (a fast mono-red deck with many 1 and 2 casting cost goblins) you could lean towards 22 or even 20 lands, while control decks would often up their count to 26 or even 28 lands.

With multi-coloured decks, you need to consider not only how many lands to play in your deck, but also what the optimal ratio of each different colour land should be. To calculate this ratio, use this simple formula: Add up the number of each of the different colour mana symbols of the cards in your deck. Now add all the totals together and then divide each colour's total by the sum of all the totals to get a percentage. Multiply this percentage by the number of lands you have chosen to play in your deck, and you get the number of lands of each colour that you should play. For e.g. after adding all the mana symbols in your deck, you end up with account of 28 blue, 12 red and 8 green. Add these totals together to get to 48. Dividing each total by the sum of all three, you will find that you need 58,3% of your lands to be blue, 25% to be red and 16,7% to be green. Multiplying these percentages by the number of lands you intend to play (lets assume 24) and you can deduce that you need 14 Islands, 6 Mountains and 4 Forests.

This should be a rough guide as to how many lands of each colour to use, but should not dictate the number of each land to use. Other factors to consider are:

- Is a particular colour only going to be required late in the game? If so, maybe drop this colour's land count by one or two, and increase the count of the colour that is critical for your early game.
- Do any of your spells have a double or even triple colour casting cost like Murderous Betrayal which requires 3 black mana to cast - if so, increase the land count of this colour by 1 or 2.
- Are any of the colours more necessary for your deck to function than any of the other colours? If so, up this colour's land count a little.
- Do any of the spells in your deck increase in power depending on how many of a particular land type you control like Mind Sludge and Blanchwood Armor? Favour the colours that these type of spells rely on.

Another thing to consider in helping to stabilise the mana base of your decks is the use of non-basic lands. There are many lands in the game that can do more than produce just a single mana of one colour. Some lands can produce mana of 2 or even more different colours, some can pump up your creatures, some can be used for direct damage and others might even help you draw more cards. Each non- basic land comes at a

cost though - tap lands can produce two different colours, but as they come into play tapped, they slow down your deck as they can only be used on your following turn. Pain lands also produce mana of 2 colours, but at the cost of 1 life each time they are used for coloured mana. An old favourite is City of Brass, which does not come into play tapped and can produce mana of any colour, but costs you 1 life each time you use it - tapping a City say 10 times in a game (even for colourless mana) does half of your opponents job for him.

These non-basic lands can help to minimise "colour-screw", but be careful to use the right non-basics in your deck. Tap lands are great in slower control decks where you don't really need much mana available in the first few turns of the game, while the faster, more aggro decks might suffer too much from the loss of tempo from only being able to use a land on your next turn.

Every magic player knows how it feels to sit with a great hand of spells, but not be able to cast these spells due to mana/colour screws. NEVER replace a land with a spell when sideboarding.

Although mono-colour decks maybe offer less versatility and power than decks of three colours, the consistency and reliability of the deck maybe be worth the sacrifice. Avoid playing decks of 3 or more colours unless it's critical to your strategy. Try sticking to two colour decks and don't be afraid to mulligan when you draw a hand that's short of mana or short of the right colours for the spells in your hand.



Comics for chicks...

Are you bored of dawdling around comic shops breezing the tired blend of spandex, fisticuffs and cling-wrapped villains? Perhaps you want something for your girlfriend, and she's not interested in why you prefer the old Catwoman versus the new one. There's always Sandman or Preacher. Not bad choices for the right people, but definitely not for everyone.

Well let's start with decent comics for women. For ladies that will never be impressed with their boyfriend's complete X-Men: the Age of Apocalypse crossover collection. Courtney Crumrin and the Night Things (Oni Press) is a sleek piece of comic fiction written and drawn by Ted Naifeh. It isn't preachy and wholesome moralistic drivel. It's all about a girl that is shunted from familiar surroundings, left unsupervised to get into trouble by herself and then sort those troubles out with no glow-in-the-dark superiority from the adults. It is a decent tale of a young girl picking her choices because she's bored, alienated and smart. Courtney Crumrin uses the same formula Lewis Carroll used for Alice, but with Wonderland as the unfamiliar neighbourhood on the other side of the front door. Alan Moore is famous for works such as From Hell and Watchmen and others you have never heard of, like The Ballad of Halo Jones. Unless you're real old like I am.

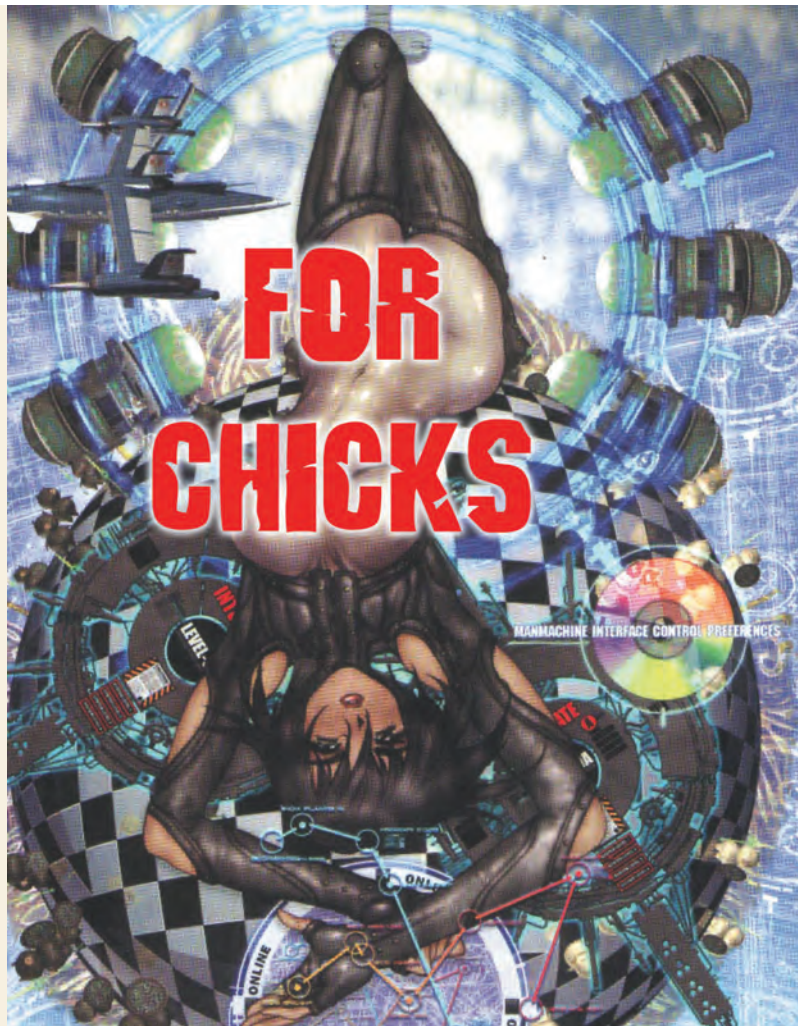
The Ballad of Halo Jones (Titan) is a coming of age story of a young woman who isn't content to sit and mope about her lot in life. So she gets out of her life, and because the story is set roughly two thousand

years ahead, she goes away from earth, struggling, crashing, and eventually moving from childhood and into adulthood. It's all about loving, losing and learning, all the way through without soap opera theatrics.

Ghost World (Fantagraphics Books) is one of the strongest, down-to-earth comics I know. It is the bittersweet story of Enid and Rebecca, fresh out of high school, eventually taking separate paths through life that slices through their friendship. It is funny, bitter, sad and well worth it. It's written and drawn by Daniel Clowes.

The Tale of One Bad Rat (Dark Horse), written and drawn by Bryan Talbot, is the smartest story of incest survival I have ever read. And it weaves around Helen Potter, her pet rat, and Beatrix Potter novels. Helen Potter, a runaway, looks for a way out of her guilt. Not the cheeriest of subjects, but it's maturely resolved without testosterone violence.

Of other strong female characters, there's Deunan Knute from Appleseed (Dark



Horse). It's another solid science fiction piece by Masume Shirow. Also good from him is Ghost in the Shell (Dark Horse).

These comics are for those who want the little sparkly diamonds that no one knows about. An adventure story featuring girls that isn't porn-lesbian-thong-bimbos with big guns; or isn't an overly emotional melodrama; or, like me, you think bad grlls [sic] are just really stupid men with breasts. Then these are the comics for you.

Many people had a bit of a whine session when 3rd edition Dungeons & Dragons came out with the announcement that several of the campaign settings from the past would fall away. However, some of the "canned" settings have reappeared, made by companies other than Wizards, but still for use with the wonderful d20 system.

In its first guise, Ravenloft was a campaign setting for Dungeons & Dragons. However, the new edition of the game has been released as an independent, published by Swords and Sorcery. It requires the D&D 3rd edition Player's Handbook to play (with a few other guides you will need).

Ravenloft is a gothic horror setting that uses most of the races and classes from traditional Dungeons & Dragons in a setting that is slightly more advanced time period (muskets and stuff are available to the player.) This game takes the player to the mysterious realms of Ravenloft, populated by ghost, ghouls, vampires, werewolves and a whole host of other nasty creatures. It is classic horror at its best. Don't expect a Cthulhu kind of experience... Ravenloft is far more suitable to lonely castles and pitchfork wielding mobs than it is to tentacles and creeping insanity. This is a great change from the usual, and is a welcome return of a great setting.



SUPPLIED BY: Outer Limits [011] 482-3771
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d20 Ravenloft

Making music

by Anton Lines

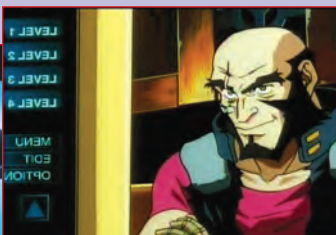
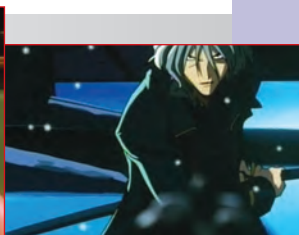


Anime Legends - Yoko Kanno

The first personality to feature in this new section is a prodigal musician from Japan's main island of Honshu. Born in 1964 on the 19th of March, Yoko taught herself to play the piano at the age of three. She continued her love for music through high school where she played in a brass band. At the age of twenty-three, during her time at Waseda University, she joined the band Tetsu 100% as a keyboardist and songwriter. In that same year (1987), she also started working as a soundtrack composer for the Koei video game company. Tetsu 100% disbanded two years later, in 1989, and she continued to work for Koei until 1994, when she resigned to work on the anime soundtrack Macross Plus. Since then, she has been involved in over fifteen original soundtracks. Her music is famous for its variety, and her ability to cross genres and styles, often merging them, is highly respected amongst fans and the industry alike. Her anime scores have been performed and recorded by the Israel, Czech, and Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestras, and she has collaborated with many of Japan's top J-Pop artists. She creates music for television and live action film as a part of "Samplly Red", and her Jazz compositions are performed by the "Seatbelts" - a band Yoko formed specifically for Cowboy Bebop. Influences in her musical life include Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, both French classical composers of the 19th-20th century.

Yoko's anime legacy

- 1994: "Macross Plus" - Original Soundtrack
- 1996: "Legend of Crystania" - Soundtrack to "The First Adventures."
- 1996: "The Vision of Escafloigne" - Original Soundtrack
- 1996: "Turn A-Gundam" - Original Soundtrack
- 1996: "Memories" - Original Soundtrack
- 1997: "Clamp School Detectives" - Mini Soundtrack
- 1997: "Macross Dynamite Seven" - Single "Radio Fire!"
- 1998: "Brain Power" - Original Soundtrack
- 1998: "Card Captor Sakura" - Single "Purachina"
- 1998: "Cowboy Bebop" - Original Soundtrack
- 1998: "Record of Lodoss War" - Single "Miracle Ocean"
- 2000: "Jin-Roh" - Original Soundtrack
- 2001: "Earth Girl Arjuna" - Original Soundtrack
- 2001: "X" - Character File Soundtrack
- 2001: "Please Save my Earth" - Original Soundtrack
- 2002: "Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex" - Original Soundtrack
- 2003: "Wolf's Rain" - Original Soundtrack



Cowboy Bebop



In a post-terrestrial world where Earth has been left a ruin and the population is spread amongst the other planets and moons of the Solar System, a pair of freelance bounty hunters - Spike Spiegel (a former member of a crime syndicate) and Jet Black (an ex-cop) - pursue job offers that will hopefully put food in their mouths. Because of the expansive nature of this modern civilisation, the police, bound by jurisdiction, are highly reliant on these bounty hunters to catch criminals when they flee to other planets. Using Jet's contacts and Spike's amazing combat skill (and pure style), they still somehow manage to screw up almost every job they undertake.

Cowboy Bebop combines humour and drama in a perfect mix of emotions. Its fictional world is so detailed that one could almost call it the futuristic version of Middle Earth. Every inhabited planet in the Solar System has its own socio-economic and political structures, combined with both existing and invented cultures. It never ceases to amaze me how real each setting seems to be - the creators have gone to great lengths to ensure the world is believable. Character is also a strong focus. The cast members seem to be unlikely friends at first, but the dynamic that unites them is exceptionally clever and well written. The other principle characters are Faye Valentine (a young woman who had been cryogenically frozen since the previous era) and Radical Edward (a child prodigy more proficient with electronics than all the adults around her. Yes, her.) But whatever praise the show may receive, it will always be surpassed by its miraculous soundtrack. This is, in my opinion, the greatest ever composed for an animated series. Several others have come close, but the spirit of a series has never before been so perfectly captured, using a combination of bebop-era jazz, atmospheric blues, old-west-style rock and powerful classical and contemporary orchestrations across a broad spectrum of musical influences. Of course these genres do not appeal to everyone in the same way, but as a soundtrack to this particular anime, the music is infallible.

The only criticism I can direct at Cowboy Bebop is that, at certain points, the pace of the story slows down unnecessarily. This happens because of several arbitrary sub-plots that take up entire episodes and, while they still contribute to the world, they leave the audience somewhat frustrated because the main storyline is just so much more interesting. If I had anything to do with it, I would have left those episodes out entirely. However, it is made up for, tenfold, by the ending, which is one of the most moving you will ever see.

The way the characters reach their personal conclusions is remarkable on both an emotional and psychological level. My advice is to resolve yourself to watch it all the way through regardless. You will not be disappointed.

Genre: Science Fiction
Year: 1998
Producer: Sunrise
Format: Series
Episodes: 26 + 1 movie
Language: Japanese with English subtitles
Availability: Common

Concept	8
Story	8
Soundtrack	10
Characters	9
Animation	10
Translation	10
Total Score (out of 100)	90

Where can I buy Anime and Manga in South Africa??



This is a question that has plagued many a South African Otaku, and one of the most frequent questions e-mailed to the Black Blade staff. Where to begin? Well back in the day when I was first starting up Black Blade Anime, a Cape-Town based operation called Ballistic Animations was our only alternative to importing the stuff ourselves directly. Sadly there is little or no profit to be made importing and re-selling Anime in this country and due to heavy customs and actually running

at a loss, Ballistic Animations had to close it's doors (we salute you Bertus, you really helped us get off of the ground). Anime has since made its way to the Pirate flea-market stalls (this has been the main source other than downloads for out of pocket South African Otaku who cannot afford the +- R400 price tag incurred when importing your own DVD). We at Black Blade did at some point attempt to start bringing in Anime to resell to our members, however in the end we decided that Black Blade should focus rather on the promotion of Anime and exposure of Anime to the South African public. Black Blade gets all of its material shipped

directly from overseas or via the latest unlicensed fansub releases. There are however a few places to get Anime from in South Africa (other than flea markets) Shops such as Outer Limits have a limited stock of Manga and Anime and can bring in titles on demand. An exciting development however is that Anime Direct South Africa has confirmed that they have already brought in shipments of both Dark Horse and Tokyo Pop manga. Both Outer Limits and Anime Direct will have a presence at rAge, if you missed them and would like to place an order with Anime Direct, you can contact Byron who can be reached on 082 937 2939.

www.blackblade.co.za



Japanese Weapons

Traditional Japanese weaponry is a common sight in anime, and it's worth knowing a bit about it. During the feudal stage of their history, the Japanese used a plethora of different edged weapons, way too many to list here. These are a few of the more common ones, though:

Katana (longsword):

One of the most commonly seen weapons in anime, the katana was the principal weapon of the samurai. The sword has a single-edged curved blade about three feet long attached to a long handle. It was a versatile sword - primarily a two-handed weapon with fearsome cutting ability, it could also be used for thrusting and was light enough to be wielded in one hand. The samurai built up a strange cult of sword-worship around it, and imbued the sword with all sorts of spiritual and metaphysical significance. It was a samurai's most prized possession.

Used by: Vicious (Cowboy Bebop)

Wakizashi (short sword):

The wakizashi was a short, single-handed sword about half the length of a katana. The samurai used it as their back-up weapon in case their longsword was lost or broken on the battlefield. Because it was considered a faux pas to carry a longsword inside a house, the wakizashi was also the chief method of self-defense when indoors. The limited range of the wakizashi meant that it had to be wielded in a very defensive style, using its speed and ability to deliver quick ripostes against the superior range of a katana.

Used by: Aoshi (Rurouni Kenshin)

Tanto (dagger):

The Japanese used a wide variety of short blades and dagger-like weapons. Many of these were carried by women for everyday self-defense. They were also used by both men and women alike to commit seppuku (ritual suicide) if they faced disgrace. Many modern-day combat knives base their designs on the Japanese tanto.

Used by: Tomoe (Rurouni Kenshin: Tsuikuhon)

Naginata (halberd):

The naginata was a long, two-handed weapon that looked almost like a staff with a wakizashi's blade stuck on one end. It was originally developed from agricultural tools and was used by women to defend their homes when their husbands were away. The naginata was later taken up as a battlefield weapon by the samurai, and was used against cavalry with devastating effect. But the naginata still retained its image as a woman's weapon, which is why even today it is still taught to many girls in Japanese schools, and most anime characters who use it are women.

Used by: Most of the women in Princess Mononoke

Yari (spear):

Feudal Japanese sword making was of a very high calibre, but so was the standard of Japanese armour. This reduced the value of the katana, which was very effective for slicing through unarmoured flesh but largely ineffectual against an armoured opponent. As such, many samurais during wartime preferred to use the yari, the Japanese equivalent of a pike, which was an efficient weapon for piercing armour. The yari is one of the few Japanese edged weapons that have a straight blade.

Used by: CIS (The Animatrix)

Jo / Bo (staff):

The staff has been used as a weapon by almost every civilisation in history, and the Japanese were no exception. They built up a very complex system of staff-fighting that utilised the weapon's unique advantage; speed. Since it has two sides, every strike with a staff puts the wielder in a position to do another attack. The staff is particularly effective against swords; there is even a popular legend that the only time Miyamoto Musashi (samurai author of *Book of the Five Rings*) was ever defeated, it was by an opponent wielding a jo.

Used by: Goku (Dragon Ball) (Well, sort of!)

Serpent's Monthly Character Bio

Name: Sena Robin

Title: Witch Hunter

Favorite colour: Black

Favorite hobby: Burning things

Famous Quote: ... Amon ...

From the following anime: Witch Hunter Robin Robin, gifted from birth with the ability to use "the craft" has recently joined the STNJ. The STNJ is the Japanese branch of a secret global organization focused on monitoring and removing any potential threats as far as witchcraft is concerned. Powers of "the craft" are passed on genetically, and the STNJ has a database of everyone born with the potential to utilize this power; these people are monitored closely and if any of them discover their powers and begin to use them, the STNJ send out a hunting party to capture the said witch before too much damage is caused. Sena Robin was born in Japan but raised in an Italian convent, she has the power of controlling flame, able to create barriers of protection, as well as being able to burn things at will. However she cannot control her power fully, and although she is an invaluable asset to the STNJ, she may yet turn out to be a target of the very organization she works for.

Serpent



- Vul Khan

lazy gamer's guide:

You put your scroll wheel in, you put your scroll wheel out, you put your scroll wheel in and you tilt it all about...

Microsoft Optical Mouse

with Tilt Wheel Technology

History of the Microsoft Mouse

- 1996 - IntelliMouse [first mouse with a scrollwheel]
- 1998 - IntelliMouse Pro [larger version]
- 1999 - IntelliMouse Explorer [optical encoder]
- 2001 - Wireless IntelliMouse Explorer [accelerated scrolling]
- 2002 - Wireless Optical Mouse [wider clear wheel]
- 2003 - Tilt Wheel Technology

Tilt n' Whirl

Let's cut to the chase here. The real change here is the mouse wheel's ability to tilt to the sides, giving side-scrolling power to the wheel. Though other mice have tried this before with a second scroll wheel, this is the first time a tilt wheel has been introduced.



In all flavours

The mouse comes in four models and in five different colour designs. You can get your hands on the Wireless Optical Mouse, which is a standard Microsoft optical with the tilt wheel, the IntelliMouse Explorer, which has two extra buttons on the side, the Wireless IntelliMouse Explorer and the Wireless Optical Desktop Elite.



Under the hood

The new tilt technology has 9 parts to it, from the usual return spring and wheel to a host of new sensors to register the tilting, as well as make sure it's not overly sensitive or interferes with normal mouse-wheel activities. In short, it makes sure you just have to lean your finger to the side.



Er, why?

Well, it is probably the next step in mouse technology - before scroll wheels people used to drag the scroll bar down. The tilt wheel will mean that eventually we won't drag the pesky horizontal bar in spreadsheets. But more importantly it's interesting to see how games will use this feature, once developers catch on to it.



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THE ORIGINAL FREELOADER

nostrium | fash movie extract pilot | flashcatcher | messagesubstract | ggsearch | foobar 2000

Nostrium

You are stranded on a mysterious planet after escaping your ship, which has just been blown up by missiles shot from that very planet. But before you can do anything, you have to concentrate on getting off the planet first, and this means surviving. Armed with only a tazer, you must scour the planet's surface and find all the components you need, as well as some sort of food.

Things are not that easy, since in the day you have to find shade covering before you get heat stroke, and in the evenings make sure you're near a fire, or making one, else you'll end up freezing. And then there are the creatures that inhabit this rock...

Nostrium is a free and very addictive game. That's not to say its easy - at all, but once you get used to the play mechanics of finding items, avoiding monsters and combining things to make utilities you can use to survive, things get a lot easier. It's also a great example of what one lone game developer can do.



MessageSubstract

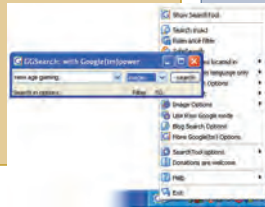
MSN Messenger is more of a burden than a feature when you load up Windows. Granted, if you use the service, it's quite cool, especially since it saves your contacts online, plus its always readily available with any machine that has Internet Explorer or Outlook Express on it. But not everyone uses it, and not everyone wants it to sit in the taskbar taking up valuable resources. Even worse, some people have found ways to send ads to your screen via the network.

This free little tool will block those ads and even disable Messenger completely if you need it. While other applications can do this as well (not to mention a brief stroll through your registry), this is by far the easiest way to do it, and the only thing that stops MessageSubstract from being perfect is that it installs, meaning you can't simply copy it from a disk to a machine without any hassles. Still, it's small and easy to use, plus you can dynamically change the settings, just in case you need to use Messenger for something.

GGSearch

We love Google over here at NAG. Heck, if we could, we'd do nothing all day but search for stuff on Google. Which we can. So we do. Needless on our relentless sloth [huh? Ed], anyone who is online uses Google at some point or another. But there is so much more on offer in the website that few get to, partly because they don't know about it and partly because some of the features are a pain to get to. Unless, of course, you use GGSearch. A program not affiliated with Google in any way, it's still a great way to make use of the search engine, since it gives you an application that harnesses Google's power straight from your machine. Simply type in your search phrase, select what area you're interested in (sites, images, stocks, newsgroups, etc) and hit 'search'. GGSearch loads up Google and displays the results for you.

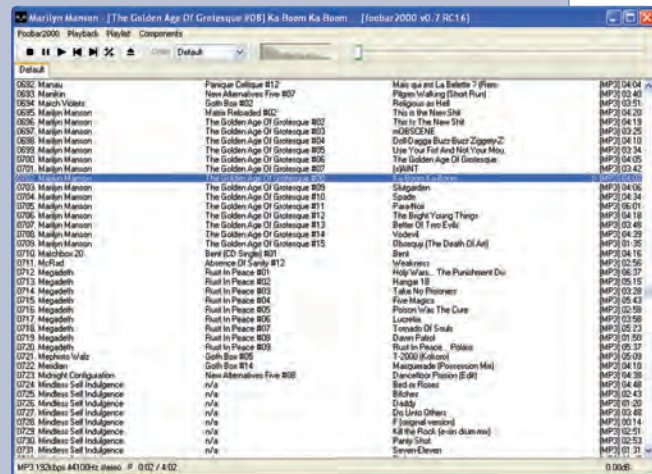
The real appeal, apart from the much more efficient approach, is the myriad of Google's options are now open to you to use. Right-clicking on the GGSearch taskbar option allows you to tweak the Safesearch options, how many results to show per page and so on. It adds a lot more power to Google as a whole, plus it makes searching for data that much less painful.



Foobar 2000

You want to play MP3, Ogg Vorbis, audio CDs and other music sources, but you need something a bit more lightweight than the usual music players. Foobar has been delivering a music player for a while now and even though it's not as flashy as the likes of Winamp and Media Player, it more than makes up for it with a decent, simple interface and a lot of support for the various sound types out there.

Foobar comes in very light, mainly because it has no support for playing video files or a large media library organizer. It's a barebones player that uses little resources - something that has become a problem for people trying to run Winamp 2.9 or the new Media Player on their aging PCs. It has no plug-in support either, but that's not the point. Foobar was never made to compete against the more feature-rich players, but rather to give an alternative to people who didn't want all the bulk of conventional players.



Flash Movie Extract Pilot

Flash files are great, especially the scores of Flash movies and games on the web. The biggest problem with Flash, though, is that you can't save it. Technically you can, but unless the site gives you the direct link to the file, or you are forced to delve through the source code of the page, you're stuck. Flash Movie Extract Pilot is a great way to get around this problem. Unlike most other Flash savers, which tend to use your browser and download files (not always fool-proof since some sites don't work well with this approach), this app scours your cache for Flash files you have downloaded. You can then view them individually and save the files you want. The downside is that you'll have to have already viewed the Flash file online, so it's not a faster way to get your Flash goodness, but it's an easy way to keep the files after you're done. And you can always just leave the movie to load and play in the background, and grab it later from your cache to view it properly.



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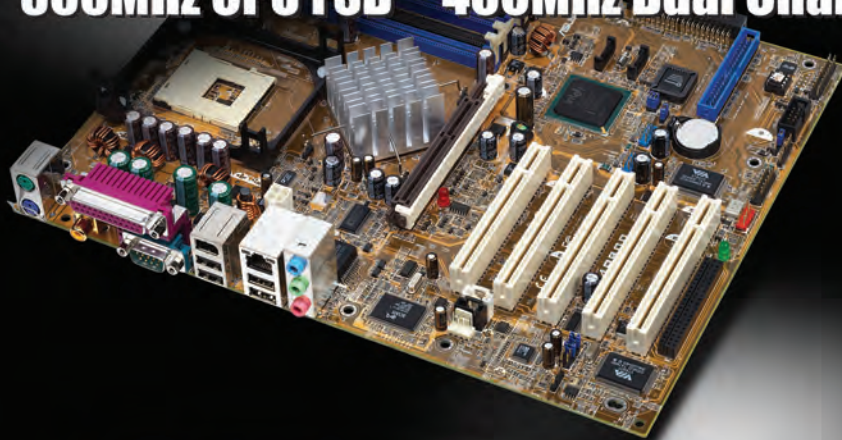
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By Randy Wilhelm, Vice President and General Manager of the Intel Chipset Division



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Peter Molyneux - game design guru



Did you hear that? It's good to play together. While, to us, Microsoft's new slogan for the Xbox sounds a bit like a bad translation of some Japanese gaming phrase, it does encapsulate the one thing that the Xbox is getting renowned for: Online Play. And the latest X0 event proved just how focused the company is on this field...

X03 is the third annual event where Microsoft shows off its plans and games for the coming year to a select press core. Held this year at Juan-Les-Pins, France, the secluded section of a beach hosted talks by several game notables; the most noteworthy names probably being Peter Molyneux, currently hard at work on Xbox-exclusives Fable and BC, and Jay Wilbur from Epic. Other speakers included Tomonobu Itagaki from Tecmo and Yves Guillemont from UbiSoft.

The entourage was also accompanied by Xbox leaders such as Michel Cassius, senior director, Xbox platform and Marketing, and Peter Moore, who left Sega of America for his current job of corporate vice president of worldwide retail sales and marketing. It was Moore's dubious honour to unveil the new slogan, and most of the event had a lot of focus on Xbox Live announcements.

