MAY 04 VOLUME 7 ISSUE 2 WWW.NAG.CO.ZA

NAG

SOUTH AFRICA'S LEADING TECHNOLOGY & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

MADE IN SOUTH AFRICA

FEATURE GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE ◂◂
LOGITECH DINUVO KEYBOARD REVIEW ◂◂
CASE **MODIFICATION** - GROUP TEST ◂◂
RETRO SECTION - **COMMODORE 64** ◂◂
COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04 REVIEW ◂◂
BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM REVIEW ◂◂
FIRST LOOK - SILENT **HILL** 4 ◂◂
SURVIVAL HORROR ◂◂
FAR CRY REVIEW ◂◂
ATI INTERVIEW ◂◂

PC **Xbox** GameCube **Mobile** GBA **PlayStation2**

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

124 PAGES OF HOT GAMING

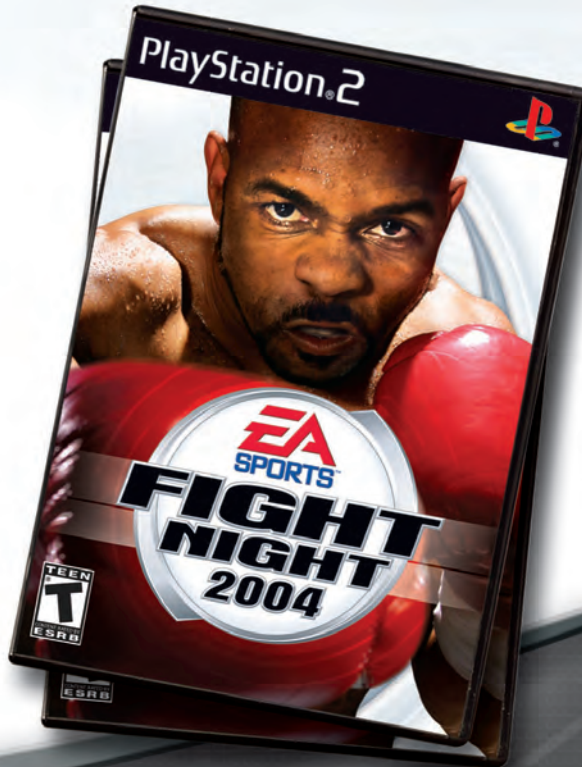
IF YOUR CD IS MISSING TORTURE KITTENS UNTIL YOUR DEMANDS ARE MET...

NAG is powered by

South Africa R 35.00
Singapore S$ 8.90
Malaysia RM 14.90

PlayStation®2

THE BIGGER THEY ARE THE HARDER YOU FALL



EA SPORTS

www.ea.co.za

IT'S IN THE GAME™

R399.99

exclusives

R399.99

exclusives

R399.99

exclusives

R399.99

exclusives

R399.99

exclusives

R399.99

exclusives

R399.99

exclusives

R499.99

R499.99

R399.99

R399.99

Offers valid while stocks last

TOYS R US

LOW PRICE GUARANTEE
WE'LL MATCH ANY ADVERTISED PRICE

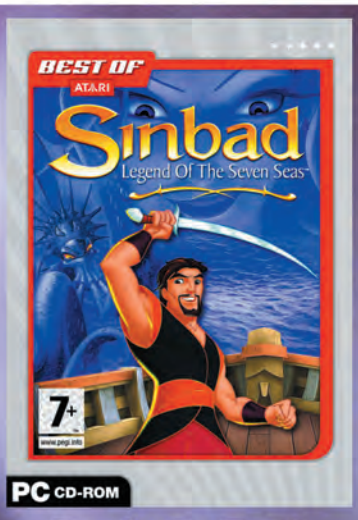
Toys R Us will match any retailers advertised price within 7 days of the advertisement appearing. We will match the price either at the time of purchase or within 7 days of the purchase provided you have your original receipt. Price matching applies provided the other retailer has stock at the time of purchase. Toys R Us coupons can not be used in addition to price matching.

Sandton City (011) 783-0327. **Fourways** (011) 467-0708/9. **Westgate** (011) 768-4084/7. **Boksburg** (011) 823-5111/2/3.
Atterbury, Pretoria (012) 991-4050. **Bloemfontein** (051) 444-0380. **Pavilion, Durban** (031) 265-0380. **Gateway, Durban** (031) 566-3772.
Bellville, Cape Town (021) 949-6030. **Somerset West** (021) 851-4123. **Canal Walk** (021) 552-8130. E&OE

PS one™ TITLES R129.99 each

PC CD ROM TITLES

R99.99

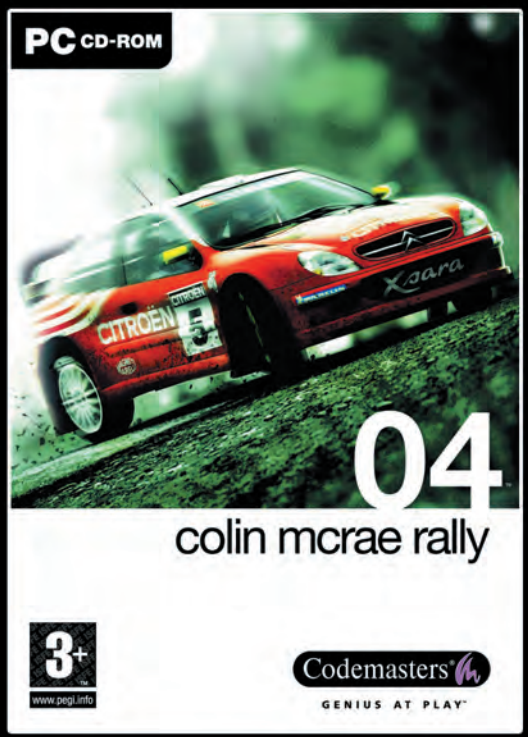


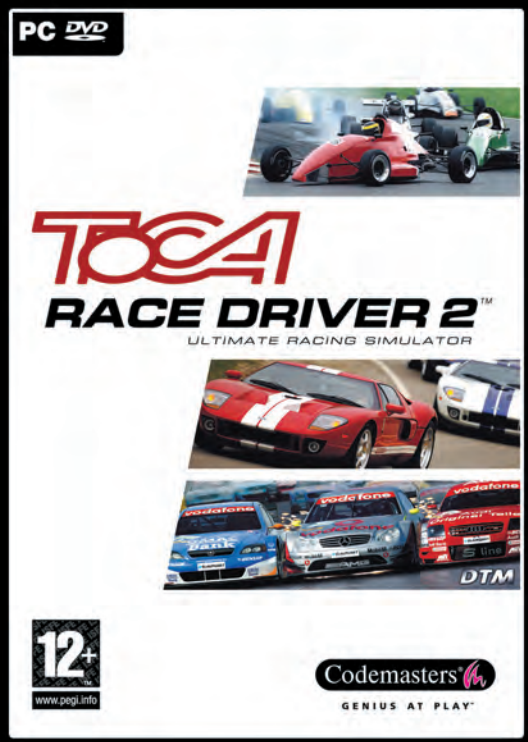
R139.99

R139.99

R299.99

www.toysrus.co.za





Colin McRae Rally 04

In Colin McRae Rally 04 it's the player in control - choose from over 20 rally cars and which championships to compete in. Game modes include 4-wheel drive and 2-wheel drive Championships (both with normal or advanced skill levels), Rallies, Stages, a Group B Championship featuring classic powerful rally cars and, for the professional, an Expert Championship, which demands the best performance from the most die-hard rally fan.

ToCA Race Drive 2

Race Driver 2 will provide petrol head gamers with the most diverse range of challenging motorsports ever seen in one game. Over 30 global championships will be featured, with players competing in events including GT Sports Car Racing, Street Racing, Rally, DTM, V8 Supercars, Global GT Lights, Rally Cross, Formula Ford, Open Wheel Grand Prix and Classic Car Racing. Race Driver 2 continues the pioneering use of cinematic plot in racing games with the whole narrative being played out completely from the first person perspective. You see what the lead character sees and you create your own history.

megarom interactive

PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY MEGAROM INTERACTIVE (PTY) LTD.
011 234 2680 | SALES@MEGAROM.CO.ZA | WWW.MEGAROM.CO.ZA
more @ www.megarom.co.za

MASTER

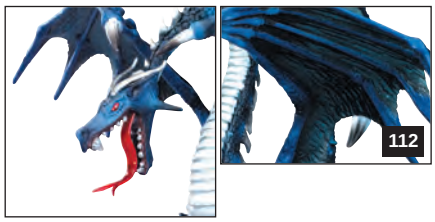
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow
The game will bring back more of the single-player intrigue that made the original game a bestseller. With exciting new action scenes and a strong cinematic feel, the player will experience new and even more realistic surroundings. Building on Ubi Soft's strong commitment to online gaming, Pandora Tomorrow will the be the first stealth game ever to feature multiplayer online missions allowing several players to simultaneously share Sam Fisher's shadowy world of espionage.

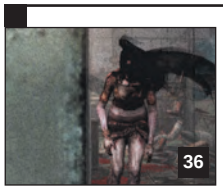
Hitman: Contracts
Hitman: Contracts delivers more action-packed and suspense-filled missions, with a greater variety of ways to make the perfect kill and an increased arsenal of firearms and close-combat weapons. A new graphics engine showcases your 'work' in brutal detail and brings the new locations to life. An improved control system and more gradual learning curve will ensure that the game is accessible to all aspiring hitmen.

THE GAME

megarom interactive
PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY MEGAROM INTERACTIVE (PTY) LTD.
011 234 2680 | SALES@MEGAROM.CO.ZA | WWW.MEGAROM.CO.ZA
more @ www.megarom.co.za

CONTENTS





Demos Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow | ToCA Race Driver 2 | I of the Dragon **Movies** XNA Demos | Driv3r | Red Dead Revolver | Perimeter | PoP TV Advert | Unreal Championship 2 **Drivers** NVIDIA ForceWare v56.64 **Patches** Call of Duty v1.3 | Far Cry v1.1 **Add-Ons** Battlefield: Vietnam Map | X-Isle Technology Demo | Scorched Earth 3D | H@K@T@K

REGULARS

10 Ed's Note
14 Industry News
28 Community.za
30 Inbox
32 Domain of the Basilisk
46 Gaming News
86 Technology News
110 Lifestyle: Anime & Manga
111 Lifestyle: Books, Graphic Novels & Music
112 Lifestyle: Role Playing & War Gaming
114 Lifestyle: Figurines & Comics
115 Lifestyle: URL
116 Retro:Commodore 64
120 Retro: Legacy - Sonic the Hedgehog
122 Game Over

FEATURES

18 Richard Huddy Interview
20 Survival Horror
82 GDC

PREVIEWS

34 Preview Introduction
36 Silent Hill 4
38 BloodRayne 2
39 Red Ninja
40 Riddick
42 Def Jam Vendetta 2
43 Settlers 5
44 Solar

REVIEWS

52 Reviews Introduction
54 Far Cry PC
58 Battlefield: Vietnam PC
60 Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow PC
62 Unreal Tournament 2004 PC
64 X-Plane PC
66 Castle Strike PC
68 Colin McRae 04 PC
69 Chaser PC
70 Joan of Arc PC
71 Silent Storm PC
72 James Bond: Everything or Nothing PS2
73 Kill.switch PS2
73 Bad Boys II PS2
74 Savage PC
74 Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre PC
76 eJay Club World PS2
76 Sonic Heroes PS2
77 I-Ninja PS2
78 Castlevania PS2
78 Wrath: Unleashed PS2
80 Fallout Collection PC
80 Vietcong: Fist Alpha PC
81 Mafia PS2
81 Ford Racing 2 PC

HARDWARE

82 Lazy Gamer's Guide: AeroCool CPU Fan
94 Abit AI7 and AN7 Motherboards
95 Thermaltake Xray
95 MSI Megastick 256
96 BTC Keyboard Roundup
96 PixelView PlayTV Box II
97 ASUS Giga X Series 1105
98 ASUS WLAN 802.11 b and g
98 Logitech X620 6.1 Speakers
99 Logitech diNovo Media Desktop
100 Freecom Beatman Flash 128 MB
100 PixelView FX 5700
101 Chronos USB Bluetooth Printer Adapter
101 Thermaltake Xwing Bluetooth Mouse
101 Powercolor Radeon 9600 XT
102 H@rdcor3: Case Modification Round-Up

These few brave companies make the Cover CD a reality every month... Think fondly of them!

megarom interactive

EA GAMES

With 2004's biggest Titles yet to come, can you afford not to join?

Pre-Order

Join now to receive these and other great benefits

- Free delivery to your front door on the release date *
- Save 10% off the normal release price
- Enjoy great giveaways from all your favourite publishers
- Weekly Release Schedules

To Join, email us your details @

preorder@budgettech.co.za

Or visit us @
Shop 244 Northgate
Shopping Centre
Northumberland Road
North Riding
Tel: (011) 794-4450

* Delivery is free within the immediate Johannesburg/Pretoria areas. Outlying areas will be charged at R 40.00 per delivery and are subject to a few days delay, depending on the remoteness of the area.

Pre-Order

ed's note

THE DANGERS OF HYPE

It was interesting to watch how Far Cry not only captured the hearts and minds of gamers around the world but also managed to impress the legions of zestless gaming hacks. The real question that needs to be asked now after all the hype and excitement - was Far Cry really that good or did it just have impeccable timing, arriving at a point when gamers [hardcore to serious] have lost faith and more than a little patience with developers and their endless delays, arrogance and apathetic "when it's done" attitude? You can't really blame the press for hounding the developers for more tidbits and you can't blame the gamers for getting excited about the next big thing. If games like Max Payne and Far Cry can be hyped for only a few months, or at worst, a year and a bit before release then Half-Life 2 and DOOM 3 have no excuse. If you also rule out the developers who are more interested in making the game and getting it finished than talking about it [there are exceptions] then I expect the blame can be levelled at the publishers who have overly eager PR departments who think it's okay to build an entire 6 page article around 3 pieces of artwork and a 5 question Q&A. Bitching aside it's really satisfying to see the early hyping and overselling backfire, something that's been happening more and more the bigger computer and console gaming grows and the smaller the global village becomes.

The result...

Now what's happening is a unique situation where underdog development companies with low or non-existent advertising budgets are just getting on with making great games and releasing them without years of fanfare. The point: delays cultivate apathy and what has now happened is that the endless release delays plaguing Half-Life 2 and DOOM 3, over hype and general disappointment among gamers has resulted in everyone making Far Cry their champion, perhaps overstating just how good it is and applauding its every pixel while snubbing Half-Life 2 with disinterest and contempt. I wonder how this will translate in sales or how overly critical the press will be when they finally get their hands on Half-Life 2 or DOOM 3. Or is this a case of the biggest babies throwing their toys out the cot as it were? It should be interesting to watch and will perhaps teach everyone involved a few valuable lessons. It just goes to show that you don't need to be id Software or Valve to put together stunning shooters, it seems these days simply owning the DOOM or Half-Life trademark, copyright, and lunch box means little if you take 3-5 years developing a game.

And even better, this kind of the thing sends a clear message to those struggling unknown development companies that if you just make good games, people will buy them.

Hopefully that all made enough sense to convince you that I should be writing the opening text for this grand magazine... if not continue below and discover just how mindless things can get after too many late nights and countless tins of Red Bull.

Ashamed and embarrassed

www.southafrica.co.za/arts/games.html

If you'd like to see what the world sees when they investigate gaming in South Africa type in this URL - but please make sure you're sitting down or have a sense of humour.

I decided to give them a call to see if NAG could assist in updating their page but they were too busy trying to get my vote to actually listen to me. So, if anyone out there has any pull in parliament tell the plod running the South African website to wake up and update the site at least once a decade.

Caption of the month

The winner has been chosen for the month of March but I feel that a special mention needs to be made about some of the other entries I received. Despite expecting a ton of corny and rude captions I actually received some of the best and funniest captions to date [not sure if this is a good thing or a bad thing?] Here are a few of the better ones...

"He doesn't know I'm a man" - **David Rodda**

"When you said you were well rendered, you weren't kidding." - **Andre De Graaff**

"Hopefully you have updated your antivirus?!" - **Maruis Du Preez**

"Don't worry dear! Every body knows stiffies are unreliable!" - **Peter Holloway**

"The new Logitech Plug 'n Play inflatable, now with force feedback." - **Kevin van Zanten**

"Do you have anti-aliasing on or do I need to fetch the sandpaper?" - **Anton Botha**

"A new title from EA Games, S.E.X. Tricky" - **Daniel Boud**

[*Because so many of you asked - the March screenshot is from a game called, Singles - we'll have a review in the May issue if we can pull Walter away from his screen and get him to use his keyboard for some typing instead of the pounding it's getting now...*]

Cover Planet | Planet name: Borgon

We managed to hack our way into a top FBI server [went through their dumpster] and discovered that the US government has imagery of a number of planets in the Canis Major dwarf galaxy some 25 000 light years away. We're going to bring you this unique material each month on our actual CD - remember to keep your Cover CD each month and then hang them from your roof.

Just try and enjoy the issue!

Michael James
[Editor]

Half Job

There seems to always be an interesting story about the cover these days and this month is no different. This was supposed to be a Half-Life 2 image but the PR 'experts' involved let us down and didn't send the promised artwork... Oh well.

Not that the Unreal Tournament 2004 cover looks bad though and the game really rocks, so buy it instead! ;)

Find out more about this frantic game on **page 62**

Caption of the Month

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: **May 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 under this block of text.

NAG's May Caption

'Peter Jackson does some research for his next movie' - **NAG's [18% lame] effort**

March winner

"Just now I'm going to wake up and find out that this was all just a computer game..." - **Blazerfrost**

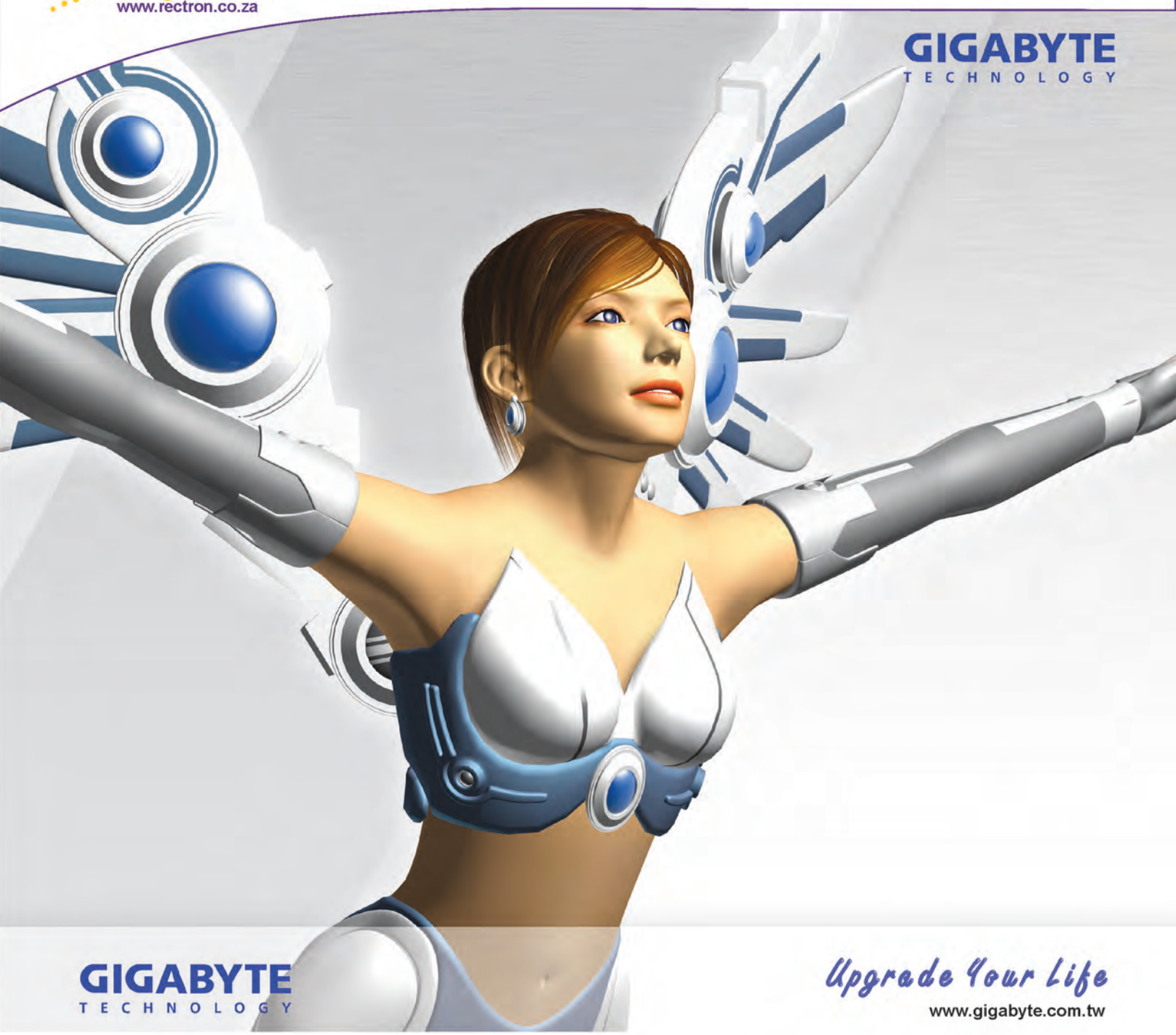
NAG Review Rigs supplied by:
Your Components Solution Provider
rectron
www.rectron.net

intel inside pentium 4
GIGABYTE TECHNOLOGY
AOpen

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

rectron
www.rectron.co.za

GIGABYTE
TECHNOLOGY



GIGABYTE
TECHNOLOGY

Upgrade Your Life

www.gigabyte.com.tw

Gigabyte PC

Motherboards

Optical Devices

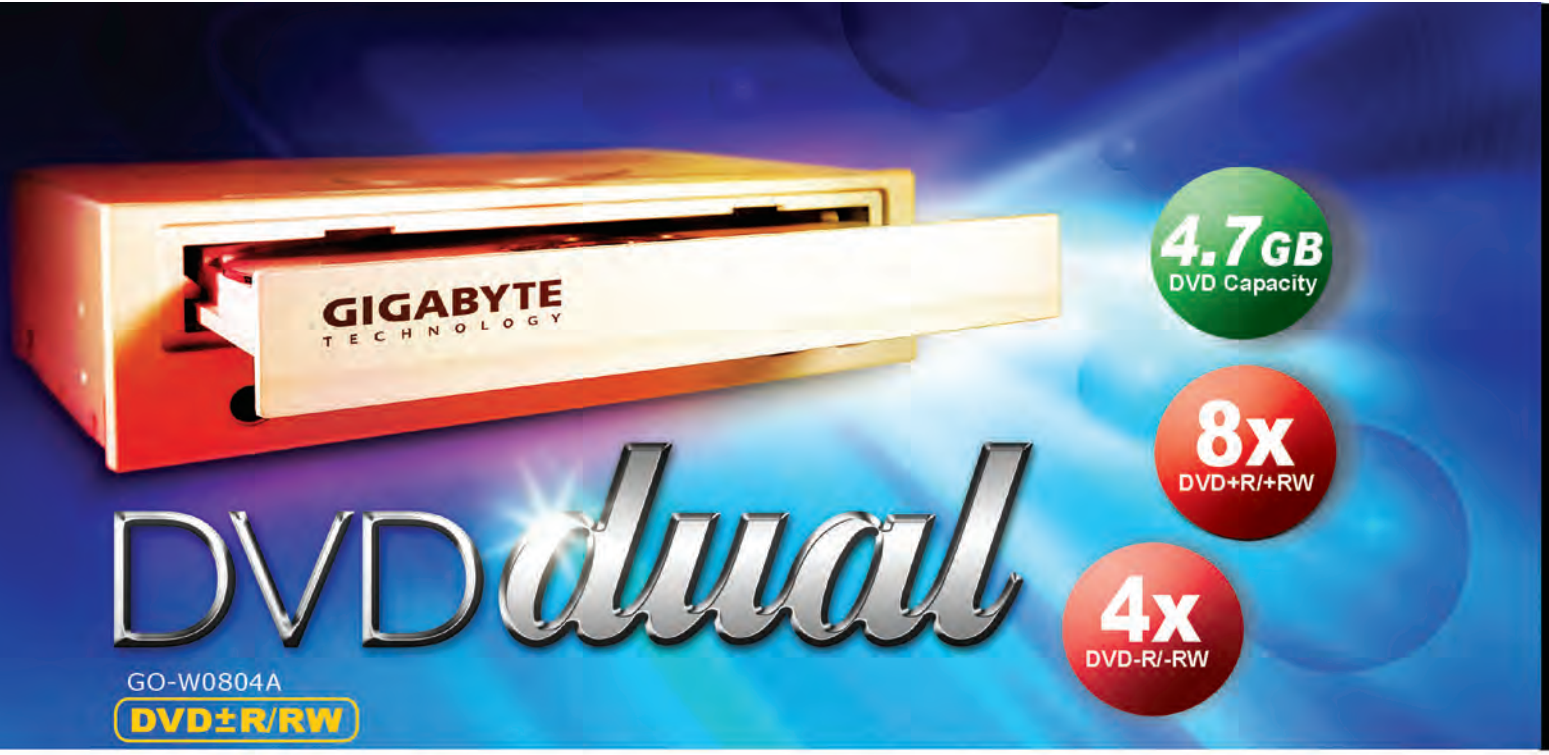
Wireless LAN

Notebook

Graphics Card

Cooling Solution

Peripherals



NVIDIA GeForce FX 5950 Ultra GV-N595U-GT

- nVidia GeForce FX 5950 Ultra GPU
- Supports the new AGP 8X and latest Direct 9.0
- Integrated with 256MB DDR memory
- Features DVI-I, TV-Out and D-Sub connetors
- All new 256-bit memory interface
- Supports video capture for video editing (VIVO)
- Supports Gigabyte "V-TUNER" overclocking application
- Bundles three world-class games and PowerDVD 5.0

NVIDIA GeForce FX 5900XT GV-N59X128D

- Powered by nVidia GeForce FX 5900XT GPU
- Supports the new AGP 8X and latest DirectX 9.0
- Integrated with 128MB DDR memory
- Features DVI-I, TV-Out and D-Sub connectors
- All new 256-bit memory interface
- Supports Gigabyte "V-TUNER" overclocking application
- Bundles three world-class games and PowerDVD 5.0

RADEON 9800 XT GV-R98X256D

- Powered by ATi RADEON™ 9800 XT Visual Processing Unit (VPU)
- Supports the new AGP 8X standard.
- Integrated latest 256MB DDR Memory
- Supports the latest MicrosoftR DirectXR 9.0 and OpenGL®
- 8 parallel rendering pipelines process up to 3.3G pixels per second.
- All new 256-bit memory interface.
- DVI-I and TV-Out connector supported
- Supports Gigabyte V-Tuner for overclocking.
- Bundles 4 Newest Full Version Games & PowerDVD 5.0

RADEON 9800 PRO GV-R98P256D

- Powered by ATi RADEON™ 9800 PRO Visual Processing Unit (VPU)
- Supports the new AGP 8X standard
- Supports the latest Microsoft® DirectX® 9.0
- Eight parallel rendering pipelines process up to 3 billion pixels per second
- All new 256-bit memory interface
- DVI-I and TV-Out connector supported
- Supports GIGABYTE V-Tuner for overclocking
- Bundles three world-class games and PowerDVD 5.0

802.11g Wireless Router GN-B49G

- 802.11g compliant, supports Super G with data transfer rate of up to 108 Mbps
- Gigabyte Smart Setup II, Plug & Play,
- High Security: WPA, 802.1x, 64/128/152 WEP Encryption
- Smart DHCP, no IP conflict
- Advanced Web Management and firmware upgrade

802.11g Access Point GN-A17GU

- 802.11g compliant, supports Super G with data transfer rate of up to 108 Mbps
- Upgradeable to dual band, double the bandwidth
- Supports Gigabyte AP Manager
- High Security: 802.1x, 64/128/152 WEP, ACL (Access Control List)

USB Wireless Lan & Storage stick GN-WLBZ201

- IEEE 802.11b and WIFI compliant
- Unique 3D Rotation LAN card to locate best signal quality
- Unique Signal quality display helps user locate optimal signal
- 128MB Flash memory with wireless LAN driver inside, convenient driver installation
- Supports Windows 98/ ME/ 2000/ XP

Cardbus Wireless Lan GN-WMAG

- IEEE802.11g compliant
- Wi-Fi compliant
- Interface : Cardbus
- Wireless Chipset : Atheros
- Security : support 64/128/152 bit WEP standard & AES
- Support 802.11e QoS(Quality of Service)
- Support Windows 98/SE/ME/2000/XP/NT4.0
- Support Ad-Hoc Mode/Infrastructure Mode

- Dual Power System(DPS)
- Dual Logical Processors Support
  (Intel® Hyper-Threading Technology)
- Dual Channel DDR
- Dual RAID
  (SATA RAID + ATA133 IDE RAID)
- DualBIOS™
- Dual Cooling
  (Dual Active Fan Sink)

Limited Edition

The 6-Dual Miracle!

Quench Your Desire for Extreme Performance

GA-8KNXP Ultra Intel® 875P/ICH5R Chipset

- Supports 800MHz FSB Pentium® 4 CPU with HT Technology
- Dual Channel DDR400 architecture with ECC support
- AGP 8X with AGP Pro interface for work-station graphics
- GIGABYTE patented Dual Power System 2 (DPS 2) design
- Integrated Adaptec Ultra320 SCSI controller
- Integrated Intel® PRO/1000 CT Network Connection
- Integrated Serial-ATA interface with RAID 0 function
- Integrated GigaRAID IDE RAID interface
- Features Performance Acceleration Technology (PAT)

SCSI | ATA133 RAID | USB 2.0 | Intel® PRO | DualBIOS™ | Xpress' | 6-Channel Audio | EasyTune™ 4 | Q-Flash™ | @BIOS™ | Multi-Lang BIOS

GA-K8NNXP NVIDIA nForce3 150 Chipset

- Supports new generation AMD Athlon™64 processors
- GIGABYTE Dual Power System-K8 (DPS-K8) design
- Enhances system performance with DDR400 memory
- Dual LAN solution with Gigabit LAN solution integrated
- Integrated Serial-ATA interface with RAID 0,1 function
- Integrated GigaRAID IDE RAID Interface
- Integrated T.I. IEEE 1394b FireWire interface

IEEE 1394b | ATA 133 RAID | Dual LAN | USB 2.0 | DualBIOS™ | 6-Channel Audio with UAJ | EasyTune™ 4 | Q-Flash™ | @BIOS™

GA-8IPE1000 Pro-G Intel® 865PE/ICH5 Chipset

- Supports 800MHz FSB Pentium 4 CPU with HT Technology
- New generation Dual Channel DDR400 architecture
- Supports AGP 8X interface for excellent graphics performance
- Integrated Serial-ATA interface
- Integrated T.I. IEEE1394 interface
- Integrated Marvel Gigabit Ethernet controller
- Gigabyte patented DualBIOS? technology design

IEEE 1394 | USB 2.0 | Gigabit LAN | DualBIOS™ | Anti-Burn™ | Xpress' | 6-Channel Audio | EasyTune™ 4 | Q-Flash™ | @BIOS™ | Multi-Lang BIOS

GA-7N400 Pro2 nForce2 Ultra 400 SPP/ MCP

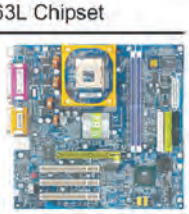
- Supports AMD Athlon™ XP 400MHz FSB processor
- Supports Dual Channel DDR400 memory architecture
- Integrated Serial-ATA interface with RAID 0,1 function
- Integrated GigaRAID IDE RAID Interface
- Integrated Gigabit LAN Ethernet controller
- Supports high quality 6-channel audio
- Integrated IEEE 1394 FireWire interface

IEEE 1394 | ATA133 RAID | Gigabit LAN | 6-Channel Audio | USB 2.0 | DualBIOS™ | EasyTune™ 4 | Q-Flash™ | @BIOS™

GA-8S661FXM SiS 661FX/963L Chipset

- Supports IntelR Pentium® 4 800MHz FSB Processor with HT Technology
- Enhance system performance with DDR 400 memory
- Integrated Real 256E Graphics engine
- Supports AGP 8X interface for higher graphics performance
- Integrated 6-channel AC'97 audio with Jack-Sensing
- Integrated 10/100Mb Ethernet controller
- Provides 6 USB 2.0 ports for high-speed connectivity

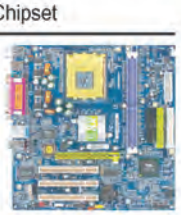
USB 2.0 | 6-Ch Audio+Jack Sensing | Xpress' | EasyTune™ 4



GA-7VM400M VIA KM400/ 8235 Chipset

- Supports AMD Athlon™ XP 333MHz FSB processor
- Enhance system performance with DDR 333 memory
- Integrated UniChrome™ graphics engine
- Integrated 6-channel AC'97 audio with S/P-DIF function
- Integrated 10/100Mb Ethernet controller
- Provides 6 USB 2.0 ports for high-speed connectivity

USB 2.0 | 10/100 LAN | 6-Channel Audio | EasyTune™ 4 | Q-Flash™ | @BIOS™



For more information, please call our distributors:

rectron www.rectron.net

Johannesburg	Cape Town	Durban	Port Elizabeth	Bloemfontein
Tel: +27-11-203-1000	Tel: +27-21-5557111	Tel: +27-31-5718888	Tel: +27-41-3638088	Tel: +27-51-4300000
Fax: +27-11-203-1100	Fax: +27-21-5557117	Fax: +27-31-5718800	Fax:+27-41-3631888	Fax: +27-51-4301144

* These speed settings are not guaranteed by GIGABYTE.
– The specification and pictures are subject to change without notice.
– All trademarks and logos are the properties of their respective holders.
– Any overclocking is at user's risk. Giga-Byte Technology shall not be responsible for any damage or instability to your processor, motherboard, or any other components.