Let's Get Live

X03 was pretty full of the usual press quotes that have come to show how strange and ridiculous the console wars have become. The Xbox is gaining ground, that's a fact, but if you took Microsoft's word for it, it might as well be the next big thing since sliced bread.

"We have firmly established our place in the console market and we have brought a huge number of great games to Xbox," said Eduardo Rosini, regional VP of the home and retail division, "The future is going to bring even more exciting developments for Xbox. Content and services are quickly converging to connect gamers with more of their friends, in more ways, more of the time. Microsoft is taking a leadership role in serving gamers' connected lifestyles - it's what Microsoft does best, and Xbox Live is just the beginning."

If you say so. Granted, Microsoft have a lot of reason to blow their trumpets so loudly, since Live is a huge success and despite Sony's serious dominance of the hardware sector, going online is Microsoft territory. The company plans to expand on this - one of the announcements at X03 was that the service is rolling out in 6 new countries, namely Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway and Switzerland within this year. It was also unveiled that current Live subscribers can go on a monthly subscription basis after their year subscription expires, or they can go in it for another year. And for a limited time, some Live-capable games will ship with vouchers that give new gamers 2 free months on the service.



...it's good to play together

writer: James "Twig" Francis



Pixel Power

The other part of Microsoft's beach-front experience was of course the games that were on show or to be announced. Strangely enough, unlike most press events regarding new games, most of Microsoft's catalogue is made up of games we are already expecting.

Let's be honest, is it really possible to garner more hype for titles like Fable and Halo 2?

The good news for Xbox fans is that there were more than 100 games

on show at the event, showing a drive to flesh out the system's repertoire.

Konami's Breakdown leads the pack of new titles.

Unveiled at the Tokyo Games Show, this was the first-person combat title's first showing in Europe.

A combination of hand-to-hand and weapon combat, it involves one man's fight against a military faction out to get him. Another Eastern partnership that brought everyone the infamous Dead or Alive Beach Volleyball plans to bring Dead or Alive Online - in a nutshell the first two Dead or Alive games with online capabilities, no doubt capitalizing on Team Ninja's huge success with the previous two titles. And the developer also showed off Ninja Gaiden, an Eastern combat adventure title that is looking really good.

Shown off at E3, and later announced as also a PC title, THQ's squad-based combat game Full Spectrum Warrior is undoubtedly going to be a favourite online if it delivers what it's been promising. Based on a light-infantry simulator

developed for the US Army, the game will allow gamers to take control of such a squad and move through hot-spots on a variety of missions. Rare, the expensive purchase Microsoft made from Nintendo,

showed off Grabbed by the Ghoulies, an action-adventure platformer where your hero has to make his way through a very haunted house.

The range was complimented by several other titles, such as Lionhead's BC, Project Gotham Racing 2, Counter-Strike (under the Microsoft Game Studio banner) and, of course, Halo 2. Though the bulk of the titles are not for Xbox eyes only, at least there are some guaranteed blockbusters such as Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup, Tony Hawk Underground and XIII. Still, 'exclusivity' is not a major feature here; then again, it's not a massive word with Sony either.

Epic took the chance to announce their partnership with the Xbox. Touting their recently-formed Scion Studio, the company behind the Unreal franchise said they plan to

develop several new games exclusively for the Xbox and PC. Of course, Epic has to as yet release or announce something on the GameCube or PlayStation 2, but it's nice to know they are working on games for the Xbox. Currently there are two titles in the works over at Scion, but nothing more was revealed.

2004 rocks on

X03 showed that 2004 is bound to be a big year for the Xbox, at the very least it's the last chance for the console to make a significant impact on the market before the roll-out of the next generation of consoles and make sure the GameCube is biting its dust, not to mention secure a decent-enough market share to rival Sony in the future.



MS paid over \$40 million for Rare. Grabbed by the Goulies is the first fruit from that purchase



There's no doubt Halo 2 is the Xbox flagship title next year



Lionhead is putting a lot of faith in the Xbox with Fable and BC

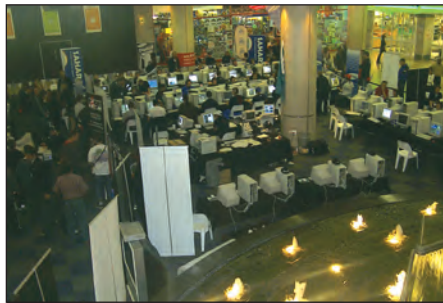


Tactical combat just itching for Live action comes in the military simulator Full Spectrum Warrior





The_Basilisk's WCG South Africa Roundup



There was a period about a year ago where I was convinced that competitive gaming would die a rather controversial and unpleasant death. Attendance at large competitions was hovering between only ten and twenty players for some games, entrance fees were exorbitant, prize money went missing, players were neglected, and through it all, no-one seemed to care. The excitement had gone. Even the stalwart competitors who emerged victorious in their respective disciplines weren't particularly enthusiastic about their achievements. The more casually inclined stopped participating at all, and who could blame them?

For anyone who didn't have a chance of winning, there was no point in paying money for an unenjoyable event. But with what has been a refreshingly successful string of tournaments in the last half of 2003 - the three preliminary WCG national qualifiers and the South African final event - I'd dare to go as far as to say competitive gaming in this country has been revived.

From the 12th to the 14th of September, the best players from Durban and Cape Town were flown up to meet their opponents from Johannesburg and Pretoria in the first truly national competition South Africa has ever held. Four Gauteng-based teams / players in each game were given free autoberths into the final rounds of the tournament, giving the lesser seeded teams a chance to play against others of a similar skill level in the early stages. This is also another step towards the professionalism in SA gaming that many have been craving. For once, we felt like professionals. We felt like sportsmen. The use of the word "we" will tell you that my role this time was that of a player. It has certainly been a long time since I competed at the highest level, and it would have been difficult to ask for a better event to return to. The finals were held at the Fountain Court in Sandton City, the perfect way to entertain both players and spectators.

For the fourth time in a row, the partnership of Gamers Gate and Mayhem have somehow managed to pull it off with flying colours. And with each event, Vapour becomes increasingly paranoid, this time fearing mass flames on the gaming forums and, for some macabre reason, skiing accidents. One of my few recommendations to Gamers Gate is a sabbatical for that man. However, his uncompromising self-critique resulted in the over-planning of every detail of the event, and this is most admirable. Things always go wrong, make no mistake about it, but with the hundreds of thousands of back-up plans that were no doubt formulated, the gamers hardly noticed a thing. I would comment on the network and power, but there's no need - the reputations of the organisers speak for themselves. The prizes were phenomenal, and I can say a few jaws dropped at their announcement. Anyone who has read a LAN review of mine in the past will know I normally have a lot to say in the criticism department. For this event, however, I can only point two fingers. The first is at the registration desk, and I pray this is the last time this particular mistake will be made as it has happened before (at the Electronic

Sports World Cup qualifier). The number of registrations was incorrectly reported to the staff responsible for drawing up the tournament format. That resulted in them having to redo the format on the fly, causing a delay in the UT2003 and WarCraft III preliminaries on the Friday evening. Although in the end it was a double three-way tie in two separate player groups (if you'll believe the insane odds) that caused WarCraft III to run later than expected. The second, and minor point I must raise, is that the staff viewed match demos in front of the crowd when an allegation of cheating was made. While this is not the end of the world, to an extent it did compromise the strategy of the team in question, and certainly rattled their nerves unnecessarily. On a related topic, I was very pleased to see the seriousness and maturity with which the cheating allegations were handled.

Now on to the topic everyone really cares about - the games. I must compliment Gamers Gate on their advertising campaign for this year's WCG, because it brought in the most competitive registrations (per game) I've seen in the last two, possibly three, years. Even though the adverts on 5fm were mindbogglingly cheesy (lasers and arcade game soundtracks) they got the public asking "I wonder what it's all about." Even if this didn't lead to them registering, they came to have a look. I would hazard a guess that next year we're going to see the registration lists fill up even more quickly. Each game had so many new, talented players, that certain favourites were given quite a run for their money. For example, 42::Mburrr, the UT2003 winner, only defeated K4 | Krauzer by a narrow 6-5 margin in his winner's bracket quarter final game. Havoc-Impact (a newly formed CS team) defeated the third-seeded Evolve B team in the upset of the tournament. Sec.8.m00p, a newcomer to WarCraft III tournaments, took second place from nf-sWoop (seeded first), beating him in the winner's bracket semi-finals. And Ethereal, the winning Durban CS team, only lost to DC Ignite by one round in their semi-final. WarCraft III had by far the most amusing finish. nf-Juvenile, NAG's Player of the Month last issue, reached

the final from the loser's bracket and needed to win two games in a row to claim the title. m00p (in true m00p style) opted to get things over with quickly, and went with two high-risk, quick-result strategies, which, by a stroke of poor luck, didn't pay off. Juvenile won both games, with m00p calling Good Game in the second, five minutes into the match. He had tried an offensive towers strategy, building defensive structures right outside Juvenile's base - a truly cheese tactic indeed. With the towers ten seconds away from completion, Juvenile found them, destroyed them, and the game was over.

UT2003 boasted the most interesting final. Having already lost to Mburrr on the map Antalus in the winner's bracket final, [N]ZeRo-1 chose not to eliminate that map, thus indirectly deciding to play it again. His move caused the audience to wonder just what he was planning. However, after a few minutes of tense play, Mburrr took the lead and managed to hold onto it for the victory.

Counter-Strike was boring in the end, as usual. By saying this, I'm not taking anything away from either team, as they both played intelligently and skillfully, but there is only so much entertainment one can get from Counter-Strike. Evolve proved once again that they are unrivalled in the South African community, although DC Ignite did not take the loss lying down. Ignite's strategies were, at times, brilliantly crafted and executed, but when it came down to crunch moments, their lack of international experience (compared to Evolve) caused them to make too many unfortunate mistakes.

So off we go again to Seoul, Korea. Will things be any different this time? We have quite a few players who are new to the international scene, so who knows. It's impossible to predict. Then again, there are an awful lot of newbie countries participating this year - perhaps we'll get lucky and some of our players will land themselves in an easy group. Either way, I will be there with the team, providing exclusive coverage for NAG of SA's gaming adventures in the Far East. So catch my report back in next month's issue.

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The Day Before



The day before your first big LAN you can't eat, you can't sleep and you can't think of anything else. You double check your goodies bag for D-day. The night comes and goes. You can hardly contain yourself to get to the venue. Map in hand you take to the road. On arrival you leap from the car, instantaneously grabbing your big-screen, clutching your box and around your neck the goodies bag. Only with the help of a sudden adrenaline rush do you make it to the entrance. You frown. You look around. You wonder. Is this the right venue? Did you get the date right? Can you be so early? You rush back to the car to get the info you printed from the web. Nope, you're at the right place, at the right time with the right equipment. But where are the organisers, the other gamers, the fragbait!

I'm sure most of you have a similar experience to share. Pitching up at LANs to find the venue empty or the organisers still deciding who will do what or where to borrow equipment from. This is not a good first impression on gamers. This will not keep your LAN over-booked.

The LAN day itself can be a nerve-wrecking experience if you don't watch out for all the traps. Thus it's always better to sit back and generate a checklist with all the things to do, things to check and things to remember. I'll try to cover the Day before the LAN in this issue.

The most important point is your setup. Arrange with your venue manager when the hall will be available for you to do the setup. Do not decide to do the setup the morning before the LAN. If something should (and will) go wrong you need time to do fault finding. Especially if it's your first time in a new venue.

Ensure that the venue is clean. Empty the venue of any equipment that won't be used by you or your helpers. Stick to your venue layout drawing and have it with you when you set up the hall. Set up your tables. Check that all the tables and chairs are sturdy and in a good condition. Arrange to have all the tables cleaned or do it yourself. There's nothing a gamer hates more than to put his precious one on a dirty table. Remember to setup additional tables for your switches, servers, etc. Set up an extra table or 2 for people who want sit down and eat or a group who want to discuss their latest strategy. Remember to leave additional chairs for the gamer who brings his girlfriend / friend / mom / dad / sister / nephew / neighbour (Mark applicable with a X :D).

Set up at least 2 tables to serve as your admission corner. This corner should be clearly visible and close to the entrance. Please provide enough space for gamers to queue, ensure no one will block the entrance. Remember to keep your disclaimers close by or put a big disclaimer on the wall. Put all advertisements your sponsors supplied in a visible place. The entrance is always a good place as everybody spends at least a few moments here. Keep in mind that an additional helper will do wonders at the registration table. The faster you can help gamers and set them up the sooner the fun

can start. Ensure that you have enough change available when the gamers start flooding you with their hard-earned money (yeah right :D)

Next you need to setup your power-box and power extensions. Take your time and check the power row by row. A Night-light (Ask to borrow one if you don't have one and can't afford R15) works well and is small enough to take with and check all the power points. Remember not to leave power cables coiled. Rather spend the extra minute. If wires should cross the floor cover them with a loose carpet or use tape and fasten them.

Now you can put down your network cables. Check that there's a point per table / chair depending on your layout drawing. Use a laptop and check all the network points by pinging the switches or another PC on the other end of your network. This will also make fault finding easier if a gamer can't see the network. Ensure there's no unfastened cables or power cables laying around for people to trip over. Test connectivity between switches.

Ensure that the windows are covered adequately and no one will be blinded in the early morning or afternoon by sunlight. Check the toilet facilities and ensure that it's clean and visible. (Especially if you know there will be female gamers).

As a last point do not forget to get the latest virus and game patches required for your LAN. Confirm with all your sponsors / suppliers / helpers the day before the LAN and be specific on the time you need the equipment or when you can pick them up. It's recommended that you pick up switches and servers the day before and install all the software you require. Also remember to check all your servers the day before and ensure they've been patched to the latest version.

Till Half-Life 2 arrives, or NAG is on the shelves again. Whichever comes first.

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

Kid's, Cannon's and the Intercom Lady

September saw Organized Chaos in a brand new venue for the two events that were held. Aside from the numerous screaming, young children and the six o'clock wake up song from the wonderful lady on the end of the PA system, the MTN Science Center in Canal Walk proved to be one of the nicest venues I have ever had the pleasure of visiting. Being inside the Southern hemisphere's largest shopping mall had its advantages, with just about any kind of junk food that one could want, 12 cinemas, coffee shops and the like. So needless to say the gamers were kept satiated throughout the weekend.

Strangely enough the only restrictions placed on the gamers with regards to entering and exiting the science center was between the hours of three and four in the morning. Go figure? One of the concerns expressed by some of the older gamers was with regards to the parking. This however was already organized by Dietmar, a weekends worth of secure parking only cost R5.

Now down to the important things. Like computer games.

Where to start? Perhaps with the fact for the first time in several months OC had problems with their network. After much pacing backwards and forwards and scratching of heads, it turned out to be a leeching problem on the game server. With one of the culprits having 43 copies open at one time alone. The Blaster Worm also made a quick trip around the LAN before that door could be closed. Once these problems had been sorted out everything once again shunted along at maximum velocity. Another highlight was

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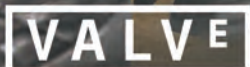
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the introduction of the admins that are going to take some of the load off the shoulders of Dietmar, Reinhard and Lance. These are: [HZO]Carty, who is taking care of the CS games; Ryder who will be running the WC3 server and YourMother who will be the guru behind the Wolf ET server. This leaves Treath to look after the BF1942 server and ChocSalties to take care of any network problems that should arise.

With all systems go it was time to get down to some serious gaming. The WC3 players battled each other to a standstill, the CS players did whatever they do, and the BF players had one of the most awesome games of Battlefield that I have ever had the pleasure of taking part in. Four hours of some of the most bleeding pumping, gut wrenching action to take place under one roof, passed in what seemed like minutes as the two teams fought each other to a standstill.

Another advantage to being in the Science Center was the large plasma screen and projector, which made it possible for the first time for spectators to watch the games going on. CS dominated the plasma screen and BF ran almost constantly on the projector giving everyone a great view of what was going on. Prize giving as usual took place on

Saturday night with prizes once again sponsored by Diesel. Amidst yells of match fixing [HZO]Carty won the set of Logitech speakers, and Chojin for the second month in a row walked away with a prize, this time a Logitech MX500 mouse.

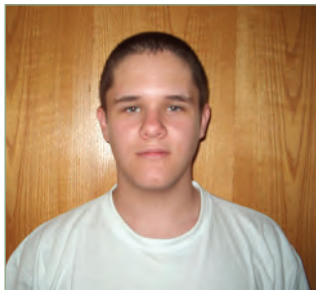
Once again OC has become a two event a month LAN, though this second one was decidedly smaller than the first as many people think that two LAN's a month of such duration are just too much. But of the 70 or so people that did attend all considered it a most excellent LAN. A couple of things happened, Red Bull helped keep the gamers awake with a couple of cases of that wonderful stay awake medicine. Permanent social teams were also organized, which will be at the core of future events.

October finds OC back at Theo Marais for what may be the last time. If this is the case then hopefully it will be the best OC to date, and the last Theo Marais LAN will go off with a bang.

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

Player of the Month

Name: Karl Buys	Occupation: Student
Nick: Mburr	Games: UT2003 Enemy Territory Tribes 2 Unreal Tournament Action Quake 2
Age: 19	Quote: "I paid my \$5. I actually paid \$10, to be doubly sure."
Clan: Team 42 (UT2003) and iRidium (ET, Tribes 2)	



<The_Basilisk> When did winning become a reality for you?

<Mburr> I had a few very close games on the way to the final at the WCG qualifier. I guess in the end I was lucky, in that I was fortunate enough to play the most solid games when they counted. As far as when winning became a reality, well... I think the possibility became apparent when we, Team 42, started taking both 1st and 2nd finishes at various local UT2k3 comps.

<The_Basilisk> What, then, is the secret to Team 42's success?

<Mburr> Well, the man who seems to take it upon himself to be my adoptive mother, "The_Momilisk", was paging through an Archie comic of mine from the 80's, when he

stumbled upon an advert that showed us how to "Dominate Others With Fantastic Brute Strength." In a sense, we aspired to embrace the cheesiness, and made it our clan motto. We try to get it into our mind that we've paid our five dollars, so to speak.

<The_Basilisk> I'm sure everyone wants to know, has your success made you more popular with women?

<Mburr> I received an SMS from someone that mentioned something about "showering me with adoration", but to be honest, I sure as hell hope it hasn't made a difference.

<The_Basilisk> Can a player with only average aim make up for it in other ways?

<Mburr> That depends on your definition of average aim. Ultimately, aim and strategy are inter-

dependant. You need a good mix of both, or you won't get anywhere.

<The_Basilisk> Some international players have said there's too much luck in UT2K3 - what is your opinion on that?

<Mburr> Well, I don't think I could convincingly disagree with that point, but on the other hand, Counter-Strike is the most competitive first person shooter in the world at the moment. Need I say more?

<The_Basilisk> Is there anyone in the gaming community that you admire or were inspired by?

<Mburr> I wouldn't say there was anyone I was inspired by, and I wouldn't use the word admire either, but I have to big it up to teh FatalONEty, because that man understands the value of cheese like a true master.

Get your heart racing



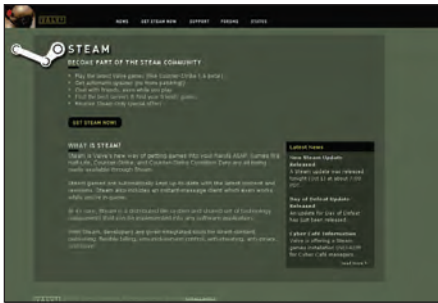
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EVENT NEWS:

Well that sees the end of rAge, one of the largest OPEN LAN and exhibition events to take place in South Africa. It saw most of the games and PC hardware distributors coming together. Some took part as exhibitors with some awesome stands showing off the latest and greatest in hardware and the games, others pulled through as sponsors to help make the event happen.

Mayhem wish to give special thanks to Intel and D-Link. Without the servers from Intel and all the switches from D-Link the LAN area at rAge just would not have been possible.

GAMING NEWS:

Steam, will it be the end of CS or the return of the roman legion?

For those of you who can remember all the fun we had trying to get a dedicated half-life server running when CS 1.4 came out, you must be thrilled that we get to go through it again.

All games made by valve (Half-Life, Counter-Strike, Day of Defeat and so on) now have to authenticate to Steam. Steam is a online server which checks if you are running a legal copy of the game. This means you can't run a pirate copy, which is a good idea.

Here comes the problem. Steam have not made it possible to host an off-line server. So if you want to install Counter-Strike 1.6 you need an internet connection, and if you don't you are going to have a very difficult time installing it. If you are running a LAN or want a CS server at home, you will also need an internet connection so that every one who wishes to join the server can be authenticated with Steam online. Now this is the same as it was in Counter-Strike 1.5, when you hosted online or played online you needed to authenticate to a WON server which did more or less what Steam does now. When you hosted a LAN server in 1.5 you could set a command to state that you are running a LAN server and it must not look for WON.

Steam has not catered for this option. In a nut shell:

- Everyone needs to get a legal copy (this we support 110%)
 - Everyone who plays or hosts a server online needs to Authenticate to Steam, this too we are OK with
 - Needing to authenticate while installing is a tad daft
- as this means if you do not have net access you will not be able to install the game
- Not having the option to turn off authentication on LAN, this is a huge issue. First of all very few LANs in this country have internet access. Thus most LANs will have to make a plan. i.e. get some sort of net access. This can be done for the guys who hold their events at the same venue every month, but what about those LANs that are moving around looking for a venue? Then are they prepared to pay for a net connection that they will most likely only use once or twice a month? The only good thing I can think of is thank God for R7 call more. Can you imagine the phone bill you would have if you did not have call more and hosted a LAN where you needed a net connection for CS all day?

At this stage having a connection to the net is the only way to host a server. Mayhem are looking into ways around this as are most LANs. If a solution is found we will let you know.

What will happen if LANs do not get net access? There is a possibility that people will go to a LAN that has access, or people will just stay at home and play online. What about people who don't have net access or only play at LANs? Will they keep playing CS 1.5 causing a split in the community? Online every one plays CS 1.6 and off-line every one plays CS 1.5. Will this kill a LAN without net access, the community or the game?

Once CS 1.6 is installed :

Counter-Strike 1.6 the counter terrorist team now have a riot shield. While you have the shield you can not carry any gun other than a pistol, but the shield stops almost everything short of a grenade. Now this does make for something new and fun, and hopefully we shall see lots of new tactics. All the maps in the game have been redone and they look great. They still have most of the bugs in the maps that 1.5 had.

The only concern is that the game could become the return of the roman legion (term provided by an over opinionated, NAG freelance writer who has blonde hair and looks like Jesus). Just picture six counter terrorists with shields running in the old box formation. I guess that is as close to having an armoured car as Counter-Strike will get.

DATES TO LOOK OUT FOR

- 1 November - Registrations for Mayhem off-line league2004 OPEN
- 8 November - Monthly link day PTA
- 8 November - Funky Cow LAN PTA
- 29 November - Mayhem Open LAN

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NEW AGE GAMING MAGAZINE

preview:

Call of Duty is an intense first-person action game that allows players to experience the movie-like intensity and gripping combat of World War II through the eyes of ordinary soldiers, fighting as part of a squad through the chaos of battle. Based on an extensively enhanced version of the Return to Castle Wolfenstein/Quake III Game Engine, Call of Duty blends fast action gameplay and detailed graphics with epic battlefield scenarios featuring scores of soldiers and incredible special effects.

Gamers will be able to journey through a variety of environments, including historic battlefields, towns, bridges, forests, a POW camp and even a battleship, all realistically created from extensive WWII archival research. Take on enemies with an explosive arsenal of authentic WWII weapons, including pistols, machine guns, sniper rifles and grenades. Man entrenched gun nests, plant explosives, and drive tanks and vehicles to complete mission objectives, moving closer to taking down the Nazi War Machine. Developed by Infinity Ward, which is comprised of over 20 individuals who developed Medal of Honor: Allied Assault,

"Wherever the player looks, he will see the battlefield erupting around him, with mortar shells landing amidst your squad, planes strafing the field, reinforcements parachuting in, and anti-air guns blazing in the distance.



including all the production leads, Call of Duty delivers the gritty realism and cinematic intensity of WWII's most epic battlefield moments - from the perspective of citizen soldiers and unsung heroes representing an alliance of countries, who together helped shape the course of modern history. Throughout the game's 24 missions, players will be part of a squad who bond together to take on enemy forces and achieve mission objectives through pivotal WWII battles and authentic military campaigns.

To get a fuller insight into the many interesting facets of the game Derek de la Fuente spoke to a number of the team members in a Q/A session, namely Grant Collier (GC), president, Earl Hammon Jr. (EH), software engineer, Jason West (JW), chief technology officer and Steve Fukuda (SF), game designer.

Q: You are offering a new WWII first person shooter. How can you extend the experience, and are you looking

toward innovations and a new approach in a market that is full of quality products? What do you believe may set this apart from other titles?

GC: Instead of viewing the war through the eyes of one soldier, Call of Duty puts the player in the shoes of the 3 major allied nations of WWII; an American paratrooper, British SAS, and a Soviet Conscript. Additionally, the quality of friendly and enemy AI will set the bar for many future games.

Q: It has been quoted that the game will allow the

player to experience the intensity and gripping experience of combat. What more can really be done to heighten this experience? Is it about adding more detail graphically or making the events even more plausible? In effect, how do you go about creating an intense atmosphere?

GC: Call of Duty brings an unprecedented level of immersion to the First Person Action genre as a whole, not just to the WWII niche. Wherever the player looks, he will see the battlefield erupting around him, with mortar shells landing amidst your squad, planes strafing the field, reinforcements parachuting in, and anti-air guns blazing in the distance.

Q: What kind of deformation of landscape, buildings, vehicles, etc. is on offer and how many detection points will the soldiers have and can injury debilitate?

GC: There will be deformable landscape through out Call of Duty. Fences may be shot away and walls destroyed. This is mostly noticed when the player is in control of a tank. Towns and forests will be lane to waste. Call of Duty also has a per pixel location based damage system implemented. Damage to the legs will cause the friendly and enemy AI to limp. Death animations are also determined by where the deathblow is inflicted.

Q: There must be a huge amount of weapons on offer. What are some of the unique ones and, as in real life, some weapons need a certain amount of skill and craft to use, where as in most games they are usually pretty simple to use? Have you rectified this issue, which could also cover vehicles?

SF: Some of the lesser seen weapons that we are using are the PPSH-41 submachine gun (Russian), the PTRS-41 anti-tank rifle (Russian, fixed position), M1-Carbine (U.S.A.), and Bren light machine gun (British). We had the chance to handle and fire some of the weapons that are depicted in Call of Duty, which helped us a great deal with modelling the weapons' behaviour and giving them a unique and good 'feel'. For the weapons we weren't permitted to fire, we observed the weapons handlers' reactions.



Q: Infinity Ward is using the Quake III engine, what additions, modifications or changes, if any, is the team making and doesn't the use of this engine give an almost generic look? (It would be nice to see a war game with a dirtier look, with a more organic feel and approach - thoughts?)

EH: Quake III gave us a great starting point with a familiar set of tools and a versatile shader language. However, we knew from the start that we'd have to make a lot of improvements to compete with the current generation of games. The code that geometry goes through to get from the map editor and onto your screen

is almost entirely new. These changes, not only to the renderer but also to the compiler tools, allow us to take advantage of the power in more modern graphics accelerators. We also introduced our own proprietary model and animation systems that enable our content creators to do things that were very difficult or even impossible beforehand. As a result, we are able to portray characters with much more realism and worlds with much more detail than the Quake III engine allows.

Q: Can you give the readers a little insight into some of the innovative ways the AI works and what you are most pleased with? (To most this can't really be discerned.)

JW: The way the AI understands and

responds to suppressing fire really changes the game. When you fire on enemies they will hide in cover waiting for a safe moment to attack. This allows you to work with your squad using fire and manoeuvre tactics. You form a base of fire and suppress the enemy while your squad moves into an advanced position. Then they suppress the enemy allowing you to get a flanking position. It adds a new strategic element to the combat, where you don't just Rambo through levels.

Q: The team must have had a goal, vision, for this game - what was it?

GC: Infinity Ward set out to make the most immersive and intense First Person Action game created. To raise the bar so high, that the competition will be scrambling to match our quality, while we work towards trumping it with our future titles.



▲ Looking after your "maatjies"



▲ Johnny's overambitious nature was the end of him...

"The way the AI understands and responds to suppressing fire really changes the game. When you fire on enemies they will hide in cover waiting for a safe moment to attack."





preview:

Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon

After a successful showing at ECTS, Revolution Software's next chapter in the Broken Sword series is getting ready to be unleashed on the gaming world. Derek de la Fuente spoke to Charles Cecil, MD and creative director about the third title in the Broken Sword series.

How long now has Broken Sword 3 been in development, how many people are working on the game and what is the lead machine for development?

Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon has been in full pre-production development for the last year, and in concept approval practically since we completed work on Broken Sword 2: The Smoking Mirror. We've around 25 people working on various aspects of the game, and, currently, the lead format is PlayStation 2 although it is planned for other formats including PC.

What kind of continuity will there be in the third instalment following on from the first 2?

The series was always intended to be a trilogy, and this third instalment ties up many of the concepts introduced and explored in the first two games. The story starts a few years after we last saw George and Nico. We know that fans of the series love the characterisation of each of the games, which is why we'll be introducing some familiar characters throughout this new adventure. Time that has passed since Broken Sword 2 and this is reflected in the personalities of both George and Nico. George himself is a little less naïve - he's seen a thing or two in the intervening years. His mundane life in the

States has bored him, and he grasps the opportunity to return to his adventuring past. Nico, too, has matured - she's much more confident as a person, which means she's less likely to take any nonsense from George. Yet whilst the relationship between the two has evolved, it still has the same roots as ever. Deep down, they both rather like each other, but find it hard to admit.

You must have been asked this many times but why do you feel the 'point and click' adventure genre has had such a rough time over the last few years and can you see a rapid return of the genre?

The point and click adventure is dead. As technology has advanced, a new play dynamic has been made possible - particularly as games become fully 3D - and the point and click play style has simply been left behind. The interface, which was the genre's strength for so long, was too inflexible to adapt. But adventures, per se, are absolutely not dead, but in need of reinvention - in the same way that other genres have been reinvented. Final Fantasy VI was considered too quirky to be released in Europe, but through Final Fantasy VII the RPG was totally reinvented and the game sold over 6 million units. Metal Gear Solid reinvented the Metal Gear genre and was a huge success. Adventures are in desperate need of reinvention and Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon will do this.

Do you see the appeal and focus for this third title towards the big user base of people who bought the

first two games and how do you entice new gamers?

We have a very loyal fan base and we certainly want to ensure that the game appeals to them. However, we also want to appeal to a new audience who would not have been interested in an old-fashioned point-and-click game - or may have never even heard of adventure games. Ever since we announced the fact the game was coming and moving to direct-control, full 3D, opinion has been split between those horrified at such radical change, to those that can't wait to see it. Whilst we understand such natural concerns, fans of the series shouldn't be worried - we will ensure that The Sleeping Dragon maintains the core appeal of an adventure while



being wholly contemporary and up to date. We've also had a hugely positive reaction to Broken Sword GBA, which we see as both a showcase and a proof positive of the move to a direct control interface.

Those new to the series will be genuinely surprised. This is a different type of adventure game, marrying many elements commonly seen in modern gaming into one unique package. This isn't Metal Gear Solid. It's not Tomb Raider. It's not Final Fantasy. This is a new type of game, which brings a hard-hitting story to life, offering a new style of gaming. We're hugely excited about it - it just feels right!

You have openly come out with the fact that you are focused on the look and 3D elements of the game. Can you divulge any innovative or exciting elements you are working on?

The move to 3D has been really exciting, allowing us to incorporate completely fresh game ideas. Stealth will play an important part in the adventure, alongside detective work and puzzling. Additionally - and for the first time in the series - we're introducing action elements, though not in a beat-'em-up style. We're very keen to make a game that appeals to a broad range of players; those that are adventure fans, and those that are action/adventure fans. A game of this variety would

not be possible without the introduction of 3D.

Many 'adventure games' have a very formulaised set of

puzzles and combat actions required to move you onto the next segment of the game. Are the puzzles totally related to the story and will they be pretty obvious and not wildly cryptic?

Wildly cryptic puzzles were very much a symptom of problems eating away at old style adventure games. The difficulty facing designers were that the game environment and interface restricted the play to 'crossword' style puzzles. In the end, designers began to run out of ideas for new puzzles in this vein, and so ended up making them very obscure, just to stop players marching through the games in no time at all. We're finding that when free of restrictive interfaces, and given the greater freedom of movement that 3D games allow, we're able to come up with puzzles and challenges that are both logical and fit the world that they're based in.

What kind of varied locations are on offer and are the settings pertinent to the tasks and puzzles that will be presented?

Once again this will be a global adventure. We're working on many new locations and a few some people will recognise. Indeed, for the GBA version of Broken Sword we introduced one new location whose relevance will only become apparent after the first game. As with Broken Sword 1, the game is based around a central hub, which, again, is Paris. We felt this structure worked particularly well.

How sequential will the game be - will there be many routes unfolding with different stories lines and what is the players overall task?

Whilst the chapter progression will be linear, we will be allowing players to devise their own tactics, within reason. We're keen to avoid having players frustrated by not being able to perform a specific task a certain way. So, you will likely solve the game in much the same order as your pal, but within the game sections, you may solve puzzles differently depending on how you play and which routes you take.

"Adventures, per se, are absolutely not dead, but in need of reinvention - in the same way that other genres have been reinvented"



preview:

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

Everywhere you look there appears to be new **The Lord of the Rings** games being produced and released but there can be no denying the fact that Electronic Arts will always endeavour to bring out the very best in any subject matter. This is the second **Lord of the Rings** title from EA which is based on New Line Cinema's upcoming film adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy novel, **The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King**. (LOTR: TROTK).

LOTR: TROTK, a third person, action adventure, will place the fate of Middle-Earth in the hands of the gamer. In the final instalment of the blockbuster movie trilogy, players must destroy the One Ring by casting it into the Crack of Doom, freeing Middle-Earth from the clutches of the Dark Lord Sauron. Players will be able to journey through multiple gameplay paths, taking control of the motion picture trilogy's heroes.

As the compelling story unfolds you will need to defend the walls of Minas Tirith as Gandalf raises the Army of the Dead as Aragorn, Legolas or Gimli, and with Frodo and Sam, deliver the ring to the fiery depths of Mount Doom. Based on the environments from the movie, gameplay will include immersive action and adventure elements set in richly detailed interactive levels. Derek dela Fuente spoke with Jonathan Harris, Senior Product Manager, to find out more about the creation of the concept and the development team behind this exciting game.

Jonathan started things off by introducing the team's expertise as well giving a positive recommendation for the game.

"Our goal is to recreate the heroic experience from the film and since those moments are action-oriented we've found that direction to be the best way of bringing the film to the interactive medium. Many of the development team involved on this title worked on *The Two Towers* last year and one of their many skills is taking a 10 minute action sequence from the movie and crafting it into an entire level in the game."

"LOTR: TROTK is the only game that is based upon the forthcoming movie and EA has a unique relationship with the film production company and Peter Jackson which allows us unprecedented access to assets. The game has many innovations. For instance, we have cooperative multiplayer that allows you to fight side-by-side with a friend and more importantly the player can play as one of nine characters including Gandalf and Frodo, as well as three secret unlockable characters. In addition there are 16 levels/environments that are bigger than ever before, featuring different ways to defeat your opponents using the interactive environments."

The twelve interactive environments authentically reproduced from the film include locales where you can explore the Paths of the Dead, defend Minas Tirith, and battle Sauron's forces at the Pelennor Fields before final confrontations at the Black Gate and the Crack of Doom. "The levels are actually broken up into three paths, including the Gandalf path, the Aragorn/Legolas/Gimli path, and the Hobbit path with Sam and Frodo. Depending on which character you choose to play, there will be certain levels available. When you eventually unlock the entire game, you'll be able to play any character on any level. (*Eight playable and secret characters including Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli,

Sam and Frodo with exclusive voice-over provided by the actual actors from the films)."

As you would expect the game follows the storyline of the movie very closely. You will start at the Helm's Deep when Gandalf arrives to help the Fellowship to defeat the Enemies of the Dark. More than just a backdrop to the action, the game's interactive environments let players

incorporate the various environments into their strategies for both melee and ranged combat. Characters will have the ability to jump and swing from ropes, fire catapults, kick boulders, etc. Objects in the environment can be picked up and used as weapons. There are several of these in the works, but the coolest so far has got to be the war pike, which can be thrown to an enemy resulting in an instant kill.

LOTR: TROTK is more than mere action, although to many this will be more than enough. Jonathan continued: "There are other gameplay styles mixed in. The player will be able to upgrade his/her characters using an RPG-light system and in addition, many of the objects within the environments in *The Return of the King* game are interactive allowing for multiple ways of defeating enemies. For instance, when playing as Sam you'll need to find ways to use the environment to your advantage, as opposed to charging into a melee of Orcs. Timing is definitely a key part of the combat gameplay in *The Return of the King*. Our goal is to deliver gameplay that is more than just a button masher, so the use of 'combo' attacks and parry are key to making the combat more interesting. We want the player to think about which moves are most appropriate in a given situation, then apply their unlocked combat moves to dispatch their enemies as quickly as possible."

Having worked closely with the film production team you can see this has worked well with incredibly

detailed environments and characters. Having received assets from the movie, such as lighting studies and motion capture data, no area, to ensure the perfect recreation, appeared to have been overlooked. The dev team has even gone as far as using the same stunt doubles for the game to ensure they got the most realistic movements possible in the game.

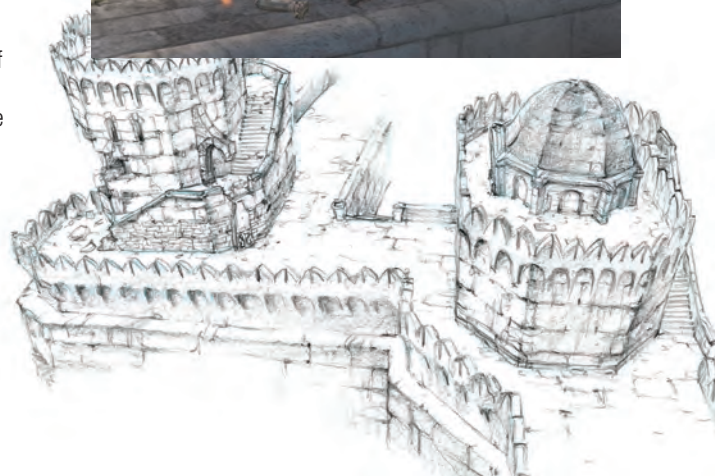
Try as you might, there is no getting away from the action and at the end of each level, the player will be able to upgrade not only his current character but also the whole Fellowship. You will get new and spectacular combos and abilities. One of the team's favourite new moves sees Gandalf impaling an Orc by levitating it with his staff and dropping it onto his sword.

Gandalf was certainly Jonathan's favourite character with a cool basic magic system created for him. This allows for all sorts of cool new combat moves. For instance, he could create a sphere of energy around him and then run through dozens of Orcs killing them instantly. This we are told is really exciting and like in the movie, Gandalf plays a great role in the game and is more involved in the battles.

Battle vicious boss monsters, play the highlights of the movie, with seamless movie-to-game transitions and never-before-seen exclusive movie footage from the upcoming *The Return of the King* movie as well as an immersive musical score composed by Academy Award-Winner Howard Shore.

An all-new co-op multiplayer mode will allow players to team up with a companion.

Although general consensus is that games based on movies usually suck, the feedback and general opinion on this game is that it is superb. What more could you ask for as you literally live the movie and fight for the fate of Middle Earth?



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preview:

Empires: Dawn of the Modern World

Speak the name Rick Goodman and those that know their historical real time strategy games sit up and listen. After all, it was the historically knowledgeable Mr Goodman who brought us Age of Empires, and then later Empire Earth... both of which are superb historical real time strategy titles that all but defined the genre. Well, here's the good news... Rick Goodman is bringing out a new historically based real time strategy title. And here's the better news... Empires: Dawn of the Modern World is unlike anything you've ever seen before.

Anyone who has played a real time strategy game

knows that the secret to a successful title is balancing. And no one knows this better than Rick Goodman, the driving force behind Activision's upcoming release, Empires: Dawn of the Modern World. With the backing of Stainless Steel Studios - which contains a large number of die hard Age of Empires players - Goodman is once again shaping the genre according to his vision... and what a shape it promises to be. See, to Goodman, balancing is more than just a "tit for tat" system. It's an intricate web of strengths and weaknesses that ultimately lead to a great game.

The last game we saw from Goodman was Empire Earth which, although severely underrated, was a rather good

and entertaining RTS title. It spanned thousands of years, and allowed the player to undertake a wide range of conquests. Empires: Dawn of the Modern World, however, is far more refined and focussed. Seven civilisations are available for play (namely England, America, China, Korea, France, Germany and Russia) during five historical periods: The Middle Ages, The Gunpowder Age, The Imperial Period, WWI and WWII. Nothing unusual there, of course, but a closer inspection reveals the true beauty behind each civilisation.

Each of them is completely distinct, with no crossovers between the civilisations happening. There are no shared units, no shared graphics, no buildings or equipment. Every nation is completely unique, and therefore adds a greater variety of tactical enjoyment to the game - not to mention a less predictable challenge. Even the way different nations harvest resources is different from the others!

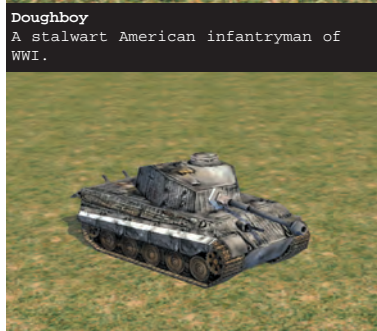
Empires: Dawn of the Modern World is based on the Empire Earth graphic engine. But while this may be a dated engine, significant advances and changes have been made, allowing for higher polygon units. The result: better graphics than ever before, with units being rounder and much more detailed. This is especially helpful when the game's tremendous zoom feature is used - no blocky infantry and square tanks!

The game features three campaigns: Richard the Lionheart in the Middle Ages, Admiral Yi defending Korea against the Japanese during the 16th Century and finally General Patton blazing his tanks from North Africa right to the doorstep of Berlin during World War 2. While this may seem a little limited, the campaigns really only serve as training sessions for the game's ultimate purpose - a strong and compelling multiplayer mode that will test players to the fullest.

Rick Goodman's track record stands testament to the man's ability as a game designer. For all intents and purposes, Empires: Dawn of the Modern World may be his greatest creation yet - the individual nature of the various races, added to some of the refined game concepts and complex balancing, will go a long way to ensure the title's success. The fact that an older engine is being used for the game may raise a few eyebrows but, from what we have seen, the game promises to outstrip Empire Earth in performance and popularity, as it brings a new depth to the historical real time strategy genre.



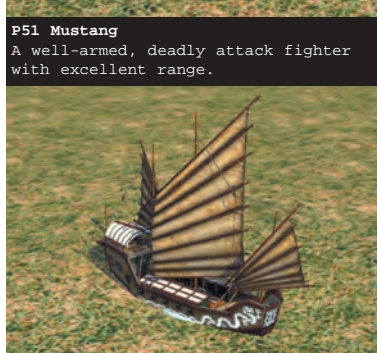
Doughboy
A stalwart American infantryman of WWI.



King Tiger
An expensive, but almost invulnerable tank built to outperform any Allied counterpart.



P51 Mustang
A well-armed, deadly attack fighter with excellent range.



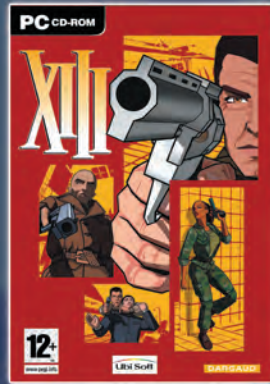
War Junk
This powerful Ch'ing Dynasty battleship also transports troops.





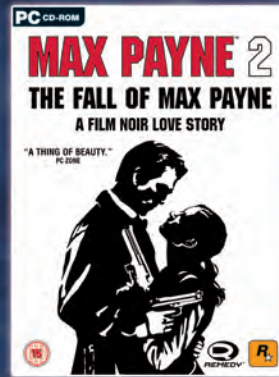
7 November

Railroad Tycoon 3
Players of Railroad Tycoon 3 begin the game with a modest sum of capital at the beginning of the Golden Era of Rail-roading and expand their empire into major cities, while purchasing the latest locomotives, forcing competitors into bankruptcy, and exploiting the stock market to become the ultimate Railroad Tycoon.



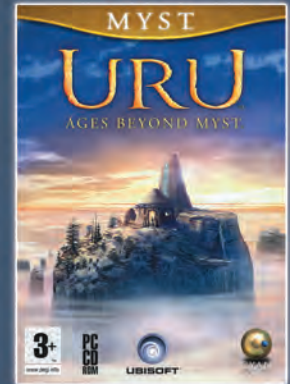
31 October

XIII
XIII features a conspiracy of epic proportions, and players will unravel clues behind the story's compelling and mysterious events. XIII includes themes of amnesia, in which players must uncover sinister plots against themselves, the U. S. government, and even the president himself.



24 October

Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne
Working together with Rockstar Games' New York-based production team, Remedy has combined Max Payne's hall-mark play style with all new innovations and unmatched production values.



7 November

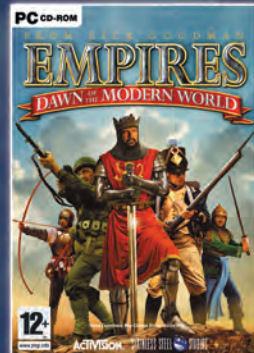
Uru: Ages of Myst
From the creators of Myst and Riven, Uru: Ages Beyond Myst is the next chapter of the Myst franchise and the most immersive and ambitious Myst experience ever created. The single-player game will be bigger, better, and more innovative than any of the previous Myst adventures.

Conquer New Worlds



14 November

Beyond Good & Evil
When Jade takes a mysterious reconnaissance assignment for IRIS, a rebel organization that challenges the official version of events, she must question her own perception of truth. Angered and shaken by what she discovers, Jade begins a harrowing journey to get to the core of the conspiracy.



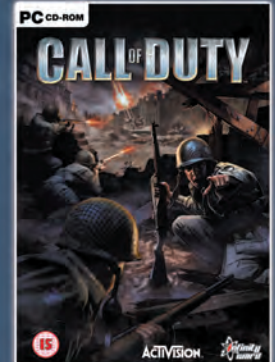
31 October

Empires: Dawn of the Modern World
Empires: Dawn of the Modern World represents the only truly global RTS where players control unique civilizations across a timeline that spans from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Gamers lead their nation's economic growth and military campaigns in their effort to dominate the world.



24 October

Hidden & Dangerous 2
Hidden & Dangerous 2 is a first and third person tactical shooter that builds upon the tremendous success of Hidden & Dangerous. You lead a small squad of Allied soldiers deep behind enemy lines, to carry out secret missions during World War II.



14 November

Call of Duty
Call of Duty is an intense first-person action game that allows players to experience the movie-like intensity and gripping combat of World War II as never before – through the eyes of ordinary soldiers, fighting as part of a squad through the chaos of battle.

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**PC
CD**

From: "The Marketing Department" <marketing@santa.org>
To: "The Big Cheese" <santa@santa.org>
Sent: 15 October 2003 10:35
Subject: Re: New Games

Dear Santa,
According to our most recent survey, the following games will be available soon.

1. War of the Ring
2. Counter-Strike : Condition Zero
3. Lords of the Realm III
4. Homeworld 2
5. Metal Arms: Glitch in the System
6. Swat GST

We are conducting further reseach and we will forward any new information.
I have attached some pics fyi.

Steve
Marketing Research Manager
The Santa Corporation
The North Pole



> From: "The Big Cheese" <santa@santa.org>
> To: "The Marketing Department" <marketing@santa.org>
> Sent: 10 October 2003 08:04
> Subject: New Games
>
> Steve
> We need to finalise available product for our "December Catalogue" as per our telephonic
> discussion. Forward me the top games as well as images you can collect.
> Santa
>



From: "The Big Cheese" <santa@santa.org>
To: "The Advertising Department" <advertising@santa.org>
Sent: 18 October 2003 12:55
Subject: Fwd: Re: New Games

Hi Jenny

Here are more games that need to go into the "December Catalogue" they are also available. Steve from Marketing found these new titles and some images. If you have any questions it is best to contact him as I am on conference for the rest of the week. The catalogue needs to be sent to the printers by no later than Thursday.

regards

Santa

ps. the games are

1. Crash: Nitro Cart
2. Battlestar Galactica
3. Judge Dread
4. The Simpsons



> From: "The Marketing Department" <marketing@santa.org>
> To: "The Big Cheese" <santa@santa.org>
> Sent: 10 October 2003 08:04
> Subject: Re: New Games

>

> Dear Santa,

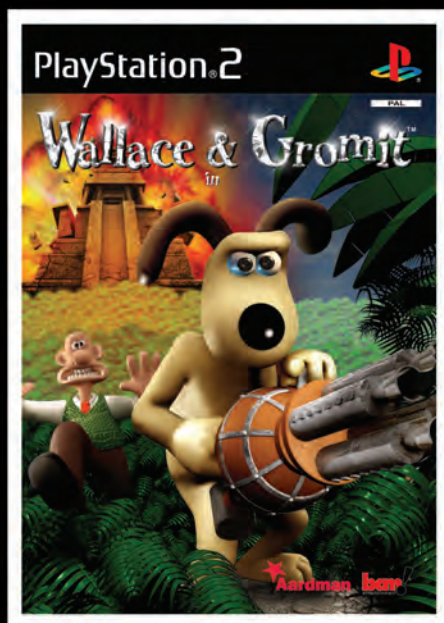
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- > 3. Lords of the Realm III



PlayStation®2

* OCT 2003



* OCT 2003

PlayStation®2



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*dates subject to changes



NAG Editors Choice
The big thumb-suck for the month.



NAG Award of Excellence
Games which score over 90% are given this award.



NAG Award of Merit
Games which score over 85% and below 90% are given this award.

▶ Republic: The Revolution [PC]

"... this title is to PC gaming as Shakespeare is to English literature - difficult to swallow at first, but worth every sip when you are finished."
Iwan Pienaar

85%



▶ Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour [GC]

"... even your Gran can pick this up and play it with ease."

85%



Eddie Francis

The new [old] scoring system: **behind the scenes**

As you page through the next few reviews, you will notice that scores have generally decreased across the board - hence fewer awards. This is thanks to a new review scoring system [it's actually a version of our old system but this time around will be transparent to the reader] - we've also been discussing how scoring creeps up over the months and things we can do to prevent it. Ergo new [old] scoring system and a few other minor changes in how we approach the game review. Below is a list of all the individual factors considered when scoring a title - each is rated as a percentage, with 50% being average:

- Graphics:** How does the game look? How does it animate? Do the various graphic elements add significantly to the gaming experience? Are the graphics detailed and suitable?
- Sound:** Is the sound of good quality? Is it suitable to the game? Is it easy to listen to? Does it enhance the gaming experience?
- Story:** Is the story original? Is it a good story? Does it advance well, or does it stagnate?
- Originality:** Is the game a new genre? If not, how does it approach the old genre? Does it have any new concepts? Is anything unique?
- Control:** How simple are the controls to master? Are they accurate and responsive? Are they well designed and suitable for the game type.
- Playability:** Was the game entertaining and fun to play?
- Continuity:** Will you play the game again? How long will you play the game for?
- Multiplayer:** Does the game have a multilayer element (if appropriate?) Is the multiplayer element enjoyable and working correctly? Is anything new introduced?
- A.I.:** Is the computer opponent appropriately challenging? Is it too smart or too stupid?
- Judgement:** What is the reviewer's personal opinion of the game?

These factors are then divided by ten, for a final score. Simple.

NAG Review Rigs supplied by:

Your Components Solution Provider

SPECIFICATION

Intel P4 3.1 GHz 512KB
Gigabyte GA-8SG800 Motherboard
NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4200 with AGP8X
AOpen A90E 19" Monitor
TwinMOS 1GB RAM DDR 266
Seagate Barracuda 80GB
AOpen CD ROM
AOpen Tower Chassis
Logitech Cordless Desktop



From: "The Advertising Department" <advertising@santa.org>
To: "The Marketing Department" <marketing@santa.org>
Sent: 23 October 2003 12:55
Subject: Re: Fwd: Re: New Games

Steve,

Santa's asked me to contact you should I have questions regarding "December Catalogue". He's gone to the elf recruitment convention. Anyway I stumbled upon these new games that are available and wondered if we could put them into the catalogue?

1. Blood Rayne
2. Buffy
3. Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter
4. Run Like Hell

I need an answer asap, the printer needs it all by thursday.

Attached are some pics

Cheers
Jen



> From: "The Big Cheese" <santa@santa.org>
> To: "The Advertising Department" <advertising@santa.org>
> Sent: 18 October 2003 12:55
> Subject: Fwd: Re: New Games
>

> Hi Jenny

> Here are more games that need to go into the "December Catalogue" they are also available.

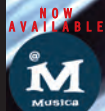
> Steve from Marketing found these new titles and some images. If you have

> any questions it is best to contact him as I am on conference for the rest of the

> week. The catalogue needs to be sent to the printers by no later than Thursday.



PC review:



Homeworld 2

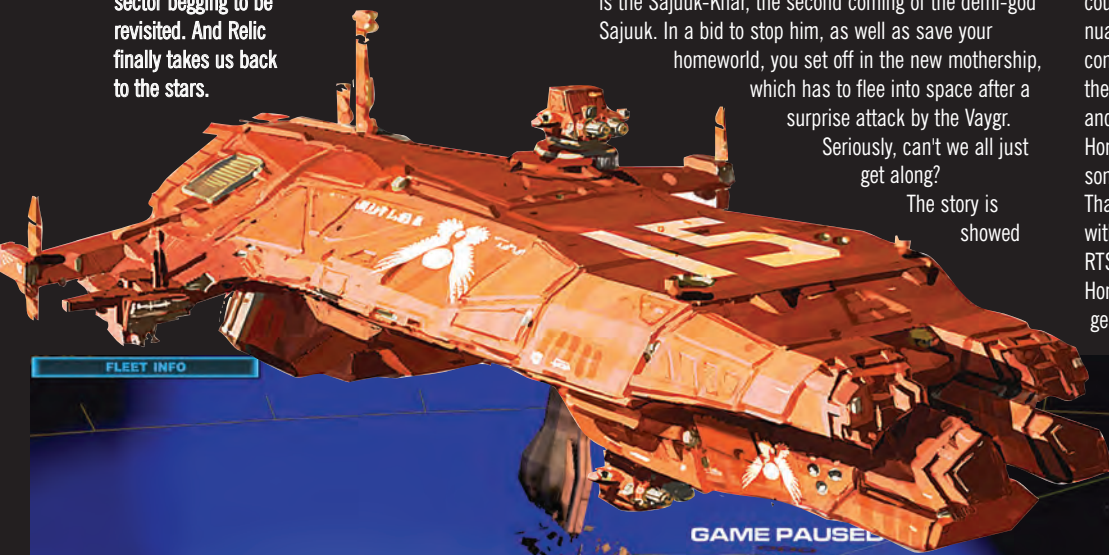
Space. The Final Frontier. The Sea. The other final frontier. What do these two have to do with each other? Well, apart from the spatial 3D combat that they might inspire, they are also the least-used settings in RTS games. Even though the original Homeworld inspired a few clones, it's been a sector begging to be revisited. And Relic finally takes us back to the stars.

It's been a few generations since the original Homeworld. You are one of the Hiigaran, descendants of the Kushan from the original game. The second Hyperspace core has been found, and the third is about to be, opening up a conflict of biblical proportions. The Vaygr, your enemy, is led by a warlord who believes he is the Saijuuk-Khar, the second coming of the demi-god Saijuuk. In a bid to stop him, as well as save your homeworld, you set off in the new mothership, which has to flee into space after a surprise attack by the Vaygr.

Seriously, can't we all just get along?

The story is showed

through the traditional sketch style we saw in Homeworld (plus a few new 3D effects) and the internal game engine. Now, to the uneducated eye, nothing has really changed. Despite being a few generations apart, the ships that you use look nearly identical. In fact, all that Relic seemed to have done was up the polygon count, add a few more visual effects and give us such nuances as moving turrets and such. When you compare the original Homeworld imagery to the sequel there is a massive difference, but it's not that obvious, and besides it's really just a sign of the times - Homeworld was released in 1999 - we've advanced somewhat in graphic prowess since. That said, if it ain't broke, why fix it? Homeworld, along with its pseudo expansion Cataclysm, came as close to RTS perfection as we've seen in years. In fact, Homeworld was a massive breath of fresh air in the genre, and messing with the delicate game balance



FLEET INFO

RESOURCE UNITS 23085

BUILD MENU

Pride of Hiigara

Production Slots	3 / 4
Module Slots	4 / 5
Sensors Slots	0 / 1

SHOW ALL FACILITIES

MODULE SUBSYSTEMS (AIR-D)

- Research Module **BUILT**
- Advanced Research Module **BUILT**
- Hyperspace Module **BUILT**
- Gravity Well Generator 750
- Cloak Generator 3000
- Fire Control Tower 1500

Subsystem Queue (Empty)

- Gunship x1
- Gun Platform x1
- Ion Beam Platform x2
- Gunship x1
- Pulsar Gunship x6

Strike Group

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

QUEUE STRIKE TACTICS EVENTS SENSORS MENU BUILD RESEARCH LAUNCH

could have been disastrous. I personally don't blame Relic for not straying off the path, and instead giving fans what they wanted - a better looking, but essentially identical, game.