PCFormat Gigabyte "Best Motherboard Brand 2002 & 2003"

GIGABYTE™ TECHNOLOGY

On the wire

words james francis

A NEW SPORT ORDER?

EA and Microsoft are sitting in a tree. And they are not kissing. In fact, they are arguing about the tree and how one is supposed to use the tree.

This is more or less the problem when it comes to these two giants and their view of online gaming, and it's not helping anyone. On the one side is Microsoft, whose Xbox Live is the best thing since anything online that requires a controller, not to mention a console that's hot in the States: the home of the sports simulator. On the other side, Electronic Arts, who has shown its near omnipotent grasp on the market by pushing Sega, usually renowned for their sports titles, to the side and decisively taking the sports game crown.

And in one of the biggest injustices to all gamers (except us, because we don't have Live and we get but a trickle of EA's sporting titles. Hell, we don't even have Xboxes) these two won't play together. Citing what usually sounds like cryptic corporate gargling, both sides complain about how the other one's doing business and who's got control over what. It's a real clash of the egos and it's somewhat akin to a bunch of girls playing tea party and two want to be the hostesses.

But there is light! Yes, Microsoft is not doing most of its sports titles anymore. And these didn't do all that badly. So we have to wonder why the company decided to forego their titles. A lesser columnist would speculate that they are going to buy Sega, but Sammy just did that. Instead, I'll prove my worth by just plagiarizing what all the news reports are speculating: a concession towards EA and its sports titles - obviously to boost Live even more.

I wonder if Sony is worried. EA is, after all, their big buddy.

> Microsoft slows sports titles

In what is seen as a move to consolidate relations with EA, Microsoft have announced that they won't be releasing most of their sports titles. The affected titles are annual releases NFL Fever, NBA Inside Track and NHL Rivals, as well as non-annual Amped, Links and Top Spin. EA and Microsoft have been at odds about the Live Network model, souring relations. Microsoft has been trying to break into the lucrative sports market since the launch of the Xbox - a market EA is currently dominating.

Epic acquires Scion

Scio, the development studio found by America's Army designer Michael Capps, has been bought by Unreal-owner Epic in a bid to double its development efforts. Capps will take position of President of Epic Games while Tim Sweeny remains the CEO and Chairman.

Gamers love to copy and share

A recent Trymedia survey amongst US gamers found that 15% of gamers admit to copying games in the past 6 months. Of this group, 66% say they have a right to make copies of the games. The average of the group copies 17 games a year and bought around 7. The top three reasons for making copies: 1) personal backup 2) to share with friends and 3) for use on multiple computers. Top reason for sharing games: 1) to play multiplayer games with friends 2) because friends asked them to and 3) thought friends would love the game. Consumers also felt that their friends were honest people who would buy 50% of the games they shared.

Capcom to close Tokyo studio

At the recent GDC event, Capcom made it known that they plan to close their Tokyo studio, comprising largely of their PC development as well as Production Studio 6, responsible for Chaos Legion. It's unclear how many jobs will be lost and if the teams are being relocated to the Osaka studio.

Nintendo expects lower profits

Nintendo have announced that they expect a 39% drop in net profit, thanks to the stronger Yen compared to the dollar. The company lowered its profit forecasts for the fiscal year that ended March 31, from 54 billion yen (US $520 million) to 33 billion yen (US $317 million). This is a 51% decline from a profit of 67.3 billion yen in 2002/2003. Despite this, the company still projects a rise in sales and profits this year.

vv
vv

Quake 2 remix planned

John Carmack in his GDC address confirmed a suggestion made in recent months that they will be working on a Quake 2 Remix. It won't be the entire game redone, but he didn't elaborate further. Carmack also displayed his annoyance with next-generation development models and the surging hype of multiple processors.

"It's not a business model I like. I'm bothered by multiple processors; I would have thought people would have learned their lesson by now - [multiple processors] rarely get used as much and hinder development." Speaking on the belief that next-gen architecture will be structured around more than one processor, he continued: "I'm not thrilled with these directions; we've had several generations showing [multiple processors] don't work."

Deon Botha

Managing Director, SA Mobile Technologies

You handle the local distribution of Iiyama. This is the first time the monitors have appeared in the country. Can you elaborate on the brand?
Well, currently it's the most popular brand in Europe and one of the biggest in the Far East. Iiyama has been making monitors for a long time and they cater for the high-end market, usually for professionals. The screens are very popular with architects and desktop publishers.
One of our triumphs is being the most popular monitor brand in Germany, where they are extremely strict about quality control.

What do you have planned to promote Iiyama locally?
Well, we're following basic principles of launching the new brand. That means advertising as well as training the channel. Our official launch in South Africa will be in May at Futurex. There we'll show that we are here and what we plan to do. We'll also be showing off the 40" Iiyama LCD monitor. It's the largest LCD monitor out there at this moment.

40 inches? How much does that weight?
[laughs] A lot! Somewhere in the region of 100kg. The resolution, quality of picture - it puts plasma to shame. If you stick a large format LCD like that to Plasma, it's no comparison.

By sponsoring The Carousel Arena 77 event with 50 monitors, your focus obviously includes gaming. Is this inherent because of the brand overseas?
It is an inherent focus, but not specifically on gaming. That's where Iiyana wants to go: satisfying the high-end user's need. A gamer wants a high-end monitor, we'll supply him one. We're already manufacturing that monitor.

LCD screens (TFT) recently caused markets to have a shakedown, doing a lot better than people expected, taking 50% of the market. How will that impact the market locally?
Actually, in Europe it's running on an 80/20 TFT/LCD favour already. The market has shifted tremendously. But locally TFT still has a pricing issue, so we're looking at between 18 and 24 months before LCD will be prominent in the market.
It doesn't affect planning for branding; we're focusing on higher end CRT's, until TFT becomes viable. We are positioning ourselves to sell the first amount of TFT. Iiyama's focus is to be the top TFT brand in 5 years.

Locally or globally?
Globally.

When you say high end, where does your market begin or end? What kind of guy should be looking at Iiyama?
Anybody that does a lot on a monitor. When I say high-end, I mean high resolutions and high refresh rates. For instance, anybody who uses a digital camera can benefit from Iyama's high resolution.
Anyone playing a game can benefit from Iiyama monitors, since they have high refresh rates at high resolutions. It all hinges around less eye-strain, being more comfortable to work with or do some entertaining, like games or watching movies.
It's also for someone who prefers quality over mass produced. Every monitor has been checked for TCR ratings, emission, radiation... That's what we see in our quality - each monitor that has passed German standards which are the most rigorous in the world.

Microsoft fined $613 million

A recent ruling by the European Union saw Microsoft being fined $613 million for apparent unfair practices, namely not retailing a version of Windows without Media Player as well as not sharing certain software code with competitors. Not everyone reacted positively to the ruling - ten prominent US politicians sent a letter to the EU, saying that the matter should have been handled by an American body. Microsoft plan to appeal the verdict.

Killzone developer for Sony alone

Sony Entertainment and Guerilla, the developer of upcoming shooter Killzone, have signed a deal that will see the company develop titles only for Sony's Platforms. The deal covers the PlayStation 2 as well as future Sony platforms. Killzone has been building up quite a bit of hype for a while and is set for an October release on the PS2.

10 year lifespan for PS2?

Sony believes that the PlayStation 2 will continue to sell into 2010 - at least double that of estimates by the industry. Andrew House, Executive VP of SCEA, made this revelation at the recent GDC event in a keynote speech, in which he cited the PlayStation's success. The console celebrates its 10th birthday this year. He also added that this means Sony will have to be conscious of the market as it ages for the console. "We have to think very carefully about the type of audience we're reaching with our games," House said.

v Infimium sues HardOCP

Infinium Labs filed a counter-suit against HardOCP after sending a cease-and-desist order to the site to pull a damaging article about the company uploaded last year, which HardOCP ignored. The site filed a suit against Infinium last month to force the company to release more information.

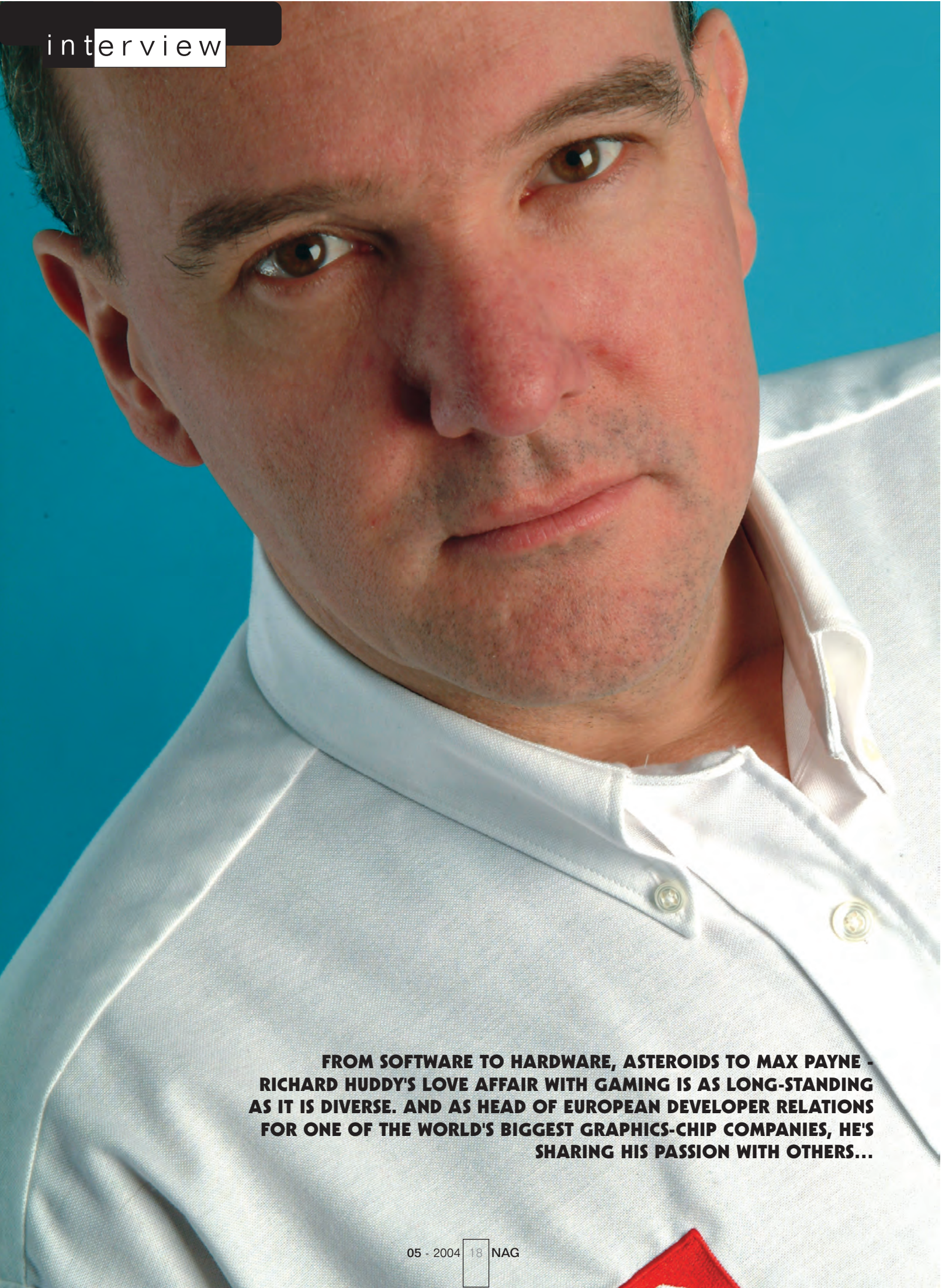
Witty rocks the Internet

A new Internet worm called Witty has changed the landscape around which worms and other parasitic files have been perceived. Witty, so called because part of its payload contains the line "^ ^ Insert Witty Message Here ^ ^", infects machines and then randomly erases part of the hard drive - making it the first worm with a malicious payload. It's also the fastest a worm has been released since a security flaw has been published. The worm took advantage of a vulnerability in some firewall packages and was released within the first 48 hours of the first public mention of the problem, spurning on debate on the effectiveness of the current security patching model.

Witty's infection rate was the fastest to date, but because of its limited scope, it infected less computers than other notorious worms.

Rubin shakes up the industry

Jason Rubin, co-founder of Naughty Dog Studios and creator of the very successful Jak & Daxter series, announced that he'll be leaving the development studio, which is owned by SCEE. This follows on the speech he gave at the recent DICE summit, where Rubin complained about creative talent not being recognized in the industry, citing an incident where he couldn't get into a Sony party, but Tyra Reid could. It might sound like sour grapes, but the man has a point, especially since his company developed two of Sony's most successful games. Rubin said that the industry doesn't respect the talent that gives them the hit titles.



FROM SOFTWARE TO HARDWARE, ASTEROIDS TO MAX PAYNE - RICHARD HUDDY'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH GAMING IS AS LONG-STANDING AS IT IS DIVERSE. AND AS HEAD OF EUROPEAN DEVELOPER RELATIONS FOR ONE OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST GRAPHICS-CHIP COMPANIES, HE'S SHARING HIS PASSION WITH OTHERS...

"IN ABOUT TEN YEARS TIME WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FOOL USERS INTO THINKING THAT WHAT THEY'RE SEEING IS GENUINELY REAL, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LOOK AND WHAT THEY DO"

RICHARD HUDDY, HEAD OF EUROPEAN DEVELOPER RELATIONS, ATI

ATI TECHNOLOGIES LTD

Richard Huddy

In just two decades, our expectations of videogames have changed immeasurably. Where we were once happy to munch our way around simple mazes or mindlessly shoot blocky aliens, we now expect our games to have a little more depth - visually and otherwise. And that's where ATI's Richard Huddy can help. The head of European developer relations for the graphics-chip giant has spent the last two years working with software houses to ensure they get to grips with the latest technology, thereby enabling programmers and artists to come up with some great-looking games.

Huddy's fixation with titles like Asteroids, Space Invaders and Galaxians prompted him to join the industry so he could make his own games. By the early Nineties he was into 3D rendering and worked with Criterion on its initial version of RenderWare. Spells at RenderMorphics, 3DLabs and NVIDIA followed before Huddy joined ATI, and although the industry has moved on, he's still enthusiastic. "When I started working in 3D there were around 20 companies trying to build 3D graphics hardware, and the best could run fast enough to fill an 'astounding' ten million pixels per second," he says. "Since then, all but three of the makers of chips have disappeared… and current high-end chips are almost a thousand times faster. The technology is every bit as exciting to me now as it was in those early days, and many times more complex."

The fact that so many hardware developers have fallen by the wayside is testament to the rising cost of innovation in gaming, and now it's left to ATI, NVIDIA and Intel to slug it out. Intel is currently the number-one company, but ATI may have a few aces up its sleeve in the shape of the new consoles from Nintendo and Microsoft. The company has already worked closely with Nintendo on the GameCube and will contribute to the N5 project. And after Microsoft's falling-out with NVIDIA, ATI was there to pick up the pieces. But actually finding out about these new ventures is rather difficult. "ATI is deeply involved with future generations of console products from both Nintendo and Microsoft," Huddy says. "That creates a position where it is impossible for me to comment on this type of product at all." Oh. Right. Well, what about Xbox 2? "What's that?" Huddy asks. "I know that last summer ATI signed an agreement with Microsoft to develop future Xbox technologies, but I'm not able to say more than that."

While he's sworn to secrecy about ATI's console projects, Huddy is more open about where PC gaming is heading. And it sounds very promising. If Huddy's predictions are right, the next time we step into a game world it should be almost indistinguishable from the one we leave behind. "The simplified shortlist of new features which we should see arriving in the next generation of games are better water, metal, fur, hair, fire, smoke, fog and mist," he explains. "These are all the kinds of things that make reality interesting."

In the meantime, however, it looks like Huddy's team will continue to make new technology as pain-free as possible. After all, developers want an easy life, just like the rest of us. "There are relatively few things that games developers want from their development system," Huddy says. "The top of their list is stability. If they have a machine with exciting technology but which crashes several times a day then they'll unplug that 'advanced technology' and put in something that works instead. Second on the list… is technology that's fun for them to play with. They like experimenting with new techniques and they like amazing their artists with what can be done."

Having fun at work isn't a concept that's lost on Huddy, and when he's not pushing chips he pops up as the 'mad scientist' in Max Payne. "It didn't take a great deal of training," Huddy says. "Most times you see me I'm lying dead on the floor having just been shot to pieces by the bad guys - and I don't need much training for that kind of role." But even if the acting roles dry up, it sounds like Huddy will be happy to stick to the day job. Whatever happens with the gaming market over the next few years, Huddy simply says: "I hope that I'll still be involved in spreading the message about technology, because I find it really exciting and stimulating." And with enthusiasm like that, it looks like we'll hear him loud and clear.

© Highbury - Paragon Ltd 2003

things to do in raccoon city when you are not dead

Games have always been about escapism, but most titles tend to be empowering, rendering you as the hero of the hour as you right the wrongs, take on the evil hordes and establish balance to the world (or at least some island somewhere). But not everything is about larger-than-life heroes taking on evil. Sometimes the common man has to face the worst the supernatural can dish up and survival horrors have risen as a fine art in scaring people out of their wits. If you intend to walk into the darkness, it's always a good idea to know where you've come from…

Afraid of the Dark?

2003 marked the tenth year since the birth of the game that brought us Survival Horror. Alone in the Dark was released in 1993 by Psygnosis, starting a slow revolution in adventure games and establishing a completely new genre. It's eerie, when you reflect on the game's story and mechanics, how it resembles even the latest Survival Horror titles – the original story starred Edward Carnby as the paranormal investigator sent to look into the mysterious suicide of Jeremy Hartwood, a wealthy recluse, who has left behind a mysterious and menacing mansion. The setting itself, with the paranoid static camera angles and spooky inhabitants, would be repeated later in the likes of Resident Evil, Eternal Darkness and Fatal Frame. AitD also introduced the idea of multiple characters - you could select either Carnby or Hartwood's young niece Emily. And let's not get started on the fact that you have to investigate strange phenomena, meeting zombies and other monsters along the way and disposing of them using shotguns, handguns and sometimes even your fists…

Another familiar approach, only to be changed years later by Overblood, was the use of 2D backgrounds with 3D characters. Even though AitD's characters were extremely low in polygons, the movement was very fluid, giving a lot of emphasis on the action sequences. The mere fact that 3D was introduced this early in adventure-style games was a revolutionary (and risky) move, but it worked well.

Alone in the Dark spawned three sequels. The second departed from the original game's puzzle approach and focused more on action, which depleted a lot of the atmosphere. The series tried to redeem itself by going back to basics in Alone in the Dark 3, released in 1995, featuring a haunted western

frontier town, but by this stage the engine was pretty dated and the appeal for it was limited. It took six years before Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare was released. Sadly, time had taken its toll and the game seemed like little more than a derivative of the Resident Evil series (the irony being how many of the original AitD's game mechanics were subsequently found in Resident Evil).

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Often forgotten in the throng of titles that grace the genre is Clock Tower, a series of games that were far more focused on psychology than action, even more than the likes of Silent Hill, thanks to a solid Adventure game format. The first game was released in 1995 by Human Entertainment on the SNES and revolved around Jennifer, a young orphan who, along with other children, was adopted by the mysterious Mr. Barrows through Miss Mary, the lady from the adoption center. But soon she disappears, as does Mr. Barrows and the other orphans, leaving young Jennifer to explore the strange mansion in order to find out what happened. The fact that said mansion is haunted doesn't make things easier. This point-n-click adventure might not have been in the traditional mould of survival horrors, but it gathered a following. One of the features that made the Clock Tower series stand aside from other survival horror (and adventure games) is the use of multiple endings. The next game, Clock Tower 2 or Clock Tower in the west, was released in 1996 on the PlayStation and also featured multiple endings (as well as the ability to play two characters, one being a slightly older Jennifer). In it you went hunting for the Scissorman, a serial killer stalking the citizens of a town in Norway. The catch: you didn't have any combat. Instead, when you did encounter the Scissorman, you had to devise ways to get away. Another novel touch was that any of the 25 characters you encounter in the game could be the killer.

Clock Tower 2 (or Clock Tower: Ghost Head in Japan) didn't live up to the first two games. A direct port from the Japanese version, the translated text and dialogue tended to be more confusing than to enhance the game experience, not to mention that the 13 endings and the numerous dead-ends ended up being too frustrating for most. The game also had nothing to do with the original games, this time featuring Alyssa Hale, a teenager with dual personalities, the second being an evil character that only wants to cause havoc. To make her problems worse, her family is haunted by an old curse in the form of a character that wears a devil's mask and likes to wield a butcher's knife – usually for stabbing, maiming and all such things. Clock Tower 2 still held true to the game's adventure roots – a mixture of point-n-click adventuring and survival, but using 3D graphics.

The latest installment, Clock Tower 3, didn't sell well, perhaps because Capcom marketed it as a survival horror. While the series has always had the spirit of the genre within it, it still remained a point-n-click adventure game. CT3 didn't stick to the adventure mechanics, though – you navigated the character,

once again Alyssa, using the analogues instead of pointing where she should go. In this game Alyssa's mom disappeared and to solve the mystery, the girl has to return objects of sentiment to angry spirits – a good thing since these spirits

are very angry, as the violent cut-scenes exhibited. The game played over 4 timelines, essentially giving gamers four storylines to complete. As a play dynamic twist, Alyssa had a panic meter that, when full, would cause her to run away uncontrollably – adding a lot of tension to the title.
It's likely that the Clock Tower series might not surface again, but it definitely did bring up a different side to survival horror, if only to demonstrate that not everything creepy has to do with running around with a gun…

Will you be my Valentine?

Jill Valentine might not be very well known, and she's only appearing for the first time in the second movie, but she is probably the most prolific character in Resident Evil, having appeared in more than three of the games. She joined Chris Redfield as one of the selectable characters in the original Resident Evil (Biohazard in Japan), released in 1996.
Resident Evil was a success at the drop of a zombie's head. It took the familiar concepts introduced by Alone in the Dark and remade them for the new PlayStation generation, plus it had the added advantages of having significantly better graphics, adding to the realism of the game world.
Graphics wasn't RE's only new perk, though. The plot was different by presenting the game in current times instead of another world or timeline. It also introduced us to the Umbrella Corporation, the mainstay villain of the series, thanks to their meddling with serums which inevitably cause side-effects such as the living dead. The RE plots inevitably ran around the premise of either being trapped in a place full of zombies, being part of a squadron out to stop the corporation and its bizarre experiments, or even as Umbrella squads cleaning up an internal mess.
Though the title also appeared on the Saturn, the Resident Evil series became one of the reasons why the PlayStation became a must-have item. Spread over several platforms, there have been 9 Resident Evil games (including the gory RE: Director's Cut) as well as several re-releases, such as a dual shock version for Resident Evil 2.
During the course of the series players have been taken to a host of locations. While Resident Evil 1 and 2 took place in and around a mansion and police station respectively, Resident Evil 3: Nemesis took players to multiple locations in Raccoon City as they were pursued by a genetic monster. The fourth game, Codename: Veronica, took place in a European branch of the Umbrella Corporation and RE: Dead Aim took place on a cruise ship.
Of course, outside of the gaming arena Resident Evil is known for being a block-buster horror movie in which Zombies got shot by the dozens, and with the pending release of Resident Evil: Apocalypse (incorporating elements from Resident Evil 2 and RE: Nemesis) as well as Resident Evil Outbreak on the PS2 and Resident Evil 4 on the GameCube, the series (and Umbrella Corp) is far from done.

Don t catch a bug

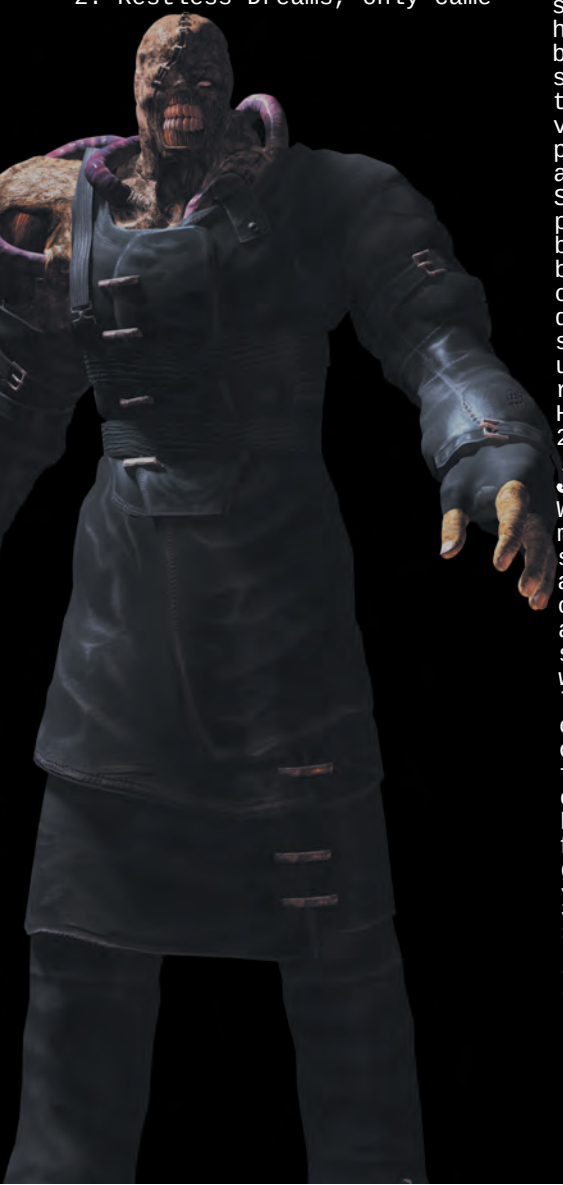
As one of the underdogs in the survival horror camp, Parasite Eve never reached the notoriety and following that other titles such as Resident Evil and Silent Hill did. The game first appeared on the PlayStation in 1998, and came from Squaresoft, best known for their Final Fantasy series. Seen as their answer to Capcom's increasing presence with non-arcade games in the console market, Squaresoft brought along their own touches to make what is a rather peculiar, if cult, entry to the genre.

Parasite Eve took a different approach to survival horror by basing the action in New York City, specifically Manhattan, instead of a fictional location. While some felt this counted against the game's suspension of disbelief, it gathered appeal as well. You take the role of Aya Brae, a police officer who goes to a concert on Christmas Eve. Things get rolling when everyone in the audience, except Aya, catch on fire. So it's up to her to stop Eve, a woman who seems to be infected by a strange organism.
The game, thanks to Squaresoft, featured a strange combat system somewhere between Final Fantasy's turn-based system and real-time combat. The story was also pretty unique and sometimes hard to follow.
Parasite Eve 2 was released in 2000 and it got rid of most of the RPG elements of the original game, plus it intended to be far scarier than the original. It got a mixed response and managed to alienate a lot of the original fans. Considering Squaresoft's recent financial woes thanks to the bombed Final Fantasy movie, a third Parasite Eve game doesn't seem to be likely.

Enjoy the Silence

As with any genre where the competition is hot, one competitor was quickly singled out as the Resident Evil killer, maybe because it came from the series publisher's main rival. If Capcom are ruling the horror roost with their infamous zombie-busting series, what would you do? Konami decided to go the other route – less B-Movie horror and more based in the psyche. The result was Silent Hill, released in 1999, arguably one of the scariest games ever produced. ▶

Where Resident Evil's cast of characters are often highly trained, or at least able to run fast and shoot accurately, Silent Hill featured author Harry Mason. Harry can't run a lot and he's a terrible shot, making it easier for players to associate with him. Throw this into a Lovercraft-inspired town where nothing is where it seems and things got truly creepy, especially since Mason's aim is the humble task of finding his missing daughter. This shift from action to the suggestive and psychological proved very popular and made the game an instant hit.
Silent Hill also had the uniqueness of not having an actual enemy. While you encounter monsters as you play, the main villain seems to be your own character as they explore and discover more about themselves- something no other survival horror, except perhaps for Eternal Darkness, has managed to achieve. This became the staple that made the series unique and appealed to a whole new audience.
The second title, Silent Hill 2: Restless Dreams, only came out 2 years later, using the power of the PlayStation 2 (and later the Xbox). This time you played as James Sunderland, searching the town for his wife Mary, who died three years before. Featuring better graphics and sound, the game was scant on combat, but made up for it with eerie puzzles and purely disturbing locations within the town, which made it the scariest in the series yet.



Released in 2003, Silent Hill 3 featured Heather Morris, a girl who went shopping and suddenly found her caught inside the town itself. It had a far better combat system, but this sacrificed some of the game's horror. While that made SH3 a bit tamer than it's predecessors (but only in terms of actual atmosphere), it was still very scary and a massive hit, partly thanks to taking visuals and sound up another notch.
Silent Hill by its nature has prevented the series from branching out into a franchise, because it's always been very character-driven, unlike Resident Evil's environment-driven stories. This legacy is continued, and becomes even more surreal, with the planned Silent Hill 4: The Room, slated for a 2005 release.

Jurassic Park

While the rest of the world was making games featuring monsters, zombies, vampires and a whole range of paranormal creatures, Resident Evil creator Shinji Mikami went for a slightly different approach with Dino Crisis. First released in 1999 on the Dreamcast and PlayStation, it was originally just the test code for camera angles while developing RE: Codename Veronica, but a few genetically-modified dinosaurs later and a new game was born. If the title had you thinking 'Jurassic Park', you couldn't be closer to the truth. The first game simply involved you playing as Regina, a combat specialist infiltrating an island where scientists tried to breed dinosaurs and obviously paid the price for their meddling. Often referred to as 'Resident Evil with Dinosaurs', it was a refreshing change for fans of the RE series, but it never went beyond that series' hit-and-run conventions.
Dino Crisis 2 turned this around in 2000. Still on the PlayStation, it was graphically superior to the first, but the real change was the introduction of more combat, a faster pace and very powerful weapons. It saw the return of Regina as well as a second playable character, Dylan, as they investigated the disappearance of a research facility and an entire town.
Dino Crisis 3 arrived on the Xbox only in 2003 and tried to combine the play styles of the two previous games, something that caused the game to be a terrible disappointment. This time based on a space ship it also appeared as if the developers were more eager to show off the console's graphic power than polish the game itself, not to mention that the awkward mix of heavy action and survival-horror elements didn't sit well with players, leaving the series in a bit of a lurch. The game did introduce a few

new elements, as well as interesting new weapons, but overall it tried to do too much for too many people.
After Capcom's disappointing performance in 2003, the Dino Crisis series was one of the franchises left in limbo, thus no fourth title has been announced to make up for the faults made in DC3.

1-hour Horror

Capcom feature strongly in survival horror and Konami carved a comfortable niche with the Silent Hill series. So where does that leave the third big Japanese developer Tecmo? Nowhere, until it released Fatal Frame in 2001. Called Project Zero in PAL territories (after the Japanese title Rei Zero) it once again involved exploring a haunted mansion while playing as a little girl, namely Miku Hinasaki, out to find her

brother and his mentor – both disappeared while exploring the mansion.
The catch, apart from the claim that this is based on a true story, was your weapon – an antique camera. This device had magical powers that could capture a spirit if you took a photo of it. And therein lay the terrifying catch – you had to focus and take a picture of a ghastly aberration as it surged in to attack you. This gimmick played off very well in creating a scary world, though perhaps not as nail-biting as the likes of Silent Hill.
Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly was released in 2003 and acted as a prequel to the events that happened in the Himuro Mansion. It involved two twin girls trapped inside a village after a dark ritual went terribly wrong; guided by a butterfly you had to get to the root of the mystery as well as discover the origins of the camera from the first game.
No third title was announced as yet and Fatal Frame's appeal in the west remains limited, but the second game has been doing well in the US. With a European release still pending, chances are fairly good that more games will appear in the series.

Small but scary

Of course, survival horror would be a bleak example of a genre if it only had a few big titles. But scaring people has been an age-old practice and everyone likes getting into the action, resulting in a few smaller but just as noteworthy titles.
While a lot was happening on the console front as far as Survival Horror goes, the original platform of hunting monsters, the PC, saw nothing except for the occasional port here and there. This changed with Nocturne, a truly scary game released in 1999. Once again, one of the things that put this title apart from others is its location and style. Set in the 1920s and 30s, you played as an agent of the Spookhouse, a government agency focused on investigating paranormal events (which frequently became a matter of survival). Nocturne had great atmosphere and used real-time lighting and cloth dynamics to create a very believable world, but the required system specifications put a lot of gamers off. A poor camera also added to the title's woes, eventually stopping it from taking a place alongside the likes of Resident Evil and other survival horror alumni. The developers went on to create the flawed Blair Witch

Project games, using the same engine, but Nocturne never returned again as a sequel.
Fear Effect was released in 2000 on the PSOne but got overshadowed by the likes of Resident Evil, but the game's stylish cell-shaded graphics, faster combat (and a system that actually didn't use health) made it stand out from the pack a bit. The story also carried the game well; based in an alternative future it involved monsters from Chinese mythology, investigated by a unique group of mercenaries. In 2001 Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix was released, but instead of expanding on the original game, the title was swamped under a marketing frenzy promoting the two lesbian characters and didn't manage to open any new ground, except for more nudity and violence. It wasn't a bad game, though, and fans enjoyed the title, but it never reached the fan status of the original.
Onimusha Warlords, or Onimusha Genma on the Xbox, was released in 2001 on the PlayStation 2, once again showing off Capcom's survival horror caliber. This time the location is medieval Japan and in a suited change, instead of zombies and monsters you battled demons. The protagonist, Samanosuke Akechi, dies during a rescue, but is given a second chance along with the gauntlet of power, a mystical piece of armour that becomes more powerful as you slay more of the undead and evil spawn that you come across. Onimusha 2, released for the PS2 in 2002, starred Jubei, a lone swordsman who finds his village destroyed by the evil from the first game and thus he heads on a quest of vengeance. Both games established themselves through the unique monsters and locations, not to mention amazing graphics, but overall they weren't much more than extension's of Capcom's Resident Evil

formula.
Multi-platform horror game The Thing, based on the 1982 John Carpenter game, saw the light in 2002. As a sequel to the movie, it followed the events of a military squad arriving at an Antarctic research station to see why communication was lost. Soon, though, the troops realized that all was not fine and that strange monsters haunt these wastelands. ▶

A New Direction?

Survival Horror has been, by tradition and necessity, a single-player experience. Multiplayer has appeared, but usually in spin-offs of the genre, such as the shooter House Of The Dead. But the Resident Evil series is going online in its latest iteration, allowing multiple players to be part of an elite zombie-killing squad (with the chance that a team member can get infected and turn into the walking dead).
Obscure, a title currently in development in France, is following the trend in a different fashion with co-operative play. With broadband becoming the next big thing, it opens several interesting opportunities for the genre, such downloadable content, and teamwork situations such as multiple players solving different parts of a riddle in a haunted mansion…

The game involved an alien virus that infected and mutated people and animals into grotesque monsters that in turn attack other humans and monsters. Playing off paranoia, you could never be sure if one of your team got infected. Your team could also grow suspicious of each other, including you. Since squad tactics were vital in surviving the game, you couldn't simply shoot your members the minute they started to twitch for some reason. At the same time your actions couldn't

be too irrational. And then there was the matter of someone actually being infected…
While the idea was great, the execution lacked some polish and the game was very tough. Still, it had atmosphere you could cut with a knife. Unfortunately the developer Computer Artworks went bankrupt last year, putting doubt on a sequel.
The GameCube received its first survival horror in 2002, once again another Lovecraft-inspired title called Eternal Darkness. Developed by veterans Silicon Knights, the game followed the bloodline of the Roivas family. Spanning twelve characters and several timelines, you had to stop an ancient evil from emerging and destroying the world.
Apart from excellent visuals, Eternal Darkness also boasted a sanity system by which characters could go insane. The game would cause quirky effects such as your character seeing things that don't happen, like blood running down walls, statues turning to look at you or your character decapitating himself. It went beyond this, though, since the game could also disable your controller, simulate messing with the television volume (or even turning it off) or just something as simple as a fly that keeps walking across the screen.
Often likened to the Cthulhu-esque Silent Hill, Eternal Darkness was still very combat-centric, even using a rune-based magic system that allowed you to develop your own spells. To date, the survival horror genre, in the strictest sense of the word, has mainly been built around the concepts of third-person exploration, combat and running. But with the exception of Clock Tower (and perhaps the heavy-handed psychological approach Silent Hill enjoys), no series has really delved into true survival.
At least not at the levels Siren has taken it to.
Far from perfect, Siren still managed to create a new niche in the genre. The story is simple enough. You play eleven characters as they try and discover what has happened in a remote village in Japan where it has started to rain blood. The characters all have their reasons to be there, and have some sort of knowledge of the event, but only by playing with all of them will the story come together.
This easily makes Siren the survival horror title with the most characters yet. But the game also took a different approach in its play style. While the views are third and first person the tactics are slightly different. The zombified citizens of the town can't die, but you can stop them for a few minutes. This means players had to get a bit more creative if they expected to survive, since shooting your way out is almost always the very last resort.
The game also introduced the concept of tuning; characters are able to 'tune' into the

views of surrounding monsters and compatriots, able to see what is going on. The effect was very horrific, especially since if a monster saw your character, a quick flash of his point of view would appear on the screen.
It remains to be seen if Siren will take off with a sequel or similar projects. The game was met with mixed reviews, but this is mainly because it was ported from Japanese with some dubious dubbing at best. But it did well in its land of origin and western enthusiasts also seem to enjoy it, so a sequel might be announced later this year…

Screams to come

The future of survival horror doesn't stand in much doubt – the genre is at a popularity high at the moment, especially in Japan where horror titles are a common sight. The West is still a bit slow to follow, with the occasional title arriving here and there, mainly from Japan itself. Apart from the Resident Evil and Silent Hill franchises releasing more titles in the next two years (Resident Evil 4 and Silent Hill 4).
An interesting addition to the Resident Evil series is the multiplayer-based Resident Evil Outbreak. Up to four players are part of a squad in a mansion, out to kill zombies and find out more about the Umbrella Corporation's latest experiments. Sadly the European version is offline-only, which ruins the novelty of the game a bit.
Michigan, another Japanese horror game, is based in Lake Michigan, though no plans have been announced for a Western version. In it you play from the perspective of a camera, working as part of a new crew investigating a series of murders. Using footage already shot, as well as what you are shooting in real time, you have to piece together the clues to discover who the killer is.
Meanwhile, the tired-and-trusted 'girl in a haunted mansion' concept is not slowing down, thanks to Kuon (which roughly translates to 9 Grudges). Based in the 1100s, you play

as a 15-year old girl who has to clear a house of spirits, while searching for her father and sister, with the help of magic seals as well as several exorcists also bent on righting things. The game plans to have an uninterrupted play dynamic as well as the added edge of having a monster constantly stalking you.

Taking a different approach, From Software's Nebula: Echo Night is a first person horror game where you have to explore an abandoned space station in the hopes of discovering what happened to the occupants. Dealing with ghosts will be a common theme, though obviously not all ghosts are friendly. Based on the PlayStation 2, the game debuted at TGS 2003 and seems to shape up for a very different game entry in the survival horror world.

The West isn't completely at a loss with The Suffering, a title currently in development over at Midway. Based inside a maximum security jail, you are a death row inmate who manages to break free

when supernatural forces attack the jail. Soon you have to fight for your survival, alongside other prisoners and guards, as executed prisoners and worse things manifest themselves to take revenge on the living.

Ubi Soft are also reaching into the market with The Lost, a title by Irrational Games based in the seven rings of Hell. As your character explores the various locations, you'll be tempted by NPCs to help them do horrific tasks, some which might lead you to great rewards, though little more has been revealed by the developers.

Sticking to France, developer Hydravision is working on Obscure, a game where three students have to investigate horrible experiments committed by teachers at a local school upon their students. You can play as any of the characters, using light to chase away the monsters (who are light sensitive). The title will also allow for two gamers to play co-operatively.

Mayhem League Update

The popular offline league entered its third month with a flurry of new developments. Ignite had dismissed two of their star players, TUS had disbanded, and several new teams had joined in. The Lautre brothers (dropped from Ignite) had agreed to help out Clan 501 (now known as X.Krew) as a once-off affair, and this meant they had suddenly become one of the major competitors as well. Thus there were four teams with a serious chance of claiming first place.

The first big match was between 501 and Synergy. The attitude from the Synergy camp indicated their confidence (or over-confidence). After all, there were only two seasoned players in 501, and so Synergy had a significant advantage on paper. The result was very different, as Explicit and Apocalypse (Tyrone and Chris Lautre) took the fight to Synergy early on and kept them under strong pressure the entire game, enough so to win it. After this, 501 lost close games to both Ignite and Aim, both due to the inexperience (concerning defuse kits and the like) of the rest of the team.

Synergy, somewhat distressed over their early loss to 501, pulled themselves together for the game against Ignite. Ignite at this stage were still trying to find their feet, and Synergy won the game comfortably, leveling the overall score between them. Coming off two draws in two months, Synergy then went on to play Aim. In the end, the match was disappointing in comparison to January and February, Aim walking away with a relatively simple victory. This left Synergy and Ignite on the same point score, many people thinking it would come down to bonus points for second place.

But no-one counted on Ignite beating Aim. The "unbeatable" team just seemed to lack that something special in their play, and it was clear early on that Ignite had full control of the map. Ignite's superstar Incin played the game of his career, finishing with a kill-to-death ratio of over three. Ignite remained calm and focused throughout the entire game, the score concluding at 16-9. This was the first time Aim had lost an official game in their entire history as a team, and for his pivotal role in the match, Harry "Incin" Apostoleris has been awarded NAG's player of the day for March.

For more information and dates regarding Mayhem events, visit www.mayhem.co.za or email staff@mayhem.co.za.

Pool A	Team Name	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
1.	Evolve Aim	10	0	1	64
2.	Evolve Ignite	10	0	1	63
3.	Synergy	9	0	2	55
4.	501 (X.Krew)	8	1	2	51
5.	Infinity	5	0	6	31

Pool B	Team Name	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
1.	Illuzion	7	2	1	43
2.	The Elders	8	0	2	42
3.	K4	7	1	2	38
4.	Gamers Inc.	6	0	4	31
5.	GWA A	5	0	5	25

Quake 3 Top 32 Invitational

Every time a Quake 3 tournament comes along, we are all inclined to think it will be the last - the game has been around longer than Counter-Strike, and that's saying something. But you can't, it seems, keep a good game down, and this month the local community (lead by the great Moleca) put together yet another competition, complete with prize money, to honour the last of the Quake 3 greats. Every player of note was in attendance, including oldschool names such as Uwe "Viper" Venter. Some were invited, others were accepted as wildcards. The top clans - among them: Evolve, NGC, Team 42, Section 8 and g79 - were all represented in a variety of game-types, including One Versus One, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag and Challenge Pro Mode. Prize money was awarded to the high finishers in the 1v1 tournament, R1000 to first place, R500 to second and R250 to third.

Results:

2v2 -
1) Section 8 (Ph4ntom and Shadowlord)
2) Team 42 (Gandulf and Mielie)
3) Section 8 (Patch and Greywolve)

1v1 -
1) Ph4ntom (Section 8)
2) Destroyer (Evolve)
3) Likwid Ice
4) Gandulf (Team 42)
5) Mielie (Team 42)

Player of the Month

Name:	Warren Medcalf
Nick:	Dr4k
Age:	16
Occupation:	Scholar
Clan:	Evolve
Games:	Counter-Strike
Achievements:	• Represented South Africa at the World Cyber Games 2003 • 1st place at Gamers Gate Eastgate 2002 (Team: Bravado) • 2nd place in the Mayhem Offline League 2003 (Team: 7e*) • 2nd place at Gamers Gate ESWC qualifier 2003 (Team: 7e*) • 2nd place at Worfaire Finals 2002 (Team: Bravado) • 4th place at 1000manLAN 2003 (Team: 7e*)
Quote:	"Why am I so good?"

<The_Basilisk> Was it a surprise to find out that you were going to be part of the team for Korea 2003?
No, 'cause I'm the best in the world. :P Yeah, I had been practicing a lot because there were going to be two places open. I thought I wouldn't get it, then one day I just got a phone call saying I was part of the team. There are many good players out there, I was the lucky one out of the lot.

<The_Basilisk> How do you view your chances of qualifying for ESWC this year?
Pretty good, I'm in one of the top teams in the country, and we've been practicing. Ignite are giving us a good go though.

<The_Basilisk> How big a part of Counter-Strike is luck?
I'd say bout 20% :P Individual skill is important, but to function together is the key. If you have five guys with the best aim in the world, and five guys who are average aimers but function perfectly as a team, the guys who work as a team will own.

<The_Basilisk> How different is online play to LAN play?
Online is probably the biggest waste of time ever, the bullets don't register, people use dodgy rates, everyone has a different connection (if an ISDN player shoots at an ADSL player, he will get nowhere). LAN is perfect, everybody is equal.

Apocalypse Joins Synergy

It was only a matter of time before one of the players booted out of Ignite found a new team. That player is Chris "Apocalypse" Lautre and the team is Synergy. He is replacing none other than two-time SA National representative Marc "Surge" du Plessis, who has emigrated to the United Kingdom. The news that Surge intended to leave came as a shock to the team, who were unaware of his plans until he informed them only a couple of weeks before. The availability of Apocalypse as a replacement seems almost pre-ordained, and Synergy are confident he will be a worthwhile addition to the team. "We've worked so hard," said Synergy's Daniel van Flymen. "We're not going to let Marc's absence destroy what we've worked for."

The Professional Cyber Gaming League

A new league idea has come to the table to offer the local competitive community something to play for online. It's called the PCGL, and looks to have the makings of a polished organisation. Already several of the top clans, including Team Evolve, have thrown their support behind the fledgling initiative, which is rare considering how skeptical most gamers have become about new leagues and tournaments. (Who can blame them?) The first event hosted by the PCGL is due to start on Sunday, the 4th of April, 2004, (latest information at time of going to print) and will be a preliminary Counter-Strike seeding league for later events. Registrations have closed, but most of the well-known clans are on the list. Teams who still wish to register for the future may do so on the PCGL website, but will not be included in the first event.

The PCGL's main goal is to develop the standard of professional gaming in South Africa, as head of the organisation, Arman "Freshfruit" Nisch, explained. "The PCGL is a gaming organization that will focus on the entire community by providing services for all popular multiplayer games. We will oversee and host tournaments and leagues in which teams and individuals engage in tightly controlled cyber matches." There is talk of prize-money, but this still seems tentative. Community.za will provide more information on this League, its sponsors and potential prizes when the news becomes available. At any rate, all dealings we have had with the PCGL thus far have been informative and professional, not to mention their website is functional and impressive. South Africa can hopefully look forward to a new era in online competitive gaming, courtesy of this ambitious but seemingly well-grounded project.

INBOX

It's not your eyes - we dropped the size of the font a little on this page to fit in more letters... because you asked so nicely.

Letter of the moment

FROM **Christo**
SUBJECT **Fight**

First Person Shooters, Real Time Strategy, Simulations, Fighting Games. When it comes to the PC, it's clear which one of the above doesn't fit. Why is it that Fighting Games aren't very popular on the PC? I'm a fan of just about all the genres on the PC. If I enjoy a game, I enjoy it, no matter the genre. Therefore I also enjoy Fighting games, but have to wait for a friend to bring his PS2 so that we can play Soul Calibur 2 and the like. I think the developers and publishers have all given up on us PC gamers as far as fighting games go. Most gamers I know feel that in order to play fighting games properly, you must have a game pad. Game pads are something that PC owners either like or don't like. I don't believe you must use one to enjoy a fighting game. I played all the Mortal Kombat games with the keyboard's number-pad, which worked perfectly. Controlling a fighting game on the PC is a matter of choice and shouldn't be a reason for not playing them. Anyway, for those who prefer them, there are very good game pads available for the PC. I think it's about time the developers started to look at the PC again as a viable fighting game platform. It would be excellent to see a remake of the classic decapitating Barbarian. They could get Schwarzenegger to yell Barbarian!

No game pad and no major hits in terms of sales are pretty much the beginning and end of this equation. However we do have Rag Doll Kung Fu coming from Lionhead Studios so there is still a glimmer of hope [this game has only been announced on PC so far]. Good news: more fighting games will come. Reason: It's a little like Hollywood and movies - the studios tend to ride successful genres [so expect a number of religious movies over the next few years] and if RDKF is a hit expect a slew of fighting games on the PC. NAG Ed.

NEXT 3 FROM **Morgue [FLB]**
SUBJECT **Alien Fossils**

Dear Dumb Dudes. On page 44 of the February issue, you state that Stan Winston created the Jurassic Park aliens. Now, I'm not sure which Jurassic Park movie you've seen, but the only Stan Winston creations I saw in there were dinosaurs.

Yes, after I announced this error the buck was passed around the office so much it looked like a soft porn magazine in a school yard. The error is a missing comma between Jurassic Park and Aliens. NAG Ed.

SUBJECT **Here's a razor blade - go do the honourable thing...**

It must be the air. Yes, that's it. The air… The air in the NAG offices must be so clogged with melancholy and unhappiness that all NAG reviewers find themselves unable to escape using the word "sadly" in their reviews. Each and every bloody one of your reviews suffers from this malady. So I just want to say I feel your loss. Reading your reviews, I too am overwhelmed by an aching sense of grief and pain. Can I buy you a thesaurus to fill the dark, empty void?

Sadly, you're right, they're a bunch of witless hacks - you'll also notice the word halcyon appearing a lot. Think back to the last time anyone actually used this word in a real conversation. It sounds like something you'd hear in Star Trek, "Captain we've managed to align the halcyon particle emitter - that gaseous anomaly has sapped its last actor we've never seen before". Keep the thesaurus, it'll only result in the use of more obscure words nobody uses anymore. NAG Ed.

SUBJECT **Where's the old Ed that we all know and love?**

With reference to your replies on the letters page - the occasional sarcastic answer, especially putting mind-numbing apes in their places, wouldn't be amiss... just so that you know.

I'm still here but it's hard to be sarcastic on demand - I'm not a beer vat you know. NAG Ed.

FROM **Mezner**
SUBJECT **Take Your Time**

Why all the fuss about delayed titles? I for one prefer development teams to take their time when creating that masterpiece. I just hate playing an 'unpolished' game that leaves you agonising over what could have been. Who can call themselves an artist if they're just out there to make the quick buck, you just can't rush art.

This is a refreshing perspective. The problem is the hype machine and the inability of gamers to understand what the word patience really means. NAG Ed.

FROM **Cassius Thyldinar**
SUBJECT **Banish the evil of consoles!**

I would like to formally request that you remove all sections and reviews related to consoles from the magazine. And before you start thinking up a sarcastic comeback, I have a good reason for it. I know from a reliable source that not too long ago the major gaming corporations like Microsoft, Nintendo, Sony and, more recently, Nokia signed a pact. Through methods I will not disclose, I obtained a copy of this document, and it entails that the companies will assign most of their monetary resources to the design of consoles and their games, but also for something more sinister. As soon as consoles have become more popular than the PC and everyone has one by their TV, they plan to activate them. The thousands of gaming consoles [more like millions, but who am I to ruin your dementia, NAG Ed] will then rise up against their former masters, and, remote controlled from an underground bunker somewhere in Gabon, will organise themselves into a robotic army. The Xboxes are the officers and generals, directly below them the PlayStation 2 robots, the GameCube, and the PlayStation and PSOne robots will serve as the grunts. The only way to prevent this from happening is to end the popularity of the consoles and then destroy the existing ones. Then, we elevate the PC to the golden throne, and it will bestow upon us a utopian society, forever free from the evil of consoles.

You did remember to take your pills this morning, right? NAG Ed.

FROM **Matthew**
SUBJECT **Badger T-Shirts**

In the March issue of your fine publication, you mentioned that the little badger had become a major hit and you said, jokingly, that you might have to start selling badger T-shirts and lunch boxes. Lunch boxes - no. But the idea of a NAG T-shirt with "the badger" on it is, in fact, bloody brilliant. If you were to produce such a T-shirt, I would be your first customer (as long as it was priced nicely). You appear to have stumbled upon a perfect mascot. The badger is quirky and is an excellent subject for an eye catching T-shirt. The idea I had in mind was a white T-shirt with a medium sized picture of the badger, in his usual pose, on the back. The front could have a small NAG logo with a tiny

SHORTS

FROM **Cheynne**
SUBJECT **Creative Writing**

I recently read something in your magazine about the quality of your readers writing abilities. How about adding in a creative writing section so we can see how bad we really are?

This is a little like a hydrogen filled airship - a bad idea... believe me. NAG Ed.

NEXT 2 FROM **Nustad**
SUBJECT **Need a Hard Drive ASAP!**

I was just wondering if I could use my tactic in getting a Hard-Drive... My tactic goes as follows: If you do not send me a Hard-Drive within 2 days, I will unhappily send you pictures of my hairy butt... Every week, from a different angle each week... Now, this might be a harsh idea, but it worked for one of my friends who scored 3 cases of beer. Now, what do you have to say to that? PS: I will do it!

Go ahead and send us your crack snaps. We'll send them onto big Ted in the joint as an appetiser to tide him over until you arrive [the cops will get your details]. NAG Ed.

SUBJECT **About Work**

Is it really true what they say about you doing nothing at NAG? If that is true, can I get your job when you perhaps retire? Pretty please! By the way, I really admire your gas powered chair...

It was supposed to be a gas powered chair but it doesn't do anything, it doesn't even have any little levers sticking out that you can mess around with. NAG Ed.

FROM **ASHTON**
SUBJECT **Question / Suggestion**

I WOULD JUST LIKE TO KNOW IF YOU HAD ANY JOBS AVAILABLE THERE, I KNOW A LOT ABOUT COMPUTER GAMES, ABOUT 70% ABOUT WHAT THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT HARDWARE AND QUITE A LOT ABOUT SOFTWARE TOO, CAN YOU DO ANYTHING FOR ME?

Yes, we've 'had' plenty jobs available in the past but alas, no... there isn't much I can do for you except to tell you to stop writing your E-mails with the caps-lock on, this tells everyone your knowledge base is really closer to 0.007%. Don't you have parents to go and disappoint somewhere? NAG Ed.

FROM **Willem**
SUBJECT **Read this Dumb-A55!**

Dear NAG. I have been trying to get a response from you for the last month. But you Sh1theads don't seem to even notice one of my 32 - yes 32 - E-mails. So from now on I will still be buying your magazine, to use as sh1tpap3r! Try publishing this!

Yes, we've noticed your E-mails, but your confessions about eating nasal ore and problems with excessive facial hair aren't something we're prepared to respond to. Oh, by the way, Miktar says to get rid of that itchiness 'down there' try bathing more often, he tried it last month and Priest says it solved all their problems. NAG Ed.

FROM **Allen**
SUBJECT **Short**

Short?

Yes, this will do it. NAG Ed.

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.

The 'Letter of the *Moment'*
prize is sponsored by EA Africa
The winner receives 2 games for coming up with the most eclectic chicken scratch

badger hiding in or on it (like on some of your magazine covers). I thought of maybe adding in a slogan like: "This badger wears fake fur." This might be cool but it may also detract from the simple interestingness of the badger himself. Please take advantage of this great marketing opportunity because "I want my badger T-shirt now!"...
I like the design - we'll have a look and see if we can get permission to reproduce the badger on a T-Shirt. We've asked the guy responsible so let's hope he's not a dry fart. NAG Ed.

I'm seriously starting to worry about you people, no really!

FROM **MJ**
SUBJECT **Advice**
Because I read your magazine every month I have become aware of your uncanny ability to help poor, pitiful, needy teens all over South Africa. You comfort and console desperate kids with faulty cover CDs, you are, beyond any doubt, angels for the people. It is with a heavy heart that I lay my problem at your feet, and ask if there is anything you can do, or any advice you could give to help me through this difficult time. I am afraid to say that no matter how hard I try, and no matter how many sit-ups I do, I can't seem to develop abs. Yes abs, that's right abs. Won't you help me in my quest to find, AB-SOLUTION!
Dear MJ. I hear your soul - it calls to me at night, wailing into the inky black void, begging for release. I can hear it as clear as if it was my other personality - it cries each night, "Oh why... why oh why am I trapped inside such a fool". NAG Ed.

FROM **MOO GOO Guy**
SUBJECT **Originality in Games**
I know this isn't very original but I'm talking about something relatively different. If there's one thing I can't stand is a game with a bad story line, I'm not saying all games suck but that they start off okay and slowly decline. Games such as C&C Renegade and Return to Castle Wolfenstein start off on good footing but slowly decline. Halfway through Renegade I started fighting mutations and that slowly evolved to the games main theme and in Wolfenstein, the first levels see you shooting Nazi captors and trying to escape, but then as you enter the catacombs the game changes dramatically and soon - non-stop zombie slaughter losing the total plot of the W.W.II theme. Then to my shock when viewing the March edition of NAG and reading the article on Far Cry I saw 2 pictures showing what looked like genetically enhanced creatures which put me off the game instantly. So I did some extra research and saw in both videos on the NAG CD of Far Cry that there were these "creatures". I am seriously disappointed but I hope the Crytek graphics engine makes up for this.
What have you got against genetically mutated monsters? This is a game you know, next you'll be telling me you don't like dark gloomy corridors, exploding barrels and pits of lava. But you are right, there's just no originality left. I must admit that I was excited about the Far Cry mutants - you can only wring so much fun out of killing goons on a beach before you start wanting more, and if more arrives in a box labelled, "mutant monkeys" then so be it. NAG Ed.

FROM **z1dane**
SUBJECT **Gamers here and gamers there**
On a recent trip to England, I picked up a gaming magazine from over there and noticed a few things about their gamers and our gamers. The things they talk about are the great LAN events happening and they seem to all be on the same wavelength. They don't waste precious pages talking about how it is such an atrocity to cut up a tiny picture of a NAG from 1 page of the magazine. Or about how some guy is waiting to send out E-mails from 134 Hotmail accounts. I'm not saying that our gaming here is bad, but just that instead of spending our time talking about utter crap, we could be doing something useful... Also, on the originality front, gaming has a problem because no matter how much fun listening to music is, it could never be a game because who would want to play as a character listening to music. So with the game developers running out of ideas, maybe we should judge the games on what they are, not how original they aren't. Finally, it is great to see that NAG is getting slowly bigger.
Hey, it's not our fault we end up with more madness than sense on the letters page - although I do receive many intelligent letters that I can't rip off so I just don't publish them. I guess in a way I'm responsible for the poor image SA gamers have. Oh well. We're getting bigger because we're excited about all the scantily clad virtual girls we've got lined up this year. NAG Ed.

FROM **GLACIUS**
SUBJECT **Need some advice...**
Ever since I bought your very cool magazine I instantly got hooked to it. Anyway, I'm experiencing some technical difficulties with my screen ever since I got my 'lame' Radeon 9200 SE; my screen is just too blurred and unclear to read and play certain games, and after doing my best to fix this problem I'm turning to my favourite magazine for some advice...do you guys have any?
Based on your in-depth fault analysis and reporting I have determined that it can be only one of two things [a] put your glasses back on your head or [b] move the goldfish bowl away from your screen. NAG Ed.

FROM **Allan**
SUBJECT **Mac Games**
Why on earth are there so few Macintosh games around, seeing as it is such a powerful system? I run a Macintosh at work and there are only a select few games that are compatible (Blizzard games and UT2k4).
I don't have a clue. I became unpopular last time I made a comment about the Macintosh. So, to make amends I decided to only say nice things about Macintosh. Macintosh is cool. Now considering you're the only person in South Africa with a Macintosh who reads this magazine I'm going to ask you a question - do you know why the mouse only has one button? Macintosh rules. Perhaps this is why so few developers make games for it - it only has one button. I love Macintosh. Perhaps Apple will invent a pill or something that grows an extra 'longer' finger out of the top of your hand so you can get to the keyboard from the mouse? NAG Ed.

NEXT 2 FROM **Les**
SUBJECT **Panda Bear**
Hey I know where that panda bear is, page 37 Sims 2 review the face icon thing.
This is to set the scene - note 'panda bear'. NAG Ed.

FROM **Les [same as above Les]**
SUBJECT **Game Programmer**
I don't know much about computers, yet, that's why I'm studying everything about them. I want to find out what exactly does one need, to be a game programmer? As the college I attend can't divulge this information to me, this is quite frustrating as you may know. I can't find anything on the net and my parents and friends aren't knowledgeable on this subject. The other problem is I'm female and you oaks out there think because I'm a chick I'm naturally stupid in all areas of technology. I'm not blond so what's the problem?
I think the problem is maybe you're just plain stupid - it's a badger, not a panda. NAG Ed.

FROM **Logan**
SUBJECT **Not Working**
I got the January issue of NAG and thoroughly (not sure of spelling) enjoyed it. My older brother has the full version of NFSU so I decided to try the demo. I installed it and did everything, but I still got an error message saying that an invalid page fault had occurred within the EXE. This happened despite the fact that I am running a seriously out-of-date PC. I would like to ask if you can check the programs before releasing them. I am disappointed but not with the magazine... I understand that you are busy there at NAG HQ and that mistakes like these can be expected.
Thanks for your understanding but rest assured that we install and run everything on the Cover CD on at least 3 different machines to make sure everything works. I'm guessing the age of your computer is to blame here. NAG Ed.