Construction! Destruction!

A few things have been changed, though. The most useful addition to the game are Strike Groups. These allow you to bind different ships into attack formations, making large strikes much easier. This differs from the traditional binding method (also available) because ships in strike groups only move as fast as their slowest unit, meaning that your Frigates won't show up to back up your Interceptors, even though the latter have been blown away minutes ago because of a lack of heavy firepower supporting them. Another tactical change was to simplify formations into pure aggression stances: Passive, Defensive and Aggressive. So instead of creating formations, the ships decide their own based on their approach. Since I prefer leaving the battles to the combat AI as much as possible, this was a nice change for me. It eliminated wondering if I got my butt kicked because of the formations I used. But it might annoy some players as it strips away quite a bit of control over the battle outcome.

The construction process has been simplified as well. Instead of creating individual ships, a lot of units come out as squadrons, making the micro management of your fleet far easier. Resource harvesting has been kept to an easy one-type approach, and the interface has been tweaked to make researching and construction much easier, though once your fleet goes into the range of the mothership and several carriers, it can get a bit confusing as to what has been researched where. Everything is tied to the resources mined from asteroids, so having a lot of mobile refineries and harvesting units is vital, especially since you carry your army over to the next mission. A few new units have been added, the most notable being the Marine Frigate, which allows you to capture certain enemy ships. The pity is that it's slow, lightly armoured and generally useless unless defended very well. But there are more than enough different units to build and upgrade.

Hell on Toast

And having an impressive army is a must to enter a new sector in, because Homeworld 2 keeps alive that tradition of throwing everything plus the interstellar kitchen sink at you. There is no difficulty setting, but I suspect that it got jammed along the lines of "damned if



you do, screwed if you don't". If you think the original title was tough, brace yourself because even Cataclysm's bad guys didn't have the fervour that the Vaygr have for taking you out. It won't be long into the missions that wave after wave of units start attacking, and it's hard to keep ahead, especially since you have to defend your ships, defend your resource collectors (a favourite target for the enemy), as well as create a strike force and mount an attack on one of your objectives. Basically there's nothing in Homeworld 2 that can't be solved with a large force, but attaining said force is quite another matter. Hell, staying alive is a prevailing objective on its own.

The reason why the Homeworld series has always been this tough is probably connected to the special nature of the game. Combat is fully 3D, and Homeworld 2 deserves to be released if only to introduce new players to this excellent concept. The play areas are huge and it takes several minutes for units to move from one point to another. That means that unless you keep tabs on the events at hand and plan ahead, your support groups or your subsequent attack waves after the first might not get there in time before the enemy regroups. And losing your entire force in order to destroy their entire force might smell like victory, but it usually results in disaster later on.


This is not so much thanks to a clever opponent than a

lot of scripting. I noticed that not destroying certain objectives result in the enemy holding back - often the difference between survival and being caught with your pants down is a matter of not destroying one weapons platform - yet.

Old School with the new school

There's nothing massively new here, but it's a welcome return to a near-perfect game in my opinion. I missed Homeworld's vast feeling. The nips and tucks might make it seem more like an expansion, and the lack of any truly new graphics or ideas is a bit disappointing, but it's still a great game to get for both fans and new players alike.





all games reviewed on AOpen machines

Minimum Specification
Pentium 833 MHz | 256 MB RAM | 16 x CD ROM | 32 MB Video Accelerator Card
1.6 GB HDD

☉ Homeworld updated	☉ Tough as steel nails
☉ Improved interface	☉ Nothing really new
☉ Better micro-management	

Summary
There's nothing new here, apart from better graphics, a few new units, an improved interface and somewhat simplified combat. But if there was a game that shouldn't be messed with too much, this is it. Though Relic might have played it a bit too safe, it's still Homeworld and if anything an excuse to get back into one of the finest games ever made.

82



pc review:

Battlefield 1942:



Secret Weapons of World War II

Apparently if World War II went on a bit longer, we'd have had cool stuff like rocket packs and rocket planes. Okay, so we do have rocket planes these days, technically, but everyone knows what we really need are rocket packs. The world would be a better place with more rocket packs.

The world, though, has generally been a better place since the release of Battlefield 1942. It has, though, in respects also been a worse place. While DICE delivered a great game, they seem to have gone completely to the other end of the spectrum as far as support goes, with

delays on patches, tons of bugs and the one expansion pack that seemed more like a cash-in than any attempt to truly add much to the Battlefield experience. Of course, we still prevailed, and stuck to playing the games, getting the patches and buying the average Road to Rome. And it seems our attitude of persistence has finally paid off with Secret Weapons of WWII. So, instead of expanding into another section of the war (such as Rumble in Russia or Pulverising the Pacific), DICE opted for a different approach, namely the aforementioned Secret Weapons. The developer looked at a lot of weapons that were reportedly being developed for

conflict in World War II, but missed that crucial "Fall of the Third Reich" deadline. These include things such as the rocket pack, the amphibious jeep called the Schwimmwagen, and the Wasserfall Guided Rocket. There are also new heavy infantry units such as the anti-air Flakpanzer and the Sherman Tank with T-34 Calliope (multi rocket launcher), a range of rocket-powered aircraft and a few new weapons such as shotguns and the throwing knife.

The mix is completed with six new levels, including the Eagles Nest - some being night time missions. Bikes finally make an appearance in the game, complete with sidecars touting mounted machine guns. And airdrops are also now executed with a Cargo Plane. Both sides have amphibious craft, though the Allied forces have an advantage with a large amphibious troop carrier as well as a high-speed Commando inflatable boat. The Axis forces have an amphibious jeep, though...



Big tanks and bikes... woohoo!



Ah, yes, the future of personal aviation

As you might have guessed by now, these things change the battles quite a bit. For one, the aircraft are all very fast and nearly impossible to control until you get used to them. And the heavy infantry has become much more powerful, though very little has changed for soldiers in the field.

As with every expansion, you can't use

the new units in the older maps, which is a pity, and there are no new Pacific maps - something I quite miss. Battlefield as a game hasn't changed much either, though there have been a few changes made to the PC AI. Secret Weapons of WWII return Battlefield to its more gimmicky heritage, and I can foresee a lot of crazy antics with ramping amphibious jeeps, rolling bikes and kamikaze rocket-pack pilots. It's not a great addition, though the new maps are quite polished (if perhaps a bit cut and paste - one map looks a bit like the Normandy one). At least it's a significantly better package than Road to Rome.



all games reviewed on recontron machines

Minimum Specification

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

- ☺ More BF1942 craziness
- ☹ Lack of Pacific settings
- ☹ Weird new weapons
- ☹ Some weapons are too powerful
- ☺ Good maps

Summary

More in the tradition of the original game than Road to Rome, the new weapons and vehicles are fun, and the maps are well designed. The nature of the expansion tips the balance a bit in the game, and some vehicles are far too powerful, but it's a good expansion to have.

82



BREED



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GET READY TO PLAY...





pc review:



I was initially quite intrigued by the idea behind Enclave. A world has become separated into good and evil, the rift caused by a massive chasm called the Enclave. And as the Enclave starts closing, good and evil start clashing. You can choose to be either light or darkness, and then you set out on the two separate storylines to resolve your quest. The game, originally made for the Xbox, boasted 12 character classes, 20 levels, stunning graphics and a great combat system.

To this point, Enclave is a poster child for the hollow promises that press releases seem to carry. While, essentially, the game does deliver all of these things, it

fails to deliver at all. I'll try and put aside my usually bias for anything that has been ported from a console to the PC and look Enclave in the eyes for what it is: a rather mundane and boring slasher.

There is an underlying principle to creating a game: look at what your gameplay is built around and make sure that is, at least, adequate. For instance, if I was to play a driving game, I'd prefer my options to be slightly more expansive than left, right, forward and back. You want gears, handbrakes, wheel-turns and all those other things that add spice to the driving experience (plus let you do stuff you'd never dare to in your own car).

Enclave suffers from this very same phenomena. For a slasher, it is extremely uncreative. In fact, it feels as if the developers really went out of their way to ignore any other sort of melee-combat game while producing this title. Your classes, whether light or dark, pretty much fall into the categories of stealth or brute. Brute classes can get into the thick of the action and hack lots of enemy monsters to shreds. Stealth characters tend to stand back and pick off the bad guys one by one. There are also a few magic classes, but they qualify as stealth characters as well.

The only variety provided in combat are your weapons, which apply different amounts of damage. But that's about it. Instead of gaining powerful new combat moves and combos, you simply get money to gain new weapons and go further into the title. While your stealth characters still have some semblance of control, brute fighters swipe wildly at the enemy - if you click too often, your guy will swipe his sword three or four times before giving you back control. This oversight in the combat system makes things very annoying, not to mention that the hit detection is not quite on par. Sometimes my axe would

go straight through a foe without harming him, and sometimes the bad guy would fall over even though I haven't actually struck him yet.

The graphics are not that wonderful, and smack of the blandness that cross-platform titles have become




Ph34r my b100ness!



Enclave



infamous for. The enemy units aren't that varied either, though that could have been remedied if it was entertaining beating them down. But it isn't. Enclave is a massive chance wasted, which is shameful when you consider titles such as Oni and Severance set a great but simple example to follow.



all games reviewed on rectron machines

Minimum Specification
 Pentium III 600 MHz | 192 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 16 MB D3D Video Accelerator
 2.2 GB HDD

☺ Varied characters	☹ Repetitive
☹ Mindless action	☹ Stupid Combat System
	☹ Lacks variety

Summary
 A lacklustre contribution to the hack and slash genre. A botched control system, average graphics and a boring combat system drives the nails into Enclave's coffin.

42

BROKEN SWORD

THE SLEEPING DRAGON

PC CD-ROM



BROKEN SWORD

THE SLEEPING DRAGON

PC CD-ROM



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GET READY TO PLAY...





pc review:



The all powerful Merlin has disappeared, and the world is once again threatened... but this time from external sources. It is up to you to reunite the wizards of the world who, hunted and persecuted, have split up and gone into hiding. And all the while, the mysterious shadow demons stalk your every step...

I have said it before, and I will say it again: turn based strategy games are certainly not for everyone. They lack

the all out, frantic adrenaline rush that is to be found in their real time cousins and therefore seem to fall by the wayside when their flashier counterparts come along. However, turn based strategy does have a very important place in the gaming market - if you ask me, I would say that, strategically, they are far more complex than the real time strategy types, purely because they give you time to think...

Age of Wonders II was one of the better turn based strategy games to come around in a while. It had a

complexity and huge scope that put it in a league of its own. Now, roughly a year down the line, the next instalment in the series has come along in the guise of Age of Wonders: Shadow Magic. And it brings with it the same kind of turn based, thought provoking game play that made the previous title such fun.


This new title carries the tale from the previous game on, and you may even recognise a few of the main characters. A new threat to the world needs your help to see it undone. How do you go about it?

Exactly the same way that you did in the last one...

Now don't get me wrong - Age of Wonders: Shadow Magic is fun, compelling and engrossing. But a year is a long time in terms of computer game technology. The fact that the title is exactly the same as the previous title, save a few new units, a new story and new scenarios, is a little disturbing; Triumph Studios obviously believe that they have reached a comfortable point and don't seem to want to take chances in advancing what they are doing.

On the upside, this game is not an expansion... it is a stand alone product. While it does help to know the story of Age of Wonders II, it's not essential to own it. This game installs and runs independently of any others. With fairly good graphics, a simple (yet amazingly complex) interface and the ability to create massive armies for use in typical turn based play style, the game is rather enjoyable. Major travelling is done on the world map, while combat takes place in a zoomed in version of the map. One side goes, and then the other - you get the idea. The game can chew up many hours of your time and, while it does provide challenge, it certainly does not enter into the realms of 'fast-paced'. There are a few little bugs that need ironing out (as with most titles these days) but, overall, this is a stable, solid and fun game.





all games reviewed on recontron machines

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

☺ Tried and tested formula	☹ Slow
☺ Engrossing	☹ Not "new" enough

Summary
 We return to the world of super powerful sorcerers and their armies in this turn based title following on the heels of Age of Wonders II. It's more of the same - engrossing, complex and very time consuming. This is not for impatient gamers!

63

CONFLICT DESERT STORM II



"Brilliant brilliant
and brilliant"
-PSM2



BACK FOR SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS!



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GET READY TO PLAY...





pc review:



Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader is the result of a beautiful synergy created by the teamwork of up and coming company Reflexive Entertainment and the well established and prominent Black Isle. While Reflexive was responsible for most of the game and design decisions, Black Isle oversaw production and offered a helping hand wherever possible.

From the beginning the game ensnares you in its tale, a tale which gradually unfolds as you, the Scion of King Richard the Lionheart, wend your way from Spain to Persia...in a world where history has been forever altered. Unlike the high fantasy worlds of most role-playing games, Lionheart plays out on Earth, in 16th Century Europe. The writers have outdone themselves,



Why don't the good guys ever get the good interior decorators?



Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader

weaving a story wholly plausible yet fantastic, cemented through clever use of historical figures such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Machiavelli, Gallileo and others. Lionheart displays a complexity and depth which is refreshing, not only in what you can do within it, but also character development and storyline. The "seriousness" of your quests is tactfully broken by some refreshing comical anecdotes, such as the potato man and the true reason behind Mona Lisa's smile! In sharp contrast, more time could have been spent on beta testing. It is very possible to find yourself unable to complete a quest, or even the game itself, if you say or do the wrong thing, or do not speak to the right characters. Various bugs can cause game crashes and other problems. Fortunately a patch is now available. In my 60 plus hours of gaming, I myself encountered very few of these bugs.

If the game feels similar to Fallout, that's because inspiration was taken from the Fallout series, most noticeably the "SPECIAL" character development system, which is effectively a classless character system. The traits and race you choose in character creation affects how characters within the game will respond to you, especially the Inquisition. A beautiful touch in a world where distrust and fear in the forces of magic are rife!

From the outset you find yourself immersed in a vibrant and atmospheric world, where the sheer abundance of quests provides plenty of opportunity for adventure. You will rarely find yourself in a position with nothing to do. You can take multiple quests from different factions or groups, even groups hostile towards each other. At one stage you should find yourself as the player facing a moral quandary! That the developers saw fit to add such an event to the game gives it a more personal appeal.


The game is graphically beautiful, though it brings nothing new to the market. Musical scores and stunning voice acting, combine beautifully to provide a pleasing gaming experience.

Combat is simplistic. Left click to attack, right click to cast spell. Pausing the game allows you to quaff potions, use scrolls or

change spells. Creatures spawn according to your level, but this seems flawed, as often you can find yourself having to lure monsters out one by one in order to slay them. While it shouldn't detract much from your gaming experience, this repetition can become annoying. The game comes with a co-operative multiplayer mode, though multiplayer seems to be pretty buggy. It may or may not work, depending on your hardware. Most multiplayer problems should find their solution in the patch.

Long, varied and with a high re-playability rating, Lionheart is certainly one of the better fantasy games to surface in quite some time. Its multiplayer problems will probably serve to keep Lionheart off the top 10 lists, as will, to a certain extent, its single player bugs. Regardless, the game is a gem, offering features that by far outweigh any problems it might have.





all games reviewed on recontron machines

Minimum Specification
 Pentium III 700 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 8MB Video Accelerator Card
 1.6 GB HDD

- ☺ Stunning voice acting
- ☹ Can be buggy
- ☺ Insane amount of quests
- ☹ Many load screens
- ☺ Original storyline
- ☹ Creatures can be too powerful

Summary
 A vast world, colourful characters, epic storyline and impressive array of quests and sub-quests combine to bring you a gaming experience you can lose yourself in for days, if not weeks. Set in an alternate 16th century Europe, Lionheart offers a well deserved break from contemporary high fantasy.

84

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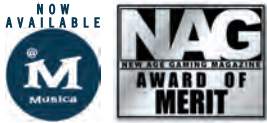
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GET READY TO PLAY...





pc review:



Republic: The Revolution has arrived after being in development for what seems like an eternity. However, does this political strategy offering from Eidos live up to its billing as being one of the most ambitious PC titles of all time? The answer - well it depends on what you expected the game to be in the first place.

Out of the ashes of the once mighty, now-defunct Soviet Union have sprung countless states - Republic takes place in one such state, Novistrana, ruled by the brutal and corrupt dictator (are there any other kind?) - Vasily Karasov. Your character has a personal vendetta against the president after what he did to your family. With discontent spreading throughout the nation, the time has come for you to seize power and spark a revolution. You start with one supporter to create a faction that will

grow (hopefully) through your use of influence, wealth and force.

That, in a hundred words or less, is the premise of Republic. However, I have to caution any gamer out there who is keen on purchasing this title, to be very cautious before buying it. It is not because Republic is a bad game. No, instead it is because Republic is a game that is unlike anything that you have ever played that makes it a tricky buy.

I am willing to say that the majority of gamers will not even play it more than a handful of times after seeing it in action. It is a strategy game, yes, but it is not about resource gathering or using your units to knock the stuffing out of your opponent.

Instead, Republic is perhaps one of the most cerebral games I have played in a very long time. Essentially each game day is broken into a morning, afternoon and evening period. You and your followers can perform one action during each of these periods. Being a political game, these actions can range from scouting for information, headhunting someone for your party or simply killing off an opponent. Obviously, the further along you go in the game, the more actions become available.

Each action requires a certain amount of resources to perform. There are three resources in Republic - force, wealth and influence. It is better to view these resources as ideologies that can impact each other. For example force beats influence, influence beats wealth and wealth beats force. While it may seem like a simplistic viewpoint, it works to great effect in Republic.



You'll spend most of your time here



Time to brush up on your Russian



Meet your fearless leader

Republic: the revolution

A title such as this one requires a good tutorial to help the player find his/her feet. Unfortunately, the sum of the tutorial is a couple of static screenshots highlighting different options. Given the amount of time spent on Republic, it is almost unforgivable to have neglected such a core element.

Having said that, Republic is still a strangely addictive game that does not easily let go - the atmospheric Russian music, speech and newspaper articles all contribute to pulling you deeper into the game. If you are someone who appreciates the subtle nuances of gaming and how art imitates life, then this is the title you should be playing.

In my mind, this title is to PC gaming as Shakespeare is to English literature - difficult to swallow at first, but worth every sip when you are finished.



I can hear the 007 music playing already



all games reviewed on recontron machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 800 MHz | 512 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM | 32 MB Video Accelerator | 1 GB HDD

- ⊖ Difficult
- ⊖ Original
- ⊖ Addictive
- ⊗ Difficult
- ⊗ 512 MB RAM
- ⊗ Will not suit everyone

Summary

Republic: The Revolution totally redefines the political strategy gaming genre, if such a one ever existed. While it does take getting used to, playing Republic pays off in a big way. This is definitely a must-have for every discerning gamer who wants more from a strategy title than just resource gathering and unit warfare.

85



Game On

The best players rely on the Sennheiser Communications PC 150, one of five brand new Sennheiser PC headsets. Thanks to the ultra-comfortable headband, hour-long game playing and internet surfing on your PC will become a totally new, exciting experience. Its noise cancelling microphone, inline volume-control and the microphone mute function is sure to give you an added advantage. Sounds rough for the competition, right?

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pc review:



▶ Sid Meier's original computer game titled *Civilization* was ground-breaking in its time, and has spawned an entire genre. Since then, Sid Meier himself has revisited the theme with titles such as *Alpha Centauri*. *Galactic Civilizations* is a third-party production that, like *Alpha Centauri*, takes the *Civilization* concept into space...

In *Galactic Civilizations*, the aim is to gain dominance over a galaxy, whether by military or by more peaceful means. The player starts the game with an inhabited planet in a star system called Sol - our own solar system. Unfortunately, you are limited to playing humans - the other races are always rivals (not necessarily opponents) and cannot be selected. The player also has a colony ship and a survey ship at start of game. The survey ship is used to scout the area and investigate various deep-space anomalies, which yield different benefits. The colony ship is used to colonise another star system, should it have suitably inhabitable planets. Each inhabited planet yields productivity and income based on its population and its people's happiness level, modified by various planetary enhancements that can be installed.

This game's main appeal lies in its incredible complexity - there are so many factors to take into consideration that they cannot all be covered in this review. Suffice it to say that a player needs to be economically, culturally, technologically and militarily competitive. Furthermore,

internal governmental policies need to be managed in order to encourage economic growth while keeping the population happy. Foreign diplomatic relations are also important, balanced against espionage. This game offers a very good simulation of running an interstellar empire. Being a turn-based strategy game, *Galactic Civilizations* does not boast super-advanced graphics or sound. Play takes place on a two-dimensional map (this is something I always have an issue with when it come to games supposedly set in space - space isn't flat, folks!) The map is divided into sectors, and these represent territory owned by one race or another. Some sectors don't contain star systems, so starbases can be built in order to exert influence in such sectors.

Something that is very pleasant to see in a game of this type is the fact that the victory options are pretty well balanced. What this means is that a cultural or technological victory can be realistically achieved. In fact, the military path of galactic conquest is one of the more difficult approaches to take, as it drains resources and involves careful strategic planning, given the distances involved. And don't think you can win by armed might if you alienate every other race! Alliances and trade are crucial in this game, as they are in real life - an isolated organism starves, withers and dies, after all.

On the down-side, *Galactic Civilizations* is rather buggy. This only really becomes apparent over the course of a long game (which is what this game was designed for!)

- some starbases suddenly become invisible, for example. Now, this might be a reasonable situation if it was limited to starbases belonging to rival races with high technological levels of development. However, it makes far less sense for perfectly functioning bases of your own to disappear from your map view when your empire is thriving and all your people are happy! And this glitch isn't limited to starbases alone - some starships, belonging to the player or to another race, also become "invisible" - needless to say, it becomes rather difficult to find them and issue orders to them!

Stardock have taken an interesting approach to the development of this game. Their strategy appears to be one

of growing the game in an almost organic fashion. The game as it stands, right out of the box, doesn't match what is described in the manual in every regard. Downloading patches for it brings the features closer to what is in the manual's pages. Incidentally, both the documentation and the in-game text are plagued by atrocious use of English - spelling mistakes and erroneous grammar are rife, and some sentences only make sense after being deciphered. It appears that no one bothered to check the text, which speaks ill of the production process.

Despite the problems this game suffers from, it is nonetheless a very good title. Fans of previous *Civ* games, in particular, will love this one. Hopefully, Stardock will continue to develop this game and resolve the issues that it has, though, of course, this doesn't help users without Internet access very much!



▶ Look, Actual graphics - this game isn't about 3D graphics and pushing the technological envelope



all games reviewed on AOpen machines

Minimum Specification

Pentium III 600 MHz | 64MB RAM | 12X CD ROM | 16MB Video Accelerator
500 MB HDD

- ☺ Satisfyingly complex
- ☺ Multiple play style options

- ☹ Atrocious language use
- ☹ Late-game bugs
- ☹ Primitive graphics and sound

Summary

This is a wonderfully complex game that will keep buyers busy for a very long time - there will be no skipping of the easier difficulty levels for the vast majority of players! Marred by bugs and poor linguistics, it is nonetheless highly recommended for those looking for a challenge.

70

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Challenge Everything



Electronic Arts (NASDAQ: ERTS) officially announced today the development of The Lord of the Rings™, The Return of the King™ for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system, the Xbox™ video game system from Microsoft, Nintendo GameCube™, Game Boy® Advance, and the PC. All versions of The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King game will be released worldwide in November 2003 under the EA GAMES™ brand.

Based on New Line Cinema's upcoming film adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's classic fantasy novel, The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King video game will let players journey through multiple gameplay paths, taking control of the motion picture trilogy's heroes including Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Sam, and Frodo. Set in all of the breathtaking locations from the upcoming movie, The Return of the King's third person gameplay will include immersive action and epic adventure elements based in rich, interactive levels. An all-new multiplayer co-op mode will let players form their own Fellowship before embarking on their journey through Middle-earth™.

Under an exclusive licensing agreement with New Line Cinema, EA has the rights to create and publish interactive entertainment games based on the movie trilogy. Currently under development, The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King game is the second installment in a series of licensed The Lord of the Rings games from EA. The console and PC versions are currently being developed by EA's Redwood Shores Studio. The Game Boy Advance version is being developed by Griptonite Games, an Amaze Entertainment Studio. For more information on EA's The Lord of the Rings games, visit the official product website at <http://lordoftherings.eagames.com>.

The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King film from New Line Cinema will be released in theaters nationwide on December 17, 2003. For more information about The Lord of the Rings movies, please go to <www.lordoftherings.net> <http://www.lordoftherings.net>.

ABOUT ELECTRONIC ARTS: Electronic Arts, headquartered in Redwood City, California, is the world's leading interactive entertainment software company. Founded in 1982, Electronic Arts posted revenues of more than \$1.7 billion for fiscal 2002. The company develops, publishes and distributes software worldwide for video game systems, personal computers and the Internet. EA markets its products under three brand names: EA SPORTS™, EA GAMES™, and EA SPORTS BIG™. More information about EA's products and full text of press releases can be found on the Internet at <http://info.ea.com>.

ABOUT NEW LINE CINEMA: Founded in 1967, New Line Cinema is the entertainment industry's leading independent producer and distributor of theatrical motion pictures. New Line licenses its films to ancillary markets including cable and broadcast television as well as to international venues. The company, which is a subsidiary of AOL Time Warner Inc., operates several divisions including in-house theatrical distribution, marketing, home video, television, acquisition, production, licensing and merchandising units. More information about New Line Cinema can be obtained at <www.newline.com> <http://www.newline.com>. For further press information about New Line Cinema's merchandising program, contact Stephanie Basmol or Sheila Feren at FerenCom, 212.953.9898.



pc review:



▶ If anyone had to make this game, it had to be Codemasters. These guys brought us Colin McCrae, a game I still play to this day. Before I got this game, I had never played an Indy car game worth remembering, even though I enjoy the sport, the game has always lacked that one thing that makes a game worth playing. When I got IndyCar Series, I prepared for the worst, and got the best.

The first thing that drew my attention is the absolutely low system requirements: 700mhz processor, 256 MB



memory, 32mb graphics card. Taking this into account, the game does not look as good as games are expected to look, but hey, when you drive that Indy Car at 200mph it actually looks and feels as if you are. The graphics could maybe have been better, but it really doesn't take too much from the game - what really stands out in this game is it's sound. Fair enough, there are a few glitches here and there, but over all the sound is as real as the races we see on TV, and that's real enough for me. Remember, this is a fully realistic game, and even with all the drive assists on, you still get the

authenticity. It never has an arcade feel; the realism is really pushed by the Master Class driving classes. This is where famous Indy drivers teach you the ins and outs of the game. Don't bother playing the game if you don't want to do the classes. They explain everything in detail and are rather difficult.

The other aspect that adds to the realism is the fact that you can change everything on your car setup, from wings to tyre pressure, from fuel mix to weight and toe in. If you don't know what this means, do the classes.

Finally to race day - everything is there, the sounds the crowds and yes, the difficulty. You can either do a full season, one race or the Indianapolis 500. But remember, on easy, this game will still take you hours to master and even then, playing it on easy proves nothing, rather do it without all the assists. Everything is customizable, from the car to the weather and assists. It might take you a day just to figure the setup out, before you even get onto the track. There isn't much of a story,

Indycar series

apart from the score sheet after every race. This game is really only for fans and driving game fanatics. Don't expect to get in and drive off, don't expect to slap into every wall and win, not going to happen. Expect to spend hours understanding and loving the sport and then maybe get a third place. And if you get into a race, remember there is no quitting, at all. For some odd reason, if you want to quit a race, you might as well reset the PC. There are some serious menu issues with this game. For one, the control setup is actually outside the game. Overall, this game is not bad, but it is not good. If you are an Indy fan, then it is brilliant. Although it captures the reality of Indy racing, it closes the door for the rest of us. Had I not known and loved Indy racing, I might have hated this game. It is ultra realistic, within limits. It takes hours to get right and should really only be played by die hard fans.



AOpen®

all games reviewed on recontron machines

Minimum Specification
 Pentium II 750 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 8 x CD ROM | 32 MB D3D Video Accelerator
 1 GB HDD

☺ Extremely fun	☒ Niche market
☺ Very realistic	☒
☺ Resource friendly	☒

Summary
 Here's a thrilling racing game that delivers a high degree of realism while asking very little from the machine running it. Fast paced, exciting and detailed, this game will sadly appeal to enthusiasts far more than laymen.