Badgers are your friend...

Badger Hunt #4 Winner [March Issue]
[***Ed:*** *Well done to David Rodda who found the March badger - really too easy we think. Now we present David's 13 seconds of fame*].
Hi. The cute badger in the March magazine is blocking the aiming site on page 44, the top right screenshot.

Badger [new rules]
Some rules: The winner will be picked at random; only send in E-mail (transferring SMS entries onto my PC is painful); the subject line must read: Badger <Month> [example Badger May] I use a mail sorting system, competitions, Caption of the Month, Badger, Spam, Personal etc. so using the wrong subject line will result in accidental deletion or misfiling and you'll never win anything.
Send to: ed@nag.co.za.

This is what you're looking for each issue - a badger hidden inside a screenshot inside the magazine. Happy hunting!

Usual Mail: P.O. Box 237, Olivedale, 2158 | **Real mail to:** letters@nag.co.za
Important: Include your details when mailing us or how will you ever get your prize...

Doumo arigatou Mr Roboto!

The Domain of The_Basilisk

A TESTAMENT TO GREATNESS

Recently the world's biggest e-sports website, ESReality, launched a world-wide opinion contest to determine who was the greatest gamer ever. The participants represented all competitive disciplines, and included the likes of Counter-Strike legend Emil "Heaton" Christensen, Quake 3 master Roman "Polosatiy" Tarasenko, and multiple arcade world-record holder Billy "Mr. Pacman" Mitchell. However, the poll quickly turned into a farce when a string of surprising upsets revealed that people were voting purely on nationality (the Russians) or clan loyalty (Schroet Kommando fans). Many of those who remained objectionable also tried, in an equally disappointing fashion, to compare skill across genres and time-frames, disregarding the unique circumstances which marked each player's career. This, of course, got me thinking - how is it possible to compare, say, a StarCraft player to an Unreal Tournament player? Can any real comparison be made at all? Not only are they different in style of play, but their communities and competitive standards differ greatly as well.

The only way to judge them, I believe, is to consider the significance of each player's achievements in context. Even then one cannot truly decide on who is the greatest of the lot. But in the initial spirit of the ESReality contest, I have identified four personalities who I believe hold a claim to the title of the world's greatest gamer. I have not gone further than the final four, because choosing an overall victor would be almost entirely my unsubstantiated opinion, and nobody really cares about that, now do they? [*The most sense you've ever made in a single sentence, Ed*]

Johnathan Wendel, aka Fatal1ty (USA)

"Five time CPL champion - can your mouse pad say that?"

The quote is from the Fatal1ty website (www.fatal1ty.com), where Johnathan sells his range of gaming accessories to the public. Why would anyone want to buy a product with his name on it? Because the Fatal One, as he is affectionately known, is the western world's highest-earning professional gamer, having won countless tournaments across the world in a variety of game types, earning him the title of Cyberathlete Professional League Champion of the Year a staggering three times in a row. Born in 1981, his break into competitive gaming came with the Quake 3 tournament Frag3, where he placed third and won $4,000. This inspired him to take his abilities even further, and he began his infamous eight-hour-per-day training schedule, which contributed to his win at the Razer CPL in 2000. For that he received $40,000. Among other victories, he won a customised Ford Focus in the 2001 CPL Aliens vs. Predator 2 tournament and $10,000 for his first place in the CPL UT2003 competition in 2003. He was the first professional gamer to earn over a hundred thousand dollars in a single year.

Christian Hoeck, aka GitzZz (Germany)

Not many people can claim to have won the World Cyber Games. Only a small handful can claim to have won it twice. And no other gamer can say they won a third world championship event (The Electronic Sports World Cup) the very next year. Christian has done all this. He is a member of the world-renowned multi-gaming clan Schroet Kommando where he earns a comfortable salary in addition to his prize money, but despite this, he says he plays for the competition and the fun of it, not the money. Gaming is only his hobby - quite an achievement considering many of his opponents view the game as their career. His domination in his chosen game type is remarkable, although he has only entered five major tournaments. His sole non-winning effort came in an ESWC online qualifier, where he protested against the imbalance in UT2K3 weapons by using only the biorifle.

Dennis Fong, aka Thresh (USA)

Every sport has its pioneers and Dennis is that for competitive gaming. His name is universally associated with the ultimate in gaming skill, and comparisons to his exploits are made even today, several years after his retirement. During his reign of just over three years, playing Doom II, Heretic, Hexen, Quake and Quake 2, he entered a large number of high profile tournaments and won every single one without losing a game. No other player has achieved this since. I do not really need to give any more reasons to justify his appearance on this list, but for interest's sake, he was also the spokesperson for professional gaming in the mainstream market and, after his retirement, he founded Gamers.com, and is now a very successful internet businessman.

Yo-Hwan Lim, aka SlayerS_'BoxeR' (South Korea)

The only country in the world where gaming can truly be considered a sport is South Korea, and rivalry there is fiercer than anywhere else. StarCraft: Broodwar is the game of choice, and many professional players practice up to ten hours per day, making Fatal1ty's regimen seem like a weekend getaway. But above all this, it is the mainstream popularity and societal impact the game carries that makes it a truly unique playing environment. Yo-Hwan Lim became a national hero when he won the World Cyber Games in 2001, and even more so when he won it again in 2002. In his illustrious career, he has won more tournaments than anyone else on this list has entered. He earns an annual average of 150 million Won (approximately a hundred thousand dollars), has his photograph on chocolate bars, has published several books, and has released a best-selling DVD collection of his most famous career matches.

JET LI
RISE TO HONOUR
THE ONE WHO IS MOST HONOURABLE
IS ALSO THE MOST DEADLY.
Call the PlayStation Hotline 082 288 1001 www.playstation.co.za
www.risetohonour.com
Rise to Honour is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America. © 2004 Sony Computer Entertainment America. Developed by Sony Computer Entertainment America. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe.
STER-KINEKOR
HOME ENTERTAINMENT
PlayStation 2

Rockstar goes west

Capcom decided to hand the reigns for this blazing Wild West title, Red Dead Revolver, over to Rockstar, letting them work their voodoo magic on its third person action adventure saga. Look for it on the Xbox and PS2.

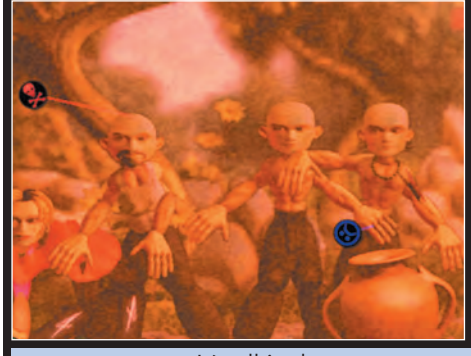
We take a look at what happens when you mix rag doll physics with exploding cars... plus a whole pile of other things.

Already being hailed as 'the most addictive game of the year' by certain factions, Mashed revitalizes the top-down racing game genre that's been noticeably absent from the market since Micro Machines. Up to 4 players will be able to 'race' against each other which involve something a little more gladiatorial than most racing games.
Using whatever means necessary, slam and batter your opponents into submission. Weapons add spice into the mix, but in a unique twist defeated opponents will be able to call down missile strikes at their leisure, sure to cause more than a few headaches for whoever happens to be in the lead at the time.
With a late June release announced, fans of the classic genre are sure to perk their ears at its release on the PS2 console.

Darryl lights a fart in the back seat...

Fast cars and big explosions... good stuff on the horizon!

All out racing action is the name of the game

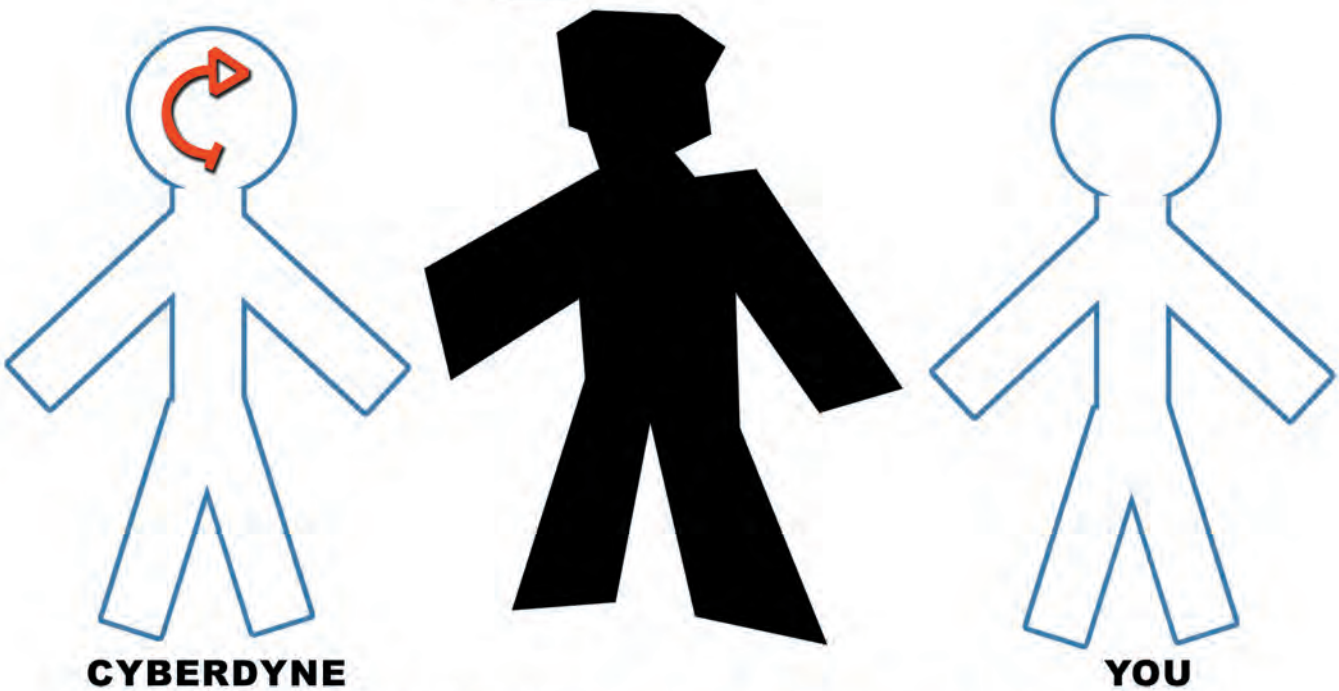


It's all in the way you use your mouse, Grasshopper...

Only two summers ago, Lionhead staff pooled their resources and attempted to create a cheesy kung-fu movie. Inspired, further steps were taken and now the industry sits poised to receive one of the more tentatively titled yet energetic concepts yet - Rag Doll Kung Fu. Using rag-doll physics players will have complete control over their kung-fu master, allowing them to fight, dance and "make love" on the PC according to Lionhead.

Contact us
0861 102 412

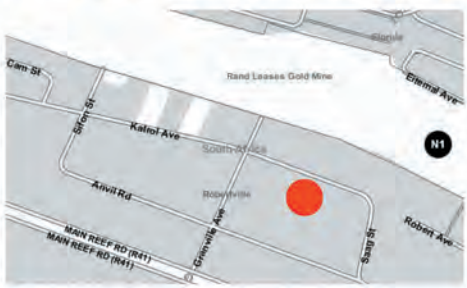
CYBERDYNE SYSTEMS SA
it pays to deal directly with the importer



we've CUT OUT the middle man

CyberDyne specializes in the importation of the highest quality computer components directly from the manufacturer or international distributor in volume, and then re-sells these products either in component form or as fully assembled and totally customized computer systems direct to end user customers

Visit us at our BRAND NEW PREMISES



www.cyberdyne.co.za

Contact us on 0861 102 412
CyberDyne House, 1070 Katrol Avenue, Robertville, Roodepoort

Silent Hill 4: The Room

PS2 | XBOX

Developer: Konami · **Publisher:** Konami · **Supplier:** Ster Kinekor [011] 455 7900 **Genre:** Survival Horror
Release Date: Q4 2004

After finishing every Silent Hill game, we always swear that it's the last. There is something out-and-out creepy about the series that makes us want to shun it forever. But just like the characters in each game, we can't help but be curious about what lurks in the darkness, and what it wants with us.

Henry Townshend asks this exact question in the fourth chapter of Silent Hill as it becomes apparent he can't leave his apartment. Instead, he is forced to go through portals that open in the room, exploring the reasons why he is trapped and how to escape.

From what we can ascertain, this is a definite departure from the actual town of Silent Hill (unless he actually has an apartment there, in which case he deserves what's coming for him) as well as a far more surreal episode in which we are promised some of the creepiest scenarios and creations yet seen in the series. That's a high call for expectations, but Konami haven't disappointed us yet.

One of their Tokyo teams are hard at work on the game to get it out for the end of 2004, and it promises new visual technology (another area where the game hasn't disappointed yet) as well as a new first-person movement mode. The other details are still sketchy, in particular on multiple characters. But you can expect the usual fair of multiple endings and creepier-than-hell areas. Of course, it begs the question of whether a game is still as scary the fourth time around.

WIDEN YOUR HORIZONS

BLITZKRIEG

BURNING HORIZON

PC CD-ROM

BLITZKRIEG

WARGAMER.COM
WARGAMER AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
2003

The READERS CHOICE AWARDS
WARGAMER.COM
2003

Campaign with 18 missions: Rommel's most famous battles, e.g. Ardennes, Tripolis, Tobruk, El Alamein,Sicily, Normandy, 8+ huge single missions like Singapore, Burma or Narvik/Norway. New nation: Japan 56 new units, e. g. Chi Ha and Pz IV H tanks, Zero, Blenheim and Vickers Vildebeest planes, Afrika Korps, US marines and Australian infantry, Better AI: The enemy seeks weak defense spots, doesn't send recon planes at the beginning, clears minefields, Wide range of mission objectives like airborne assaults, evacuations, covert ops, defense, counter attacks, All missions are designed - no random maps, New buildings, terrains and objects, Stand alone Addon: You don't need the original Blitzkrieg

cdv
www.cdv.de

NIVAL INTERACTIVE

Distributed Exclusively by World Web Entertainment
Tel: 011 462 0150 www.wwe.co.za email: sales@wwe.co.za
All rights and trademarks and logos are copyright of their respective owners

GET READY TO PLAY...

WWE

BloodRayne 2

PC | PS2
XBOX

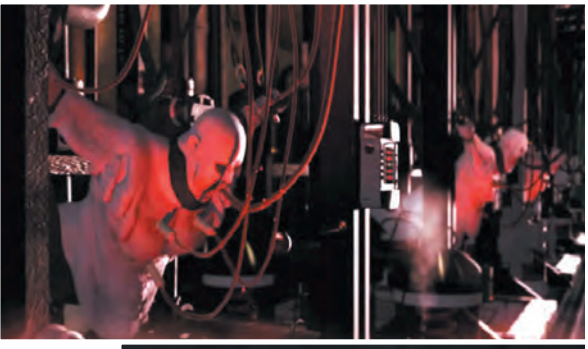
Developer: Terminal Reality · **Publisher:** Vivendi Universal · **Supplier:** Nu Metro [011] 340 9345 **Genre:** Action
Release Date: Q4 2004

Deveoper Terminal Reality is being bullish about improving upon the original game in all elements and plans to deliver a bigger, more action-packed sequel that elevates the franchise to a whole new level. Born from the unnatural union of vampire and human, BloodRayne is blessed with the powers of a vampire but cursed with the unquenchable thirst for blood and a weakness to sunlight. The sequel challenges the supernatural anti-heroine with her most personal battle yet as she hunts down each of her wicked siblings who are carrying on the legacy of their dead father, Kagan. They have created 'The Shroud', a mysterious substance which, when released, renders the sun's lethal rays harmless to vampires.

Expanding upon the features of its predecessor - fast-paced acrobatic combat and supernatural powers - BloodRayne 2 includes new in-game dynamics such as pole combat, rail sliding and advanced melee fighting with fatality moves. Built upon a modified version of the Infernal Engine, the game has new environments set within a huge modern day city, a range of new supernatural powers and new motion-captured movements complete with soft-body physics. Terminal Reality has worked on new techniques that add more diversity and intensity to the fighting and combat which includes 35+ combos. In effect the level of fighting will offer full body detection and some pretty explicit and disturbing dismemberment.

Motion Capture gives further credibility to the fluidity of the game. TR technology allows the team to build extremely lifelike characters with smooth animations. Geoff Hill, from the BloodRayne team, commented that he believed that most game developers don't seem to put enough effort into character animation unlike Terminal. "We spent a lot of time making a huge variety of animations. When some of the characters back away from you, they actually back-pedal to retreat. The Infernal Engine not only transitions between animations, it also blends, allowing enemies to strafe to the side while firing machine guns as they dive behind a corner to take cover."

The 'gore' factor of the game, with dismembered limbs, the weapons list, including Rayne's own attributes, has been dramatically reworked and it is perhaps the fuller melee mechanics for more precise fighting that will be one of the more impressive aspects of BloodRayne 2. Interaction with characters and the environment is something Terminal is particularly proud of and have built most of the environments to let the player either demolish or interact within.



Hack and slash, latex and blades... hmm...

Red Ninja: End of Honor

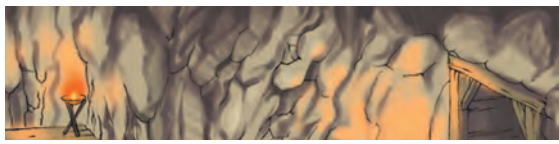
PS2 | XBOX

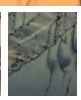
Developer: Tranji · **Publisher:** Vivendi Universal · **Supplier:** Nu Metro [011] 340 9345 · **Genre:** Action
Release Date: Q4 2004

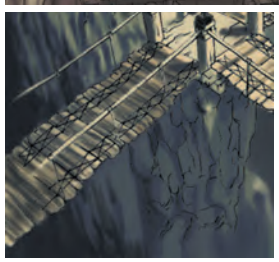
It's a well known fact that ninjas are just plain cool. Everybody loves ninjas - it's as simple as that and it only takes a cursory glance at any release schedule to realise that game developers seem to be oblivious to this fact. Aside from the major Ninja franchises such as Shinobi or Tenchu there isn't much in the way of Japanese assassin fun to be had. Japanese development house Tranji is doing their part to assuage this problem with the simply titled Red Ninja: End of Honor. Not your average sword swinging revenge drama, Red Ninja sees players wearing the shoes of a 16th century femme fatale named Kurenai set on the path for vengeance after her father is killed and she is left for dead by a group of rival ninja called the Black Lizard Clan. Whilst the plot is vintage revenge, Red Ninja chart's its own course through a number of interesting quirks, not the least of them being the weapon wielded by the heroine. Called a Tetsugen, Kurenai's weapon is a length or thin but sturdy wire capable of strangling or cutting enemies with a number of interchangeable heads allowing the wire to be used as a grapple, submission weapon and trip wire. Additional weapons such as a blow-gun, smoke bombs and rocket bombs will also become available. A scantily clad ninja vixen herself, Kurenai is also capable of using her feminine whiles to distract her enemies and all her skills will improve as she progresses through her mission. She also has the capacity to leap off walls, do various acrobatic stunts and sneak up behind enemy units, dismembering them if necessary.

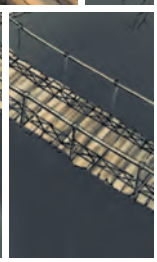
The story was written by famed Japanese director Shinsuke Sato, though he isn't well known outside of the East. Based in the 1500s, everything takes place amidst a feudal war for power, which means that your quest for revenge will obviously be in danger of being sidelined by political ambitions from both rivals and allies.

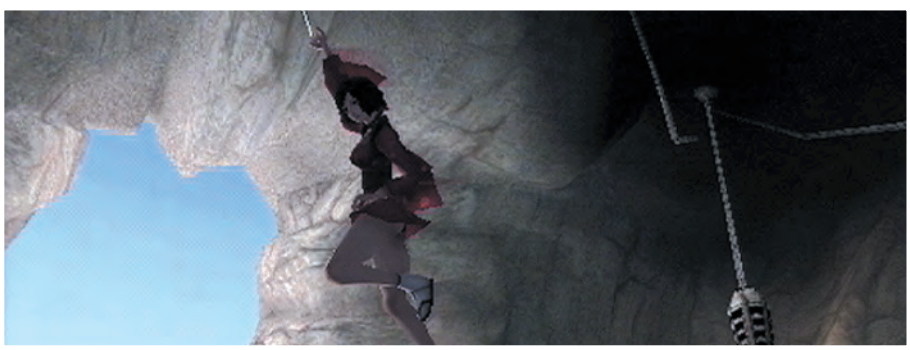
Due out in the later part of this year on Xbox and PlayStation 2, Red Ninja looks to be a good addition to the action-combat genre.











Even if it's a cute chick doing it, getting hacked in half has got to suck

Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay

Xbox

Developer: Starbreeze Studios · **Publisher:** Vivendi Universal · **Supplier:** Nu Metro [011] 340 9345
Genre: Action · **Release Date:** TBA

Since there is a movie in the works, it's no surprise that a game is also being pushed out. Seen as a prequel to Pitch Black, the low budget sci-fi Aussie bug-fest released in the late 90s, both the movie and game lead us through the events that see Riddick, the anti-hero from the first movie (starring a much less-inflated Vin Diesel) escape the infamous Butcher's Bay prison, as well as how he got those cool eyes.

Enclave developer Starbreeze takes on the development responsibility and they boast that the game will have some of the most advanced console technology ever used. The title seems to go for the safe approach, opting for the traditional sneaker/shooter/adventuring mould that often gets called "cross-genre" these days. In short, you'll shoot things, with the occasional stealth mission and interaction with critical characters.

To Riddick's credit, the game has already been in development for two years, quite longer than most movie-licensed games tend to take, which could own up to a more substantial game than recent offerings such as The Hulk, instead heading for the league of Lord of the Rings.

The title will feature the voices of the movie's actors and according to the developers Mr. Diesel himself has been very involved as well. So far the game is only due for the Xbox and no mention is made about multiplayer or online support, but more will be revealed closer to the game's release.

A good way to get the point...

direct to the public

Naked IT
feel IT exposure

AGP 8X Graphic Card CPU Cooling Air Duct Kit

brighten up your computers look

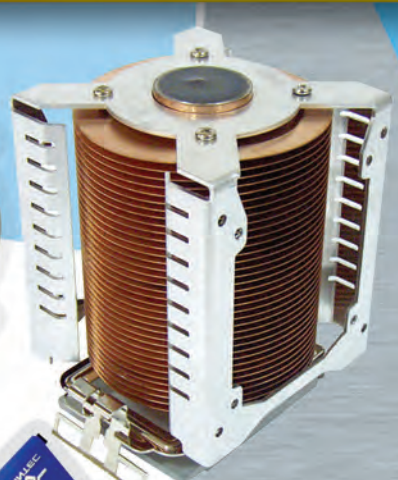
Fancy PC Chassis from R289 (transparent case is now available)
PC Chassis Fittings (Inculding LED Fan,
Cool Cathode Light and IDE Cable etc) from R99
New concept on CPU Cooling - Air Duct Kit from R189
Intel / AMD Computer ATX Power Supply from R150

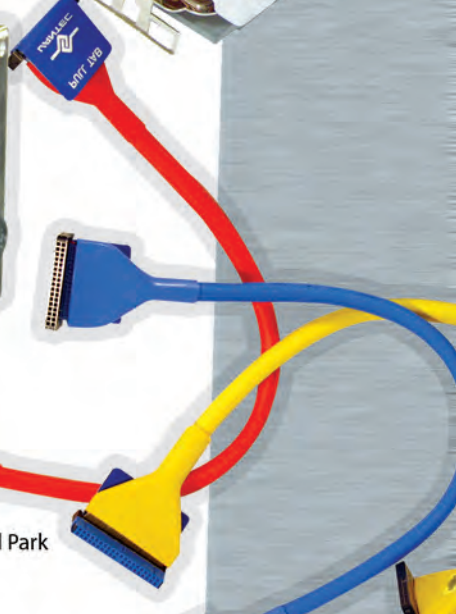
special offer on new Intel / AMD System

*from R2999 incl VAT

For more prices please visit our online price on www.nakedit.co.za

online shopping
now available at:
www.nakedit.co.za
door to door delivery





tel: +27 11 482 5493 . http://www.nakedit.co.za
email: info@nakedit.co.za . Campus Square (Shop.20) . Cnr Kingsway & University Road . Auckland Park
Trading Hours: Mon-Fri: 9.00-18.00 . **Sat:** 9.00-16.00 . **Sun & Public Holiday:** 9.30-13.00

ADVERT DESIGN BY DANGEROUSLY CREATIVE DESIGN: 082 454 4158

Def Jam Vendetta 2

PS2 | GCN
Xbox

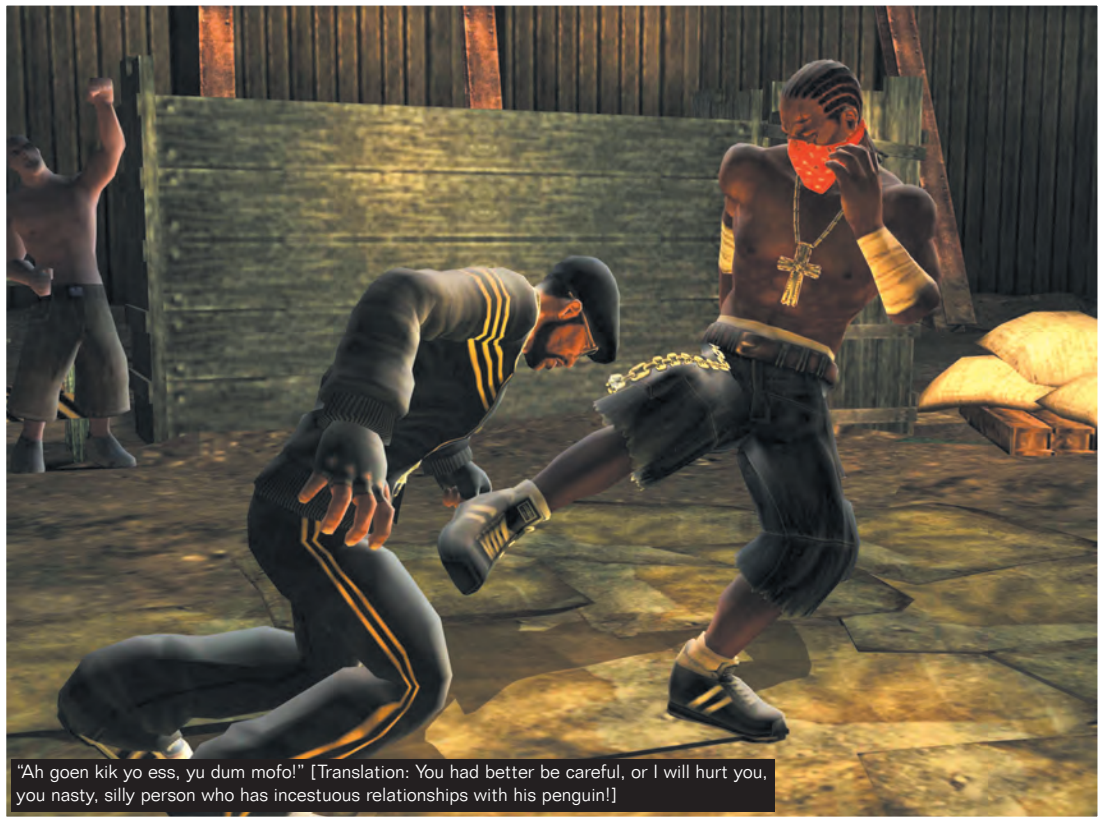
Developer: EA Games · **Publisher:** Electronic Arts · **Supplier:** EA Africa [011] 516 8300 · **Genre:** Fighting
Release Date: Q4 2004

What could be better than rap stars beating seven kinds of sheet out of each other to the rhythm of a hardcore hip-hop soundtrack? Well, apart from stopping most of them from launching movie careers, we'd have to say a second iteration to Def Jam Vendetta. Once again EA is collaborating with Def Jam to release a new game, featuring 70 characters, more than 35 of which will be hip-hop personalities like Busta Rhymes, Ludacris, Redman and Sean Paul.

Players have to take their fighter through the NYC underground fighting scene to take control of hip-hopdom. The game boasts a new customizable fighting system that will allow players to create multiple fighting styles. NBA Street and Def Jam Vendetta developers EA Canada take on the creation side again. Judging from the screens the game has been given a nice visual polish and based on the originals play dynamic we don't have to speculate too much on the second's playability.

You can obviously expect another large soundtrack to accompany the game, probably under EA's successful EA Trax section. No mention was made of any exclusive tracks, but you can expect a few.

Now there is a question of whether they'll include an Ebonics tutorial as well...



"Ah goen kik yo ess, yu dum mofo!" [Translation: You had better be careful, or I will hurt you, you nasty, silly person who has incestuous relationships with his penguin!]

Settlers V

PC

Developer: Blue Byte · **Publisher:** Ubisoft · **Supplier:** MegaRom [011] 234 2468 · **Genre:** Strategy
Release Date: Q4 2004

Ubisoft have a good deal going with Settlers. The series itself hasn't done badly at all with 5 million units sold to date and internal studio Blue Byte seem happy to churn them out one by one. But the new game, currently called Settlers V, seems to make a big departure from the series, if only visually. This time the cartoon-style looks have been set aside for a more realistic feel, and the traditional sprites have been replaced with a 3D engine.

This might seem a long time coming, but Settlers was one of the first games to take a serious approach to micro-management, meaning that dozens of units walk around your terrain, doing menial tasks. These increased with every new sequel and a full 3D engine would have killed earlier machines, but these days we might just handle it.

It's looking good, with detailed landscapes, units and buildings, but you can see that. This apparently promises a higher level of animation detail plus other play features, but Ubisoft haven't elaborated on that. What we do know is that the design team is joined by Bruce Milligan, who has worked with the likes of Sid Meier and Bruce Shelly (designer of Age of Empires).

Your job will be to liberate the land from an evil tyrant king. The game is still focused around micro-management of your village, placed in a medieval setting, in order to build a strong army and topple enemy strongholds.

It's due out at the end of 2004, so obviously more info will churn out over the coming months, especially with E3 and ECTS still ahead.

Solar

PC

Developer: Brat Design · **Publisher:** TBA · **Supplier:** TBA · **Genre:** First person shooter · **Release Date:** TBA

It appears that Brat Design [who appear to shun publicity and now have a number of games in development], is progressing forward having received some great feedback from their latest title, Breed.

The current project, Solar comes across as a stylish and moody FPS utilising the Mercury II engine. Set across three theatres of war, The Earth, Moon and Mars, Solar follows the progress of the Eastern Collective Democracy (ECD) and the United Western Alliance (UWA) as they clash in a decade old struggle for resources.

The back-story is that Earth is now a shattered wasteland, a huge battlefield, where the warring factions compete for scarce resources in a quagmire of trenches and fortifications. Mars is a partially terra-formed mining world, its vast red surface littered with wrecks and ruin from the bitter conflict. The Moon has become a dumping ground boasting a huge network of tunnels, excavated in the early days of the lunar colonies, now crammed with the filth and waste of the human race.

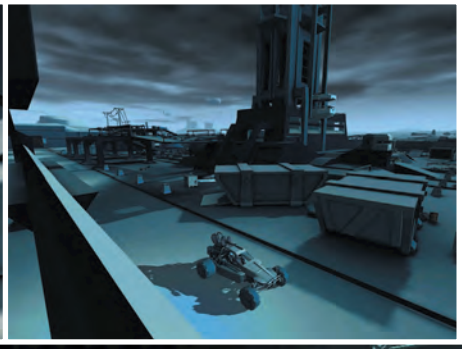
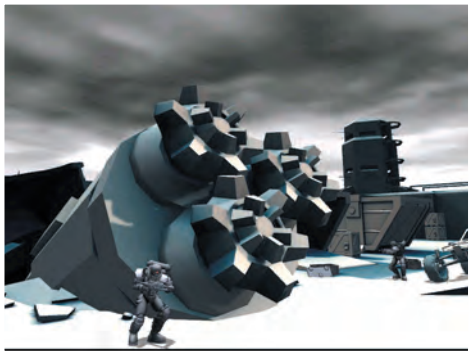
The two warring factions will each have their own technology set, including weapons of mass destruction (ICBM's and Orbital laser platforms), not to mention ground, aerial and aquatic vehicles capable of multiple crew members.

Solar will offer a tightly focused, near future, battlefield gaming experience allowing both single player and multiplayer modes over vast terrains, with up to 32 players in a game. Single player games use multiplayer maps with the addition of advanced AI bots to simulate multiplayer gaming styles.

In addition to the two factions are the Necro - an army of undead soldiers, re-animated by a toxic brew created by fallout from decades of nuclear, chemical and biological war. Mostly chaotic by nature, these troopers are a constant threat to both sides, but can be a useful resource if brought under the influence of one faction.

Interactive environments add another play dynamic to Solar. Buildings crumble as they are hit by shells or are crashed into with vehicles; gun emplacements can be manned to cut down the opposition in a hail of bullets, trees and other incidental scenery can be cleared by a well placed grenade. All this leads to a dynamic, ever changing battlefield.

Of course, time will tell. Since the team has to focus less on the actual engine this time around, not to mention benefit from a larger team, things could be very different.

Pretty nice, for a swamp...

Nintendo®

GET THESE GREAT TITLES

GAME BOY ADVANCE SP™

R399,99

R399,99

R exclusives

R399,99

R399,99

R549,99

NINTENDO GAMECUBE™

R999,99

GET THEM IN THE

R ZONE

Offers valid while stocks last

TOYS R US

LOW PRICE GUARANTEE
WE'LL MATCH ANY ADVERTISED PRICE

Toys R Us will match any retailers advertised price within 7 days of the advertisement appearing. We will match the price either at the time of purchase or within 7 days of the purchase provided you have your original receipt. Price matching applies provided the other retailer has stock at the time of purchase. Toys R Us coupons can not be used in addition to price matching.

Sandton City (011) 783-0327. **Fourways** (011) 467-0708/9. **Westgate** (011) 768-4084/7. **Boksburg** (011) 823-5111/2/3.
Atterbury, Pretoria (012) 991-4050. **Bloemfontein** (051) 444-0380. **Pavilion, Durban** (031) 265-0380. **Gateway, Durban** (031) 566-3772.
Bellville, Cape Town (021) 949-6030. **Somerset West** (021) 851-4123. **Canal Walk** (021) 552-8130. E&OE

The death of a salesman

words ed dracon

Gaming has seen horror upon horror in the last few years. The insurmountable Westwood with their additions to the Real Time Strategy and Adventure genres, the gentlemanly Black Isle with their quality Role Playing Games and even Muckyfoot and Legend Entertainment with their sleeper underdog titles; all gone. Bankrupt, closed doors or coagulated into existing companies, these names were once considered the unchallenged kings but now remain little more than a footnote in the big book of gaming.

While a variety of factors played a part in the demise of these companies, more than a little blame, if you want to lob it, could be flung at the publishers. Often during the development of a game, the extraordinary bill for the endeavour is paid for by the publisher. Once the game is released, all the initial earnings goes into paying back the publisher, only once that debt is fulfilled does the development team see any kind of returns on their work. While this is a natural process and there's nothing overly wrong with it, it does cause serious monetary problems for developers, especially smaller companies who can't afford the 'lull' before the cash starts coming in. Eventually atrophy sets in; development costs get higher while income remains the same.

While perhaps not a completely founded statement, I both predict and hope for the eventual death of publishers (as we know them). Companies such as Moonpod and Garage Games, not to mention RealMedia and Strategy First have already started paving the way for the possible future of gaming. Self-published games; an almost eerie hark back to the days when Roberta Williams would walk into stores with her newest Kings Quest on a floppy disk in a zip-lock bag to try and convince the owner to sell it. If and/or when publishers run out of developers to short-changed, more and more might turn to the elegant (though not completely simple) solution of self-publishing, especially in today's world of high-speed broadband.

In a possible future where each game is published by the developers themselves without restrictions of region or medium, where is the use for a large conventional publishing house?

> The Roots

Tannhauser Gate is at work on The Roots, a role-playing game with a fantasy flavour. The game's story will revolve around the sickening of a magical tree of life, and the ensuing quest to unravel this mysterious threat. The Roots will include non-player characters with their own agendas, and some of them will conflict with the player's goals, though not always overtly so. The game will be published by Cenega Publishing, and is scheduled for release on the 3rd of September.

Godfather game from EA

Electronic Arts is at work on a computer game based on the Godfather trilogy of films. Currently, no further details have been revealed.

New Carmageddon coming

SCi has disclosed that a new Carmageddon title will be released next year. The franchise has been around since 1997.

Viewtiful Joe 2

Rumours abound that a sequel to Viewtiful Joe is on its way. It seems the game will feature both Joe and his girlfriend Sylvia as playable characters. As yet, Capcom has neither denied nor confirmed these rumours.

v Mercenaries

Mercenaries is a new open-ended third-person combat action title in development at Pandemic Studios. The game will feature present-day military equipment, interactive environments and a non-linear play dynamic. It will be released by LucasArts for PlayStation 2 and Xbox in the next few months.

< Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone

A new Dungeons & Dragons game is on its way to the PlayStation 2 from Stormfront Studios and Atari. It is titled Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone, and will be released late this year.

< IndyCar Series 2005

IndyCar Series 2005 is on its way to Xbox later this month, and to the PlayStation 2 some time later this year. The game is licensed by the Indy Racing League, ensuring authenticity, and boasts enhanced AI that will result in believable, realistic behaviour in opposing drivers. The game will also support online multiplayer capabilities (12 players on Xbox, 8 on PS2).

vv
vv
vv

Former MS execs start game design studio

Former highly placed Microsoft Technology staff members have founded an independent game development studio, named Emogence. These former Microsoft employees were involved in the development of Age of Mythology, Halo 2 (in conjunction with Bungie) and Direct3D. Emogence is already busy with a title, a first-person RPG titled Grafan, which has been scheduled for release later this year.

Max Payne 3

Take-Two Interactive has confirmed that a third Max Payne game will, indeed, be going into development. The company stated that it intends to take some time over the project, in order to make it excellent. It is currently uncertain whether the design team responsible for Max Payne 2 will remain unaltered.

Vanguard: Saga of Heroes

Microsoft Game Studios and Sigil Games Online have announced Vanguard: Saga of Heroes, an upcoming massively multiplayer online RPG. Brad McQuaid, co-creator of EverQuest, will be involved in the project. No release schedules have been determined yet. www.vanguardsoh.com

EA and Castaway Entertainment sign deal

Electronic Arts and Castaway Entertainment, comprised largely of former Blizzard North staff, have signed a publishing agreement. Castaway, whose staff was responsible for the Diablo series, are currently at work on an action role-playing title; no release details have been made public yet.

Guilty Gear Isuka

Guilty Gear Isuka is in development at Arc System Works, to be published for PlayStation 2 by Sammy Studios. The fighting game will include a new 4-player set of modes, one offering 2vs2 bouts, the other allowing cooperative play against the AI.

< The Sims 2 Body Shop

Maxis will be releasing Body Shop for The Sims 2 this month, in advance of the game itself, which is scheduled for release later this year. The application will allow players to customize sims' physical appearance, right down to facial features and clothing. Some elements will require users to have access to an image editing program. Non-cosmetic aspects will be determined in the game itself, not in Body Shop.

< Stargate SG-1

JoWood has acquired rights from MGM Television to publish games based on the Stargate franchise, including SG-1 and the upcoming Stargate: Atlantis. Australian development company Perception will be responsible for the creation of the games.

International Release Dates

Pac-Man World 2 Action	PC	1 May 2004
Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis Tactical	Xbox	3 May 2004
Digimon Rumble Arena 2 Action	GC | Xbox	3 May 2004
Pilot Down RPG	Xbox	3 May 2004
Rent a Hero No. 1 Adventure	Xbox	3 May 2004
Samurai Jack Action	Xbox	3 May 2004
Rallisport Challenge 2 Racing	Xbox	4 May 2004
Soldner: Secret Wars Strategy	PC	4 May 2004
Samurai Warriors Action	PS2	4 May 2004
Van Helsing Action	PS2 | Xbox | GBA	6 May 2004
Custom Robo Action	GC	10 May 2004
X-Men Legends RPG	Xbox | PS2	11 May 2004
Headhunter: Redemption Action	Xbox | PS2	11 May 2004
Joint Operations Action	PC	14 May 2004
Thief: Deadly Shadows Tactical	PC | Xbox	17 May 2004
DareDevil Action	Xbox	17 May 2004
Fila World Tour Tennis Sport	Xbox	20 May 2004
STALKER: Shadow of Chernobyl Action	PC	25 May 2004
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban Adventure	PC | PS2 | Xbox | GC | GBA	25 May 2004
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy Action	PS2 | Xbox | GC	25 May 2004
Bujingai: The Forsaken City Action	PS2	27 May 2004
Besieger	PC	28 May 2004

N-Gage MMRPG en route

Sega is working on a massively multiplayer RPG for the N-Gage, to be played over N-Gage Arena. The game will be called Pocket Kingdom: Own the World, and will be set in a medieval fantasy world. Sega plans to release the game late this year.

SWAT: Urban Justice terminated?

Vivendi Universal's catalogue no longer carries any reference to SWAT: Urban Justice, and rumour has it that the project has been cancelled. The company has announced that it will inform the public regarding the franchise's status later this year.

Tekken 5

The next incarnation of this highly popular fighting game is expected to be unveiled at this year's E3, and will, if all goes well, be released, first on arcades and then on PlayStation 2, by the end of the year. The game will, reportedly, support online play.

EA and Gas Powered Games team up

Electronic Arts and Gas Powered Games have signed an agreement for the development of a real-time strategy title for release on PC in 2006. The project will be headed by Chris Taylor of Gas Powered Games, who was responsible for Total Annihilation.

Medieval Lords: Kingdom Under Siege

Monte Cristo Games is at work on Medieval Lords: Kingdom Under Siege, a medieval city building game. The company has licensed Interactive Data Visualization's SpeedTree technology, which renders very lifelike trees. Other details are currently not available, such as when the game is expected to be completed.

v CSI: Miami

UbiSoft has acquired rights to publish a game based on the TV series CSI: Miami. The game is in development at 369 Interactive, a division of Radical Entertainment, and will be an adventure-style game requiring players to solve puzzles, use forensic techniques and question suspects. It is expected to be complete around the middle of the year.

< Unreal Championship 2

Epic is at work on Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict, which promises to be unlike previous Unreal titles. What sets this next offering apart is the fact that first-person action will be combined with third-person melee combat and combo-based fighting. Single- and multiplayer will be available, with the game offering two single-player options: campaign and tournament, the latter being akin to the play dynamic of beat-'em-up games - sequential duels, unlocking characters based on progress, and so forth. The maps will be relatively small to ensure furious action, much like Quake's DM4 was a firm favourite with many for that exact reason. The game will offer a variety of playable characters, each with particular strengths and weaknesses. Unreal Championship 2, to be published by Microsoft Game Studios, is scheduled for release for Xbox by the end of the year. *Trailer on the CD this month.*

Web Scores

PC Games	UT 2004	Far Cry	Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	Battlefield Vietnam
NAG	90%	92%	83%	75%
gamespy.com	5/5	n/r	n/r	4/5
gamespot.com	9.4/10	9.2/10	9.1/10	8.5/10
pc.ign.com	9.4/10	9.2/10	9.5/10	8.2/10

Console Games	007 Everything or Nothing [PS2]	Castlevania [PS2]	Sonic Heroes [PS2]	I-Ninja [PS2]
NAG	85%	71%	76%	75%
gamespy.com	4/5	3/5	3/5	3/5
gamespot.com	8.8/10	7.7/10	6.2/10	7.5/10
ign.com	8.5/10	9/10	6.9/10	8/10

< Pariah

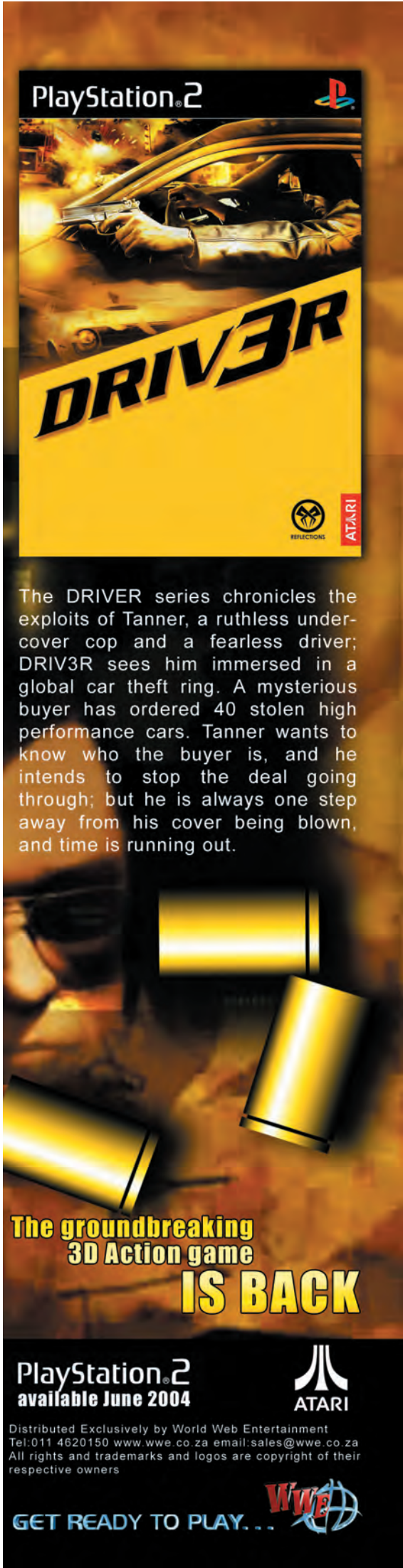
Digital Extremes, of Unreal fame, has disclosed a project that the company has been working on for the past two years. It is a first-person shooter with survival elements and focusing largely on single-player and story aspects, and is titled Pariah. Multiplayer modes will be available too. More details are expected to emerge at E3.

< Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War

Warhammer 40K: Dawn of War, based on Games Workshop's tabletop strategy game and in development at Relic Entertainment, is an upcoming strategy title from THQ that is expected out in September. The game will feature four playable races, will offer a single-player campaign and support for up to six-player multiplayer skirmishes. The developers have opted for a streamlined resource model to emphasise the combat action over the resource gathering.

< Harry Potter Eyes PS2 Toy

The upcoming Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, from EA Games, will be the first third-party product to support the EyeToy accessory for the PlayStation 2. The new Harry Potter title will allow players to assume the role of each of the three friends who are the main characters, and will require the synergistic use of their individual skills. It will also include several mini-games; these will be aimed primarily at a young audience. The game is being developed by EA's British studio, and is expected to be available on a variety of platforms by mid-year. EyeToy functionality, of course, will only be offered by the PlayStation 2 version. All versions of the game should be available at the end of this month.



reviews

Blinded by hype

With all the big name games on the way, are things going to be as good as people say they are?

It seems that the "big gaming year" 2004 promised to be is seriously getting under way, with big name titles beginning to show up on the shelves. Far Cry, UT 2004 and Battlefield: Vietnam being three good examples. But the hype monster often bites back, and titles that showed so much promise on paper are not necessarily providing the player with everything that was assured. While some games certainly do live up to the hype, others fall sadly short, creating a lot of disappointment.

This leads one to wonder: if 2004 is going to be such a big year, does that also mean that it's going to be a big year for disappointment as well? Titles like Half-Life 2, DOOM 3 and The Sims 2 have gamers chomping at the bit, but are these games going to deliver what was promised, or are they going to provide more complaint-fodder for those not satisfied with what they bring to the table?

There is no way of telling, really. Perhaps we as gamers need to be realistic about our expectations. Taking the PR spawned hype with a couple of pinches of the proverbial salt may result in less disappointment, and maybe even a few surprises.

But the marketing is hard to ignore. The prospect of brilliant games is exciting and, what with the easy dissemination of information on the internet, building this excitement is also really simple. Ignoring anything is pretty damn difficult.

So the next time you feverishly tear the plastic from your latest, long awaited title, remember one thing; marketing people are paid to get you worked up. It doesn't mean they know what makes a good game or not.

How to use this magazine...

Award of Merit
A silver award is given to a game that achieves a score of 85 to 90. It's a good thing.

Award of Excellence
A gold award is given to a game that achieves a score of above 90. It's even better.

Editor's Choice
Every now and then, when the Ed sees a game he likes, he gives it this special award. He sleeps a lot though, so this is a rare thing...

Platform
Platforms are described using icons rather than just plain old words. For those of you who don't know (shame on you) they are, left to right, top to bottom: Game Boy Advance, GameCube, N-Gage, PC, PS2 and Xbox.

Scoring
As we said, our scores range from one to one hundred, with a score of fifty being considered average. Live with it.

Z-680 SPEAKER SYSTEM. The first multimedia speaker system that brings together THX®, Dolby® Digital, Dolby® Pro Logic® II, and DTS®, in one bass-pumping, earth-shaking 500 watt RMS surround sound package. And because it connects directly to any DVD player, XBox®, PlayStation®2, or PC, it's bound to make the biggest connection of all. With you.

www.logitech.com

Logitech

CONNECTS TO ALL SYSTEMS. INCLUDING YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM.

©2003 Logitech. All rights reserved. Logitech, the Logitech logo, and the Logitech products referred to herein are either the trademarks or the registered trademarks of Logitech.

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Far Cry

PC Review

Now Available

Gold Award

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 **Developer:** Crytek · **Publisher:** Ubisoft
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 **Genre:** First person shooter · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 4 1GHz · 256 MB RAM · 16 x CD ROM · 64 MB Video Card · 4 GB HDD

When our features editor came back from E3 in 2003 he was spouting endlessly about a game that no-one new much about. It was called Far Cry and, according to him at least, it was going to be the next best thing. It's now almost a year later and he's getting ready to go back to E3. Far Cry has arrived and, admittedly, he was bang on the money.

Far Cry, with it's relatively late and minimal hype, is set to be something of a sleeper hit for the year, especially when you consider that titles like DOOM 3 and Half-Life 2 are on the way. In fact, these two big guns have been challenged by this arrival, and they will have to truly shine to out-perform what is one of the best first person shooters to hit the market in a very long time.

The main aim that the Far Cry development team brought to the fore with this title is realism, despite the game's mild science fiction overtones (which come about in later levels.) And they pulled it off admirably. With varying difficulty levels and a very smart AI, Far Cry is the next best thing to an actual fire fight.

The most noticeable advance that Far Cry has made is in the field of graphics - something which becomes apparent from the word go. To call this game pretty is a grave understatement. Its tropical setting makes for a brilliant showcase of the Crytek engine's abilities, and the overall sense of realism is heightened by the fact that the game looks as close to real life as anything we've seen before; more so, in fact. Details like insects, fish, birds and other wild life enhance the illusion even more, making the Far Cry setting one of the most complex, detailed game realities ever. High detail in the graphics department certainly do affect the game dynamic somewhat. The player can use foliage to hide in, but the same foliage can hamper his seeing enemies. In addition, a higher visual range makes for a game that can be played over longer distances - the player can accurately eliminate enemies from a surprisingly long way away. But they can see and hit him at that range too.

Added to the game's graphical reliance is a very smart AI. In fact, the game is challenging even on the easiest of difficulty settings almost purely because of the artificial enemies that the player faces. Very little challenge in this game is based on elements like movement (unless that movement is part of a fire fight.) Virtually everything comes down to outwitting the enemy. In addition, the AI can adapt to the player's ability (if the option is selected) becoming more or less challenging

A tropical location, lots of action and dead guys that actually float in water... it's an FPS dream!

according to the player's skill. Enemies will seek cover, call for backup, react to suspicious noises (not just gunfire) and act in other generally very "human" ways to stop the player from reaching his goals. They will also lay down suppressive fire in areas where they think the player might be... sometimes they are wrong, and shoot in the wrong direction. But suppressive fire can be deadly when they are right!

The very nature of the game dictates that Far Cry should be approached as both a "sneak and peek" and "run and gun" title, with the player needing to adapt play style as the need arises - even using vehicles at times. While the majority of the player's time will doubtlessly be spent sneaking through the undergrowth and taking out enemies from afar, situations where quick movement and a "guns blazing" approach is required will crop up every now and then.

Almost every situation in Far Cry is unique, and requires a different approach. Sometimes long distance sniping is the best, while others require stealth and even others require full ball gun fights. Enemies and settings vary widely, and the player will soon learn that what worked in one situation may fail in another. Thankfully the developers have allowed the player a wide variety of options when playing the game, making it as non-linear as possible by building free roaming outdoor settings and covering almost every option for equipment (including thermal goggles and very useful binoculars that pick up sound and record enemy positions. However, the player does need to think a bit beyond just plain old movement strategies - only four weapons (excluding grenades) can be carried at a time, for example. Additionally, indoor levels are far more linear in design, and require a different approach, seeing as how useful things like undergrowth and distance are not really common indoors.

As you can see, Far Cry demands a lot from the player, in terms of strategy, ability and (sometimes) plain old luck. But it does give back to the player as well, in terms of a stunning gaming experience. In addition to the excellent graphics and brilliant AI, Far Cry features some of the most realistic sounds ever presented in this format. Sound, in fact, is a very important aspect of the game. The AI reacts to it, and the player can determine a lot about a given station by listening to what is going on - engine sounds, gun fire, sneaking progress through the underbrush all give the player clues. Aside from wildlife and environmental noise, there is no ambient sound in the game. If you hear a gun being fired, there is a gun being fired somewhere on the level, and most likely nearby and at you. Turning off the music can heighten the realism of the game even more - that said, the music really is very good...

Another great aspect of the title is its length. The game is made up of twenty levels, all of which are long and challenging. Each level can be played several different ways, making the game

A babe and a bomb... yes please!

Thermal graphics are handy

With heavily armoured enemies, headshots are probably better...

Origins

Crytek planned to make use of the rather stunning Cryengine for something a bit different to Far Cry. Yes, there would have been jungles and teams of heavily armed guys, but the main adversaries were going to be dinosaurs. Yep, the original idea for the engine's implementation was a dinosaur hunting game. It's little wonder that a few sections of Far Cry have a distinct Jurassic Park feel to them... Those of you so inclined can check out the X-Isle tech demo on the cover CD, which was released in 2000. The engine used was technically the basis for the Cryengine, but the team scrapped it and remade it for Far Cry.

eminently re-playable. Add to that the five difficulty levels, as well as multiplayer and a map editor, and you realise that the Far Cry goodness is going to last a long time.

No game is perfect, however, and Far Cry does have its problems. We're not talking minor bugs and glitches (of which there are virtually none, surprisingly) but rather of issues that may effect the way the game is perceived by players. The first is the game's story, which is bit lacklustre and predictable. No harm, really, because the game dynamic is good enough to override any damage there. A bit more concerning is the save system. The player cannot save anywhere... Far Cry uses a check point system which automatically saves the game at certain times. While this may seem backward, it does promote a more careful approach to the game. If you think about it you will realise that the save system is actually perfect for a game of this nature.

The only true problem that Far Cry possesses is its rather plain multiplayer mode. There are a few game options, but it ships with very few multiplayer maps, and the lack of documentation for the level editor makes creating more difficult. It seems as though the multiplayer version of the game is something of an afterthought.

While it might seem that Far Cry would be something of a resource hog, the game is very scalable, making it possible to play it on most systems that don't date back to the Ark. This does mean that much of the game's detail will be lost, but the great dynamic stays the same none the less.

Far Cry is by far one of the best titles to come out in recent memory, and fans of a good tactical style FPS will go nuts for it. Even those that don't go in for FPS titles will find the game highly enjoyable, and incredible to see in action.

Few games are as stylish and engrossing - a mere review can do this game no justice!

92

Second Opinion

They wouldn't let me review the final version of Far Cry because I was labelled a fan boy thanks to the preview I did an issue or two back. But as you can see not even the jaded, callous, and bitter Shryke could fault it. Far Cry is proof that you don't need to be id Software or Valve to put together a stunning FPS. From the lush tropical setting to the mostly surprisingly smart artificial intelligence Far Cry is the business.

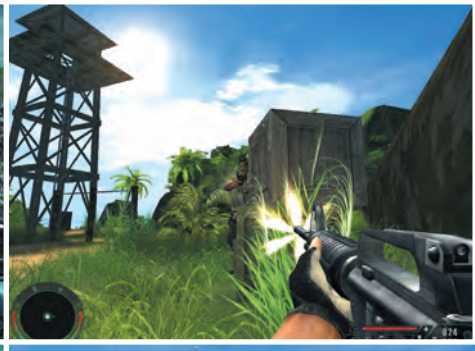
The only let down is the vanilla multiplayer - it's polished, paced and technically flawless but lacks anything to distinguish it from the hundreds of other multiplayer titles out there - additionally, there are too few maps and many of the supplied maps are too big for a small group to have any fun in - except for the excellent 'Surf' map - this map rocks the boat!

Moral Minority
90%

"With varying difficulty levels and a very smart AI, Far Cry is the next best thing to an actual fire fight."

A great place to park

Not a great place to park



Not the best tactic...

God is in the details

Crytek made certain that the suspension of disbelief in their game was strongly supported by the level of detail they injected into the project. Look out for dappled shadows on the player's gun, and the differing colours of sea and river water, as well as insects, birds and other wildlife... to name but a few.

www.esquire.co.za

CTX will keep you wide AWAKE

Data Projectors - incredible value - high performance

- Wide range of lighweight LCD projectors
- Brightness from 1400-4000 ANSI lumens
- Uses 3 poly-silicon TFT LCD panels
- Displays 16,7 million colours (24 bit)
- SVGA, XGA & SXGA native resolutions available
- Contrast ratio 400:1
- NTSC/PAL/SECAM, HDTV compatible
- IR wireless mouse with laser pointer; Built-in speakers

LCD M730V monitor - your multimedia and Internet partner

- A range of LCD monitors to suit your lifestyle needs
- The M730V has high contrast ratio 511:1, wide viewing angle, fast response time
- Analogue VGA & Digital DVI dual PC inputs; S-Video, composite video(CVBS) component video
- Preference stereo speakers: SRS sound system; 3:2 pull down film mode for NTSC & 2;2 pull down film mode for PAL; support PAL & NTSC system; high quality RGB24-bit digital camera; non-directional microphone

CD-RW 52x 24x 52x - fast, stable and reliable

- Data buffer: 2MB; Data transfer: 52X max
- Burst: 66.6 MB/Sec UDMA Mode 4 (Max); Access time: 80ms 170ms,Max
- Audio: sampling freq 44.1KHz; Mounting: horizontal/vertical
- Dimensions: 42 x 146 x 192cm; Weight: 1kg

ESQUIRE TECHNOLOGIES

Distributors of leading brands of computer hardware & peripherals

IT's a matter of choice

Distributor of the Year 2003

Esquire was voted Peripherals Distributor of the Year 2003

All logos & brand names are duly acknowledged as registered trademarks of their respective owners.

Head Office - Midrand: (012) 657 1111
Durban branch: (031) 569 2301
Cape Town branch: (021) 555 0001
Port Elizabeth branch: Opening June 2004
E-mail us at sales@esquire.co.za or
phone us for your closest outlet or dealer.

intel premier provider · CTX · ABIT Your Reliable Partner · Western Digital · Seagate · BTC · princo · TEAC · BenQ · PROLINK · Microsoft · CHRONOS · hp invent · ST Lab · SONY · KINGMAX · PRIME NETWORK · xitel · AMD · AZZA · xsonic tech · Logitech · EPSON PRINTERS · A4 TECH

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Battlefield: Vietnam

PC Review

Now Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** DICE · **Publisher:** Electronic Arts
Supplier: EA Africa [011] 516 8300 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** James Francis
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 933MHz · 256 MB RAM · 16 x CD ROM · 64 MB Video Card · 2 GB HDD

What is war good for? James Brown asked us that question during the Vietnam War - controversial both by its nature (the US wasn't provoked into attacking the North Vietnam forces, other really than the threat of communism) and by being the first war to have its brutality displayed, thanks to television. Before that, everyone thought war was a glorious affair, a classic struggle of good versus evil. But Vietnam exposed a different face, showing the true brutality of man.

Of course, that's all in the history books. These days War has become more of a hobby than an actual event. We have more games now celebrating and emulating wars than ever before, especially historical and modern conflicts. While other shooters and strategy games used to have a serious leaning to sci-fi and near-future events, every second shooter or RTS is placed in the past or present.

It's hard to place where Battlefield 1942 falls into the fray of combat shooters, but it's definitely a highlight in the genre's evolution. It was significantly less organised and more chaotic than other games and everyone loved this. It also brought in vehicles to multiplayer combat - other games have done this before, but never like Battlefield did, opting for a more streamlined, pick-up-and-play approach.

So what's next?

Vietnam, of course. After an almost-ridiculous amount of patching, plus three average to good expansions, 1942 has spent its breath and a new game is needed to continue the legacy. This time developed by DICE Canada and not 1942's developer, DICE Sweden, on the surface it looks like a lot has been done. The game is definitely more stable, and loads at a reasonable pace. The three sides (US, South Vietnam and North Vietnam) are all represented, with somewhat similar classes to the first game, although with weapon changes (as well as the ability to choose a different head and body. Both sides' engineers can carry out booby trap or disbarment jobs (depending on the side). To balance the forces, you cannot see a VC's nametag unless your crosshairs are on top of them. It's a fair trade, since the VC do not have HEUY attack or transport choppers, neither means to move tanks and jeeps using choppers. In fact, artillery-wise, the VC is very underequipped - as the war was. That said, they are able to plant spikes in the ground, move tunnel spawn points and drop caltrops, though wire-traps are amiss.

DICE stuck with the ageing Torque engine, which means that elements

Paying Homage

BFV has paid homage here and there to a few movies. Apart from the music, keep an eye out for the grenade launcher of the heavy infantry unit on the US side. It's decorated in the same fashion as the one carried by Roach, the grenadier at the Do Lung Bridge who blew up the screaming VC in the jungle in Apocalypse Now. Strangely, the South Vietnam grenadier also carries it in the game. Maybe he did time at Do Lung as well...

Rocking tunes and rockets...

such as tunnels are nowhere to be seen, except as spawn points, which is a pity. Flame-thrower units are just as lacking. The engine is also not capable of doing truly thick jungle and it comes across as 1942 with more trees and some undergrowth - a let-down when you compare it to Vietcong, but it's an unfair comparison when you compare play styles.

The promised improved single player campaign quite simply isn't there. Instead, it's been dropped to 'quick action' and displays bots that are dumber than the first game's. I never thought I'd say this, but 1942 had a better single player element. Why DICE didn't even opt for a nice tutorial campaign is beyond me - even Quake 3's campaign was more substantial than this.

Despite that, though, the new changes add just enough dynamic to make the game feel slightly different, but it's not quite Vietnam. Firstly, it plays like 1942. In fact, it is 1942, but with some undergrowth and a few new units. The choppers and aircraft fly comfortably (though the maps are a bit small a lot of the time) and it is a lot of fun to play. This is countered by the soundtrack - chock full of Vietnam songs you'll remember from all the movies made on the war. Everyone from Creedence Clearwater Revival to the Trogg's Wild Thing is here, but bands like Rolling Stones and The Doors are missing. Wagner's Ride of the Valkyrie isn't though - perfect for those early-morning Air Cavalry runs. You can play these songs in any vehicle, so it at least makes you think you're in Vietnam. Small touches, such as movable spawn points and the ability to see how long it will take to capture a flag also make a difference and round the overall Battlefield experience considerably.