75



World's 1st 800MHz SFF PC



- ▶ Supports Intel Socket 478 Pentium 4 / Celeron with 400/533/800MHz FSB
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- ▶ Built in Intel Extreme Graphics 2 and Six Channel audio
- ▶ On board high speed connection: mini1394a, USB2.0, 10/100M LAN
- ▶ Integrated Cooling Engine(ICE)technology



- ▶ Supports Intel Socket 478 Pentium 4 / Celeron with 400/533MHz FSB
- ▶ Built in high performance S3 Pro-Savage 3D Graphics Controller
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- ▶ Overclocking - FSB, Multiplier

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- ▶ Supports Dual Channel 266/333/400*2 AGP 8X and Six Channel Audio
- ▶ On board high speed connection: IEEE1394a, mini1394a, USB2.0
- ▶ Integrated Cooling Engine(ICE)technology



- ▶ Supports AMD Socket 462 Athlon XP / Duron CPU
- ▶ nVIDIA nForce2 Ultra 400 Chipset supports 200/266/333/400 Mhz FSB
- ▶ Dual Channel DDR 200/266/333/400 Memory Up to 3GB
- ▶ Supports AGP 8X, 6 Channel Audio
- ▶ Supports ATA 66/100/133.6 USB2.0
- ▶ On-board LAN Port
- ▶ Overclocking - FSB, Multiplier

pc review:



CSI: Crime Scene Investigation

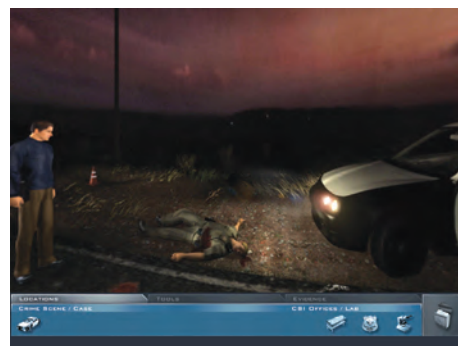
The current trend in gaming is undoubtedly leaning toward fast and frenetic games, and a point-and-click adventure that relies more on logic than on firepower is a welcome change of pace. Ubi Soft's CSI manages to do the TV show justice, but is unfortunately too short-lived.

CSI is undoubtedly one of the most popular TV shows currently airing, and has certainly glamorised the profession of forensic detectives. The game, thankfully, stays true to the show upon which it is based, both in concept and presentation. The characters from the CSI series are present, and their voice-acting is flawlessly provided by the actors who play them in the TV show. The game starts by introducing your character as a rookie on the CSI team, and the introductions are hardly over before you've arrived at your first crime scene. For those unfamiliar with the concept of CSI, it is your duty to "process" a crime scene, by collecting and examining evidence, as well as



interrogating suspects in order to try to determine how the crime in question (often a murder) was committed, and by who. At your disposal are various tools such as an ultraviolet light (for examining bruises), luminol (for detecting blood stains), as well as the ever-present fingerprint dusting kit. Your arsenal of available tools is quite extensive, however I found it disappointing that certain tools are used only once in the whole campaign. Furthermore, with only 5 different cases, the game is quite short, however you will want to revisit old cases in order to fully complete them (you are given a percentage score after each case, determined primarily by whether or not you examined all available evidence) in order to unlock bonus materials. Visually, CSI looks good, with realistic locales and characters. The sound is also very well done, particularly the true-to-life voice acting, which undoubtedly adds to the experience. Ultimately, CSI is a refreshing change, since point-and-click adventures are somewhat of a rarity nowadays, however the game is a little too

short to be rewarding, and although your success is dependent on the use of logic, the game could be more challenging, but CSI remains a good option for fans of the show, or anyone looking for a break from the tedium of more action-oriented titles.



- ⊕ Innovative
- ⊕ True to TV series
- ⊕ Voice acting
- ⊖ Too short
- ⊖ Not challenging enough

75

pc review:



Starsky & Hutch

Games based on TV shows are frequently very disappointing, but nonetheless incredibly successful, usually riding on the popularity of the television franchise. Fortunately, not too bad a job has been done with Starsky & Hutch, which, despite its simplicity, is quite entertaining.

It's quite a puzzling move for a company to decide to base a game on a TV show that very few members of the game's target market will be old enough to remember. For those who've never seen Starsky & Hutch, it was a rather typical, though successful, cop show, centred around two enforcers of the law (if you'd guessed that their names were "Starsky" & "Hutch", you'd be right) who primarily engage in car chases with no-gooders in their trademark Ford Gran Torino. The game is best described as a driving/shoot 'em up hybrid; you have to follow the ne'er-do-wells in question through the streets of Bay City, while



simultaneously trying to destroy their mode of transportation, while usually armed with nothing larger than a revolver. The twist comes in the form of the Viewer Rating concept - your objective in each mission, or "episode" as the game calls them, is not only to stop the bad guys, but also to make the show as exciting as possible. During each episode, the Viewer Rating counts down like a timer - when it reaches zero, you've failed your mission. Fortunately, the VR can be replenished in many ways, generally by shooting at the bad guys and driving recklessly, though collisions with other vehicles or civilians won't go down too well with the public. It's an interesting concept, and one that does make the play dynamic more interesting, but it does become tedious after the first few episodes. When it comes to graphics, Starsky & Hutch looks realistic, while still retaining the feel of an old TV-show, and the soundtrack features tunes and voices very reminiscent of the show, serving to engross the player in the Starsky & Hutch experience. Starsky & Hutch is an entertaining game, despite the lack of depth in its play dynamic, and the

too-short story mode, and the average multiplayer mode does little to add to the longevity of the title. It is by no means a bad game, particularly if you're a devotee of the show, but sadly lacks the depth to keep one engaged for too long.



- ⊕ Nostalgic
- ⊕ Simple and entertaining play dynamic
- ⊖ Short
- ⊖ Can become tedious
- ⊖ Few will remember the show

67

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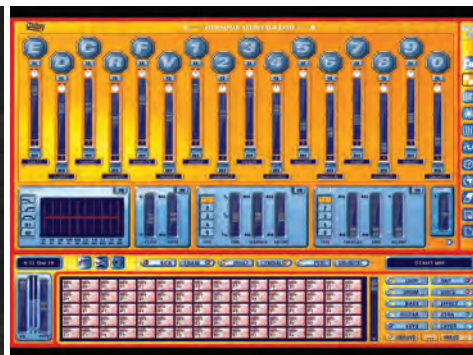


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pc budget review:

▶ Many gamers are undoubtedly frustrated at not only having to fork out a lot of cash for the latest games, but also needing to constantly upgrade their rigs in order to be able to play them - hence the budget title, older games re-released at very affordable prices.

SiN - The first person shooter genre is certainly overcrowded, and a title needs to bring some innovation to the genre if it is to succeed. SiN manages to be an entertaining game, even if the play dynamic does tend towards a platform game style at times, though it does have an interesting and engaging storyline which, unsurprisingly, ultimately results in you having to save the world. Reasonably competent AI makes SiN challenging, but the play dynamic is reminiscent of many other FPS games from that time frame. Sadly, SiN wasn't graphically perfect even at the time of its original release in 1998, but on the bright side, this means that it will run even on relatively ancient systems. Good sound effects and score are somewhat offset by rather poor voice acting, but that doesn't detract too heavily from the game. Fortunately, the multiplayer mode is quite entertaining, despite the game's age, adding to the title's longevity. Ultimately, it's very difficult to recommend a first person shooter from 1998, particularly with Doom 3 & Half Life 2 right around the corner, but for those unable to run the latest titles, SiN is certainly a solid and entertaining action game.

Heretic II - Heretic II tells the story of Corvus, an Elven archer who returns to his homeland, only to find it overrun by a strange and mysterious plague. Interestingly, though based on the Quake II engine, Heretic II is played solely from a third-person perspective, though the game

dynamics are still unmistakably similar to those of a first person shooter. Personally, I didn't find that this detracted much from the game, but some might be disappointed by it. Large, well designed levels, and graphics that even today don't look too terrible make this an easy title to enjoy, and the fantasy setting, not to mention Corvus's extensive arsenal of weaponry and spells, provides a refreshing change from most games in this genre, though the AI is on the poor side. The soundtrack and effects are fairly well done, though they can at times become repetitive. On the whole, Heretic II is certainly not brilliant, and the third-person perspective may take some getting used to, but it is nevertheless quite an entertaining title, even 5 years after its release, particularly if more recent games are out of your reach.

Dance eJay 3 - Many of us have had aspirations of becoming a DJ, but the costs associated with obtaining the right equipment are often prohibitive. Dance eJay 3 attempts to bring that experience to the PC, and it doesn't do too badly, though low quality samples, some of which are merely variations on other samples, may disappoint enthusiasts, though additional

samples can be found on the eJay website. Unfortunately, the somewhat convoluted and initially daunting interface may be discouraging to novices. However, the ability to record one's own samples, or import from other sources, as well as numerous options for sound editing will keep those with an interest in the concept engaged. Ultimately, Dance eJay 3 can by no means compete with professional equipment, and probably doesn't have the depth to please those with a serious interest in mixing, but it's probably a good choice for a newcomer content just to dabble.



Dance eJay 3

Pentium 300 MHz | 128 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM
| 4 MB Graphics Card | 100 MB HDD

Developer: Empire Interactive
Publisher: Xplosiv
Distributor: WWE (011) 462-0150
Genre: Music
RRP: R99.00

61

Heretic II

Pentium 166 MHz | 32 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM
16 MB Graphics Card | 50 MB HDD

Developer: Raven Software
Publisher: Xplosiv
Distributor: WWE (011) 462-0150
Genre: Action
RRP: R99.00

73

SiN

Pentium 166 MHz | 32 MB RAM | 4 x CD ROM
2 MB Graphics Card | 50 MB HDD

Developer: Ritual Entertainment
Publisher: Xplosiv
Distributor: WWE (011) 462-0150
Genre: First Person Shooter
RRP: R99.00

70

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ps2 review:



EA Sports have developed a reputation for producing sports simulations of only the highest quality, and fans of their work are generally treated to a new release of their favourite franchise year after year. It's been about 2 years since EA Sports released their last rugby effort, which was decent if nothing else, but does the new version live up to the pedigree set by EA Sports's other titles?



Rugby simulations have been very, very few and exceptionally far between, mostly on account of the sport's lack of popularity in America. However, Rugby is supposedly gaining some publicity in the land of the free, and EA Sports, in their typical style, have already attempted to capitalise on that. Let me state at the outset that my expectations for Rugby 2004 were not exceptionally high - I find it highly unlikely that EA Sports would assign their top talent to the task of creating a simulation of a sport very few of them will ever have heard of. On the other hand, though, I did expect that even if the play dynamic was perhaps not up to scratch, the title's graphics and overall level of polish would be on a par with most other EA Sports titles. After playing the game, I can say that I'm both pleasantly surprised and moderately disappointed.

Heel to the head

Rugby must seem to be one of the most absurd sports



▲ Fanie attempts yet another unsuccessful Heilmann Manoeuvre

ever devised (aside, of course, from Aussie Rules Football) to someone who has never been exposed to it before, and as you might imagine, the flavour of the game is probably very difficult to capture in a videogame.

Surprisingly, however, EA Sports has done a rather good job with Rugby 2004's play dynamic. Unlike its predecessor, Rugby 2004's play dynamic emphasises the "running game" aspect of rugby, making the experience a more entertaining one than the last outing. However, rucks, scrums and mauls are still an integral part of the game, but unfortunately, there is no "scrum meter" this time around, so it can be difficult to judge who's coming out on top in those situations. The control system is effective without being too complex, and after a few minutes of acclimatisation, you'll be executing sprints, tackles, and up-and-unders like a professional, but sadly, the training mode is rather threadbare, leaving a lot to be desired.

Blood, sweat, tears, and more blood

Visually, Rugby 2004 is unfortunately severely disappointing. I had high expectations in this regard, given the level of graphical shine displayed in other recent EA Sports titles. The player models look terribly blocky, and although the faces do resemble those of their real life counterparts, they could certainly have been more detailed. The animation is generally quite well done, though there are a few instances in which it is exceptionally jerky. Another gripe I have is the excessive load times, particularly when starting the game or after a match - very few things are as annoying as having to sit through long loading periods. In terms of sound, the commentary is provided by John Inverdale and Gordon Bray, though it becomes repetitive, and the uneven inflections can become somewhat annoying. The backing music and crowd effects, however, are decent enough.

Final whistle

What it comes down to is that Rugby 2004 provides quite an entertaining experience, though it could have done with a bit more polish in certain areas. It does well to capture the essence of

rugby, and it is certainly an improvement over the last title in the series, and a roster consisting of 62 officially licensed teams (including Super 12 teams) doesn't do it any harm, but poor graphics are quite a letdown. Nonetheless, if you've been waiting for a good rugby simulation, you'll definitely have a good time with Rugby 2004 (particularly in multiplayer) - it isn't perfect, but it definitely is entertaining if you have a penchant for the sport, but never liked head injuries and brain damage enough to play the real thing.



Minimum Specification

1-4 Players (Multitap) | 1043KB Memory | Analog: Sticks only - Vibration compatible

- ☺ Fun to play
- ☹ Poor graphics
- ☺ Official license
- ☹ Lacks polish
- ☺ Good recreation of the sport

Summary

A faithful recreation of the sport, with a well-executed play dynamic that makes for a very entertaining experience. Sadly, the title lacks the shine possessed by other EA Sports games, and poor graphics and mediocre sound do detract from the game, but anyone looking for a rugby simulation will probably find it enjoyable. Casual gamers might want to try it before buying.

71

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a 600 blot spoogle chop?

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ps2 review:

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

Once again it's time for Junior to grab his well worn Fedora and his trusty Bull Whip... a world of adventure awaits the intrepid explorer as he is challenged to find and enter the mysterious and long lost Emperor's Tomb, hidden somewhere in China... but, as always, all is not quite as it seems for Indiana Jones.

I had my doubts about this one, I must say. This is the first Indiana Jones game I have ever given more than a



cursory try. Added to that the fact that LucasArts' track record has been less than peachy lately, and I am sure you can understand my apprehension. But first impressions are normally wrong and very definitely in this case.

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb is a great game, full of all the excitement and nail biting adventure that one would expect. The Indy series has sometimes been accused of being a Tomb Raider clone but, quite frankly, the team behind Lara Croft's latest game could take a leaf out of this book.

The only real problem that I came across was a control issue. And then only really when Indy is swimming... quite a few virtual sharks and crocodiles had a great time snacking on my struggling carcass. Most of the difficulty inherent in the title comes from the fact that the game is, all by itself, pretty tough to get through. Lightning reflexes and perfect timing are what you need to get through this brilliant adventure title.

Hats off to LucasArts for this one - they really have done a good job. The game is entertaining, the story is interesting and... well, in spirit, it's as Indiana Jones as you're going to get (short of the films, of

course).

This is one that I will recommend to any third person adventure fan - the right amount of humour, challenge and all out action to keep anyone happy.



- Great fun
- Challenging
- Excellent action
- Some control issues
- Not incredibly original

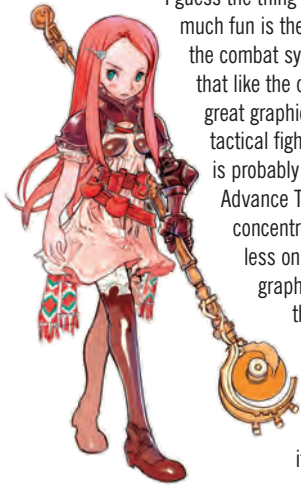
71

meet
him
online
www.nag.co.za



gba review:

For a series of games that has no cohesion other than a title, Final Fantasy has done really well, spanning many different platforms and generally taking the world by storm. But how does one of the whole world's favourite titles do when it enters the realm of hand held gaming?



I guess the thing that makes Final Fantasy so much fun is the whole tactical nature of the combat system. Sure, there are those that like the compelling story lines and great graphics, but for me, it's the tactical fights that take the cake. Which is probably why I enjoyed Final Fantasy Advance Tactics so much - it concentrates more on fighting, and less on story (and certainly less on graphics, seeing as how it is on the GameBoy).

That's not to say that the game has no story - in fact, for what it is, the story is rather good. But it is the careful trimming of

the characters to be the best they can be, the intensely tactical nature of the combats (which are governed by random rules excluding certain actions) and the overall sense of achievement gained from knocking the stuffing out of your opponent that really counts here.

The combat system within the game is more than just running around and beating things up. With a myriad of weapons, races and careers, a huge amount of scope is open to the player. Characters advance and learn new skills, as well as getting the opportunity to change careers every now and then. This adds a depth to the game that, along with its length, makes playing it a very worthwhile undertaking... and there is a fun multiplayer mode, too, for added play time.

Fans of the console based Final Fantasy games will

probably do a little head scratching when they see this title, but rest assured... there is no better way for the Final Fantasy series to be played on a handheld console. Challenging, engrossing and, above all, fun, this one is a guaranteed thumb-cramper!



- ⊕ Long
- ⊕ Fun
- ⊕ Addictive
- ⊕ Might not be what is expected

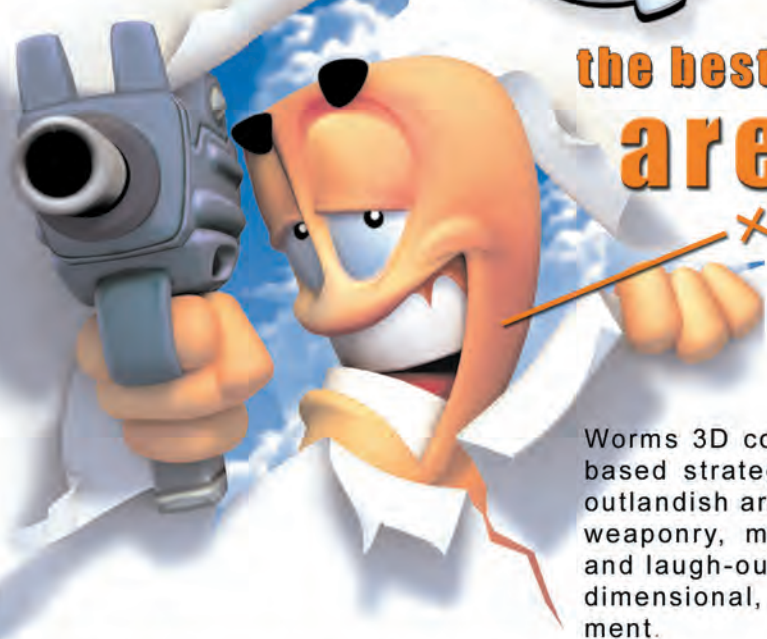
75

PC CD-ROM



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GET READY TO PLAY...



ps2 review:



I have never been a fan of games based on movies - the concept is generally good, but I've far too often been disappointed by shoddy translations between the two media. Unfortunately, The Great Escape falls into the same category as countless other movie-inspired games - it could've been great, but is sorely disappointing.

Games based on films long forgotten by most people seem to be the trend nowadays, despite how illogical the concept seems. Thus, I probably shouldn't have been surprised when I came face to face with The Great Escape, based on the 1963 film of the same name, starring Steve McQueen (no, I'm not making this up). The Great Escape is best described as a stealth-



action game, with various other elements thrown into the play dynamic to make things more exciting. Sadly, however, gamers have come to expect that games in this genre are capable of competing with the likes of Metal Gear Solid and Splinter Cell, and The Great Escape falls desperately short of that mark. Although there are a few all-out shooting sequences, which are hampered by a poor control system, much of the game will be spent sneaking around, generally while you're

The Great Escape

engaged in typical "find and retrieve" quests. Unfortunately, the play dynamic is very unbalanced in the stealth aspects - occasionally, you can walk directly through a guard's line of sight without being spotted, while other times you'll be detected even when you're supposedly well hidden. Add to

this a limit of 3 saves per mission, and the game can become seriously frustrating. Various sequences that see you controlling vehicles, or taking on the role of a tail-gunner on an aircraft are a nice idea, but once again, the awkward control system makes these potentially entertaining diversions into chores. Visually, despite a sometimes choppy frame rate, the different locations are well enough detailed, but the characters are animated in a very unrealistic fashion, and their general appearances seem to be deformed versions of their real-life counterparts. The sound track and sound effects are decent, as is the voice-acting, though they are by no stretch of the imagination able to be considered remarkable. Fans of the movie may get a kick out of The Great Escape, but for those looking for an engaging stealth adventure title, you'd do best to look elsewhere.

True to the movie

Shoddy play dynamic

Awkward control

Repetitive

55

ps2 review:



Innovation is something seldom seen in an "action" game - the developer's emphasis is generally placed on creating more things for you to shoot at (and to shoot at you) than on trying to add something truly revolutionary to the game. Giants: Citizen Kabuto, though it hasn't redefined the genre in any way, manages to almost perfectly splice several different genres into one game, despite its rather pronounced lack of graphical finesse.

Giants: Citizen Kabuto is set on a mysterious piece of rock floating through space, known only as "The Island". The Island is inhabited by an evil race of amphibious creatures, known as the Sea Reapers, ugly-yet-cute but utterly stupid beings



called Smarties, and a huge and very angry beast known as Kabuto, who happens to be going through a rather taxing period of existential angst. Add to this 5 cockney aliens wielding high-tech weaponry and with an unbreakable will to party, and you've got a very interesting assortment of characters. Throughout the game, you will get the chance to play as the Meccs (short for Meccaryns), a group of aliens who have

crash-landed on The Island, en route to their favourite holiday destination, a Sea Reaper known as Delphi, who wishes to distance herself from the evil actions of her peers, as well as the immensely powerful Kabuto. The control system is intuitive, and once you've got to

Giants

grips with it, you'll be rewarded to find that the Giants experience is completely different for each race. Furthermore, in addition to the out and out shooting action that makes up the majority of the play dynamic, elements of adventure as well as RTS gaming break the tedium of blasting everything in sight. Unfortunately, since Giants is a port of a PC title released in 2000, the game's graphics, though not awful, certainly fail to push the PS2 to its limits, but an engaging story, complete with superb voice-acting and witty dialogue help to offset this drawback. Giants is sure to provide both laughs and entertainment, and despite the lack of multiplayer modes and the not-quite-excellent graphics, Giants is undoubtedly one of the better action titles available, with enough variety and depth to keep most gamers busy for a very decent amount of time.

Innovative

Deep play dynamic

Sure to make you laugh

Dated graphics

No multiplayer

74

gcn review:



▶ **Mario Golf, hmm, about as intellectually challenging as the real game, but then again, golf was meant to be more a social sport than anything else.**

Mario Golf is one of the best multiplayer titles to hit the GameCube. It will give hours of fun and lots of housemate rivalry. There is a fun aspect that allows you to taunt or encourage other players. Obviously this only turns into a button bashing contest to irritate the other players enough for them to screw their shots up. There is single player mode, but don't bother, it is really only good for opening characters and courses. The character AI also goes from extremely stupid to unbeatable, so watch out for bad shots. The game boasts a variety of sub games, apart from the traditional



form of golf. These include rings, where you have to hit the ball through rings, and finish the hole under par, and coins, where hundreds of coins are placed on the course and the player that collects the most in one round wins. The entire entourage of Nintendo characters is there, even the ghost; the courses and music take you back to classic games like Mario and Wario. If you want to play the single player campaign, be warned, it gets very difficult and frustrating. It can become boring but it pays off at the end. Single player is also the only way to open star characters. These can hit further and do so more accurately. The graphics of the game never really push the GameCube to its max. But in the same breath, this doesn't make a difference. At no point does the "lack" of graphics really come into play. The game does have some problems when it comes to restarting,

Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour

as this option is well hidden away. The camera angles take some getting used to and an overall consistency is lacking. Sports game fans, stay away, this is not the new edition to Madden. This game would really only appeal to Nintendo fans and people who want a bit of fun. Although it is great as a group game, don't expect to play for months on end. This game will be good for the weekend and be shelved afterward. Added to this, the game is dreadfully easy to learn, and as easy to play; apart from the single player campaign, even your Granny can pick this up and play it with ease.



- ⊕ Great multiplayer
- ⊕ Easy to play
- ⊕ A lot of fun
- ⊖ Can get frustrating
- ⊖ Repetitive

85

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Dark Chronicle

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Rugby 2004

Strap on your boots! For true sports fans looking for the unique thrill of rugby, EA SPORTS Rugby 2004 is the most complete and authentic rugby game available. Building on the success of EA SPORTS Rugby 2001, this is world rugby at its body-ramming, bullet-passing, try-scoring best.

H@RD@C@R3

CASE MODDING

writer: Tom "Fr00tC@k3" Taylor

▶ Case modding is fast becoming one of the most popular past-times around and, for serious gamers, showing off a modded PC at a LAN is like popping your car bonnet at a street race (have you seen *2 Fast 2 Furious?*). [Unfortunately, yes. Ed]

This month's H@rdcor3 roundup is one that I have been dying to do for a couple of months and I am glad to say, is a first for South Africa. There are literally hundreds of products on the market [internationally] and sadly we only see a handful here in South Africa. A couple of local companies though have decided to import these products and are playing a key role in the development of this fast growing past-time. I am not going to yack too much this month in the introduction as I wanted to pack as many goodies as possible into this round up. I do want to extend a huge

thank-you to the companies who submitted products for review and because they support a hobby I feel very passionate about. If you plan on modding your case please support these guys and they will bring more and better products into the country. Because of obvious space issues I was not able to cover all the products I wanted to, I also did not list all the case light distributors available and did not review any LED fans and cold cathode lights (as these are readily available), but if there is a demand for more I will do a [part 2] of the H@rdcor3: Case Modding feature in the near future. (E-mail the Ed and tell him you want another modding feature.) In closing I would like to state my disappointment in some distributors I contacted while trying to get products for this round-up. Keeping in mind that not all of the big distributors do case modding products there are a couple who carry a large range but were unable or unwilling to supply products for this review.

Power Supplies

Antec True Blue 480W PSU

This is a really cool looking power supply, it features two heat extractor fans (the standard fan at the back and a top extractor fan) which has blue LEDs built in. What I really liked about this power supply is that the 20-pin main connector has a mesh wrapped cable which ties its cables neatly together. The True Blue also features dedicated "Fan Only" power connectors allowing it to control the fans in your case which helps to reduce system noise. If you have a Serial ATA hard drive then you will be happy to hear that this PSU has Serial ATA power connectors already included. The last thing which caught my attention was the external power 4-pin power connector which is handy for large water cooling systems of certain lights. It is also interesting to note that all the power connectors are gold plated.

Vantec Stealth 420W PSU

The Vantec Stealth aluminium power supply is a great power supply which, sadly, comes with a hefty price tag. It features three fans which can be controlled via a switch on the back of the unit and is definitely true to its name, on its lowest setting the unit is whisper

quiet. It also features an external-American three prong- power connector which is useless to us on its own but luckily this unit comes with a converter plug allowing you to connect any two-prong electrical appliance such as a cell-phone charger. The main power connector is also wrapped in mesh but the one thing I did not like all that much is that this PSU has, as standard, a 24-pin main power connector, and in order to use most of today's motherboards the included converter plug must be used. If you are very fussy about how your cables look in your case this will definitely put you off.

Antec True Control 550W PSU

The idea behind the Antec True Control PSU is to give you full control over the fan speed of the fans in the power supply and to allow you to adjust the +12V, +3.3V, and the +5V output. The PSU itself looks a lot like the Antec True Blue and also features the external 4-pin power connector, but does not have the same blue-LED fans. This PSU also features a mesh covered cable of the main power connector and it has Serial ATA power connectors built in. What is different with this PSU is that it comes with a front panel which fits into a 5 ¼ inch bay and has a switch to control the speed of the fans in the PSU and to manually



Antec True Blue 480W PSU

Value for Money	89
Desirability	91

Pros: Everything
Cons: Pricey
Supplied by: Frontosa [011] 466-4728
ERP: R990
Internet: www.antec-inc.com



Vantec Stealth 420W PSU

Value for Money	80
Desirability	80

Pros: Whisper quiet
Cons: Price
Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R1228
Internet: www.vantecusa.com

adjust the voltage. This front panel looks a bit bare but it allows for a stiffy drive to be mounted in it if you wish to do so.

Thermaltake Xaser Silent Purepower 480W

The Thermaltake Xaser Silent Purepower 480W does not only look funky, it is very functional too. There are two fans on this unit, of which only the outtake fan's speed can be controlled. This is done by attaching either the front panel speed control switch or the



Antec True Control 550W PSU

Value for Money	89	Pros: Allows you to manually change voltages...
Desirability	89	Cons: ...if you do not want to, this will be too pricey
		Supplied by: Frontosa [011] 466-4728
		ERP: R1239
		Internet: www.antec-inc.com

PCI bracket speed control switch. Both are supplied but only one can be connected at a time. As seems to be the norm with all of these PSU's, the main power connector cable is tied together and covered with mesh to make it look neat and to ensure no unnecessary cables are in the way to obstruct airflow. This PSU also features built in Serial ATA power. Looking at its price this product gives the Antec True Blue a run for its money; depending on your needs, either one is superb though.