From a personal perspective I'm a bit disappointed. I wanted tunnels, guerrilla-style combat and a multiplayer game in the spirit of Battlefield but set in the reality of Vietnam. The main deterrent to this is that it's still the same engine and while the units have different attributes to them, it still plays a lot like Battlefield did. Then again, 1942 wasn't what I'd call a WW2 simulator either. It seems like the team didn't exploit the material enough. As a novelty, for instance, death cards or a photographer unit (who can take screenshots) would have been interesting. I definitely miss flame throwers. Nighttime scenarios and serious jungle combat. Overall it's not a bad combat game but it's not what I expected and it comes off as more of an expansive mod than a truly new title.

"The engine is also not capable of doing truly thick jungle and it comes across as 1942 with more trees and some undergrowth."

Lacklustre as a Vietnam game but a fair sequel to 1942.

75

What a bunch of dorks...

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

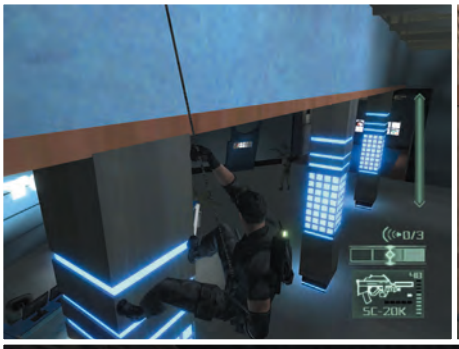
PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Ubisoft · **Publisher:** Ubisoft
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** Stealth · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 1GHz · 128 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 64 MB Video Card · 3 GB HDD

With an almost nonsensical name that seems to have derived more from an adjective-verb-noun style of titling, Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow represents an interesting conjoining of technology and game mechanics. When Splinter Cell was released in 2002 it managed to slip so smoothly into the gap of stealth titles that even Hideo Kojima of Metal Gear Solid 2 fame was so impressed he uttered, "Splinter Cell is what I wanted Metal Gear Solid 2 (considered the penultimate of the genre) to be". In today's world of lengthy development time Pandora Tomorrow follows relatively hot on the heels of its predecessor, making the best of its enigmatic lead character, its super spy premise and even adding a completely new multiplayer mode allowing players to participate in various situations of espionage from two different perspectives.

Slightly older, slightly more cynical but still able to swing the tide of war by using just his hands and lots of dark clothing, Sam Fisher returns to active duty less than eager to participate in the game's well crafted storyline. Noticeably more cohesive than its predecessor, the plot logarithmically becomes more intricate and gripping as it progresses, driven along by both in-game cut-scenes and the CNN styled movies in-between each mission. An overall feel of authenticity remains predominant; Sam's actions often having global effects and repercussions. Much like the plot, Pandora Tomorrow sports more of a refined experience than a completely new game. The locations in which Sam finds himself are more exotic, the situations and scripted sequences more polished and fun. Almost every aspect of the game has been refined, from the dialogue right through to the controls. Achieving seemingly complex super-spy manoeuvres is a painless process while new actions such as the ability to hang-upside-down-from-pipes-and-shoot keeps things fresh.

The aforementioned exotic locations are all accented by the improved engine, graphically everything appears crisp and detailed, even Sam himself has been given a face-lift. While the real-time shadows of the game seem to be slightly blockier than the previous title, everything else has been improved and adds to the realism of the game. As the missions get progressively more interesting, the graphics seem to follow suit. Hanging on the side of a moving train you're almost blasted off by another train speeding past. Slinking through the tall grasses of Cambodia pushes them to the side; water reflects and shimmers properly while atmospheric sounds complete the illusion.



FPS vs. Third Person Stealth

Mercenaries, spies and various other Tom Clancy wet-dreams complete what might be one of the more interesting multiplayer segments of a game to date. If you play as one of the Argus Mercenaries the style of the game resembles your standard First Person Shooter, whereas the Shadownet Spies have added acrobatic ability due to their Third Person perspective (much like the single player portion of the game). While the Mercenaries may have superior firepower and motion tracking visors, the Spies can use them as human shields and hang upside down from pipes to shoot immobilising shots. Tactical and highly enjoyable.

Ladies and gentlemen... presenting... the only light source in the entire game!

Some missions however seem to suffer slightly despite these improvements; Jerusalem for example looks bland and uninspired in comparison to the other missions. None the less, each mission boasts several ways to complete; paying attention to your environment might allow you to bypass a particularly troublesome guard by shimmying along a ledge or rappelling down a wall. While the emphasis might be on stealth for a good portion of a mission, often Sam will be given '5-degrees of freedom', allowing him to use any means (or any weapon) necessary to complete his mission.

However, for the most part Sam will have to remain unseen and his actions unnoticed. Making the mistake of leaving dead bodies around alerts the guards, causing the alarm level to rise thus making any other guards encountered more difficult but at scripted points in the mission the alarm will reset to zero, thankfully. A helpful blip on your already invaluable stealth-meter will indicate when a body can be dropped in a safe area. Security cameras still prove to be a major hindrance but it's nothing a Chaff grenade (that scrambles electrical equipment) can't handle. All the classic gadgets have returned including the StickyCam, allowing Sam to see around corners. A few new devices help Sam along the way, including a secondary fire mode for his weapons. Thanks to marketing placement, Sam also often uses his new Sony Ericcson phone to communicate, which both seems to be rather kitsch and yet adds another tiny element of realism to the game. Tough-guy actor Michael Ironside makes a welcome return as the gruff voice of Sam Fisher as well as his contribution to the dry banter between Fisher and the commanding officer during the course of the game. Secondary characters seem to suffer slightly from poor voice acting, the English accents on the bystanders of all nationalities feeling slightly out of place. The musical score however sets a stunningly tense mood, picking up during lulls and trailing off into slightly more heavy music once action starts, though they could have benefited from a slightly smoother transition, the abruptness often catching a person by surprise.

A great addition to the series, Pandora Tomorrow would suffice with its action, stealth and intrigue yet manages yet another trump card with its unexpectedly detailed multiplayer section, allowing two styles of gaming to collide. With all it's edges polished and various issues from the previous title addressed, Pandora Tomorrow is a slick high-tech romp through the world of espionage that almost any gamer can enjoy.

Addictive and tactical multiplayer with an already strong, enjoyable and accessible single-player.

83

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Unreal Tournament 2004

PC Review

Gold Award

Suggested Retail Price: R 399.00 **Developer:** Epic · **Publisher:** Atari · **Supplier:** MegaRom [011] 234 2680
Genre: First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** Anton Lines
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 1GHz · 128 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 5.5 GB HDD

When Epic announced their intention to release annual versions of the award-winning Unreal Tournament series, gamers were immediately sceptical. The presiding fear was that people would have to "pay for a patch", and would not be getting any real new content for their money. After some delay, the third Unreal Tournament title has finally been delivered and, thankfully, nearly all fears have been put to rest. Epic have corrected their many mistakes with UT2003 and released a follow-up that is polished and original enough to be well-worth a purchase.

UT2004 uses the same graphics and physics engines as 2003, although they have been greatly optimised in terms of resource-usage and smoothness. The new game has lower minimum requirements and gives more frames per second during play (although its initial loading times are longer). It is reasonably fast even on old GeForce and GeForce 2 chipsets, at a time when most new releases run only adequately on the best hardware available. In addition, the game still has the most realistic death physics I have ever seen, as well as some new maps which can only be described as visual masterpieces.

Aimed almost exclusively at the multiplayer experience, UT2004 is designed to be friendly to competitive and casual players alike. The addition of vehicles and various new game modes (Onslaught in particular) allow skilled competitors to express their abilities without leaving the newer players helpless. There is always something to be done; every player can find his/her niche and play a direct role in the success of their team. There is a "single-player" option as well, which serves as more of a tutorial than a separate game, similarly to how it was handled in UT2003. The action is extremely fast-paced once you get the hang of the controls (simple to grasp but challenging to master), and is reminiscent of the "golden age" of the First Person Shooter, where action was all that mattered.

Strategy has not been neglected either, not by any means. Weapon balance is almost perfect, and some of the new 1v1 maps demonstrate an understanding of the competitive scene that is seldom found in game developers the world over. Essential features such as a voting system and an in-game timer have finally been included in the official release. UT2004 is also significant in that it is the first competitively-focussed FPS title to delay item spawns. This is revolutionary because it virtually eliminates the random advantage of where you start on the map. The only possible criticism I can level at Epic is

Play Online

To connect to the South African servers which do not appear on the master server list, you will need to bring up the favourites menu (within the "Join Game" menu). Right click in the central area of the list and select the option "Add to Favourites"; there you must enter one of the following IP addresses:

Arena 77 - 196.44.30.130:7777
MWEB - 196.2.128.100:9777
SGS - 196.25.69.222:7777

Server details are always likely to change in future. To stay in tune with the changes, you can check the MWEB website http://www.gamezone.co.za, the Arena 77 website http://www.arena77.com, the SGS website http://games.saix.net, or the South African Unreal community website http://www.unrealza.co.za

I would also strongly recommend downloading the All-Seeing Eye (a program for finding and managing game servers). It is free and works for all of the popular online games. The Eye can be downloaded at http://www.udpsoft.com/eye2/

If you have any problems, visit the IRC channel #ut on the Shadowfire network (za.shadowfire.org), or post on the UnrealZA forums.

Lots of fun new ways to make people bleed...

the failure to include brightskins, which counter the problem of the small, hard-to-see models. Brightskins have become a standard worldwide, but it is always up to the community to code their own, as Epic refuse to include official ones. The debate about their legitimacy rages on, but if they are your thing, UT2004 brightskins can be found on most international E-Sports websites, and of course through Google.com.

Finally, I have never seen AI this good, or this much improved. The bots time items like clockwork, perform all manner of useful trick-jumps, lay ambushes, vary their play style depending on their health and weapons, and are extremely hard to kill when on high difficulty settings. The seasoned UT2003 player used to destroying a Godlike bot 20-0 is in for a startling surprise.

Overall, boasting an optimised graphics engine, balanced weapons and maps, a groundbreaking new game-type and Artificial Intelligence that makes HAL look like a calculator, UT2004 deserves top honours.

Second Opinion

With a strong return towards the original Unreal Tournament, this 2004 revision manages to encapsulate not only every advancement the series has made to date, but refine and improve on these advancements to create a surprisingly full-bodied title. A lot of attention has been paid to the single-player portion of this generally multiplayer-only game, small touches making the experience comparable to a pro-sports title. With random matches against other teams, the ability to buy your way off a difficult map into an easier one as well as match-ups where one can up the ante and try to walk away with more than the initial bet, one could almost never have to play the game against anyone else. The highly functional voice command over your virtual teammates makes being a squad-leader so easy anyone can do it, and therein lays the heart of it. Unreal Tournament 2004 is a game almost anyone can enjoy in varying degrees.

Miktar Dracon
89%

UT2004 is what its predecessor should have been.

90

New Game Modes

There are ten game modes, including three that were introduced late to the 2003 version through a series of updates. The updates were large and impractical to download, and so for many players this will be their first unveiling.

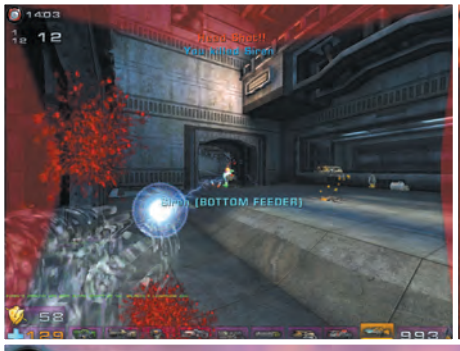
Mutant - (UT2003 update) The first player to score a frag becomes the mutant and receives additional powers. He is then hunted by all the other players, and the player to kill him becomes the next mutant.

Invasion - (UT2003 update) A co-operative game type where players must hold off advancing waves of monsters which become increasingly tougher.

Last Man Standing - (UT2003 update) Each player has a number of lives, and once they are exhausted, that player is eliminated. The last player left is the victor.

Assault - (Remake of UT classic) An objective-based team game mode in which each side has a turn to attack and defend on a map. The winner is determined by which team completes the attacking objectives the quickest.

Onslaught - (Unique to UT2004) A large-scale team game mode, emphasising vehicle combat. Each team must construct and defend "power nodes" in a chain to make their opponents base vulnerable to attack. Once the "power core" at the base is destroyed, that team loses the match. This is currently the most popular game-type.



AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

X-Plane

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 490.00 • **Developer:** Laminar Research • **Publisher:** Laminar Research
Supplier: Flightsim World [011] 708-2435 • **Genre:** Flight Simulation • **Reviewer:** Michael Black
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 600 MHz · 384 MB RAM · 4x CD ROM · 16 MB Video Card · 4 GB HDD

Some people see X-Plane as 'the other flight simulator' while others see it as 'the only flight simulator' - how you see it depends on what you are looking for. If stunning graphics and a polished user interface is your thing, you're in the first camp. On the other hand, if you believe that the true measure of a flight simulator is how well it simulates the sensation of flight, you are squarely in the second.

X-Plane has a 'home-made' feel to it in comparison with its better-known rival - no fancy packaging, no glitzy installer, and no user-friendly interface. That's the immediate impression one gets when confronted with its 5 CD's in paper envelopes. The impression continues when you first run the simulation: the terrain graphics are blocky and repetitive, harkening back to the 1990's versions of Microsoft Flight Simulator. And if you're used to the latter, X-Plane's sounds don't compare too favourably either. But take off with any of the 36 aircraft included and you're in simulator heaven.

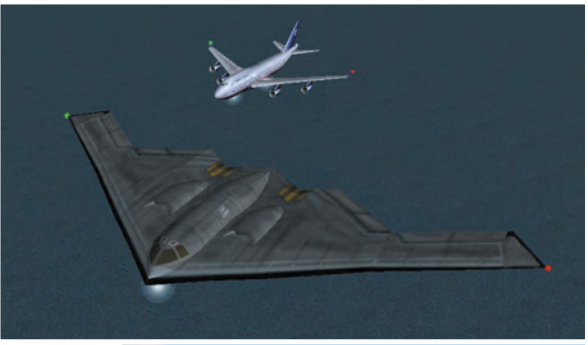
X-Plane models the sensation of flight much more realistically than the competition. The difference is subtle, but perceptually huge - this is as close to actual flying as I have ever got to on a computer. In the final analysis a flight simulator should be about conveying the feeling of flying; everything else is more or less incidental. To prove how good the flight model is, X-Plane is used to power a simulator platform certified by the American Federal Aviation Administration for real-life flight training. If you ever wondered what it feels like to fly the simulators they use at flying schools, X-Plane is your ticket.

After experiencing that remarkable flight model it would seem that very little else matters, but X-Plane offers more than just that. Among other utilities, the package includes a program that allows you to create your own aircraft. It's called Plane-Maker, and it was extensively used in the design and testing of the CarterCopter, a revolutionary new (real-life) gyroplane that is currently being developed.

Being approved by the FAA and used for the development of real aircraft is something the competition only dreams about, and yet the product of a comparatively tiny company managed to do so. It may lack the polish and professionalism of Microsoft's offering, but X-Plane is a seriously competent simulator where it counts.

A great flight model makes up for less than state-of-the-art graphics

72



They launch gliders with Boeings?

The latest...

The latest version of X-Plane features no less than 36 aircraft covering the entire scope from radio-controlled aircraft to the venerable Jumbo Jet. Terrain coverage is also extensive - 4 CD's of airports, textures and digital elevation models (including most South African airports). Although the terrain graphics are disappointing, the instrument panels look realistic - very important seeing that you spend most of your flight looking at the instruments. Apart from its hyper-realistic flight model, its other great strength is that it can be used as a virtual wind tunnel to design and perfect your own aeroplane. **www.x-plane.co.za**.

Silly us
we've given our pc a function you'll never use

a warranty

Thanks to the remarkable care we take when assembling and testing Emerald PC's by hand, warranty returns are something we're not too familiar with.

EMERALD
brilliant thinking

LIQUID LAB

Manufactured and distributed by Light Edge Technology

Cape Town	Durban	Johannesburg	Port Elizabeth
021 510 8270	031 263 0121	011 315 6680	041 367 3062/5

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Castle Strike

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 399.99 · **Developer:** Related Designs · **Publisher:** Data Becker
Supplier: Bowline [021] 550 9700 **Genre:** Strategy · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 800MHz · 256 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 800 MB HDD

Although there are a number of medieval style strategy games, the actual building of castles is still a relatively underutilised angle in these titles. In fact, only Stronghold ever seriously looked at the castle building and defence aspect in the past. Now, though, Castle Strike re-examines the idea with a game that is rather enjoyable, albeit less detailed than its predecessor.

Castle Strike may be about building castles, but it is far less bogged down in details than Stronghold was, making it something of a faster paced game - but only a little. It is still slower paced than other titles that rely on strategy as their mainstay.

The main building aspect of the game is divided into castle and town building. Certain buildings are inside the castle walls, while others have to be outside. Peasants and soldiers perform their duties both inside and outside the castle walls, and a clever building plan can result in at least a little defence for the village from the castle wall towers.

And then it's down to beating up your enemies. While it has a nice multiplayer mode, Castle Strike has a fascinating single player campaign that features both strategy and role playing style elements. The game uses the popular "hero" concept, with these special characters enhancing the troops with them. Infantry, archers, cavalry and siege engines (including cannons) are all available to any of the three historical races available for play (Germans, French and English, all with authentic voice acting.)

The true beauty of this game, which features graphics that are only just above average and sometimes annoying sound, is the simplicity of the interface and control. The interface is so simple and practical - in fact, that it takes getting used to after all the confusing ones we've had to deal with. Everything is smartly categorised and easily accessible, making for a quick game dynamic.

Castle Strike can get slow at times, and the unit limit does seem rather low, but - particularly in the multiplayer mode - it can lead to some titanic struggles, which may even result in stalemates. It won't be replacing any titles as a top competition game, but it will prove popular and will more than likely become something of a cult classic. It does require some patience, but it lends itself to a wide array of strategies and should provide fans of the genre with a good amount of fun.

A fun and engaging strategy game with castle-building at its heart.

80

Villages are most vulnerable to enemy attacks

Second Opinion

In this day and age of Real Time Strategy games where emphasis falls squarely on the shoulders of being able to manage each individual unit with pinpoint precision, it's pleasant to find a title that attempts to merge the more impalpable sense of fun provided by the hassle-free systems of common management titles with the action-oriented aspect of the classic Real Time Strategy. Castle Strike is simply a joy to play because the resource management can either be manually controlled or rather left to a more automatic system where you simply specify which resource you would like more of. The task of castle siege could have been arduous, yet intelligent context makes assaulting ramparts and tunnelling under gates a breeze, leaving nothing to hinder an already solid experience.

Miktar Dracon
78%

There's neat work
and then there's
obsessive perfection.

and then there's
our staff

If you ever happened to catch a glimpse of the inside of an Emerald PC, you'd be looking at the true benchmark in PC workmanship.

EMERALD
·····brilliant thinking

LIQUID LAB

Manufactured and distributed by Light Edge Technology

Cape Town	Durban	Johannesburg	Port Elizabeth
021 510 8270	031 263 0121	011 315 6680	041 367 3062/5

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Colin McRae 04

PC Review

Silver Award

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Codemasters · **Publisher:** Codemasters
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** Driving · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 750MHz · 256 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 220 MB HDD

Rally games are fairly common, but there is little doubt about which title series leads the pack. Yes, Colin McRae Rally is back with its fourth instalment, bringing players more of the same calibre of rally action that fans are used to.

This fourth title in the series brings the player a new level of graphics, as well as the usual assortment of cars and tracks that make the series what it is.

The first obvious big impression that the game makes on the player is the superb level of graphical detail within the title. This is supported, very importantly, by incredibly detailed cars and a very fine damage model. This results in a very realistic look for the game (one of the reasons a number of replay style screen shots was included is to show this off effectively.) Environmental effects and high particle counts add to the overall effect, as well as progressive "dirt gathering" on the vehicle and realistic environmental and lighting effects.

But good graphics don't make a good game. Thankfully, Colin McRae 04 features a largely realistic physics model that delivers a near perfect feel to the actual driving of the various vehicles available. This is supported by varying performance standards for the different groups of cars available for play... four wheel drive cars, for example, perform quite differently from their two wheel drive counterparts.

Various upgrades can be unlocked by way of challenging tests that occur during the Championship mode of the game. Although the upgrades are quite few, the cars are very "adjustable," making for yet another varying aspect in a fairly varied game.

Despite various race modes and customisable tracks, the number of cars is quite small, and the number of tracks leaves a little to be desired. Notwithstanding, the tracks are detailed and challenging - just when you think you've got the game licked, a whole new set of conditions (rain, snow, ice, gravel to name a few) crops up and throws you a rally version of a curve ball.

Fans will love this title, with its four-player multiplayer and wide variety of tracks and conditions. While a bit more might have been added for re-playability's sake, Colin McRae 04 is a great addition to the series, and is one of the best driving titles on the market today. While rally games certainly aren't every driving enthusiast's thing, the great graphics ad physics model of this title do merit at least a spin around a few of the tracks.

Colin McRae spins around for a fourth instalment, full of mud slinging driving action.

85

Getting sideways on snow in Sweden...

Chaser

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Cauldron · **Publisher:** JoWooD
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** Iwan Pienaar

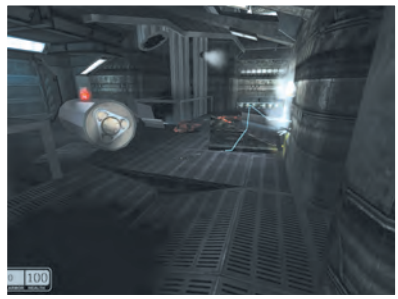
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 650MHz · 128 MB RAM · 4x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1.35 GB HDD

Chaser is publisher JoWooD's latest foray into the first-person shooter genre. The missions, while bordering on the "been there, done that" side, are nicely crafted without overwhelming the player by their design.

The graphics and, to a lesser extent, the sound are the real crowd-pleasers in this one. Unfortunately, the graphics do suffer from several clipping issues. Even the cut-scenes are littered with these annoying bugs. Apart from this glaring error, the game remains pretty to look at. Chaser is also one of the few games that support multiple monitors for gamers using the Matrox Parhelia card. Many of the levels have a strong Half-Life feel to them thanks to scripted events such as exploding pipes, collapsing ceilings and so on. Several critics have taken Chaser to task for its choice of weapons. While the title does feature some futuristic guns, the majority of your arsenal is firmly placed in the present. I believe that this succeeds in making the title more believable and allows the player to feel more part of the game universe. Being a first-person shooter, Chaser features the obligatory multiplayer modes. These are Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag and Shocktroops. The latter is essentially a style of Counter-Strike where each team has goals to achieve and once you die, you cannot continue. While not necessarily brilliant, Chaser should keep you busy for a couple of days at least. However, do not expect it to be a Half-Life or DOOM killer because it's definitely not.

While it is fun and features plenty of eye-candy, Chaser does not leave a lasting impression.

74



Herbert tried his best, but the paper targets were too intimidating for him to be accurate...

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Joan of Arc

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Enlight Studios · **Publisher:** Enlight Studios
Supplier: Vidis [011] 615 2074 · **Genre:** CRPG Strategy · **Reviewer:** Alex Jelagin
Minimum Specifications: Pentium III 800MHz · 256 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · GeForce 2 · 1.1 GB HDD

It was with some pleasure that I gradually discovered the cross-genre nature of Enlight's Wars & Warriors: Joan of Arc. This title manages to combine elements of third-person and first-person adventures, skill-based role-playing, combo-based beat-'em-ups and real-time strategy. It can most closely be compared to the ages-old game Defender of the Crown, which few will remember, as it was around almost fifteen years ago.

The game's story is set toward the end of the Hundred Years' War between England and France, with France very much on the back foot and in need of a hero and leader. The story, which is based loosely on Joan of Arc's campaign, unfolds by means of scripted scenes using the game engine, with accompanying speech and text. The version of English spoken by the characters is often very amusing, as the game's non-English-speaking developers frequently use fancy, long words without fully understanding their usage! At other times, it merely seems stilted and unnatural. My first impressions of the game, considerably influenced by this linguistic awkwardness, were not very good. However, as I progressed though the campaign I quite quickly came to enjoy it and started finding it rather addictive.

Players can eventually control any of a number of leading characters, each complete with inventory, attributes and skills. The skills themselves are limited purely to attack combos, and as experience is earned and a character climbs levels, it is possible to learn new ones and improve existing ones. The game has some re-playability value despite consisting of but a single campaign, as players will find their first attempt's character building choices to be less than ideal. The game is organised into missions, and from the fourth onward these start becoming rewardingly long. The game can be played in two modes, third-person (switching to first-person for ranged attacks) and real-time strategy mode. Most of the game is fairly flexible, and can be played in either mode, so players can choose the mode that suits them best.

The graphics are crisp, if a little simple for the most part. The game's engine renders to a viewing distance, which can be somewhat annoying, as one will notice trees or castles popping in where previously was only clear sky, but this is fairly minor. However, the game does have an irritating flaw - the maps aren't seamless, and the transitions are all-too-often right in the middle of a battle.

An innovative game which may appeal to a variety of audiences. **69**

"Begging your pardon, mademoiselle, but I can only die after the level has loaded..."

Silent Storm

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Nival · **Publisher:** JoWooD · **Supplier:** WWE [011] 462 0150
Genre: Turn Based Strategy · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 600MHz · 128 MB RAM · 8x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 3 GB HDD

One of the greatest things that can happen in this line of work is when you get hold of a title that, despite not having been hyped up at all, shines among the best in its genre. These "diamonds in the rough" are rare and a true pleasure to discover. Nival's Silent Storm, released through JoWooD, is just such a title.

Set in World War 2, Silent Storm takes the player on a part role playing, part strategy game that features a combat system reminiscent of the Fallout series and Jagged Alliance. But what makes the game truly wonderful and sets it above the rest is the attention to a number of fine details.

The first such detail is the destroyable terrain that the game features. This adjustable geometry really affects the game dynamic, allowing the player to use several approaches in completing missions. Spot a sniper hiding behind the door - blow a hole through a wall and get him from an unexpected direction.

The next detail is almost entirely cosmetic, but its inclusion does elevate the status of the game - ragdoll physics. We see it all the time in FPS titles now, but in an isometric strategy game it's pretty rare and very refreshing.

With two campaigns, a number of interesting characters, lots of missions and tons of equipment to use, the game is very engrossing and tremendously enjoyable. Its turn based system may frustrate some, but it does allow for a very strategic approach. The characters within the game also advance through the story, with new skills and ability advances happening all the time. In short, Silent Storm is a good strategy title. Good graphics, fair sound and a simple interface, with very capable controls covering a very wide array of options, all add to this enjoyable title.

A fun game that will have turn-based squad strategy fans engrossed for hours.

82

Big holes and floppy dead guys... how cool is that?

James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing

PlayStation 2 Review · Now Available · Silver Award

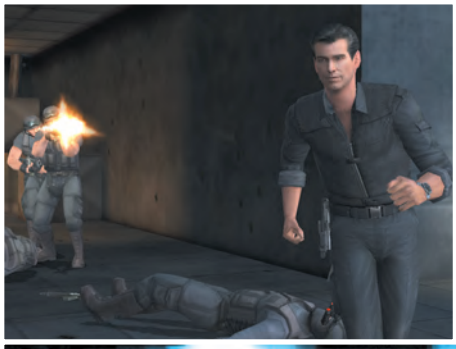
Suggested Retail Price: R 499.00 · **Developer:** EA Games · **Publisher:** Electronic Arts
Supplier: EA Africa [011] 516 8300 · **Genre:** Action · **Reviewer:** Adam Liebman
Requirements: 1-2 Players (1-4 with multitap) · 50Kb memory · Analog: sticks only · Vibration compatible

Seldom does any single fictional character have a lifespan stretching across decades, without losing even an iota of appeal, though James Bond, being beyond any doubt the world's most stylish (not to mention dangerous) spy, has done just that, and it's fitting that any game bearing his name should be of the same calibre as the man himself.

Sadly, this has seldom proved to be the case in the past, but Electronic Arts have rectified this with Bond's latest outing, Everything or Nothing. Boasting a unique storyline, not to mention the voice talents of actors from the movie (as well as a few other high-profile celebrities), Everything or Nothing offers a thoroughly entertaining and impressive gaming experience. Abandoning the traditional first-person perspective in favour of a third-person view, the play dynamic exploits Bond's "cool factor" to its limits - in addition to the rudimentary hide, run and shoot mechanic seen in most titles of this genre, Bond also has several gadgets at his disposal, including coin-sized grenades and a rappel device that allows him to scale buildings, a technique you'll often need to use. As if that weren't enough, you'll also have to engage in fire-fights whilst rappelling. Another new addition is "Bond Sense", a mode which slows down time allowing 007 to survey his surroundings for potential targets - it's seldom necessary, but still a welcome touch. Aiming can be left to the game, provided you hit the target lock button, but a precision reticule also appears, allowing you to aim for specific areas on an enemy. Along the way you'll also find yourself behind the wheel of Bond's perennial favourite, an Aston Martin (the Vanquish, for those who are interested), as well as a motorcycle, Porsche Cayenne and even a helicopter. The vehicle sequences have been implemented with a modified version of the Need for Speed engine, so they feel thoroughly polished and highly playable. The graphics too are stunning, with expansive, well detailed levels, characters that faithfully represent their silver-screen counterparts, and numerous special effects. An excellent score, including an original theme song, is complemented by superb voice-acting, and the all-star cast certainly gives one the impression that this title was taken very seriously by all parties involved. Ultimately, Everything or Nothing can hardly be described as revolutionary in its cluttered genre, though it's immensely enjoyable.

High production values and well-executed play dynamic make 007's latest a joy to behold.

85



This one doesn't take the usual Bond game belly flop approach...

kill.Switch

PlayStation 2 Review

Now Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 549.00 · **Developer:** Namco · **Publisher:** Namco
Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 **Genre:** Action · **Reviewer:** Adam Liebman
Requirements: 1 Player · 50 kb Memory · Analog Compatible · Vibration Compatible

Kill.Switch, Namco's latest 3rd person shooter offering, is for the most part, a no-strings-attached action-packed affair. The story sees you controlling a soldier known as Bishop, with your motives bearing a suspicious inclination towards starting a third World War. Sadly, though, despite having some potential, the storyline never feels at all integrated with the play dynamic - it develops through cut-scenes between missions, though the objective of each level is inevitably the same - hide behind boxes, desks or any other object whilst pumping as much lead into the opposition as possible. The "peep 'n shoot" tactics certainly comprise the greatest part of the game dynamic, since trying to go toe-to-toe with the enemy in the open can always be depended on to leave you rather dead. One form of innovation, however, does come in Bishop's "blindfire" ability - our protagonist is able to take shots at the enemy with only his firearm protruding from behind cover. The impact this has on accuracy makes it a scarcely used tactic. Kill.Switch manages to be addictive, though the lack of a multiplayer mode combined with the short length of the single-player campaign makes the whole experience too short-lived. For straightforward action, it certainly fits the bill, but if you're looking for a deeper and more original game, you could do better.

Uncomplicated action-packed title with a few innovative ideas, but lacking in depth and length. **69**

Bad Boys II

PlayStation 2 Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 499.00 · **Developer:** Blitz Games · **Publisher:** Empire Interactive · **Supplier:** WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Action · **Reviewer:** Adam Liebman
Requirements: 1 Player · 124 kb Memory · Analog Compatible · Vibration Compatible

Easily one of the most anticipated box-office releases of last year, there could never be much doubt that a videogame would follow hot on the heels of Bad Boys II. A rather typical 3rd person shooter, Bad Boys II sees you controlling the now familiar duo of Mike Lowry and Lawrence Burnett as they do their bit to rid the world of assorted members of the criminal underworld. During each scenario, you'll control one character while the other follows you around and acts as backup, hugging walls and hiding behind doors as we've all seen in one or another cop film. In terms of the play dynamic, Bad Boys II offers little variation over similar titles, and although aspects such as shooting from cover have been included, this can sadly only be used at certain "hotspots" that are few and far between, lending a disjointed feeling to the overall play experience. Visually, Bad Boys II again falls short, with blocky characters (even in cut-scenes) being the crime culprit. To further promulgate the lack of realism, Will Smith and Martin Lawrence obviously decided they were too important to lend their voices to the game, and so substitutes have been used, often sounding unlike the real actors. On the whole, Bad Boys II may appeal to fans of the movie, but the quality of the title pales in comparison to other recent titles in its genre.

Officially licensed movie game falls short of the standard set by other games in the genre. **63**

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Savage

PC Review

Silver Award

Suggested Retail Price: TBA · **Developer:** S2 Games · **Publisher:** Digital Jesters · **Supplier:** TBA
Genre: Online Strategy Action · **Reviewer:** Iwan Pienaar

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 600MHz · 128 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 600 MB HDD

Savage is a massively multiplayer online title with a difference. It combines real-time strategy and first-person shooter elements to create something that should please many gamers.

Granted, the "online" bit might put off those of us not blessed with ADSL at home. However, the lag only really gets noticeable when the levels fill up which might defeat the purpose of a massively online game. The fact that there are no monthly fees does ease the pain.

In Savage, gamers can play as either an Action Unit or a Commander. The dynamic changes considerably when alternating between these two modes. As an Action Unit you have a first-person perspective on the game universe. You can hack & slash to your heart's desire and get rewarded for it. Commanders, as the name suggests, control the different sides in the game. Essentially, this gives the player a WarCraft-like overview of the battlefield to order team mates as you see fit.

While some might worry that being bossed around can be annoying, Savage handles this very well. If you perform your duties well, you can get rewarded in a variety of ways ranging from getting gold, experience and weapons. Savage is a great game if you can suffer the slow connection times or have ADSL.

Savage gets addictive, if you can afford spending hours online.

85

"Learn the advantage of shooting something in the butt..."

Black Hawk Down: Team Sabre

PC Review

Now Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 199.00 · **Developer:** Ritual Entertainment · **Publisher:** NovaLogic
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** Iwan Pienaar

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 733MHz · 256 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 750 MB HDD

The first expansion to the popular Black Hawk Down military first-person shooter, Team Sabre, promises to continue where its predecessor left off. Following your stint in Somalia, you have been re-deployed to Columbia and Iran to combat drug smugglers and fundamentalist troops (what else?).

The two campaigns feature 11 missions that will ensure you are kept busy for a while at least. Team Sabre also features the standard multiplayer option that can support up to 50 simultaneous players.

Apart from the usual bells and whistles, Team Sabre has three new weapons and three new vehicles for the player to use. The two assault rifles are more of the same, but the PSG1 sniper rifle is a true beauty. The vehicles cover land, sea and air in the form of a light armoured reconnaissance vehicle, a rigid hull inflatable boat and the PaveLow IV helicopter.

While the majority of missions are played as a Delta Force operator, the player can occasionally become a US Army Ranger or an SAS operative. Unfortunately, there are not that many missions for the player to really experience these new classes, but then this is a Delta Force title. Apart from the ordinary graphics, Team Sabre is still an enjoyable title, even if it is starting to show its age when compared to offerings like Far Cry.

Black Hawk Down is starting to show its age with this expansion.

68

iiyama | LCD Line-up

CONSUMER MODELS

Model	LCD	Max. resolution	Signal input	Response time	USB	
E385	15" SuperTN + Film	XGA 1024x768	D-sub	35ms	No	
E383	15" SuperTN + Film	XGA 1024x768	D-sub	25ms	No	sRGB
E380S	15" SuperTN + Film	XGA 1024x768	D-sub	23ms	No	sRGB
E430	17" SuperTN + Film	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub	16ms	No	sRGB
E431S	17" SuperTN + Film	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub/DVI-D	16ms	No	sRGB
E481S	19" IPS	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub/DVI-D	25ms	No	sRGB
E511S	20,1" IPS	UXGA 1600x1200	D-sub/DVI-D	16ms	No	sRGB

PROFESSIONAL MODELS

Model	LCD	Max. resolution	Signal input	Response time	USB	
H380	15" SuperTN + Film	XGA 1024x768	D-sub/DVI-D	25ms	No	sRGB
H430	17" MVA	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub/DVI-D	25ms	1up-4down	sRGB
AS4612UT	18,1" IPS	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub/DVI-I	30ms	No	sRGB
AS4821DT	19" MVA	SXGA 1280x1024	2x DVI-I	25ms	1up-4down	sRGB
H510	20,1" MVA	UXGA 1600x1200	2x DVI-I	25ms	1up-4down	sRGB
H540S	21,3" IPS	UXGA 1600x1200	2x DVI-I	20ms	1up-4down	sRGB

LCD TV'S

Model	LCD	Max. resolution	Signal input	Response time	USB	
E430T	17" LCD TV	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub/TV-Tuner/ S-video	16ms	No	sRGB
C171WT	17" Widescreen TV	VGA 1280x768	D-sub/TV-Tuner/ S-video	25ms	No	
C480T	19" LCD TV	SXGA 1280x1024	D-sub/DVI-I/ TV-Tuner + Scart	12ms	No	
C510T	20,1" LCD TV	VGA 640x480	D-sub/TV-Tuner/ S-video + Scart	16ms	No	

sRGB guarantees true colour display

H510 and H540S: Hi-Speed USB 2.0

These models are available in white and black: E383, E511S, H380, H430, AS4821DT, H510 and H540S.

These models are available in white, silver and black: E430, E431S and E481S.

These models can also rotate: H380, H430, AS4612UT, AS4637UTA, AS4821DT, H510 and H540S.

iiyama also offers a large assortment of CRT models.

www.iiyama.co.za | Distributor

www.tvr.co.za

Cape Town: (021) 555-0891, Durban: (031) 263-0371
Pretoria: (012) 665-4919 / 23, Johannesburg: (011) 807-1390

iiyama

quality | value | support

eJay Club World

PlayStation 2 Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Unique Development Studios · **Publisher:** Crave Entertainment
Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Music making · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Requirements: 1- 4 Player · 150 kb Memory · Analog Compatible · Vibration Compatible

Sampling, tracking and mixing remains all the rave these days, with up and coming DJs all vying for similar status accorded to greats such as Carl Cox, who happens to be involved in eJay Clubworld. A reincarnation of the original PC software with a slightly more polished spin, eJay remains a title that would only appeal to a small eclectic group who are interested in this kind of thing.

With a typical promotional blurb by Carl Cox at the beginning, you're plopped unceremoniously inside this "game" and left to your own devices. Selecting one of a variety of different clubs around the world gives you access to one of several styles ranging from House to Rave, letting you mix your own music from a library of samples. This involves 'dragging and dropping' sound clips into the tracks, adjusting them and adding small effects and extra samples until you achieve something that doesn't suck. While eJay promises 'music in minutes', you might find one still requires a modicum of musical ability before one can achieve anything decent. As expected, there is no way to achieve anything in this title other than your own bit of music. A hap-hazard multiplayer mode lets people 'jam' together, but the limited structure of this feature hinders more than it helps. eJay Clubworld offers little new over it's previous PC incarnation.

A good alternative for aspiring DJs, but limited in appeal for everyone else.

41

Wicky wicky wack, wicky wicky wack...

Sonic Heroes

PlayStation 2 Review

Now Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 599.00 · **Developer:** Sonic Team · **Publisher:** Sega
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Platform · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Requirements: 1- 2 Player · 200 kb Memory · Analog Compatible · Vibration Compatible

As marking the first appearance of SEGA's mascot on the PS2, there were doubts that the aging Sonic would perform. Sonic Team managed to throw a curveball, delivering the trademark speed of Sonic atop a few new twists that breathes life into what could have been a flat-lined series.

Sonic Heroes requires you to run your team of 3 through the usual twisting, curving and topsy-turvy levels, switching between team-members as the level requires. Sonic's speed works well for long stretches, Knuckles can punch through large objects and Tails lets the team fly across specific sections. Each level can be completed multiple ways due to the nature of the team - specific characters cause different events at specific points. Coupled with the dynamic of four teams (making a total of 12 playable characters); each team having their own signature moves, unique missions and storyline, Heroes delivers a surprising amount of content and re-playability.

As you progress through each level you are awarded Hero symbols - these unlock extra features for the game; more multiplayer modes, hidden content and other extras that we've come to expect from the series. While Sonic Heroes doesn't break any limits of the genre it does give a polished rework of a loved series.

A solid addition that will appeal to fans and interest newcomers to the series.

76

I-Ninja

PlayStation 2
Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 599.00 · **Developer:** Argonaut · **Publisher:** SCEE
Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Platform · **Reviewer:** Adam Liebman

Requirements: 1 Player · 377Kb memory · Analog compatible · Vibration compatible

I-Ninja opens with our grotesquely large-headed (in typical cutesy cartoon style, of course) hero, imaginatively named "Ninja", rescuing his Sensei from evil-doers. Having successfully completed that, Ninja succumbs to a psychotic rage and proceeds to decapitate the poor old man, who then returns as a ghost to offer Ninja much-needed guidance on a quest to save the world. From the outset, it's abundantly clear that I-Ninja is not a ninja game in the traditional sense, but rather an almost archetypal goofy platform game, that strangely contains within it a unique allure, despite having blatantly ripped off concepts from several other high-profile platform titles. Among these concepts are wall-running, rail grinding and sphere-rolling, as well as several attacks (including the ubiquitous spinning attack) and combinations. Seeing the sort of moves we expect from a character like Shinobi performed by as unlikely a character as Ninja is almost certainly the source of part of the game's appeal - despite Ninja's terribly out-of-place voice, he is an extremely likeable (if quirky) character. Needless to say, the collection of thousands of small objects is also a necessary exercise, and you'll almost certainly need to revisit completed levels in order to completely unlock certain areas of the title. Although the game isn't a technological masterpiece in terms of visuals, the different settings are colourful and unique, and the characters mesh seamlessly into I-Ninja's cartoon world. Aside from Ninja's mismatched voice, the voice-acting is well done, and the dialog is often humorous - thankfully, though, in not too blatant a manner. Despite its lack of any true innovation in its own right, I-Ninja manages to faultlessly blend elements from other titles, without encumbering the play dynamic, and it is this blending of concepts, coupled with the likeable lead character and the often-absurd story that make I-Ninja a thoroughly enjoyable title, even though it's far from being revolutionary.

Cute and light-hearted ninja-themed platform title - not ground-breaking, but highly entertaining.

75

We never knew that ninjas were supposed to be cute...

Manhunt

"They just killed Cash. Now, they want to kill him again."

America is full of run down, broken rust-belt towns where nobody cares and anything goes. In Carcer City, nothing matters anymore and all that's left are cheap thrills. The ultimate rush is the power to grant life and take it away, for sport. This time James Earl Cash, you are the sport. They gave you your life back. Now, they are going to hunt you down.

Available
APRIL / MAY 04

PC CD

TAKE2 interactive

megarom interactive
PROUDLY DISTRIBUTED BY MEGAROM INTERACTIVE (PTY) LTD.
011 234 2680 | SALES@MEGAROM.CO.ZA | WWW.MEGAROM.CO.ZA

more @ www.megarom.co.za

Castlevania: Lament of Innocence

PlayStation 2 Review

Now Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 549.00 · **Developer:** Konami · **Publisher:** Konami
Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Action Platform · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Requirements: 1 Player · 200 kb Memory · Analog Compatible · Vibration Compatible

Plots in the Castlevania series have been epic, yet far from being literary gems. Lament of Innocence does not falter in that regard, its storyline containing enough Dracula-inspired goodness for any passing fan or the faithful.

With yet another foray into the world of 3 dimensions, Lament of Innocence manages to succeed where the previous Nintendo 64 attempt failed. Considering Castlevania was one of the cornerstones of side scrolling 2D platform gaming in the last decade, it's made the leap into 3D gracefully.

While the graphics may not be anything revolutionary, they manage to set the scene and do their job amiably despite character animations seeming slightly stiff. Fixed camera angles often appear out of nowhere to interrupt the standard third-person fare, causing havoc with estimating distances between platforms and adding general frustration... yet the action side of the title remains fun and functional. Staple moves such as whipping and jumping have been augmented with combination attacks and the use of different items and weapons to achieve different levels of damage on enemies. General mobility has been improved through double-jumps and dodging.

Castlevania has always been a difficult series and it seems there's no escaping that, yet Lament of Innocence retains general fun of the series.

A classic addition to the series, but showing its age in terms of game mechanics and concept. **71**

"Ooh, pretty... me like pretty..."

Wrath Unleashed

PlayStation 2 Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 399.00 · **Developer:** The Collective · **Publisher:** LucasArts
Supplier: EA Africa [011] 516 8300 · **Genre:** Turn Based Strategy · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Requirements: 1- 4 Player · 200 kb Memory · Analog Compatible · Vibration Compatible

With a reasonable track-record containing a good Indiana Jones game as well as a Buffy: The Vampire Slayer title, one would think that The Collective has enough under the belt to release a decent turn-based strategy game. Wrath Unleashed seems to think otherwise, failing to impress in almost every single category.

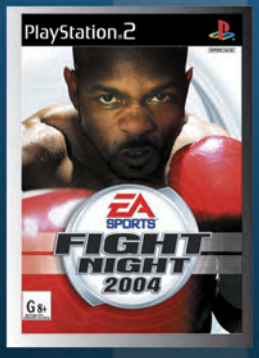
It would be difficult to tie down exactly why this game deserves no accolade, but most criticism could be directly attributed to the game mechanics.

Most games involve moving sets of units, yet in Wrath Unleashed one can only move one unit at a time. This leads to lengthy and tiresome games, offering little in the way of strategy. When two opposing units occupy the same space, a battle commences. One horrifically long load later, you fight with your unit in a combat situation, much akin to a fighting game. No combination or special moves exist however; each button is either a hard or soft attack, making you rely more on button-mashing than actual tactics. Once the battle has been won or lost, you have to sit through another long load to get back to the overview map, making encounters frustrating. With no rhyme or reason in the plot, horrible voice-acting and a general lacklustre feeling all-round, this is a title to be avoided at all costs.

A horrifically substandard game lacking substance, polish and any kind of fun. **28**

"Hey guys! Anyone up for a game of Boring?"

THE JUPITER DRAWING ROOM (CAPE TOWN) 12488



It's never been easier to throw a tantrum

With analogue you will be surprised by what you are capable of. Angle your punch. Determine its power. Manoeuvre one of the 32 legendary fighters and select one of a million options of smashing your opponents to the canvas. This pound for pound action is available at selected stores or at www.musica.co.za.

RELEASED END OF MAY.

MUSICA.
THE SOUL STORE

AOpen Games reviewed on Rectron machines

Fallout Collection

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 249.00 · **Developer:** Black Isle · **Publisher:** Interplay
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** CRPG · **Reviewer:** James Francis
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 1 300MHz · 64 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 4 MB Video Card · 700 MB HDD

There's really little point in scoring this. The pack is a release of all the Fallout games in one nice package. This is all rather timely since the game's developer, Black Isle, recently closed its doors. Fallout is arguably the game to start computer role-playing games and it kept more in the spirit of it than any other game that followed by allowing gamers to do pretty much anything they want.

Fallout 2 continued the saga and took players even deeper in the nuclear, post-apocalyptic wasteland that was the world you inhabited. Fallout Tactics to a slightly different approach, combining team-based, tactical, turn-based combat with the original game premise - thus a lot more combat-intensive.

Everything is backed with a third CD, containing the manuals as well as a lot of art assets to browse through. The patches are also included - though you might need to give MegaRom's support line a call to get the two older versions to work under XP.

Overall, it's a sweet deal and a fair farewell to the game's studio, since a Fallout 3 seems very unlikely. The game's haven't aged that well, so it's more of a service to fans of the series. It does still feel like a quick cash-in from Interplay and Microforte instead of a real fan collection, but it is your last chance to own all of Fallout and enjoy this classic series again.

Barring OS compatibility issues, it's all the Fallout you'll ever need.

NA

Vietcong: Fist Alpha

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 249.00 · **Developer:** Pterodon · **Publisher:** Take 2 Interactive
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** James Francis
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 700MHz · 256 MB RAM · 16 x CD ROM · 16 MB Video Card · 1 GB HDD

Vietcong has always struck gamers as a mixed bag of oats. On the one side it's very realistic, to the proportions of Operation Flashpoint and beyond. On the other it's a harshly unforgiving shooter with overly-intelligent AI and harsh terrain, steeped in perhaps too much atmosphere. But you either like it or hate it.

That said Illusion Softworks made a good game, because it built a strong cult following, despite frequently impossible odds stacked against you. The inevitable expansion acts as a prequel to the team you were part of in the first game, although this time you play under a different, new character.

Spread over seven new missions, the game also adds five new weapons, such as the Scorpion and M14 as well as a new multiplayer mode.

The story revolves around the establishment of the Nui Pek base and gives another good eight hours of extreme jungle combat for fans of the series. Graphically the engine has been given a few tweaks as well - it might not be obvious, Fist Alpha introduces more realism to the jungle scenarios. There are still issues with the combat, such as heavy recoil, overly intelligent enemy units that occasionally succumb to extreme stupidity and lots of sudden-death moments, but these are the things that made Vietcong find a strong following (sans the dodgy AI).

A fair expansion, dogged by some AI issues.

72

Mafia

PlayStation 2 Review

Now Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 599.00 · **Developer:** Illusion 2 Softworks · **Publisher:** Take 2 · **Supplier:** Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Action · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius

Requirements: 1 player · Analog compatible · Vibration compatible

When times are hard, crime is always more attractive to those down on their luck. And times don't get much harder than the 1930's in America, when the great Depression forced a huge number of people into a life of crime. This was the golden age of the American Mafia, and now the PS2 gamer can enter that shady world with this title from Illusion 2 Softworks. While this title performed well on the PC, however, the transfer onto this second generation console has caused a few hiccups for the title.

The major hassles for this game result from two aspect. The major problem is the control interface, which tends to be annoying and a little difficult to handle - the player can to easily make the character crouch when he's meant to be running, for example. Next, the problem of hideous mounts of loading comes up. These load times are long and come around far too often - even in the middle of the most nail biting of car chases!

These problems aside, Mafia offers the player good graphics, exciting game dynamics, an engrossing, well acted story and a very unusual setting to play in. Patience will be required on the part of the player, but a little perseverance will allow the player to enjoy the better aspects of the title (as long as they can look past the problems.)

A great story about mobsters is hampered by dodgy controls and annoying loading

73

Sample Caption

Ford Racing 2

PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Razorworks · **Publisher:** Empire Interactive
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Racing · **Reviewer:** Eddie Francis

Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 500GHz · 128 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 150 MB HDD

Welcome to the dreadful world of Ford Racing. Yes, it is true, this is the worst racing game ever made. With graphics that remind you of the original Ridge Racer and physics that echo back to Test Drive One - yes, this is truly a game that came about ten years too late.

The sad part: some programmer was actually proud of his work. There is absolutely no saving grace concerning this game, there is really no point in playing it. It has about four songs in its sound track, and they jump in the same way sandpapered CDs might. It would take an untrained monkey about two days to finish the game, but it must be said that the monkey would have to be really stupid. The graphics are, well, they are there. At least the game got that right, it has graphics. Is it exciting? Well, yes, my TV is next to my PC, so, I watched TV. There could have been something to make the game worthwhile, the fact that you have the Ford entourage all the way back to 1949, including concept cars, but it doesn't help. There is no power slide, damage model, slipstreaming, physics engine or any form of excitement. Everything a good game needs, this game magically lacks. Frankly, if the Olsen twins made a racer, it would be better.

Alert, alert, worse game ever in progress!

27

From its humble beginnings when a couple of game developers met in a living room almost a decade ago, all the way up to its current form of a massive Conference all about creating games for fun and profit, the Game Developers Conference remains an industry staple, the annual tradition where game developers can rub elbows and discuss the business of getting successful games on store shelves. While the GDC remains a business-oriented show aimed more at other developers, quite a lot of what happens during its course is interesting for the average gamer out there; we present exactly those interesting things to you, now.

Better, faster, cheaper

With yet another ambiguous use of the letter X, Microsoft has announced their newest addition to their family of enabling technologies. Game development prices have risen exponentially yet the retail cost has comparatively stood still. As a solution, Microsoft has developed XNA which basically aims to be the 'building blocks' for future Xbox, Windows and Windows Mobile games. By mixing and matching the components they want, developers can spend less time programming the physics or sound or networking of a game, and more on the actual game dynamics or creative process. As a bonus, by developing for one platform in XNA such as the Xbox, the game will automatically be able to run on Windows with little hassle.

XNA allows us to predict higher quality games in a quicker fashion, but only time will tell. But we'll let J Allard have the final word: "just like Win 32, Microsoft is committing that every one of our platforms moving forward will be based on XNA, every one of our game platforms."

You can take a look at the demonstration videos on the cover CD.

A true ICOn in game development

Kenji Kaido and Fumito Ueda may seem like just another pair of names to the average consumer, but in the game development world they can be equated to the likes of John Carmack: cornerstones of innovation in game design and development. Responsible for the surreal and emotional PS2 title, ICO, they gave a stirring speech at the GDC about the philosophy of 'subtracting design', which basically means instantly cutting a part of a game if it didn't work or wasn't much fun to play. With a lengthy discussion about ICO and how they achieved the various aspects of it, focusing more on emotions conveyed by the characters rather than graphics, both developers gave a 'no comment' when asked about a sequel to ICO.

A lifetime of gaming

The 4th Annual Game Developers Choice Awards is much like the Oscars of the gaming world - awards given out to developers and studios who have achieved greatness in the eyes of their peers. The big winner this year was Bioware. It not only took top Game of the Year honours, but also won awards for Excellence in Writing and Original Game Character for the cynical and mostly evil droid HK-47. Greg Zeschuk commented upon accepting the award that 'KH-47 wishes to thank all organic meat bags that voted for him'. Both co-founders Zeschuk and Ray Muzyka were given the IDGA Award for Community Contribution for their activities within the game industry.

For the developers breaking new ground, the Penguin Award was given to Masaya Matsuura who contributed by bringing rhythm to games with Parappa the Rapper and Vib-Ribbon. For those who were unafraid to experiment with new forms of digital games, the Maverick award was given to the founders of PopCap games, known for their addictive puzzle titles and addictive classic reworks like Bookworm and Bejeweld.

Mark Cerny who originally gained his fame as the creator of Marble Madness but later became involved in some of the most popular character-driven games of all time, including Sonic the ▶

Black & White 2 (PC)
Lionhead

What's there to say about Black & White 2 that hasn't been said (or assumed) already? With a much more focused approach than its predecessor, Black & White 2 combines legacy Real Time Strategy dynamics with a rather large 'pet', allowing you to play the game either as a benevolent God protecting his people or as an evil dictator, using his creature to smash down the walls of his opposition so that his army can invade. With a completely revamped physics engine and a much upgraded graphics engine, every creature is animated, emotive and colourful.

RollerCoaster Tycoon 3 (PC)
Frontier Development

RollerCoaster Tycoon 3 sports a fancy new completely 3D world, even allowing you to ride your own roller-coasters. Much of the obscene amount of scenery and rides have returned, yet little has changed from the classic and still capable play dynamic. Slightly higher system requirements might isolate fans of the original who appreciated that it could run on anything less than a toaster, but when it comes to advancement, there's always a price to pay.

Hedgehog 2 and Crash Bandicoot, took the Lifetime Achievement Award. Cerny was visibly moved at being awarded such a prestigious award.

Inifinity Ward, known for developing Call of Duty, took the Rookie Studio award, while Ubisoft's Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time won two awards for Excellence in Programming along with Excellence in Game Design. Excellence in Visual Arts was handed to a deserving The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker. Finally, underdog titles such as Beyond Good & Evil were nominated for several large awards, giving a tribute to underappreciated games.

Make your own friends

Molyneux would be a surname easily forgotten, if had it not been for the Peter in front of it or the big names such as Dungeon Keeper, Populous and Black & White behind it. Giving a brief yet in-depth talk about what Artificial Intelligence means for a game designer, he outlined the good and the often forgotten bad. "It's quite often a trap", he admitted.

When it comes to AI in games, there are three basic types. The first, called 'State Machines' describe very basic behaviours based on certain conditions. If attacked, they will attack back, and so fourth. Efficient, but not really intelligent. Agent or 'Scripted AI' as found in games like Halo, is when an AI will try to achieve basic goals. Mixed with some scripted sequences, it can be pretty convincing. Lastly, there is what Molyneux has dubbed 'Group Minds', such as found in the towns of Black & White. A single 'hive mind' controls multiple agents within the game, a whole town's behaviour is dictated by one AI system.

"I feel that we should soon be able to make game characters that could be your best friend"

Molyneux commented on how these AI systems might not be Artificial Intelligence in the academic sense of the word, but that they'll suffice for gaming. Showing his inner child again, Molyneux predicted that someday we'll see truly complex AI characters capable of meaningful interaction, "I feel that we should soon be able to make game characters that could be your best friend", he said. Freud would have been proud.

Carmack thinks

Giving his thoughts on the current state and future of the game development industry, the iD Software co-founder shows no signs of slowing down. While most people will admit that Carmack's technical talk might not be easy to follow, the general consensus remains that he is an impressive and focused speaker, quizzically never using any notes.

He started his talk about how far gaming has come since the early days, noting how amazing it is that game hardware has actually improved by a factor of millions since the days of bleeps and blocks onscreen. In the beginning, to enjoy a game meant one would have to suspend disbelief and try to buy into the fact that the dots on screen represented a monster or a world, a stark contrast to today's games which try to reach out and grab you.

Carmack asked, "What could we do with another factor of a million?"

Once it was believed that "reality" required 80 million polygons a second, yet that barrier was broken quite a few years ago and it's become painfully obvious that even more detail is necessary for utter realism. Carmack predicts that after "another

Jade Empire (Xbox)
Bioware

BioWare has become a household name in the RPG genre, second only perhaps to the recently deceased Black Isle. Jade Empire stands to become possibly the best looking game BioWare has ever made, atop an already promising fighting system and character development. Very little is known about the story depth or the mission structures, but considering it's BioWare we don't think gamers have anything to worry about. While slightly more action-oriented than their previous titles, Jade Empire could easily become the CRPG of the year.

Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude (PC)
Vivendi Universal

Possibly the first series to ever have a 'zipper' icon in it's interface, the Leisure Suit Larry games always have been and always will be, the games you hide from your parents and don't admit to your friends you own. Years ago, Larry was the de-facto in games not with breasts, but about breasts. Starring a younger Larry in college, Magna Cum Laude boasts a new and rather colourful 3D approach to the series yet seems to retain much of the over-the-top humour that made it so popular (aside from the breasts). With mini games galore and a rather innovative skill-based dialogue system, we have high hopes for this one.

factor of a hundred" games will contain real-time visuals akin to the quality of the Computer Graphics in the Lord of the Rings movies, but perhaps not for another decade. Showing a slight lack of interest in the audio side of games, Carmack touched on the subject by saying that games could do anything with audio if they dedicated all their power towards attaining that, but "it doesn't really pay off in the current generation to put that much effort into it".

Moving on to a more physical topic (pun intended), Carmack gave his thoughts on Physics Simulators, the part of a game that allows a body to flop over a banner or down stairs realistically. "We're still doing basically trivial things", said Carmack, "It's cool to have a couple of boxes bounce around and knock off each other, to see rag doll characters, but in the future game generations there will be simulations of weather, simulations of liquids, simulations of dust motes going through the air and transferring through the environment."

"In the future game generations there will be simulations of weather, simulations of liquids, simulations of dust motes going through the air and transferring through the environment."

Lastly, Carmack talked about Artificial Intelligence in games, revealing one of iD's main strategies when making games. "If you're not going to try and solve something really well, try and dodge the issue as completely as possible", said Carmack. "Character interaction is hard, and if you start making characters look really, really good but they still act like cardboard cut-outs, it's an open question whether that's a good direction to pursue".

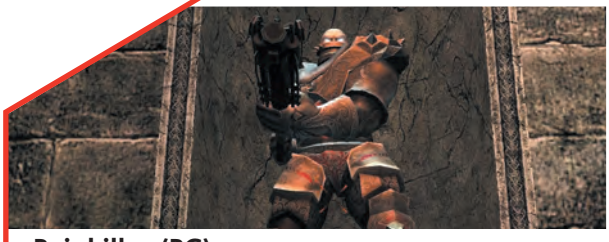
Now entering its 4th year of development, Doom 3 has obviously not shipped yet and this was noted by Carmack. Mentioning that working on Doom has not been as satisfying as he thought, Carmack said "There's a level of craftsman's satisfaction that you get from trying to do what you do at an extreme level of quality, but I find that's not my primary motivation. I find that I get the most satisfaction when I can tell that the work I'm doing has maximum leverage on the final product".

The Creative End

With even more discussion about Game Development from Carmack as well as talks by Tim Shafer (Full Throttle, Grim Fandango) about his adventures in game design, the GDC wrapped up with an amusing Game Design Challenge; a competition to see which of the three top game designers could come up with the best concept to match a limited idea. Will Wright from Maxis, Warren Spector from Ion Storm and Raph Koster (creative director for Sony Online) each grappled with conceptual problems of game design until eventually Will Wright came out on top with his design, winning a large bouquet of roses.

Fable (Xbox)
Big Blue Box

Promises of a limitless play dynamic and intriguing characters have been dancing around the heads of gamers ever since Peter Molyneux announced Fable, an Action RPG exclusively (for now) for the Xbox. It's going to have it all, they say. A world that responds to your actions, kids making dolls of you if you're popular, your wife running away from you if she doesn't like your tattoos. You'll probably still have to kill a whole lot of rats before you can improve your character as with most RPG games. There are talks that players will even be able to have kids (which will involve killing more rats just to support them).



Painkiller (PC)
People Can Fly

What Half-Life 2 promised in terms of physics, Painkiller has already delivered. The physics are actually an integral part of the game dynamic; juggling enemies drops extra bonuses, chain-reacting explosions flings enemies into each other making your life easier. Using the 'Black Tarot' system, players can purchase Tarot cards which either change the starting conditions of a mission or can be used during a mission such as slowing down time. When you kill an enemy, a soul is left behind. Collect a numerically important 66 of these and you become an invulnerable demon yourself, able to kill anything and everything for a short time.

Laptops go mainstream

words james francis

I've never gotten used to it. I've been lugging a machine back and forth between LAN's for well over a decade now and while it never grows old to balance your precious machine on a dodgy table and stretch network cables to the edge of their tension just to play a few games, the actual carrying of hardware has always been a pain. And as these bastards get bigger and more elaborate, it's just getting worse. Sure, we have handles, straps and all other 'conveniences' these days, but the cases get a lot bigger, so it's all moot.

So I am very happy to see that laptops are getting serious about gaming. With the miracle of technology, not to mention the even bigger innovator of 'breaking new capitalistic ground', laptops are hitting the gaming scene big time. Give the thanks to Alienware, who started making high-performance laptops a while ago. Someone I know actually imported one and it's like having your own ninja in your backpack. VoodooPC followed suite with their models, but the real deal-breaker here is Dell, who started to manufacture their own gaming laptops earlier this year.

What counts against them, though, is the price. Price has always been a factor with gaming, but true enthusiasts replace components every other month; then they occasionally splurge out for a new board, chip and memory. Laptops don't afford you this luxury. While companies like Alienware have built a solid market for gamers who like to have built-to-spec systems, I still think this is a small market and the laptops are sure to compete for more space here.

There's the chance that some day we can have both - a beast of a desktop PC where you can switch and swap 'till you drop and a laptop to take to the socials of the anti-social, but this will only happen when hardware is a lot cheaper.