Thermaltake Xaser Silent Purepower 480W

Value for Money	89	Pros: Manual fan speed control
Desirability	91	Cons: Nothing
		Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
		ERP: R788
		Internet: www.thermaltake.com

Cooler Master Aero 7+

Moving away from the conventional design, Cooler Master truly impressed me with the Aero 7+. What makes this heatsink and fan so different from the normal CPU coolers is the fan which is used to cool the heatsink. Instead of a fan placed directly on a heatsink, the Aero 7+ uses a turbine-like fan which sucks air in from its side and blows it downwards, this method also eliminates the "blind spot" caused by conventional heatsink and fan setups. The air output from this fan is quite amazing and by using the external speed control, which is placed in an open PCI bracket, the Aero 7+ is able to blow between 1900rpm and 3500rpm. The heatsink used is made completely of copper and the unit supplied to me for review was only for Socket A and Socket 370 CPUs. A Socket 462 version is also available but at the time of going to print Rectron had not imported any. The fan of the Aero 7+ is also available as a separate unit which is called the Aero blower fan and is placeable in any 80mm fan slot in your case, the blower fan retails for about R200.

Thermaltake P4 Spark 7+ Xaser Edition and Thermaltake K7 Volcano 11+ Xaser Edition

A decent CPU heatsink and fan is imperative to ensure optimal cooling. If you plan to overclock your CPU you also need to make sure you get a heatsink and fan capable of keeping your CPU cool. These two products from Thermaltake are exactly the same, except that the Thermaltake K7 Volcano 11+ is designed to fit AMD CPU's and the Thermaltake P4 Spark 7+ fits the Intel socket. The first noticeable feature of these products is that the heatsinks are made of copper, an excellent heat conductor. The P4 Spark 7+ has a maximum rating of 6000rpm and the K7 Volcano 11+ has a maximum of 4800rpm. On both products you are able to manually control the speed of the fans by connecting either the PCI bracket controller or the 5 ¼ inch bay controller (only one can be connected at a time) both of which are included in the box. Both units also come with a temperature sensor which can be stuck to the bottom of the heatsink manually - note that this must not be placed between the CPU and heatsink, but rather next to it. Both these products are truly superb, so much so, I decided to upgrade my stock heatsink and fan with the Thermaltake P4 Spark 7+.

Aguatek Blue Ice

This is a very interesting product; the Aguatek Blue Ice is a heatsink and fan for both AMD and Intel CPU's with a water pump built in. This heatsink and fan makes use of a magnetic pump to keep the liquid in it moving. The liquid moves from the metal bit over the CPU through a layer of copper fins with a fan below it to cool the liquid down (although strangely enough the fan blows away from the copper fins). I was not able to find much info on this



Cooler Master Aero 7+

Value for Money	95	Pros: New technology
Desirability	95	Cons: Nothing
		Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203-1000
		ERP: R260
		Internet: www.thermaltake.com

product as the company website seemed to be inactive and not many people seem to know about this product. Spinning at 6000 rpm this heatsink and fan is quite noisy, I was disappointed to see that there was no way to slow down the fan and having such a noise consistently is enough to drive anyone crazy. There is a lot of potential wasted with this product, and one unsolved mystery - why is the fan not blowing the air through the copper fins? Looking at the extremely high price for this unit, I find it difficult to justify it, especially when comparing it to the Thermaltake offering.

Vantec Iceberg CCB-A1C

This kit is the perfect solution for people who want a better VGA or Northbridge cooler. The package includes two secondary chip heatsinks and one heatsink and fan which is capable of spinning at 5000rpm, there is also a tube of thermal paste included as well as some thermal tape. The benefit to using something like this is to improve the cooling you currently have on either your graphics card or any other chipset on your motherboard. If you want to overclock, this kit will also help as it is able to cool a chipset much quicker because it's made of copper. This is a handy product and it works quite well, it also will not burn a hole in your pocket.

Thermaltake Giant II

Thermaltake seems to be taking the spotlight again with this superb product. The Giant II is a heatpipe VGA cooler which fits both ATI and NVIDIA graphics cards; this product makes provision for the capacitors on the graphics card and will even fit on the Radeon 9800 Pro. The Giant II requires a bit of assembly and I do not recommend it to be installed by complete newbies. One of the core features of this product is the heatpipe which connects the front part of the heatsink to the back part, allowing a very quick dispersion of heat. The installation instructions are very thorough and explain every step in the setup process in detail. For overclocking, this product is very effective and I highly recommend it. This is one for my Christmas list...

Cooler Master CRC-U01 RAM Sinks

Even though these RAM sinks are simple in construction, they have many uses. For one you can stick them onto the chips on your RAM sticks to allow quick heat dissipation making it great for overclocking. You can also use it on your graphics card or on the chipsets on your motherboard. Each pack contains eight RAM sinks and each RAM sink has double sided thermal tape on the back. This makes it extremely easy to use and the results are very effective, they are also available in aluminium alloy, but I would much rather recommend these copper based ones.



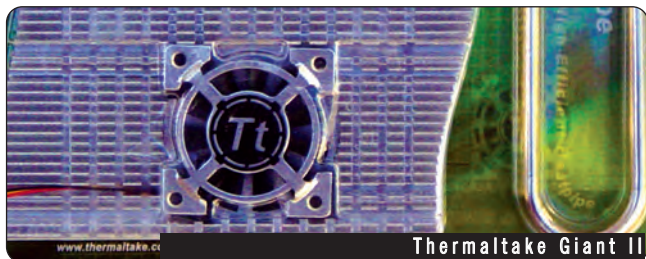
Thermaltake P4 Spark 7+ Xaser Edition and Thermaltake K7 Volcano 11+ Xaser Edition

Value for Money	94	Pros: Everything
Desirability	94	Cons: Nothing
		Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
		ERP: R184 (Spark 7+) R227 (Volcano 11+)
		Internet: www.thermaltake.com



Aguatek Blue Ice

Value for Money	50	Pros: Innovative
Desirability	50	Cons: Very expensive, noisy
		Supplied by: Wentek International [021] 551-8866
		ERP: R899
		Internet: website unknown



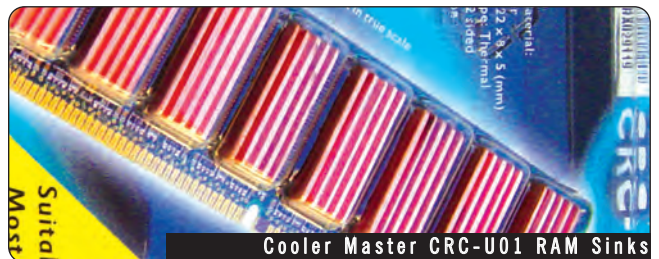
Thermaltake Giant II

Value for Money	90	Pros: Works great
Desirability	90	Cons: Installation is not that simple
		Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
		ERP: R227
		Internet: www.thermaltake.com



Vantec Iceberg CCB-A1C

Value for Money	91	Pros: Very effective
Desirability	89	Cons: Not for latest graphics cards
		Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
		ERP: R124
		Internet: www.vantecusa.com



Cooler Master CRC-U01 RAM Sinks

Value for Money	90	Pros: Easy to use Effective
Desirability	89	Cons: Does not look good on all chipsets
		Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
		ERP: R134
		Internet: www.cooler-master.com

Thermaltake Hardcano 5

The Hardcano 5 serves three purposes, the first thing it can do is house a hard drive and, using the built-in fan, it is able to keep the hard drive cool. The second, and more useful feature is its built-in temperature monitor which can be connected virtually anywhere in your computer case. The temperature monitor comes with special tape making it easy to stick to any surface of any hardware you want monitored inside your case. Lastly you are able to connect any case fan to it using the built-in switch to toggle the fan speed between three different speed settings. This product is very well priced and does the job well, for a basic mod to your system this is a great option.

Thermaltake Hardcano 6

This product is almost the same as the Hardcano 5 except that this one does not feature a LCD temperature monitor, instead it brings an IEEE 1394 port, two USB 2.0 ports, and a microphone and earphone jack to the front of your case. This one is also able to accommodate a hard drive by using the supplied brackets and you can control the speed of one fan using the fan speed controller. The Hardcano 6 can connect its audio jacks and the USB 2.0 ports by plugging in directly onto your motherboard but the IEEE 1394 port needs to be plugged into your computers' back IEEE 1394 port. For this purpose it has a long cable and a special PCI bracket which allows the cable to neatly stick out of the back of your case so that it can be plugged into the relevant port. This is a very handy product if you do not have front panel connectors and want a fan controller at your finger tips.

Thermaltake Hardcano 10

This product is definitely the one out of the Hardcano range to get. It features an LCD monitor which can monitor the surface temperature of any surface in your computer, including the CPU, by using the connected thermal sensor and sticking it to the desired surface. With the Hardcano 10 you are also able to set an alarm at a temperature you wish in case the monitored temperature reaches that number. If this happens an alarm will sound warning you of the breach. You can also record maximum and minimum temperatures if you wish to see these and, like the other products in this range, this one features a front panel with an IEEE 1394 port, two USB 2.0 ports, two fan speed controllers, and you are able to attach a hard drive to it using the supplied brackets. This is truly a handy product and hopefully Santa will bring me one this year (hint to mom).

Thermaltake Hardcano 11

The Hardcano 11 is for the serious case modder who wants to know exactly what is going on in his/her case. This product features three sets of thermal sensors which means that you can monitor three different hardware components' temperatures. The unit only features an LCD monitor and behind the monitor is an innovative, anti-shock hard drive

bay which is kept in place by a bracket and a thumbscrew. The Hardcano 11 also plugs into your motherboard to display when your hard drive is being used. It can also display the fan status, hard drive overheat status, and it is able to sound an alarm when a preset temperature is breached. The only thing I did not like was the switch, which is used to toggle between the three temperature settings. It is difficult to move and I would much rather have seen all three temperatures displayed at once.

Cooler Master Musketeer

The Musketeer from Cooler Master is one of those products you either love or hate. It features three analogue gauges to measure the Volt, sound pressure (vu), and temperature respectively. The round gauges have a retro look which I really liked it. Each of the dials also sports a funky blue light which gives it that race car feel. Apart from measuring the voltage, sound and temperature the Musketeer is mainly used to make your computer look good. This unit is very easy to install and a PCI bracket with audio in and audio out is supplied so that you can plug your soundcard into it and allow the Musketeer to measure the sound pressure from your sound card. The only thing that I did not like was that the Musketeer was a tad on the expensive side when looking at what it can actually do.

Vantec Nexus

The Vantec Nexus is a fan and light controller kit which includes two blue cold cathode lights. The unit looks very neat and allows for three fans to be connected to it, the inverter box for the cathode tubes are already built in, so you only need to plug in the lights. There are three fan controller knobs and one to control the lights. The light controller allows you to toggle between the on, off, or sound activated modes. When connected there is a funky green light around each knob. For ease of use and an all in one solution this kit is definitely the answer; its price is also fairly reasonable seeing that you get two cold cathode lights.

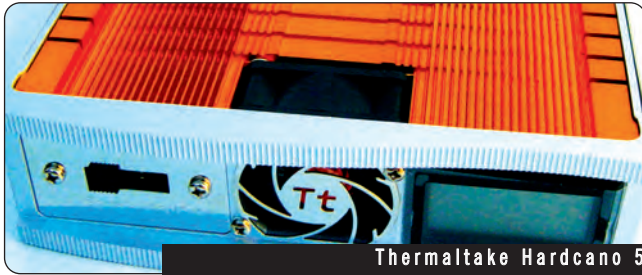
Vantec ez-swap

This is a removable hard drive rack with a difference. Apart from its funky design it sports a useful LCD monitor on the front panel and a lock to ensure the hard drive does not get removed while you are away from your computer. There is also a fan at the back of the ez-swap to ensure a cool airflow throughout the unit. The LCD monitor is able to display the temperature of the hard drive and you can set an alarm to warn you when it gets too hot. The LCD can also show the fan status of the built-in fan and it can show when the hard drive is being accessed. A handy feature I found was that the Vantec ez-swap can show whether the hard drive in it is setup as the master or slave drive. This is a great alternative to the traditional removable hard drive bays and it is very functional. Sadly it is a bit pricey, but if you have everything else this is a great extra.

Sunbeam 4-Channel Rheobus

There is only one drawback to having many case-fans in your computer case - fan-noise. This product is the perfect solution to decrease the fan noise, by allowing you to control the speed of your fans and even turn them off completely. This sleek looking unit sports a brushed silver aluminium finish and each of the adjustable controls features a two-colour

status LED. Connecting the unit is very easy and once fitted it works like a dream. You can also attach a cold cathode light to this product making it a truly versatile case modding device. If you have a black case do not despair, the Sunbeam 4-Channel Rheobus is also available in black.



Thermaltake Hardcano 5

Value for Money 85

Desirability 88

Pros: Many functions
Cons: Only one fan control
Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
ERP: R342
Internet: www.thermaltake.com

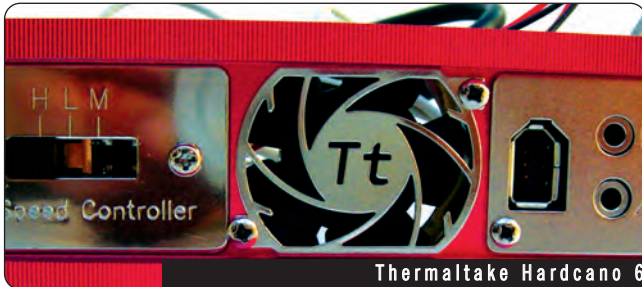


Cooler Master Musketeer

Value for Money 84

Desirability 88

Pros: Looks funky
Cons: Pricey
Supplied by: Rectron [011] 203-1000
ERP: R450
Internet: www.cooler-master.com



Thermaltake Hardcano 6

Value for Money 85

Desirability 88

Pros: Brings your back ports to the front
Cons: Some cases already do that
Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
ERP: R329
Internet: www.thermaltake.com



Vantec Nexus

Value for Money 90

Desirability 89

Plus: All in one package
Minus: If you do not want blue cathodes, what then?
Supplied by: CoreX IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R511
Internet: www.vantecusa.com



Thermaltake Hardcano 10

Value for Money 95

Desirability 99

Pros: Temperature monitor
Cons: Only two fan speed controllers
Supplied by: CoreX IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R268
Internet: www.thermaltake.com



Vantec ez-swap

Value for Money 88

Desirability 85

Pros: Useful LCD
Cons: That's about it
Supplied by: CoreX IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R577
Internet: www.vantecusa.com

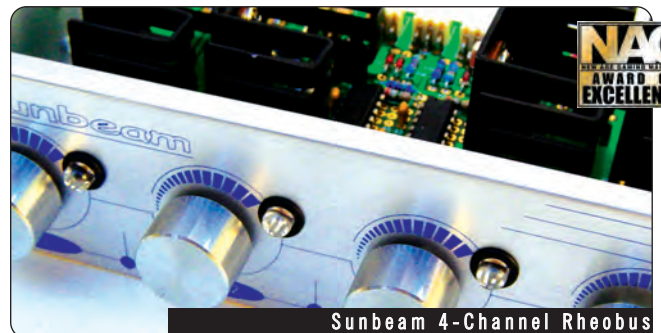


Thermaltake Hardcano 11

Value for Money 89

Desirability 88

Pros: Three temperature sensors
Cons: Only one is displayed at a time
Supplied by: CoreX IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R374
Internet: www.thermaltake.com

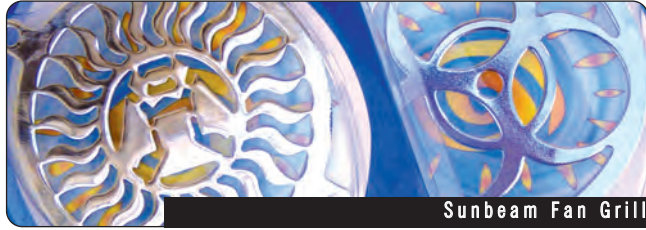


Sunbeam 4-Channel Rheobus

Value for Money 90

Desirability 95

Plus: Cheap, effective and easy to use
Minus: Nothing
Supplied by: ModShop [www.modshop.co.za]
ERP: R269
Internet: www.sunbeamtech.com



Value for Money	95	Pros: Looks great
Desirability	89	Cons: Some designs might obstruct airflow
		Supplied by: ModShop [www.modshop.co.za]
		ERP: R39
		Internet: www.sunbeamtech.com



Value for Money	96	Plus: Useful
Desirability	80	Minus: If needed
		Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
		ERP: R26
		Internet: www.vantecusa.com

Sunbeam Fan Grill

The main purpose of the fan grill is to keep objects from touching the fan blades and possibly damaging the fan (or your fingers). Traditional fan grills like those sold by Light Edge are not bad looking and many people might even prefer them, but these custom laser-cut steel fan grills add the perfect touch to the ultimate case mod. The two designs ModShop supplied for this review featured the Biohazard design and the Chimera design both made for fan sizes of 80mm. These laser cut fan grills will even look good on the inside of your case.

Thermaltake Fan Grill Xaser Edition

If you own a Thermaltake fan or are planning on buying one this is a great accessory. This kit comprises of three coloured Thermaltake 80mmfan grills which you can use to replace the standard one on your current Thermaltake heatsink if it has an 80mm fan. The kit also includes the necessary screws and you can even use these grills for your case fans if you want to create a custom Thermaltake look.

Vantec Vibration Dampener Kit

A new trend these days is to keep your system noise to a minimum. While the fans in your case play the biggest role in system noise, the one thing always overlooked is the PSU. The main problem areas with PSU's are that they tend to vibrate, more so if you have one with a noisy fan. This kit from Vantec allows you to dampen the noise in one of two ways (both are included in the kit). The first is the Power Supply Dampener which should be fitted between the PSU and the back of your case, thus creating a flexible barrier which absorbs vibration. The second option is to use the screw washers which you also place between the PCU and the case. This kit is not useful to most people though and only needs to be installed if you have power supply vibration and noise.

Cooler Master Pro-Studio

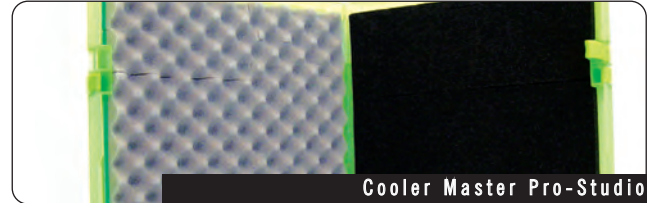
The Cooler Master Pro-Studio is a professional studio class noise absorber kit. The kit comes in a neat case and features two sets of noise absorbing "sponge". The "sponge" is the same as those used in recording studios, and applying it is as easy as peeling the double sided tape and sticking it to the desired position. The kit comprises of two types of "sponge" the thicker one is to absorb noise and you will generally have a large piece against the side panel of your case and the thinner one is used to insulate the noise in your case. Each of the two materials has smaller cut pieces which can be used in smaller areas in your case. A set of instructions explaining the ins and outs of reducing system noise is included in the kit and I could only see one drawback to it, if you have a window in your case you will not be able to effectively isolate the system noise as the window is in the same place as what the "sponge" should be. Looking at the price though it is not expensive and even with a windowed case you can isolate various other parts of your case and at least minimise system noise.

Sunbeam Anodized Thumb Screws

The one thing I hate about traditional cases is that every time I want to take off the side panel I need to use a screwdriver. This makes it difficult to quickly add something into your computer and makes it a tedious task to switch off a light which only has a switch on the inside of the case. These thumbscrews also add an industrial look to any



Value for Money	89	Pros: Allows you to colour code your CPU fan
Desirability	88	Cons: Does not fit the Spark 7+ heatsink and fan
		Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
		ERP: R81
		Internet: www.thermaltake.com



Value for Money	89	Pros: Keeps system noise to a minimum
Desirability	88	Cons: Cases with windows cannot benefit fully from it
		Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
		ERP: R201
		Internet: www.cooler-master.com

computer case. The Sunbeam Anodized Thumb Screws supplied by ModShop are available in gold, silver and black and each pack contains 10 thumb screws. The thread size for each screw is 3.3mm which might not fit on all cases but is fairly standard. At R45 a pack these should definitely be on your top 10 list.

Sunbeam Etched Window Kit

One of the first things you need to do as a case-modder is make sure you either buy a case with a window on its side panel, or cut your existing side-panel and add a window yourself. The latter obviously requires some cutting tools like a Dremel and you need to know what you are doing before damaging your case. Once you have done your research and decided that cutting your own case is the route you want to take, this is the product you need to buy. This kit features a 9.5 x 12 inch etched acrylic window with a Biohazard applique, gold trim, Velcro-tape, and an acrylic LED holder which is used to attach the Lazer LED if purchased separately. The end result, if you did it properly, is a professional looking window in your computer, now just add some lights...

Thermaltake Ducting Mod

This is another one of those interesting products which works extremely well. The idea behind the Thermaltake Ducting Mod is to improve the airflow to your heatsink. Traditionally your fan sits on top of your heatsink; this design leads to a hot spot in the middle of the heatsink as no air gets to it due to the fan hubs resistance to air



Value for Money	80	Plus: Cheap
Desirability	50	Minus: Not recommended for high end CPUs
		Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
		ERP: R27
		Internet: www.cooler-master.com



Value for Money	96	Plus: Better performance
Desirability	96	Minus: More expensive
		Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
		ERP: R81
		Internet: www.cooler-master.com



Value for Money	99	Pros: Arctic Silver's best compound yet
Desirability	99	Cons: Nothing
		Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
		ERP: R67
		Internet: www.arcticsilver.com



turbulence. This ducting mod simply increases the distance between the fan and the heatsink thus eliminating the air turbulence and improving the air flow that reaches your heatsink. This also has the benefit of a quieter running fan. This is a very cheap and effective mod if you have an 80mm Thermaltake fan.

Cooler Master High Performance Thermal Compound kit and Cooler Master Premium Thermal Compound kit

In order to achieve optimal heat dispersion between your CPU and the heatsink you need a decent thermal compound to allow the heat to transfer off the CPU as quickly as possible. It is for this reason that 3rd party thermal compound is recommended if you want the best performance out of your system. Some of the high end Intel CPU box kits ship with ShinEtsu which is a great thermal paste. Cooler Master also sells this compound and brands it as the Cooler Master Premium Thermal Compound kit. The Cooler Master High Performance Thermal Compound kit makes use of the Dow Corning compound which is substantially cheaper but does not offer the same performance as the ShinEtsu compound. If you are considering buying a thermal compound from Cooler Master, I would suggest you buy the Premium Thermal Compound kit. Both kits come with an applicator template and instruction manual.



Sunbeam Etched Window Kit

Value for Money	95
Desirability	89

Pros: Easy to use
Cons: You'd need to cut your case
Supplied by: ModShop [www.modshop.co.za]
ERP: R129
Internet: www.sunbeamtech.com



Antec LANPAL

Value for Money	80
Desirability	92

Pros: Very useful
Cons: Price
Supplied by: Frontosa [011] 466-4728
ERP: R410
Internet: www.antec-inc.com

Arctic Silver Céramique

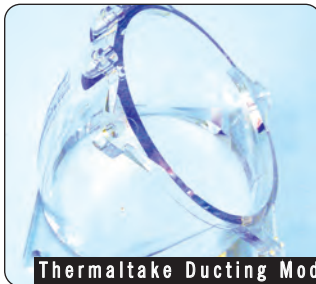
Arctic Silver is known for its high quality thermal compound. Their latest product called Céramique is a little different than what we used to expect from the thermal compound giant. Céramique is white, it contains no metal, and it is made up of micronized aluminium oxide, boron nitride and zinc oxide. An application guide has been setup on the Arctic Silver website, once applied the compound thickens over the first 100 to 300 hours of use then stays at its designed consistency state. Arctic Silver Céramique is the thermal compound to consider if you want the best. Looking at its retail price, this thermal compound is superb value for money, and is definitely going on my list of goods to get in the near future.

Antec LANPAL

The one problem many gamers currently face is that carrying your PC to the local LAN every weekend is a tedious task; you also generally have to bring along an extra bag just for your keyboard and mouse. There are some cases on the market which feature a carry handle but I am not too fond of those cases. The LANPAL is made of an extremely strong Nylon and is able to carry any case up to a SOHO server case size and can support a weight of up to 30Kg. The LANPAL features a carry handle and a shoulder strap and has three mesh side pockets, a zippered pocket, and an adjustable accessory bag. Setting up the LANPAL is easy and the straps are easily adjustable to ensure a tight fit. This product is very useful and I would recommend it to all the LAN going gamers out there, sadly it is not very cheap and many people will not be able to justify its price.

Value for Money	96
Desirability	90

Pros: It is effective and cheap
Cons: Nothing
Supplied by: Profile Design Technology [011] 469-4757
ERP: R74
Internet: www.thermaltake.com



Thermaltake Ducting Mod



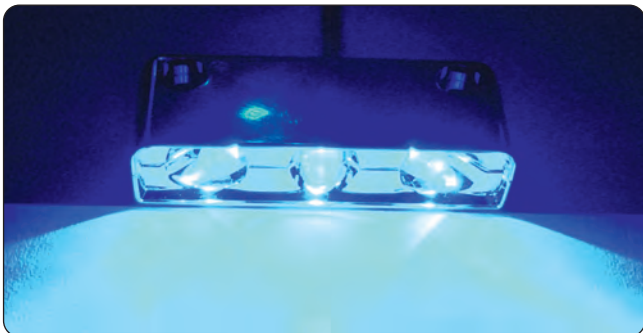
Sunbeam Anodized Thumb Screws

Value for Money	98
Desirability	96

Pros: Makes life a lot easier
Cons: Does not fit all threads
Supplied by: ModShop [www.modshop.co.za]
ERP: R45
Internet: www.sunbeamtech.com

Sunbeam Lazer LEDs

These nifty LEDs are really bright and its small formfactor makes it perfect for tight spaces and discreet placement. The Lazer LED comes in a plastic, chrome-coloured, housing and it is able to be screwed into your computer case or you can keep it in place with the supplied Velcro-tape. The light emitted from this LED, point in three directions covering a fairly large area in your case. One use for the Lazer LED from Sunbeam which I will use it for is to place it against the side panel of my acrylic case and the results are quite impressive. These LEDs are well priced and are perfect if you do not want to use large cold cathode lights in your case.



Value for Money	90
Desirability	90

Pros: Very bright | Small
Cons: No on/off switch
Supplied by: ModShop [www.modshop.co.za]
ERP: R89
Internet: www.sunbeamtech.com

Sunbeam EL Wire

The EL Wire is somewhat of a specialist product and if used incorrectly could make your case look too much like a Christmas tree than a serious gaming rig. EL Wire or Electro Luminescence cable as it is formerly known is a thin piece of wire which glows a bright colour; the EL Wire kit supplied for this month's roundup is blue in colour and looks extremely funky. The one benefit of EL Wire is its durability, it can be bent into any shape, you can cut it to a required length and you can add another piece like you would any electric cable. A popular use for EL Wire is to line a case with it or mod your keyboard so that an eerie glow is emitted from beneath the keys. The only thing holding your creativity back is the inverter box which is needed to supply power to the EL Wire. Other than that this product has a lot of potential for serious modders.



Value for Money	88
Desirability	89

Pros: Many modding uses
Cons: Not everyone's cup of tea
Supplied by: ModShop [www.modshop.co.za]
ERP: R179
Internet: www.sunbeamtech.com

Antec SONATA

The Antec SONATA is one of the new cases in the Antec range; it sports a piano black finish and comes pre-fitted with the Antec True 380S power supply. The side panel and front bezel door is fitted with a lock to ensure nobody can open your case or operate the optical drives. On the inside there are a couple of useful improvements, for starters, it features four 3.5 inch drive bays which are faced towards the side panel making it extremely easy to remove a device or drive. At the back of the case, below the power supply, is a huge 120mm case fan and there was only one thing that struck me as odd about this case - the side panel situated behind the motherboard cannot be removed. An interesting and innovative feature though is the removable and washable air filter situated at the front of the case. Lastly the case features one IEEE 1394 port, two USB 2.0 ports, as well as a microphone and earphone jack on the front of the case. This is a very smart case with many great features but personally I still prefer the PlusView 1000AMG



Value for Money 86

Desirability 85

Plus: Many innovative features
Minus: I still prefer the PlusView1000AMG
Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R1253
Internet: www.antec-inc.com

Antec LANBOY

The first thing I noticed when unpacking the Antec LANBOY mini tower case was how exceptionally light it was, even with the power supply it ships with it weighs about 5 Kg's, this is thanks to its aluminium construction. The case features metallic silver and the side panel has a window built-in. I was disappointed to see that the front bezel door and the side panel did not have any locks; this makes the idea of a front bezel panel somewhat unnecessary in my opinion. The LANBOY also ships with a carry strap, but this is nothing like the LANPAL, these straps only add a handle to the case allowing it to be carried with one hand. The front of the case sees two USB 2.0 ports and a small compartment at the back of the case allows for a couple of screws to be kept in case they are needed. I was not all that impressed with this case and looking at its price I would still much rather opt for the PlusView 1000AMG.



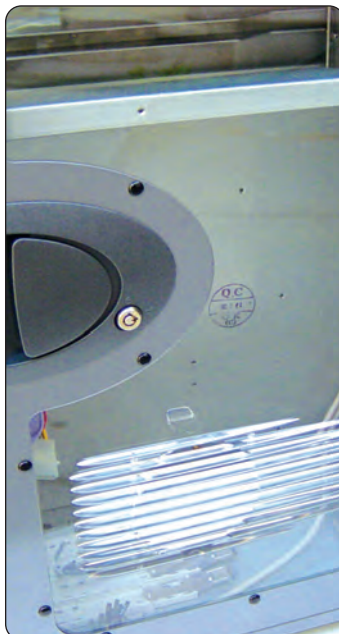
Value for Money 84

Desirability 75

Plus: Light weight | Carry strap
Minus: Does not look that great
Supplied by: Frontosa [011] 466-4728
ERP: R1094
Internet: www.antec-inc.com

Antec PlusView1000AMG

This case is every young boy's wildest dream. The Antec PlusView1000AMG is actually a SOHO file server case, but slight size difference does not matter. This case is huge inside and it has space for 10 drives. This case only has two 80mm fans preinstalled at the back end of the case, there is however space for another two fans and the front of the case and one fan can fit in the side panel window. One of the fans in the front end of the case is situated by the bottom set of drive bays, this allows you to have cooling directly onto your hard drives which is a great way to keep them cool. The front bezel door and side panels are fitted with locks which allow you to leave your pc secure when you fall asleep at the LAN. Great case at a great price.



Value for Money 95

Desirability 99

Plus: Lots of space inside it
Minus: No power supply preinstalled
Supplied by: Corex IT [011] 707-5000
ERP: R741
Internet: www.antec-inc.com



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Genius Camera Round-up: Genius DSC-1.3M Smart, Genius G-Shot D211, Genius G-Shot P313

Being a keen photographer, one realises the need to keep up with the times. Not only is the entire world becoming more digitally oriented, but saving money is also a huge consideration in a time when the value of each individual Rand plummets from day to day. The answer, of course, lies in digital cameras - instantly on your computer, and with no need for film, developing and printing. But with these devices being in vogue, there are a great many pitfalls for the potential buyer to be aware of.

Genius bring us three cameras to have a look at this month. Ranging in price and capability, these products cover a wide spectrum of photographic possibilities.

The first is the DSC 1.3M Smart, which could also be described as the "diet-camera" version of the range. This is the light weight, slim line sort of camera that proves popular with those who want a quick and easy solution to taking photographs. More suited to quick snap shots than serious photography, this is a simple and very user friendly photography solution. Basically, this one is for those who are not going to mind too much if the composition of their picture isn't quite perfect and who aren't going to get too picky about super high resolution photographs. It features a fairly capable lens

and a rear mounted, simplified LCD display which provides the necessary information. All photographs need to be composed via the top mounted viewfinder, which can result in a few compositional faux pas. Overall, though, the unit has a nice price and is capable enough for those who aren't trying to be Ansel Adams in their spare time. It's a little plain looking, but then again, it's not really what the camera looks like - it's what the pictures that it takes looks like. As

storage device. It doesn't have the biggest storage capacity, but it does beat using a writable CD for a few MB of info. The small camera also comes with a belt pouch for safe transportation. On to the big boy of the range: the G-Shot P313. Aside from a full SLR camera with interchangeable lenses and ridiculously high resolutions (like the top of the range Canons), I must admit that this would be the digital camera I would choose to buy. It is compact,



Genius G-Shot P313

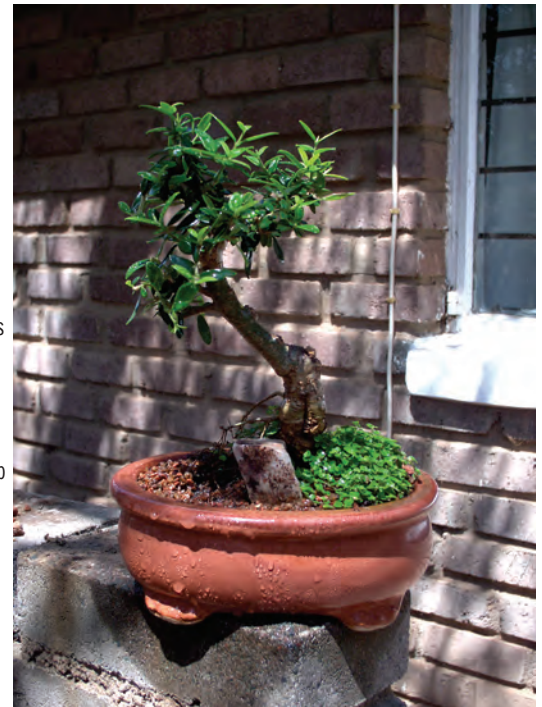
sturdy, nicely made and very, very capable of taking incredible photographs. It does have a few issues with its auto focus, however, so you may need to take the same photo a few times. With both a colour LCD on the back and a viewfinder, it can be used quickly or at leisure, for the best possible results. It has a sturdy lens cover and three focus modes, as well as adjustable "film" variables (like ISO settings.) Additionally it can be used to capture video independent of a PC, and can take pictures at a very high resolution and size ratio. Only a few of these can be stored on the camera's limited memory

but, like the D211, additional memory cards can be loaded for extended memory. The sample picture shown on this page was taken with this camera, and shows the quality of its ability. Sadly it is a bit power hungry, so carrying spare batteries (two AA) is not a bad idea. Once again, it is supplied with a belt pouch. Genius seems to be tackling the digital camera market full on. The three cameras they have on offer are not the best on the market, but they are capable enough if you are not trying to take the world's best pictures. At the prices, though, the quality is pretty much what you can expect.

far as that's concerned, I wouldn't give any prizes for excellence here. But the picture quality is passable for digital purposes.

The unit also doubles as a video camera when connected to the pc via USB, using software bundled with it. Its low power demands mean a fair battery life from the two AAA batteries required to operate it. The lack of lens cover is a bit worrying, but the camera is supplied with a handy belt pouch to protect it. Next in line - a little more powerful than the DSC-1.3M Smart - is the G-Shot D211. Sadly, this camera performs below where it was expected to. The picture quality left a touch to be desired, and the reaction time from the shutter button seemed a little sluggish. Of the three, though, it certainly is the best looking, and probably offers a greater ease of use than both its cousins. With a simple "lens cover open means it's on" system, the camera is very quick to get up and snapping. It has a great full colour LCD mounted on the rear, which is used to compose pictures with, as well as display vital information. The strange thing is that the camera has no top view finder - in other words, all pictures have to be taken holding the camera up and away from your face, instead of being able to quickly put it up to your eye and snap away. While this is by no means a disaster, people not used to that way of using a camera will have to get used to the process.

Three autofocus settings allow the camera to take a variety of pictures, including a really nice macro (up close and personal) setting. It is also capable of video capture without being hooked up to a PC, and can be used (rather usefully) as a mass



REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	

PRODUCT	
Genius DSC 1.3M Smart	
PLUS	MINUS
Compact Easy to use Price	Picture quality No LCD preview

SUPPLIER: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
PRICE: R629.00
WEBSITE: www.tvr.co.za

PRODUCT	
Genius G-Shot D211	
PLUS	MINUS
Pretty Easy to use Good macro function	Slow shutter reaction

SUPPLIER: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
PRICE: R1229.00
WEBSITE: www.tvr.co.za

PRODUCT	
Genius G-Shot P313	
PLUS	MINUS
Picture quality LCD	Autofocus issues Short battery life

SUPPLIER: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
PRICE: R1899.00
WEBSITE: www.tvr.co.za

Soltek SL-5600-XD Graphics Card

Remember when a new graphics card was exciting, you'd tear off the wrapper and plug it in and then boot up your new piece of hot-rod silicon. I remember the first time I got to play with a true 3D accelerator card, my jaw dropped as I marveled at Quake in its OpenGL glory and worshipped it as a master of a new domain. Well times change and it now seems I get at least one new card a month, each one more impressive than the next - I'm wondering how the hell anyone keeps up nowadays.

The 3D race is entering its most exciting stage ever, DirectX 9 titles are emerging and guess what, all us Nvidia supporters (which is everyone that moved from 3dfx) are short changed; nVIDIA in all their glory decided to do DirectX9 their way not Microsoft's way, the problem is nVIDIA's way sucks the big one. ATI on the other hand followed the DirectX9 implementation to the letter and guess what, DirectX9 titles are faster on ATI (think Half-Life 2). So now all of us nVIDIA supporters are going to rush out to buy the latest ATI card so we can get max fps from the next Half-Life installment.

All those people that are chucking away their nVIDIA graphics cards to get an ATI please mail me (knightmare@mailbox.co.za) as I would love to see how much of an impact this is going to have on our 3D market, I for one am looking at buying a 9800XT with HL2 inside (well a coupon anyway, because we all know a software publisher couldn't hit a date even if they tried).

So if this is the latest situation in the graphics market what would tempt me to buy a FX5600 even if it's made by the good guys at Soltek? This has been bugging me a lot lately as I cannot recommend any nVIDIA cards to our readers looking for the latest DirectX9 support; the problem with making such a damning statement like this in the biggest gaming publication in SA is that we are at least an 80%-90% nVIDIA market. Let's have a

look at some performance figures to give you an idea of what I mean.

Half-Life 2 Benchmark - Source Engine - (1024*768) FP

ATI 9800	ATI 9600	FX5900	FX5600
76.9fps	44.3fps	33.0fps	0.0fps

*various tests conducted online

These results show just how badly NVIDIA's new FX chipsets handle HL2 DirectX9 implementation, Valve have been kind enough to create a work-around for nVIDIA chipsets (guess they would like to sell more copies of HL2) to give them better performance, in my opinion when a sub \$200 (R1500-00) out-performs a \$400+ (R3000-00) card it's time to start asking some serious questions.

AuqaMark 2003 - (1024 x 768)*

ATI 9800	ATI 9600	FX5900	FX5600
43.8fps	29.5fps	29.4fps	15.9fps

*sourced from Toms Hardware

Now maybe I'm just paranoid but I'm guessing these benchmarks are not good news for nVIDIA, what is even more distressing is that the latest driver releases (45.23 and 51.75) show a marked fps increase but at a cost of image quality and rendering issues. nVIDIA have blamed these anomalies on driver bugs, but I will leave the final decision up to you.

The Soltek FX5600 is a great card for DirectX8 titles and will provide users with a good to great experience depending on the title, just don't expect it to run some of the long awaited titles relying on DirectX9 (think HL2 and DOOM3). I leave you with the words of Gabe Newell

"Valve is very concerned about those developments since customers make their buying decisions for new hard- and software based on benchmark numbers. The problem is that the results with those optimizations have very little to do with the real game performance of those cards."

Product Features

- 128-bit Studio-Precision Colour
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- CineFX Shading Architecture Supports DirectX 9.X Pixel Shader 2.0+ and Vertex Shader 2.0+
- OpenGL 1.4 Optimizations and Support
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- NVIDIA Intellisample technology
- NVIDIA nView multi-display technology
- High-quality HDTV/DVD playback support
- High-performance 2D rendering engine



REVIEWED BY

Brett "KnightMare" Hamilton

PLUS MINUS

With optimised drivers it rocks	Nvidia performance issues
DirectX8 games are fast	DirectX9 problems
Still cheaper than ATI	Bugs or cheats

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Sennheiser pc150 headset

▶ Can you tie them in a knot?
 Can you tie them in a bow?
 Can you throw them o'er your shoulder
Like a Continental Soldier?

Well, do they? Your headset, not your ears, I mean. It's eerie then that I have a headset here that seems to embody the philosophy behind this children's song. For one, you can throw them over your shoulder. In fact, you can probably throw them over anyone's shoulder thanks to the three meter chord.

The pc150 set is also very durable. Okay, no true knot or bow-tying abilities revealed themselves, but you can twist them quite a bit, which means they are bound to survive a few trips and then some. Just to make sure of that, Sennheiser backs these with a two year warranty. Of course, the real appeal is in that they are Sennheiser, a brand quite firmly established in the headphone market. The sound quality is great, and the set is very, very comfortable. I could sit for hours with them on and not notice them at all.

The microphone accompanies all of this quite nicely, and has noise-cancellation - ideal for noisy LAN rooms. There are two quirks, though. Firstly, we couldn't get a huge amount of volume out of these unless we plugged them into an amplifier of some sorts, such as an external speaker set. In other words, they aren't very loud, but unless you intend to hang around in mine shafts or kindergarten playrooms they should do fine. The other is the price. This set will set you back a cool R 760, which isn't that expensive, but it is a pricier option for gaming.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Comfortable	Pricey
Durable	Average volume
Good sound quality	

SUPPLIER: Sennheiser Electronic SA [011] 482 2501
PRICE: R760.00
WEBSITE: www.senheiser.com



LiteOn External Combo Drive

▶ External drives certainly have a novelty about them. Not being a fan of laptops and mobile computing, I like my desktop PC. Then there's the aspect that as a gamer, moving my PC around is not a big deal. As a kid, it meant little walking from one spot to another with your PC and at least one buddy in tow with your monitor, unless you were a masochist and tried to do it all by yourself.

But I also like portable technologies. USB memory cards have to be my favourite, purely because I can cart data from one machine to another without having to write it to CD. Portable DVD and writable drives are also nice, since not everyone I know has a DVD drive.

LiteOn's option gives me all of these options at 24/24/24 read, write and re-write, with 8x DVD support (no DVD burner). It connects to your machine via USB (USB 2 if you have SP1 or the enclosed drivers installed), and ships with Nero 5. To make writing much more painless. With XP it automatically picks up as an external driver, and in case you need it, a sound cable is included to connect to your machine for audio CDs.

LiteOn's unit isn't built for any kind of portable appeal, but really just for a solution to people who don't have a DVD reader/CD writer and need one, but don't have the space/aren't able to install an internal drive (such as with laptops).

It's also very convenient if you simply want a portable DVD drive or CD writer to use various PCs, and it's also cheaper than Asus' DVD drive (though that does look better and comes with a better collection of software).

The unit is rather heavy, though (around as heavy as a normal drive) and that will undoubtedly be a problem to people who cart around their laptop a lot, since that extra bit of weight will add quite a bit on your shoulder in the long haul.

Still, it's priced quite competitively at R 1,600, though an internal drive will cost you a third of that.



REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Functional	A bit pricey
Sturdy	Not as fast as internal drives
Variety of features	

SUPPLIED BY: Corex IT [011] 707 5000
PRICE: R1600.00
INTERNET: www.liteon.com

GA-K8VNX [VIA K8T800 chipset]



Supporting the revolutionary AMD Athlon 64 processor, the GA-K8VNX brings new levels of performance and features to the desktop platform. The brand new AMD Athlon 64 processor is furnished with an unprecedented framework consisting of AMD's 64-bit computing platform, Hyper Transport Technology, and the CPU-integrated memory controller to boost the overall performance. The innovative design of the Athlon 64, a variety of industry leading technologies and Gigabyte's unique design all contribute to the functionality and stability of this platform. The Gigabyte patented Dual Power System (DPS) enhances the computing power and steadiness of the system. Featuring the industries first IEEE 1394b controller, this platform is ready for the next generation of high performance Audio/Video appliances. Dual LAN is equipped for establishing the traffic between two separate networks, ensuring rapid transfer of data from WAN to LAN. The Serial ATA and IDE RAID provide superior input/output performance and data protection. GA-K8VNX will definitely represent the uppermost platform for today's computer enthusiasts.

AMD Athlon 64 Computing Platform

Powered by the VIA K8T800 chipset, GA-K8VNX supports the brand new 8th generation AMD Athlon 64 processor to deliver a high performance platform with dual support for 32-bit applications and increasing 64-bit computing needs.

Hyper Transport technology

A high-speed, low latency, point-to-point link designed to provide excellent interconnectivity for computation and networking. This Technology not only provides more bandwidth but also reduces the I/O bottlenecks and, consequently, greatly enhances the system performance.



Integrated DDR memory controller

The AMD Athlon 64 processor improves the memory performance by integrating a DDR memory controller into the processor. By running at the processor's core frequency, an integrated memory controller greatly increases bandwidth directly available to the processor at significantly reduced latencies.



Superb bandwidth AGP 8X graphics interface

Featuring AGP 8x (AGP 3.0) the new generation VGA interface specification, this platform delivers enhanced graphics performance with high bandwidth up to 2.12GB/s allowing users to have a more realistic graphics experience while gaming or movie watching.



Dual Power System K8 (DPS K8)

Specially designed for Athlon 64 platform, the Dual Power System delivers a 6-phase power circuit to provide a more solid and durable power supply for the new generation AMD platform. Ensuring a more secure and stable platform than ever before.



DUAL LAN

Equipped with Gigabit and Ethernet LAN solution, this platform can be applied as a network gateway, managing traffic between two separate networks and ensuring rapid transfer of data from WAN to LAN without any added arbitration or latency.



Industries first IEEE1394b motherboard

This platform is the first motherboard with IEEE1394b FireWire interface from Texas Instruments (TI). With the transfer speed up to 800Mb/s, the new generation IEEE1394b interface further enhances PC connectivity with consumer electronics audio/video (A/V) appliances, and storage peripherals.



Serial ATA with RAID 0, 1 function

Serial ATA is the revolutionary ATA interface that provides scalable performance for IDE device. With up to 150MB/s data transfer rate, Serial ATA is faster than current Parallel ATA and delivers superior input/output performance. In addition, the Serial ATA interface is furnished with RAID 0,1 function for extra performance enhancement and data protection.



GigaRAID IDE RAID Controller

Supporting RAID (0, 1, 0+1), JBOD function and ATA133 interface, GigaRAID Controller delivers complete solution for storage interface to increase fault tolerance, improve data access performance and provides additional interface for more IDE devices.



6 Channel Audio with UAA

With the innovative function of Universal Audio Jack (UAA) of ALC 658 AC97 codec, this platform provides superior 6-Channel stereo sound enjoyment without the hassle of complicated installation.



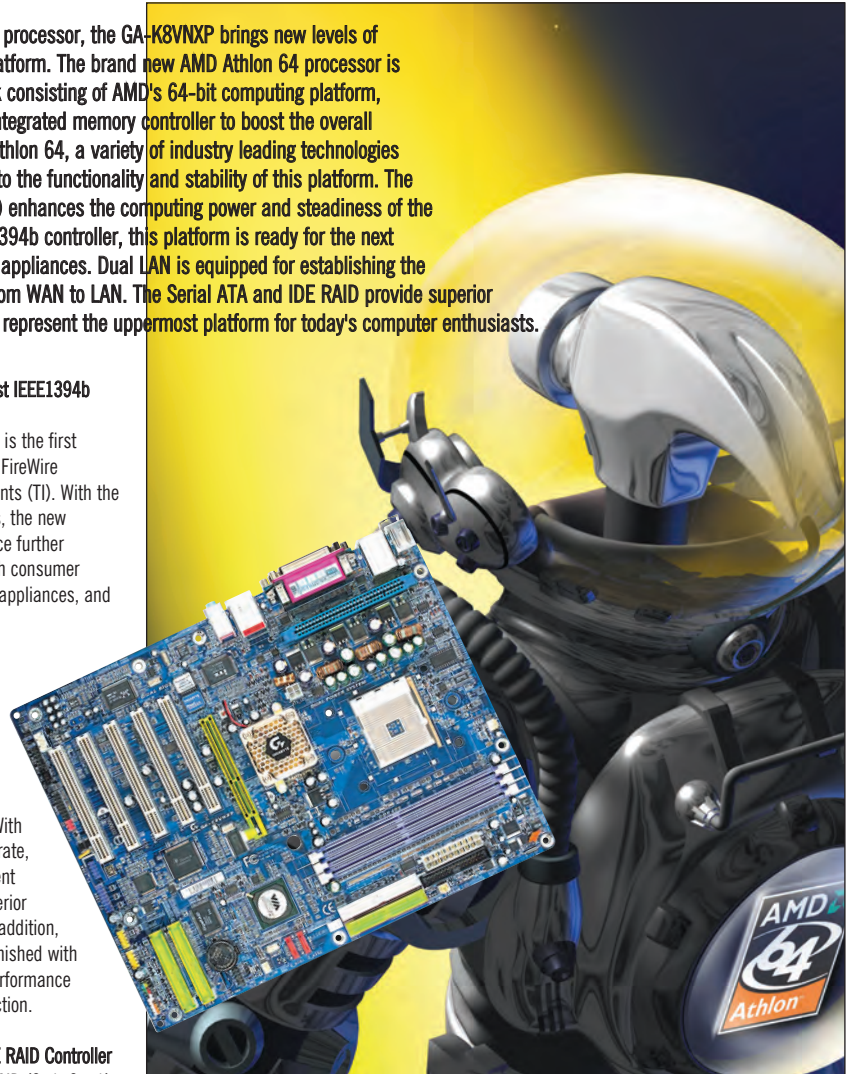
GIGABYTE Patent

DualBIOS

DualBIOS prevents BIOS from virus attacks to provide a double security thus assuring the PC stability.

Norton Internet Security Included

Norton Internet Security 2003 is the essential protection from viruses, hackers, and privacy threats. It protects users during the online activities such as e-mailing, shopping, banking, and game playing.



DETAILED SPECIFICATIONS

Processor

Socket 754 for AMD Athlon64

Chipset

VIA K8T800 Chipset
VIA VT8237 Chipset
Super I/O: ITE IT8705 chip

Integrated peripherals
1. GigaRAID ATA 133 RAID controller
2. T.I. IEEE1394b controller
3. Realtek 8110S Gigabit Ethernet controller
4. Realtek 8201 PHY LAN chip
5. Realtek ALC658 Audio AC'97 Codec

Memory

Type: DDR400/ 333/ 266- 184pin
Max capacity: Up to 3GB by 3 DIMM slots

Internal I/O Connectors

2 x Serial ATA connector
4 x UDMA ATA 133/100/66 Bus Master IDE connectors
1 x FDD connector
2 x USB 2.0/1.1 connectors (supports 4 ports)
2 x IEEE 1394b connectors (supports 3 ports)
S/P DIF input/output pin header
3 x cooling fan pin headers
CD/AUX in
1 x Game/Midi connector

Expansion Slots

1 x AGP slot (8x/4x-AGP 3.0 compliant), supports 1.5W display card only.
5 x PCI slots (PCI 2.2 compliant)
1 x DPS slot

Rear Panel I/O

PS/2 Keyboard / Mouse
4 x USB 2.0/1.1 ports
2 x RJ45 ports
2 x COM ports
1 x LPT
Audio (1 x Line-in / 1 x Line-out / 1 x Mic) connector

CPU/AGP/DIMM setting

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

Power

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

Form Factor

ATX form factor
30.5 x 24.4 cm

H/W Monitoring

System health status auto-detect and report by BIOS
Hardware detecting and reporting for case open, CPU voltage, and fan speed.

BIOS

2 X 4M bit flash ROM, Award BIOS

Other Features

Xpress™ Installation,
Xpress™ Recovery
Q-Flash™
@BIOS™

Genius Netscroll+ Mini Traveller

▶ **Have Mouse. Will Travel. Will sit at bench. Will miss my desktop.**

Maybe I've been out of the loop for a while, but as far as I know these miniature mice for laptops are a new thing. In the past, people seemed quite content with their touch pads, but these days everyone seems to need a mouse, and instead of getting a larger model (which will take up the same space anyway - the one factor, namely our hands, don't get smaller and still occupy the same space on the table) users can rather opt for these mini mice. There are two advantages: firstly, they are cheaper and secondly they're a nice perk for kids. Genius' mouse, sporting their new brand logo, is by far the prettiest of the lot I've seen. Despite being plastic, it looks like a nice metal finish, and the buttons are mostly body-covered, giving it a nice curvy feel - something that would be nice with larger mice. It runs on 800 DPI sensitivity Optical, and has a fairly short chord - ideal for tight spots such as coffee shop tables. The mouse has all of Genius' custom software for easy shortcuts and such. But I rarely used it. The best perk for the Netscroll+ has to be the price - R



129. That's very cheap, considering the general quality we're talking here. That alone makes it a great buy. Of course, its size negates any chance of taking on its obese desktop cousins, but between you and me, I don't think that's the market Genius had in mind here anyway.

REVIEWED BY	
James "Priest" Francis	
PLUS	MINUS
Cheap	Only useful for Laptops
Looks cool	
Good quality	

SUPPLIER: TVR Computers [011] 807 1390
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WEBSITE: www.tvr.co.za

Genius MaxFire G-12PS

▶ **Peripherals are really big business these days, with a few companies leading the pack while a bunch of others just follow. These**

"pack leaders" tend to have very recognizable names - like Genius, for example. But what made them who they are - the innovations of the past - seem to have fallen by the wayside, replaced instead by a need to make a quick buck.

Reputations can be won and lost in the blink of an eye in this tumultuous age of technological advance and a company willing to rest on the laurels of past achievement runs the risk of losing all that their hard work of

eras past managed to establish. On the other hand, how much innovation can realistically still be produced in a time when almost everything under the sun has been thought of, and new ideas often tend to be gimmicks rather than truly useful advances? Take, for example, the Genius MaxFire G-12PS controller. Built specifically for the PlayStation 2, this device

boasts everything that one would expect such a device to have: dual analog controllers, vibration and compatibility with PSOne. However, there are dozens of



controllers out there that offer the same things at a similar price. Why, then, should this controller be considered?

The most noticeable factor about the MazFire G-12PS is its size. It is a rather big unit, and people with small hands (like yours truly) are going to experience comfort issues when using the unit for extended periods of time.

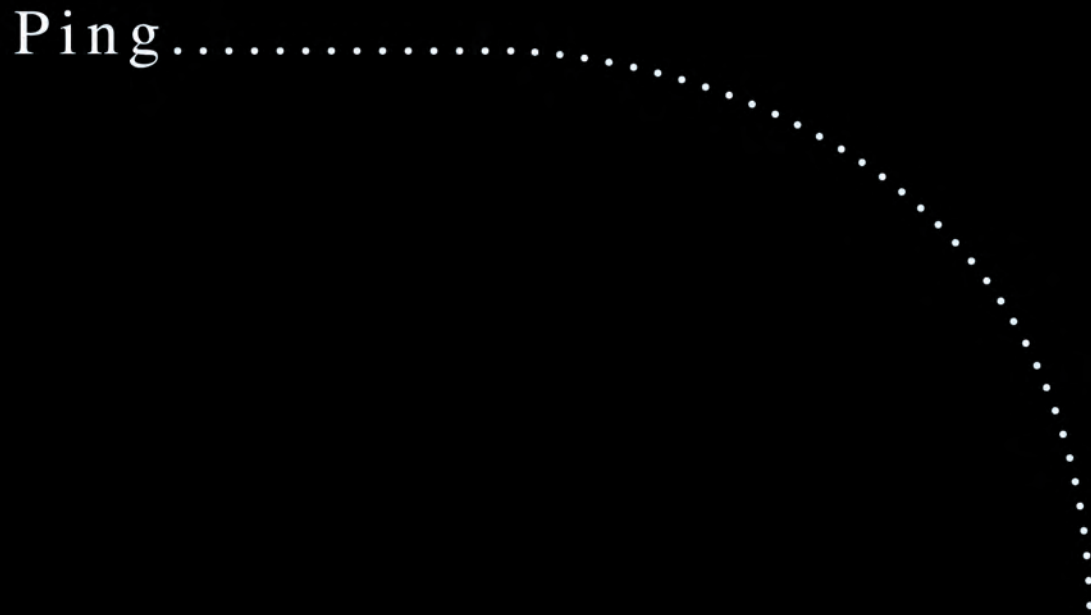
Also, the overall shape of the device is rather, well... unusual. It is more curved than the standard controller and, although the shoulder buttons are large, they are tough to get to. It also weighs a lot more than a standard PS2 controller, which adds to user hand fatigue after extended periods of play.

The most important factor when looking at any controller is how well it works, and the MaxFire G-12PS has this area well covered. With controls that are neither sluggish or ridiculously sensitive, the controller offers a nice level of input for the user. Additionally, the unit can be set to work as either a digital or analog controller, adding to its versatility. With a market as flooded as it is, the MaxFire G-12PS neither over or under performs when compared to its competitors. It doesn't scream "buy me" or "avoid me." While it is aesthetically pleasing, it isn't a particularly remarkable device either way. It's just another PlayStation 2 controller that will either appeal to a player or not.

REVIEWED BY	
Walt "Shryke" Pretorius	
PLUS	MINUS
Nice control	Large
Good looking	Pretty average
Price	

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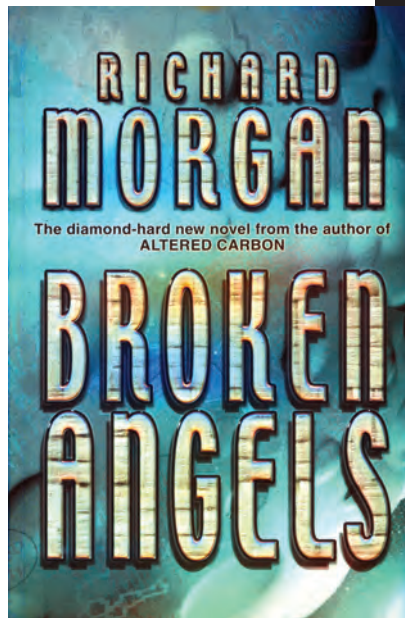
book review:

A Martian ship and the dot.com crash

NAG book review readers are in for a treat this month as we take a look at Richard Morgan's latest cyber-punk offering, *Broken Angels*. On a more earthly front, Christine Finn's look at Silicon Valley provides an intriguing glimpse into everyone's favourite technology asylum

Judging by the quality of the recent crop of science fiction writers, the future (sorry, I could not resist) looks promising for us devotees of the fantastic. It seems that science fiction writing is experiencing a revival. There are so many quality titles being published, that the reader is indeed spoilt for choice.

Broken Angels is British author Richard Morgan's second novel and follows on the highly successful *Altered Carbon* that was published last year. It is set almost forty years after the events of *Altered Carbon* and continues the story of Takeshi Kovacs, an ex-Envoy soldier that was a member of the elite Wedge military unit. Admittedly, having not read Morgan's debut novel, I was slightly hesitant on jumping straight into the story with the second book. Thankfully, the writing style and story structure combine to immediately draw the reader into the narrative without having prior knowledge of the milieu. In *Broken Angels*, Kovacs joins a group of mercenaries trying to secure a unique archaeological prize. Without giving away too much, members of the group discovered a star gate leading to a fully functioning Martian starship. Since no working piece of Martian technology has ever been discovered, this find will prove enormously valuable to anyone who has access to it.



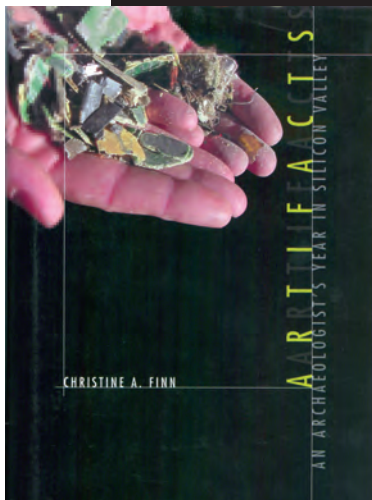
However, the group, consisting of Kovacs, pilot Jan Schneider and veteran archaeologist Tanya Wardani, must first find a corporation willing to 'sponsor' their expedition without killing them for the information. Morgan sets a blistering pace for a novel that contains everything the modern reader requires. The combat scenes are so wonderfully descriptive that the reader might feel that he/she is watching over the shoulder of Kovacs. Of course, *Broken Angels* offers much more than the ample acts of violence might suggest. Morgan's universe is one where mankind has mastered the ability to backup the human consciousness onto a "stack".

This "stack" can be reloaded onto another body or "sleeve" as Morgan so eloquently puts it, thereby virtually assuring the most powerful and rich of immortality. While *Broken Angels* is a wonderful read, the ending did disappoint me slightly. It is almost as if Morgan could not last the pace with the book petering out in the final few chapters. However, it is testament to the quality of the writing that, even with the slow ending, *Broken Angels* is one of the best science fiction novels I have read this year.

Christine Finn, an archaeologist and journalist, has written *Artifacts* to combine the perspectives of the past and future to the story of Silicon Valley's present material culture.

The book is divided into four parts, each discussing different elements of the technology Mecca that is Silicon Valley. In turn, she examines the place, the people, the technology and the consequences of SIVA, as it has become known as by the technorati. While the book might sound alternately as a glorified travelogue or academic study depending on whom you speak to, it does give a fascinating insight into how technology is just another stepping stone in our own cultural evolution. What makes *Artifacts* especially riveting is the fact that it is written by someone who is looking in from the outside. Finn is not a technologist or a computer whiz kid. She is an expert in the study of historical things. She sees

technology as many in the information technology industry cannot



see it. Finn is removed from the innovation and pace of life in this modern technological society. Instead, she examines Silicon Valley and the dot.com explosion in terms of its relative importance in society.

"Value is subjective. In the New World, conquistadors favoured gold; Aztec feathers. The premise of this book is that computer development in Silicon Valley is just recent enough for a chain of "value" to be clearly seen from engineer to manufacturer, salesman to consumer, and back into the trade, post-redundancy, as part of a collection."

Due to the nature of the book, *Artifacts* does come across as disjointed at times. It is almost as if Finn is wearing too many hats. She occasionally becomes trapped in a certain train of thought only to change it in the next chapter.

From an historical perspective, *Artifacts* is an interesting book to read. Just do not expect it to be a technology book as its focus remains firmly on the earthly level.

artifacts: an archaeologist's year in silicon valley

Author: Christine Finn
Publisher: The MIT Press (2001)
ISBN: 0 262 06224 0
Pages: 244
Format: Hardcover
Kalahari.net price (excl. delivery): R325.95

about the author

Christine Finn is an archaeologist and journalist. She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a Research Associate in the Institute of Archaeology at the University of Oxford.

broken angels

Author: Richard Morgan
Publisher: Gollancz (2003)
ISBN: 0 575 07550 3
Pages: 394
Format: Paperback
Kalahari.net price (excl. delivery): R106.95

about the author

Richard Morgan teaches the teaching of English as a foreign language at Strathclyde University in Glasgow. He is in his early 30s.

selected bibliography

Altered Carbon (2002)

bibliography

She has written for numerous academic publications. This is her first book.

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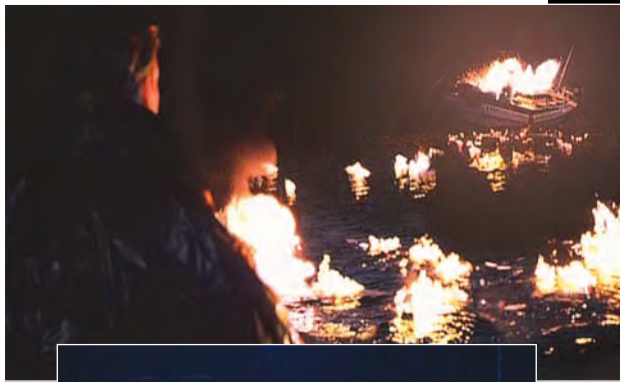
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dvd reviews:



Below
102 min
13LV

When three survivors are picked up by an American Submarine, things start going wrong. But all is not what it seems on the submarine itself. With a German anti-sub ship hunting them, the crew and passengers, forced to stay underwater, start seeing and hearing things that might be there, or might all be in their minds...

James: I wish everyone who dabbles in horror would consider what makes these kind of movies so great. The movie smacks of the kind of atmosphere last seen in *The Others*, and it really creeps you out. Best of all, you never get given a clue to what's really going on. Is the sub haunted or is it all in their heads? Forget crap like *Ghost ship* and go for this instead. A horror classic.

Walt: It's been quite some time since I saw quality horror of this degree. It's the kind of film where drawing a curtain aside or opening a door will have you colouring your briefs - creepy deluxe. Yet it has a good story, great acting, and doesn't rely on a huge special effects budget to scare the shinola out of you. As I said, this is what horror films should be.



Narc
101 Min
18 LV

Suspended from the police force following an undercover drug bust gone horribly awry, Detroit undercover narcotics officer Nick Tellis is reluctantly goaded back into active duty in hopes that he can help crack the case of a slain fellow officer, partnered with the victim's volatile ex-partner Henry Oak.

James: I love grit movies. If you enjoyed *The Bad Lieutenant* or *Gang Related*, this will appeal to you, though Ray Liotta isn't on form, and Jason Patrick just follows the numbers. But it's a grim and violent look at their world.

Walt: I like to watch movies for escapism and entertainment, neither of which I found in this hard hitting cop story. There was so much grit in this one that I found it hard to swallow. Add to that the fact that the acting was rather mediocre and the plot was oh so predictable, and you are left with a film that is rather forgettable.

Solaris
95 min
13

Aboard a lonely space station orbiting a mysterious planet, terrified crew members are experiencing a host of strange phenomena, including resurrected phantoms from their pasts. When psychologist Chris Kelvin arrives to investigate, he confronts a power beyond imagining that could hold the key to humanity's deepest dreams or darkest nightmares.

James: I'm one of 4 people I know who love this film. It either speaks to you or it doesn't. If someone has to explain it to you, then you've missed the point. A great movie that is destined for cult stardom, but not entertainment.



Walt: I loved this film. I couldn't tell you why, but I did. In fact, I am not even sure what happened in it. But it is, if nothing else, a haunting tour de force that will stimulate you on a very deep level. Or, maybe it won't. It's a film that you will either love or hate. Fits in well with other "weird" films like *The Wall* and *Clockwork Orange*.

Ghost Ship
87 min
16V

Salvagers trained for any situation imaginable come face to face with the unimaginable after boarding a derelict luxury liner, previously thought to have been lost at sea...

James: Special effects suddenly gave directors the idea that they can make scary movies. This belongs up there with *13 Ghosts*, *The Haunting* and every other modern horror that thinks style adds more atmosphere than substance. It's not scary and ultimately very, very stupid.

Walt: A few good frights don't make for good horror. This modern horror, which relies on gore and violence rather than psychology and subtlety, is a great film to scare your girl friend

with... but it's not really a good horror at all. On the other hand, it does have a rather nice naked woman in it for about two seconds...



▲ Ben and his agent, after *Dare Devil*...

Daredevil
99 min
13 V

Daredevil, a street-smart vigilante, falls in love with the beautiful martial-arts master Elektra, but when she and her family are targeted by a vicious assassin, *Daredevil* is faced with losing the one thing he loves.

James: I hate what Joel Schumacher did to the *Batman* series of films, but I'd much rather watch his films than sit through this tripe again. Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner take themselves far too seriously, not to mention that the plot has too many obvious holes and the effects are lacklustre. The film has no energy and is just an obvious cash cow for Marvel.

Walt: Wow! I had no idea that *Daredevil* was more powerful than *Superman*, faster than *Neo* and slicker than an *Alaskan oil spill*. When it comes to superhero films, there are very few that are good. This is not one of them. Aside from Colin Farrell's excellent depiction of *Bullseye*, this film is a bit whiffy. Besides which, Ben Affleck has a chin that looks like a butt and he still cannot act.

The Emperor's Club
104 min
PG L

Take *Dead Poets Society*, sprinkle in a bit of *Good Will Hunting*, and replace Robin Williams' name with Kevin Kline's, and you have this movie. Get the former instead - it's a classic. This is boring.

Extreme Ops
90 min
10 V

A bunch of snowboarders and skiers want to shoot an ad, but instead stumble upon high-tech terrorists hiding in the mountain. Guess what happens next. We dare you. It's so bad and predictable not even Vin Diesel will touch this one.

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strategy guide:

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne (part 2)

Welcome back. Last month we revisited some fundamentals and took a look at some of the enhancements to the game's interface. It is now time to talk about new units and technologies, and how to apply them in the field.

Equipment

In the original, unexpanded game, it quickly became apparent that magical items, whether looted from creeps or bought at shops, are a very important element. In Frozen Throne, this aspect has been emphasised. Not only can players now build a base structure that sells magic items, but some ground units other than heroes can now be empowered to carry them. Also, many powerful items that can be bought at neutral shops have been reduced in price, making them more attractive.

Building the new shops structures is not really optional. Not only do they sell arcane wares, but they are also required for most of the new technologies and units. In fact, with the exception of a few new tower upgrades, the shops are the only new structures, which makes it quite a simple matter to access the new units - all you have to do is to build all the things you normally would, and simply remember to build a magic shop. They are cheap, so be sure to build one early. Also not a bad idea is to build one in each base, to allow your heroes and other units to stock up on goodies whenever they are in the neighbourhood.

Mages and magicide

Virtually all the new units in Frozen Throne are spellcasters of some kind. Many of them, furthermore, are "anti-spellcaster spellcasters". Spellbreakers can redistribute spell effects and have an attack with feedback, meaning that when a spellbreaker hits a unit with mana, it takes additional damage from the mana burn. This has a micromanagement implication - anti-mage units need to be micromanaged to attack enemy spellcasters, which includes heroes, of course. In fact, enemy "mage-killer" spellcasters should be eliminated first, as they pose a threat to both your spellcasters and your heroes. The Night Elves' faerie dragon and the Undead's obsidian in destroyer mode are also designed to deal with mana-using units.

Heroes for hire

Some maps in Frozen Throne include a shop called the Tavern. Here, additional heroes are hired, offering players more variety in their strategies. Bear in mind, however, that hired heroes count normally toward your food count, and you can still only have one hero per technology tier that you have achieved. To get to know these heroes, you should take some time to practise against an AI opponent on a map containing a tavern, and hire a different one every time. An advantage of hiring heroes is that a hero emerges from a tavern immediately, so there's no waiting for the hero to be summoned. It is sometimes desirable to hire a hero, even if it's just to throw your

opponent off balance, as these require (and allow) modification of the common strategies.

Parting shots

It would be impossible to cover all possibilities in

WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne given the space constraints of a magazine. And this particular game provides the potential for many and very varied strategies and tactics. Should you desire more detailed advice, there are many web-sites

devoted to WarCraft

strategy, and they vary in style from very generalised texts right through to highly detailed analyses of various unit face-offs, build order times and more. I strongly recommend visiting some of these for a variety of styles and viewpoints. I also welcome E-mail dialogue, so if you have questions or would like to discuss strategies, drop me a line at mystraven@lantic.net.



▲ Place your shops in accessible places where your units can get to them easily



▲ As is the case with troops, mixing up the types of towers used yields best results. Be sure not to overcrowd them

Magic items are the most concentrated way to add value to an army. They are also inconspicuous - an opponent can measure the size and composition of your army at a glance, but must pick out your heroes to examine their inventories. (This, incidentally, you should do whenever you encounter an enemy army, to avoid nasty surprises. Of course, if things are a bit hectic, you may not have time to do so...) Each magic shop sells a range that is determined by the player's race. Some items are exclusive to a specific race. Here are some choice items:

- **The Sacrificial Skull** is a powerful device that allows fortification of an isolated area by deploying blight at a target location. It can also be deployed in the middle of a battle, for remember that undead units heal on blighted ground. Although the regeneration will be subtle, it may still give enough of an edge in a tight situation.
- **The Moonstone** is great for nudging the odds in your favour, if you are playing Night Elves, by making it night for a short time. For starters, your units will slowly heal while it is dark. Secondly, they will be able to hide during this time. And lastly, your moonwells will recharge somewhat.
- **Humans'** Ivory Towers serve a twofold purpose: firstly, they can be used to quickly fortify a budding expansion, even as the town hall is being built. Secondly, deploying these outside an opponent's base in preparation to an attack can lend much weight to a siege. It's even possible to sneakily deploy Ivory Towers near a player's mining operation while his or her attention is on a frontal assault.
- **The Tiny Great Hall** of the orcs allows quick expansion, enabling the hero to clear the creep and immediately start a new base. The alternative to this is to keep peons with the army, but this is often impractical, and the peons have a habit of getting themselves killed before making themselves useful. The Tiny Great Hall also deploys far more quickly than the normal construction time of a Great Hall.
- **Orbs:** these cannot be emphasised enough. Once available at higher levels, these not only add damage to a hero's attack, but each also adds some special property to the carrying hero's attack. One thing they have in common - all of the orbs allow melee heroes to attack airborne units, thus making this the ideal item for melee heroes in the late game. Although the above are some of the most powerful items, the others should not be underestimated either. Healing potions and salves of various kinds, mana potions, ways to detect hidden threats - all these should be taken into consideration. Be sure to experiment with the various items, if you have not already done so.

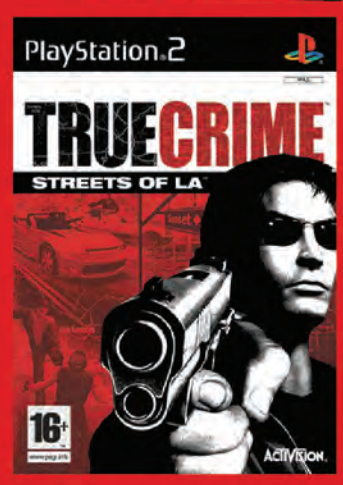
Sometimes a tome of unlearning is available for purchase. This is quite useful for changing a hero's main focus. Say, for example, that you are using a Farseer as your first hero. In order to make it combat effective, you may have assigned points to chain lightning and feral spirit. Now you find that you could really use some instant scouting - so you untrain your Farseer and reallocate points.

Frozen Throne has introduced a new defence technology for each race. Humans get the arcane tower, which is particularly effective against mana-using units; undead now have the Nerubian tower which, although it deals less damage, slows its targets with a cold effect - this is particularly useful as slowed units will take longer to reach the towers themselves, allowing more time for shots to be fired at them. The night elves and the orcs get no new tower variants, but benefit from upgrades to enhance their defences. The night elves can drastically improve the effectiveness of their moonwells with wellspring; this upgrade requires an Ancient of Wonders (magic shop). The orcs can, if they have reached a high enough technological level, vastly enhance the toughness of their defensive structures (watchtowers and burrows) with the new armour upgrade.

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Raider of the Lost Ark 1982

Rating: ★★

Considered the oldest Indiana Jones game in existence, the main character consisted only out of 24 pixels! Based on the movie, you travel the land looking for the staff of RA and other objects to uncover the Well of Souls, where the ark is hidden.



Indiana Jones and the Lost Kingdom 1984

Rating: ★

The first game in the series to not feature a movie storyline, and which was very puzzle orientated. In it Indiana has to solve tricky puzzles and avoid traps, but it was generally lacking in action.

Indiana Jones and The Revenge of the Ancients 1987

Rating: ★★★★★

Indiana's first adventure on the PC, it's a text adventure where you have to hack your way through the jungle to find the powerful Mazatec Key, before Plebinheim and his SS thugs get to it first. One of the best text-adventures ever made.

Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade: The Graphic Adventure 1989

Rate: ★★★★★

The first adventure game from the series, it made use of LucasArts' SCUMM engine. Based on the movie, it was a tough but fun game featuring both combat and true adventure gameplay.

Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade: The Action Game 1989

Rating: ★★★★★

Based on the movie, it's really a platformer taking you through all the scenes of the movies, including the scene where young Indy recovers the Cross of Coronado. Nothing special, but it was fun to play.

Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom 1988

Rating: ★★★★★

Released on the Commodore and PC, it was quite simply a matter of searching the mines of the Thugee, releasing the children, taking rides on the mine's rails with a runaway mine cart, and collecting those pesky stones. In other words, a lot of fun!

Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis 1992

Rating: ★★★★★

Considered to be the finest adventure game in the series, if not the best Indiana Jones game ever made, it featured a unique storyline where Dr. Jones has to find the fabled city of Atlantis. Nazis, women, tombs and magic - everything you need in an Indy game.

Indiana Jones and The Fate of Atlantis: The Action Game 1992

Rating: ★★

Based on the adventure game, it wasn't nearly as monumental. Still, it had good action, and the isometric view took you to various locations, but it wasn't as exotic as the adventure version.

Indiana Jones and his Greatest Adventures 1994

Rating: ★★★★★

Taking a twist on the original titles, the first SNES Indy title let you play through the action-packed sequences from all three movies, instead of focusing on one particular story line.

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb 2003

Rating: ★★★★★

Despite not having Harrison Ford's voice, plus some frustrating sudden-death moments, The Emperor's Tomb is one of the finest Indiana Jones games. Taking you all over the world to exotic locations, and featuring a smooth combat system, it was a huge hit with fans.

Indiana Jones and The Infernal Machine 1999

Rating: ★★

Indiana Jones steps into 3D, though rather half-heartedly with a game better known for overly tough puzzles, high system demands and tricky and confusing levels. Still, it was fun to play, but never went down as a Indy classic.

Indiana Jones and His Desktop Adventures 1996

Rating: ★

As part of LucasArts' brief Desktop game spree, the title generated a range of different adventures that could each be clocked in under an hour. Not much of an addition to the Indy game legacy, it did entertain bored office workers for a while.

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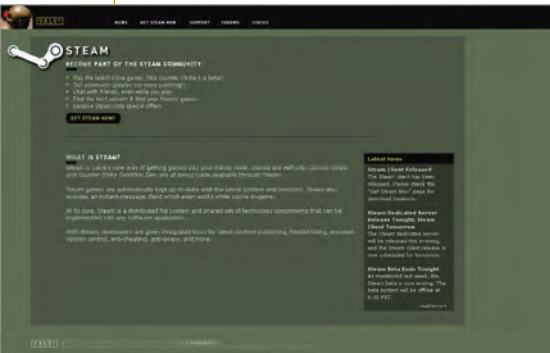
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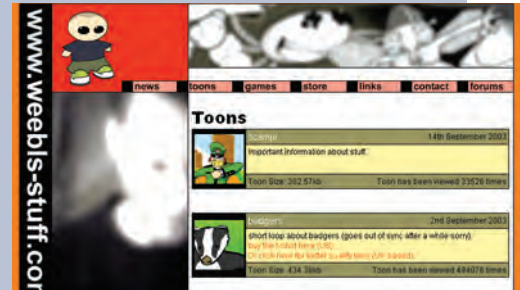
If you've been keeping half an eye (no pun intended) on the Half Life 2/Steam saga, you must at some point have wondered what Steam is. In a nutshell, it's Valve's own content delivery system intended to keep your Valve games (such as Half Life, Condition Zero and Counter-Strike) up to date automatically. Members of Steam also get access to special features and downloads. By the time you read this, Steam should have gone beyond its Beta stage and slowly start encroaching upon Valve game players everywhere. The client is a small(ish) 500KB download, and Valve hopes that more developers might license and use the system to keep their games up to date. A single-solution that keeps all of your online titles up-to-date? A bit utopian, but we like your thinking.



Flash in the Pan?

www.weebis-stuff.com

The great thing about new technology is that every now and then, just as you thought you've seen it all, something new emerges. Flash might have been around for a while, but with the constant updates, developers pushing the limits and the advent of Flash MX, the medium has gone from strength to strength. One of the sites that hold testament to Flash's power has to be Weeb's Stuff. NAG landed upon this man's creation, Weebl and Bob, a while ago, but he has since evolved the virtual space to hold more cartoons, different kinds of games, and the incredibly catchy and very popular Badgers animation. The cartoons and games all tend to be a bit obscure, surreal, and possibly of bad taste, but they are fun nonetheless. Another great feature is that Weebl actually indicates how big a flash file is, just in case your connection isn't really capable of it, though most files range between 100 and 300 kb. Rather twisted, but very good and obviously the result of someone with too much time and talent in hand.



Getting graphic

www.bjorn3d.com

Unless the screaming banshee pixels of hell! Graphics cards are no mere toys these days, retailing for more than what an entire PC would have cost you a few years ago. But they are the speed demons of the 21st century, complete with cooling systems that puts any concert rig or dragster to shame. Well, proportionally, anyway. That said, graphics cards fall in that bizarre region where you need to know what you buy, and everyone needs to buy one eventually. But it can be quite confusing, and the hardware sites and magazines are often of little help at all, being too damn technical. Unless you have NAG's luxury of phoning up one of our hardware gurus and asking them what for, you might need a decent source of info, and Bjorn 3D is it. Hiding amongst the throngs of large hardware sites, Bjorn 3D is a smaller, but very thorough, site that looks at 3D hardware and all that encompasses the subject. They tend to do a lot of comparison reviews, and their articles are easy and straight-forward to understand. While they won't explain to you what exactly AF and AA is, the articles tend not to get overly technical. The site is also less imposing than Tom's Hardware, which is the other site you should visit if you were researching your new buy.



Anime rescue

www.animenfo.com

Ah, anime - the current mainstay of the average geek's entertainment diet. But don't let this scare you! Beyond the crazed fan boy element is a form of animation that, though highly commercial, is still very unique and interesting, thanks to its high quality and the foreign perspective of Japanese storytelling. Granted, if you've seen one Anime series, you've seen a good-deal similar ones. And with Anime distribution channels being as they are, it's often hit-and-miss if you're getting something really good, or just a piece of rubbish that seems special because you can't understand it.

Thankfully, the net rushes to your rescue with Anime-NFO, one of the best Anime series databases on the net. The site goes out to catalogue anime series and movies released, cataloguing the creators, producers, characters and other aspects of each show. Every series gets a run-down explaining what it's about, how many episodes were released, the year it was released in, and who the distribution partners are. There is also a user voting system raking how popular the show is. Of course, it's not the be-all of anime show guides, but it's a good place to start.



Euthanasia award

www.slushpuppie.co.za

We haven't handed out a Euthanasia award in a while, but deserving sites are hard to find. Most sites just make classic mistakes, and most companies have the foresight to spend some cash on their sites, or avoid getting things too complicated. Actually, the Slushpuppie site isn't that bad, if you can get through the first page, and you have a lot of bandwidth. The first impression is something that looks like high-school art students have been unleashed with PSP 3 and FrontPage - the result being something quite ugly. Get past this, and head towards the large Flash interface that seems to load the entire site in one go, and you can play some basic games or visit the factory, which tells you nothing much, and isn't as cool as watching Flash episodes on another site. We'll forgive them, though - it's still the coolest drink in existence.



Watching them watching you

All the world's a stage, and it's full of multinationals and corporations out to screw the little man, destroy the world and make everything generally hell on Earth. Well, it's not that bad, but there are a few disgruntled people out there, and some of them seem to have a point to make...

www.google-watch.com

Is Google too powerful? Can it actually make or break your online business with its site rankings? This man seems to think so, and he has a one-man campaign against the site.

www.google-watch-watch.com

In case you don't believe the guy from Google-Watch, neither does the writer of this article, stipulating how stupid it is.

www.msboycott.com

Microsoft is too big, and dangerous to the world. This site believes that there should be an active boycott against Microsoft, and they back their claims with regular news reports and MS-related updates.

www.boycott-riaa.com

A lot of music file shares are not

fans of the RIAA, the largest US music industry watchdog, which has recently taken to suing children and old people for sharing music on the Internet.

www.mcspotlight.com

McDonalds is no stranger to controversy, especially with their one-meal-suits-all approach to making food. This site picks away at the edges of the McDonalds empire, hoping to make more people conscious of fast food, and the company's ad campaigns.

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HRYKE IS FLIPPING THROUGH A COUPLE OF MAGAZINES WHEN PRIEST BURSTS IN...

Priest: Here's your share [gives Shryke R 7000].

Shryke: Umm... [looks at cash] Umm... [pockets cash] I don't really understand...

Priest: I sold your car. That's your half.

Shryke: I never owned a car. I own the motorbike. The car was yours... but why did you sell it?

Priest: Okay, it's your share from someone's car. I need the cash to buy a new ATI 9800.

Shryke: Umm. Okay. You sold someone's car to buy an overpriced graphics card... that makes no sense...

Priest: Of course it does. I need the card. Valve says Half-Life 2 will run best on this card!

Shryke: ...you sold the car so that you can buy a graphics card to run a specific game...

Priest: Yes.

Shryke: Hang on. You are prepared to spend seven grand on a graphics card...

Priest: Yes.

Shryke: ...so that you can play Half-Life 2...

Priest: Yes.

Shryke: ... which will probably retail for around three hundred bucks?

Priest: Look, we're not all satisfied with running games at 320 by 240 at 4 frames a second. The rest of the world demands POWER! And we're willing to pay for it. Especially if it means it'll run Half-Life 2 in all its glory.

Shryke: I can understand you wanting to upgrade your graphics card. Hell, how'd you survive with that old 4MB clunker I don't know. What I don't understand is that you're willing to spend that much money because some developer says their game will run better on it. So maybe it won't run quite as well on a GeForce, but you will save a bit of money at least...

Priest: But Valve says I should. Valve is God.

Shryke: You know, they don't even need subliminal messaging with you. You're such a weakling... allowing yourself to be swayed by some bunch of guys who are just trying to get rich off you anyway. They've probably got some lucrative deal going with ATI! They're gonna make a killing, I'll warrant.

Priest: Maybe, but it's justification to buy a R 7000 card. Right now I own a R 7000 beast of a card, and you don't. And my conscience is clean. What have you got?

Shryke: Seven grand that I can do anything with... Have you ever considered the fact that you've blown a lot of money for a game that might, just maybe, possibly suck?

Priest: Yeah, but there's Doom 3 too. Wanna know which card it likes?

Shryke: They don't even know who they're going with. And besides, by the time these games come out, that graphics card will be obsolete...

Priest: Then I'll sell another car...

Shryke hides the keys for his bike...



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