Bill Gates said something about cheaper hardware in ten years.

Maybe he wants to stop carrying hardware too.

< Siemens S65, C65 and M65

Siemens has released a new series of phones, the S65, C65 and M65, and re-released the CF62 and CX65. The phones feature 1.3 megapixel cameras, and a separate optional flash is available for low-light conditions.

< PDAs powered by fuel cells

Hitachi and Tokai, the latter makers of disposable lighters, have teamed up to develop a fuel cell powered handheld computer. Their prototype fuel cartridge is about the size of one AA battery and produces sufficient power to run a PDA for six to eight hours. The companies intend to raise this lifespan. The first of these PDAs should be emerging next year. The fuel cell is currently a hotly pursued research field, with companies like Toshiba and NEC racing to be the first to viably market fuel-cell powered devices. There are, however, still some technical difficulties to overcome.

<BenQ Joybee 125

The Joybee 125 is a multifunction digital audio player which has a retractable USB port for easy data storage and a powerful Li-Ion battery that allows listeners to play up to 10 hours of music.

< Iiyama LCD TV

Iiyama has released a new LCD television set, the 17" Pro Lite E430T-S. It has a resolution of 1280x1024 at 75Hz, good brightness, contrast and viewing angle and its tuner supports all main broadcast standards. Its small speakers, however, nark it out for use with a hi-fi set or home theatre set of some sort.

< Philips 639

Philips has introduced its 639, which boasts its Magic Mirror technology. Essentially, it is a mirror on the front of a TV display. When turned off, it's a mirror, but powering it up results in a display.

v Voodoo Rage F-50

Late last year, a company named Voodoo released the Rage F-50 personal computer. This system's main claim to fame is the fact that it uses no fans for cooling. Instead, the entire case is one massive convectional heat-sink. The end result of this is that the F-50 is virtually silent - only whatever disk noise leaks through the case is audible. The system has its downsides, however. Firstly, it is very large and its appearance is rather conspicuous. Secondly, very few components can be easily upgraded, due to the design of the case, although Voodoo does provide a lifetime upgrade plan. When ordering the system, various hardware options are available, though all are fairly high end. It must be understood that this system is not cheap - you can expect to pay upward of R30000 or R40000! Interestingly, no NVidia graphics options are offered - the manufacturers seem to like ATI. Included in the bundle is a leather folder containing all the driver discs, as well as a full testing history - an interesting look into its creation process.

v LG promoting home theatre products

Due to the gradually falling prices of audio products and, more recently, projectors, LG is hoping for growth in this market. The company has introduced the RD-JT50, RD-JT-51 and RD-JT52 projectors. The units are compact and quiet, and although still pricey, less so than in the past.

tECHNOLOGY NEWS
fROM thE OthER SidE

words iwan pienaar

GAMES MAKE FOR FAT, ANGRY CHILDREN

It's that time of the year again when video games get blamed for everything. Now Swedish experts have joined their American counterparts in saying that games can make children fat, and in the case of violent ones, even aggressive.

"It has been proved beyond dispute that people who watch a lot of violence on television develop aggressive behaviour," says Frank Lindblad, a child psychiatrist at Sweden's Karolinska Institute university hospital. "There is a lot suggesting that video games are worse. The border between the virtual reality and the real world becomes diffuse and that is dangerous."

I'm guessing that Lindblad will not be playing the complimentary copy of Manhunt we will be sending him.

NAPSTER USING IBM TECHNOLOGY

The music industry's favourite online music service Napster has introduced its Super Peer application that uses IBM technology to help users save bandwidth and money.

The program uses Big Blue eServer BladeCenter systems to store songs from Napster in on-site servers.

Bill Pence, CTO at Napster, says Napster daily usage at Pennsylvania State university totals about 100 000 downloads and 100 000 streams. "With the new application, about 90% of these downloads and streams would not result in traffic across the open Internet."

Somehow I cannot see local universities following suit as the online needs of our students still seem to be on a backburner.

ROBOT FOR DISABLED UNVEILED

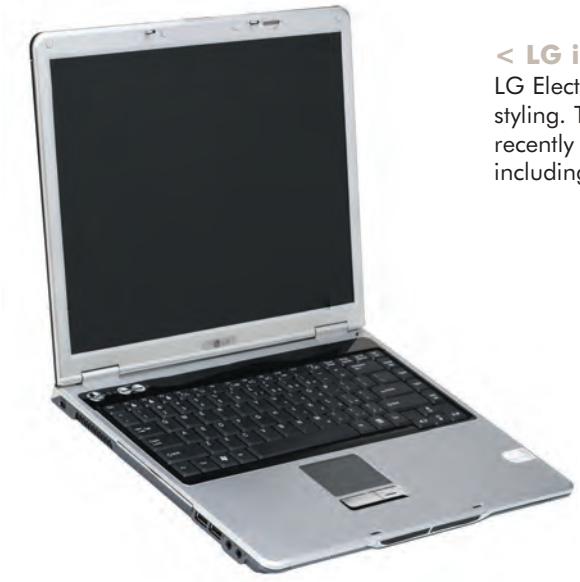
The Flexibot robot that looks and moves like a caterpillar and is designed to help the disabled in the home has recently been announced in Britain. It can clamp itself to specific points on the wall and ceiling and could be used to aid the elderly and disabled with domestic tasks such as shaving, cooking and cleaning. It has three pivots allowing it to move between points and a three-fingered hand to grip objects. I wonder when the first union will be formed to take care of robot rights in the workplace?

BRAIN-CONTROLLED GAMING

Researchers have designed a game called Mind Balance, which is controlled by thought. To calibrate the device to a user's brain, one first has to take part in a procedure whereby a series of flashing boxes appears on the screen and the user watches them. A headset that features a set of electrodes reads the electromagnetic emanations from the brain and the software makes necessary adjustments. The game is not for sale, but rather is a tool to help researchers to develop the technology. Other uses for the technology include communication and actuation for disabled people. It must be said, military applications do also spring to mind.

> Swiss Army Knife with USB Flash drive

A brilliant, and inevitable, development - Victorinox has teamed up with Swissbit to bring a Swiss Army Knife with built-in 64MB or 128MB USB Flash drive. Given the fact that Swiss Army Knives are intended as ultimate convenience tools, this innovation is hardly surprising. To Swiss Army Knife fans, Victorinox needs no introduction, but Swissbit is less heard of. However, the company grew out of Siemens and has in fact been involved in manufacture of memory and Compact Flash products for over ten years. www.swissbit.com



< LG introduces notebooks

LG Electronics has released a range of notebooks marked by their elegant styling. The models are the LM50 and its smaller brother the LM40. The LM50 recently won a design award at the CeBIT show. It features good connectivity, including wireless networking on various bands.

> Z3 Gyro Wireless Mouse

This device, from SICO System Integration, features a 3D space identification sensor to allow its user to make use of it anywhere within a 10 metre wide area, without requiring a surface. The mouse works by means of an inertial sensor inside it, so no telemetric receivers are required, only the base station. Its ergonomic design is aimed at reducing the various injuries associated with regular mouse use. It is also capable of being used as a laser pointer.

< gigabeat G21 player

Toshiba has released the gigabeat G21 portable multimedia player, built around a 1.8" 20GB hard drive. The unit connects via USB, and can be hooked up to a wireless LAN accessory. Battery life is quoted at up to 11 hours of operation.

www.mexcomsa.com
Anything but square.
mexcomsa

< LaCie flash memory watch

Maxtec Peripherals will be distributing the LaCie flash memory watch in SA. "The LaCie Data Watch allows users to easily transfer audio files, presentations, spread sheets or documents," says Christine Nel, product manager at Maxtec. "Removable and compact, the watch is funky and easy to use for universal, cost-effective data exchange and cross-platform data shuffles."

< Nokia 7610 handset

Nokia has released the 7610, which features a 1 megapixel camera with a resolution of 1152x864, 4x digital zoom, video recording, full-colour screen, 72MB of RAM, USB, MP3 and AAC playback. The battery provides 250 hours of standby or three hours of talk time.

< Wireless TV

Late last year, Sharp released the Aquos Wireless, a wireless LCD television set. The system includes a base station and charger, a flat panel LCD display with a range of 15m and battery life of 2 hours, a carry handle and detachable stand.

> Ullman PenClic Mouse

A doctor named J Ullman recently developed a mouse that looks and feels virtually like a pen. Using this alternative device results in far less fatigue and injury, and users gain much finer control and higher precision. It possesses all normal optical mouse functions. www.ullmantech.se

v Casio Xfer Splash Proof TV

Casio has released an innovative Wi-Fi TV set. It consists of a tuner base station, a splash-proof LCD monitor, a recharging stand and waterproof remote control. The screen can be taken anywhere in the house, including the bathroom, for instance, hence the unit is splash-proof (though not actually waterproof). www.japan-direct.com

v BenQ 46W1-S plasma HDTV

BenQ recently unveiled this television set, which features 16:9 wide-format aspect ratio. Being a plasma screen, it is perfectly flat, doesn't distort images, is unaffected by magnetism and has high ambient light tolerance.

< Hornet

Chenbro Micom has released the Hornet Gaming PC, noted for its bold styling. It is powered by a Pentium-4 3.06GHz processor, and is designed to feature enhanced air flow for cooling. The entire system features a totally screwless assembly, ideal for gamers. Other elements further promote accessibility and portability.

> HUSH AVX Music Server

A trio of companies, namely VIA, Digital Fidelity and HUSH Technologies, has unveiled the HUSH AVX Music Server, running on a VIA EPIA M10000 Mini-ITX motherboard. The unit will provide space for around 1600 CDs, and it can be operated by means of a remote control that resembles a PDA.

> Hori Katana: Soul Controller

Playing games like Onimusha will now become even more interactive thanks to the imminent launch of this wireless sword, the Soul Controller. It weighs in at a mere 680g and measures 960mm in length and will react to the players motions and imitate them in the game as if your game character were controlling the katana himself.

ASUS® K8 Family

AMD Cool 'n' Quiet! Support!!

Feel the Power of AMD64 Architecture

K8N-E Deluxe

- AMD Athlon 64 Processor
- NVIDIA nForce3 250Gb
- DDR400
- 800MHz HyperTransport
- AMD Cool 'n' Quiet! Technology
- Dual SATA RAID
- 6 Serial ATA Ports
- 8-Channel Audio
- Optical/Coaxial S/PDIF out
- ASUS AI Features
- Gigabit LAN

AMD 64 Athlon

K8V SE Deluxe

- AMD Athlon 64 Processor
- VIA K8T800+VT8237
- DDR400
- 800MHz HyperTransport
- AMD Cool 'n' Quiet! Technology
- Dual SATA RAID
- IEEE1394
- ASUS AI Features
- Marvell Gigabit LAN
- ASUS WiFi slot

AMD 64 Athlon

K8V

- AMD Athlon 64 Processor
- VIA K8T800+VT8237
- DDR400
- 800MHz HyperTransport
- AMD Cool 'n' Quiet! Technology
- ASUS AI Features
- Gigabit LAN
- ASUS Features
- SATA RAID

AMD 64 Athlon

SK8V

- AMD Athlon 64 FX& Opteron 100 Series
- VIA K8T800+VT8237
- 800MHz HyperTransport
- Dual Channel DDR400
- Dual SATA RAID
- IEEE1394
- ASUS AI Features
- 3COM Gigabit LAN
- ASUS WiFi slot

AMD 64 Opteron
AMD 64 Athlon FX

SK8N

- AMD Athlon 64 FX& Opteron 100 Series
- NVIDIA nForce3 Pro150
- Dual Channel DDR400
- Scalable HyperTransport
- IEEE1394
- ASUS Features
- SATA RAID

AMD 64 Opteron
AMD 64 Athlon FX

axiz insight

Axiz
web: www.axiz.com
JHB tel: (011) 237 7007
CPT tel: (021) 529 3900
DBN tel: (031) 250 2000
PE tel: (041) 374 0321

COREX

Corex IT DISTRIBUTION DYNAMICS (Pty)Ltd
web: www.corex.co.za
JHB tel: (011) 707 5000

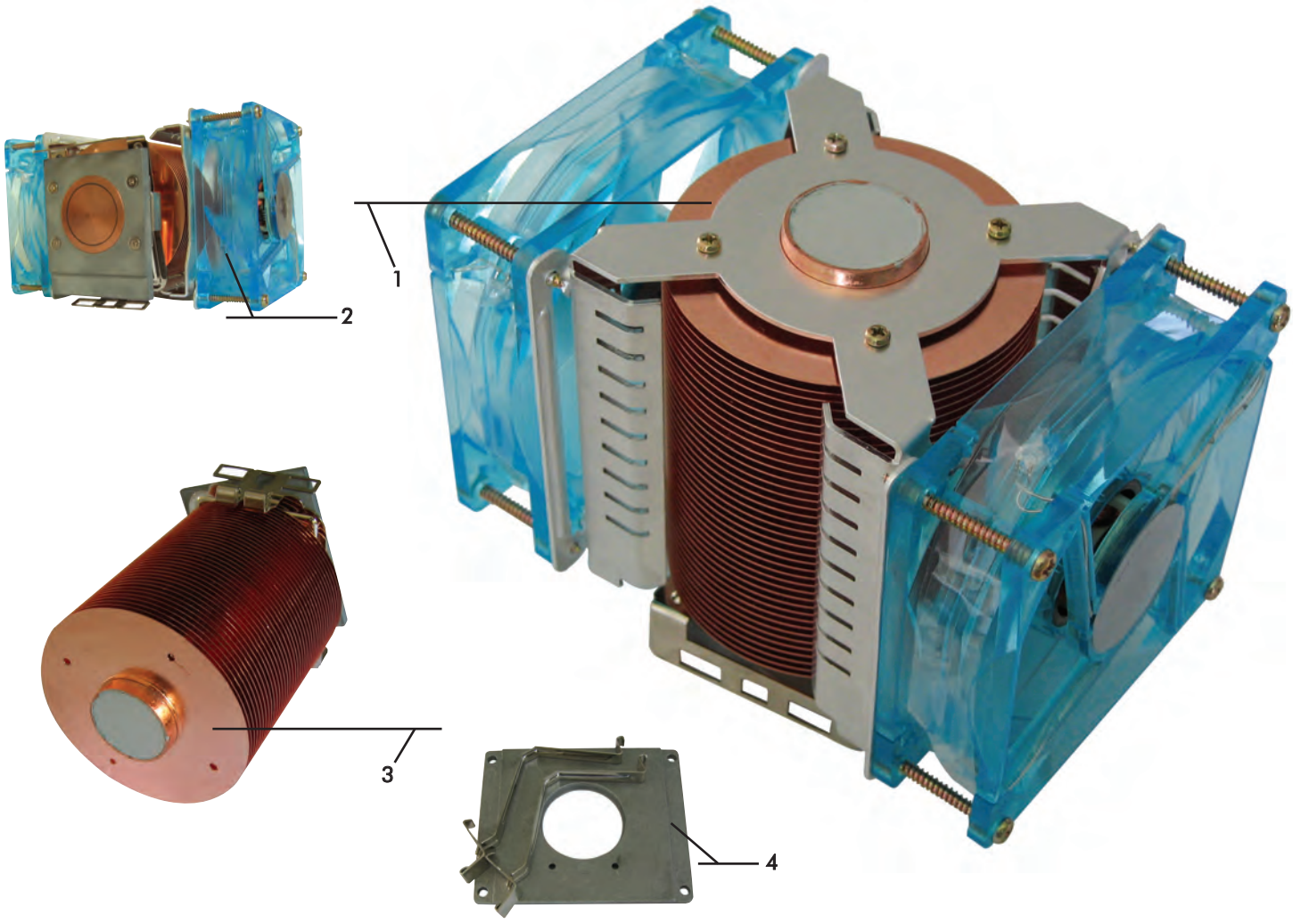
3 Year Warranty

ASUS®
ASUS South Africa
Office Tel: +27 11 781 4204
www.asus.com

HANDS ON TESTED

AeroCool Deep Impact CPU Fan

High-performance cooling for high-end CPUs, AeroCool keeps it hardcore.



1. The AeroCool Deep Impact 102 Heat Sink is a serious way to cool your CPU. Recommended for a P4 socket 478 3.6 GHz and higher (Universal version only) or the AMD XP 3600+ and higher, it's aimed at the high end user who doesn't mind some weight, considering that without the fans it sits at 580g.

2. The speed on one fan is 2500 rpm and has an airflow of 31.5cfm (CFM stands for Cubic Feet of air per Minute). The unit can be rotated for the best position, but there is actually only one effective way and any other can damage your CPU, so it's more of an enthusiast's cooler. Web reviews so far found that it easily cooled a chip 7-10 degrees Celsius more than anything else on the market - no mean feat!

3. The main base is largely made out of copper. The units measures around 10 cm in height and the fan mount can be rotated to place the fans on any side, just as long as they are across from each other. It can carry one fan on its own as well. This base connects to a metal plate at the bottom which rests on the CPU, and it ships with a larger plate for other socket types.

4. The unit is aimed at both the AMD and Intel markets and is strictly for enthusiasts. This is mainly because a) it is a very large cooler - the largest on the market - and b) it won't fit in just any case or on any motherboard. Space is a definite issue here, not to mention the weight. Also, as we mentioned, mounting can be done wrong, so it needs an expert's touch.

RRP: 359.00 • **Supplied by:** The Naked IT [011] 482 5493 • **Internet:** www.nakedit.co.za

PlayStation®2

PAL

MX UNLEASHED™

6+
www.pegi.info

SILVER-KINEKOR HOME ENTERTAINMENT

www.Playstation.co.za

THQ®

Call the PlayStation Hotline 082 288 1001

Exclusively licensed to and published by THQ. THQ and the THQ logo are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All Rights Reserved. All other trademarks, logos and copyrights are property of their respective owners.

Abit AI7 and AN7 motherboards

Motherboard manufacturer Abit is storming the market with its typically highly overclockable solutions for both Intel and AMD CPUs. We looked at two of its products to see just what makes Abit boards so sought after in overclocking circles in particular.

The AMD Athlon XP board, called the Abit AN7, features the nForce 2 Ultra 400 chipset, widely regarded as the best performing Athlon XP chipset currently available. Meanwhile the Intel Pentium 4 board is one of the company's latest releases, and while it features the somewhat older Intel 865 PE chipset at its heart does promise excellent performance at an extremely attractive price point.

Let's begin this review with the AN7, then, and see if this board really has the performance and features to be named among the best Athlon XP boards out there.

The first thing you notice about this offering is that while it has five PCI slots none of these could possibly share a back panel with the card in the AGP slot. This means that even VGA adaptors with ponderously large cooling solutions will fit in the board without sacrificing even a single PCI expansion slot. The nForce 2 Ultra chipset features dual-channel DDR 400, integrated 10/100 LAN adaptor, 6 USB slots and, importantly, an IEEE 1394 Firewire port. All the connections needed to run Dolby Digital 5.1 sound are also there, as the SoundForce integrated audio solution of this chipset was among the first to introduce a true digital surround sound experience from an on-board audio adaptor. There are also 2 Serial-ATA connectors on the AN7, and the unique to Abit uGuru processor which enables on-the-fly overclocking is clearly visible.

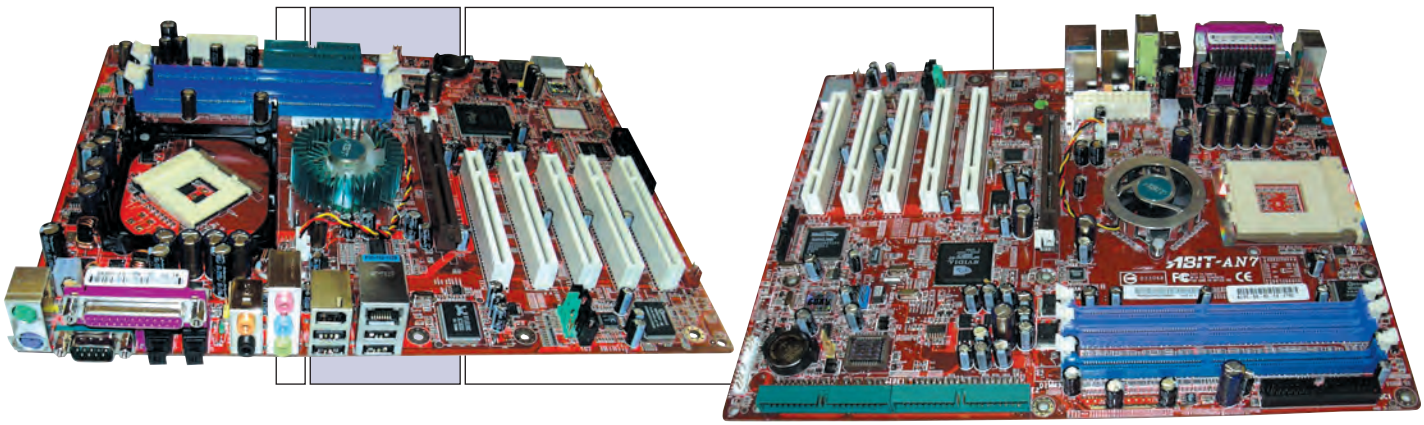
This offering's BIOS options are extensive and nicely laid out, enabling the user to change all manner of system settings in the pursuit of some more performance. Even overclockers who are afraid of software-based BIOS and overclocking utilities (like me), are kept happy through the inclusion of this excellent BIOS implementation.

In the performance stakes, this nVidia chipset really helps the Abit offering into the leading position. Very few other motherboards can quite match the outright power of this chipset, and that's without even looking at those aforementioned dodgy overclocking utilities. If you have an Athlon XP chip, no matter the FSB, the Abit AN7 will run it to the best of its abilities. The uGuru tools are there to play with should you be convinced your machine needs to be able to complete a few additional computations a second, but if your system is working fine in your opinion leave these software tools be.

On the Intel Pentium 4 side of the coin, the AI7 here is a brand new offering by Abit, and just from testing the AN7 it already has much to live up to. The features list of this board makes very similar reading to the AMD platform, also including a Dual DDR 400 memory bus, uGuru services, on-board 10/100 LAN, SATA and integrated audio capable of 5.1 surround with auto-sensing jacks.

Being an Intel platform, it also supports Hyper Threading technology of course, but there's still the useful Firewire port as well. Boot straight into the BIOS and you can immediately see that this is what the 865 PE chipset is made for! Tweaking and testing and adjusting things, BIOS settings, could keep you occupied for some time such is the wealth of options to be found here. Intel boards with Intel chipsets are traditionally scant in this area. In flexibility, and overclockability, Intel boards and chipsets are considered a definite second choice. The AI7 however manages to do it exactly right, combining the strengths of this 865 chipset with unparalleled flexibility. The 865 PE chipset in here almost wastes its newer brethren, the 875 chipset, in most every area of platform performance. Memory access and transfer, bus transfer speeds, disk access speeds, and overall platform performance were similar to the newer chipset according to SiSoft Sandra 2004.

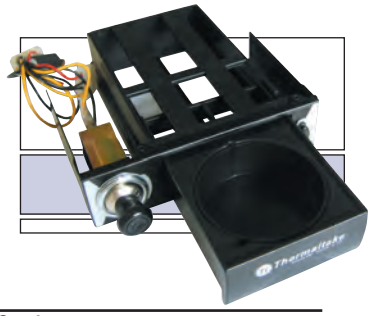
Both of these boards are very good choices if you're someone who might want to play with some settings to drag the very best out of the hardware you have available to you. The AI7, in particular, is likely to be the first pick for anyone wanting to clock an Intel chip up a notch or two.



Plus: Great performance **Minus:** software BIOS manipulation cannot be relied on **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: Esquire Technologies [012] 657 1111 **Internet:** www.esquire.com **RRP:** AN7 R1100 | AI7 R1200

Thermaltake Xray

The masters of case cooling and modding are back, and this time they have brought out possibly the most gimmicky case modification device in history. That said, I can clearly see where the uses of this device are, and I can understand that a number of people would want to take advantage of what it offers.



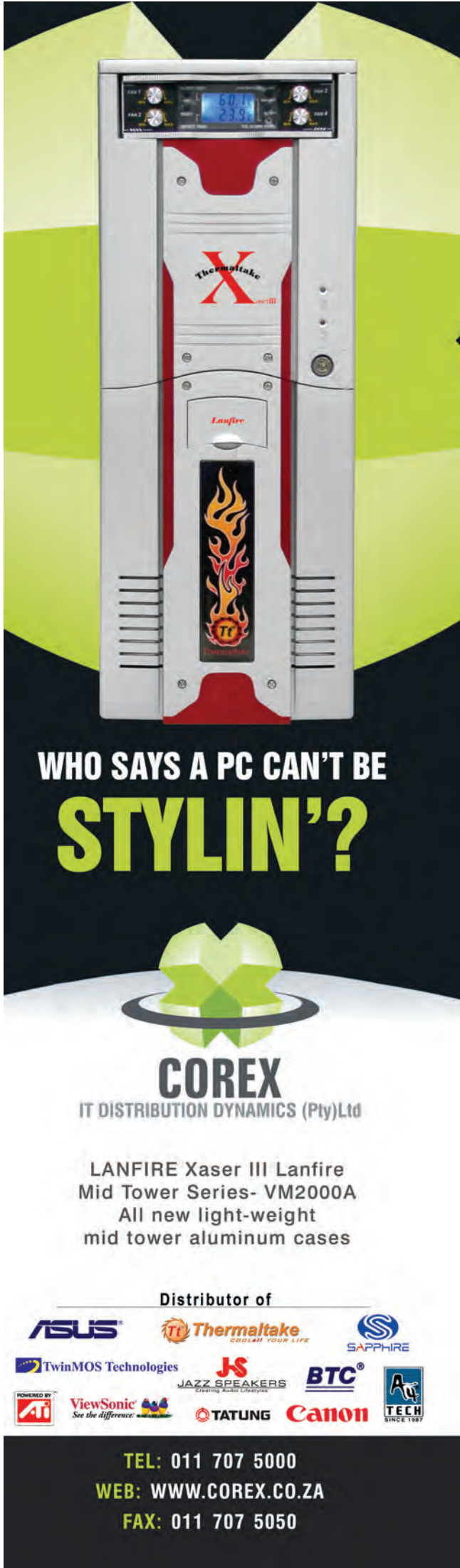
The Xray is a 5.25" bay mod that falls into Thermaltake's "car mod" kit range (which also includes the Hardcano 12 from last month). It features a car style cigarette lighter and a beverage tray that ejects. Yes, you read that right. In fact, that's all one needs to say. Either you want it, or you don't.

Plus: Cute idea **Minus:** Utter gimmick **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius **Supplier:** Corex [011 707 5000]
Internet: www.corex.co.za **RRP:** R 100

MSI Megastick 256

I have looked at many MP3 players in my career, some were good and others were awful but through my experiences I have created a list of characteristics that I feel are very important and when I personally choose such a device, that is what I will be looking for. To my amazement, the Megastick 256 satisfied 99% of my requirements with the exception of the sound quality of the headphones, more specifically the lack of decent bass, but more on that a little further down. MSI definitely got the design spot on with this unit, not only does it sport 256 MB of flash memory but it can plug straight into a USB port (an extension cable is provided), it offers voice recording, and has a built in radio. One of the most innovative "tricks" I have seen in a while is that the cap which covers the USB port on the Megastick is actually connected by a robust plastic string. This is a great feature because my current MP3 player which looks similar to this one has a tendency to loose its cap when I am about 15 minutes into my jog on the treadmill, it is not a pretty site to see my attempt at keeping my legs in pace with the treadmill while trying to catch this lid. The Megastick 256 sports a multi line LCD which also has a funky blue backlight. The LCD displays a host of information such as current song title, volume status, and equalizer status. The LCD is also used to scroll through the menu to set the equalizer or to delete a file, very handy if you need to make space when using the voice recording feature. Speaking of which its voice recording capabilities are also great and besides the built in microphone, the inclusion of a microphone jack is a clever idea, allowing you to add a conference or directional microphone if the need arises. The built in recorder also allows you to record straight from the radio. As mentioned before the headphone sound quality is, for the most part, very good, but it lacks some bass. The earphones are exceptionally comfortable and I really liked the idea that the box includes a headphone cable extension so that the Megastick can be placed in your pocket. I can honestly say that this is one of the best MP3 players I have tested to date, the fact that it has 256 MB of flash memory and can be used as a portable USB storage device makes it all the much sweeter.

Plus: Versatile **Minus:** Does not double as a TV remote **Reviewer:** Tom Taylor
Supplier: Light Edge Technology [021] 510-8270 **Internet:** www.msi.com.tw **RRP:** R1700



BTC Keyboard Roundup

For the more budget-conscious, BTC keyboards should make a good alternative. Usually when the word "budget" comes to the fore, you can't help thinking "cheap, knockoff crap". But not everyone is privy to spending R 700 or more on a keyboard (no matter how nice it is).

The BTW keyboards are not comparable to Logitech or Microsoft models, but that's to be expected. Instead, what you get is a solid input device with those popular shortcut keys that have become the rage these days (though I have to wonder how many use them).

In this review we'll cover three flavours: the two respective Internet models and BTC's Multimedia keyboard. The first keyboard, dubbed the 9112 Internet Keyboard, is a no-frills option if you do a lot of web surfing. It comes with the usual collection of web-able keys at the top. The 9113 is a bit more elaborate, combining the web buttons with multimedia keys as well. In short, it can handle both your browser and your media player. Apart from that these two look very similar.

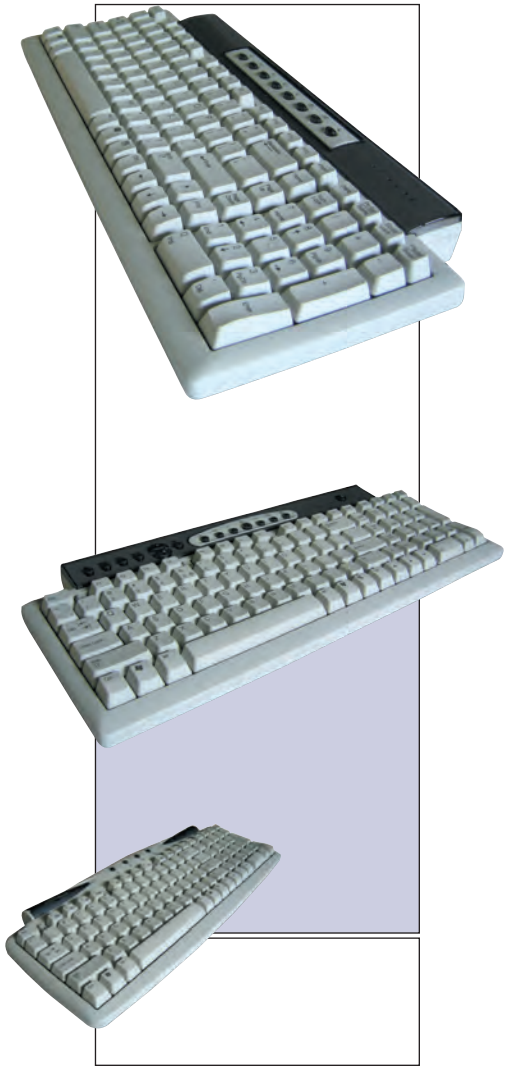
The Multimedia Keyboard, though, has a different look and comes in several colours - none of which really appealed to me, but I've always preferred hardware with a very flowing design. But it does hold its promise for multimedia keys, in a sense...

Here things get a little bit tricky.

I've never been a fan of the F-switch key that Microsoft introduced a few years back. Since then everyone has gone for this design, giving extra functionality to the keys. In the case of this keyboard, the multimedia keys are the Function keys, so if you want to swap songs using your keyboard, you can't use the F-keys for other functions. It shouldn't be that big a deal, but if I prefer a keyboard with multimedia support, I don't want it to impede on other functions (and I use my F keys quite a bit). Thankfully the other two models don't use an F-switch, but they do lack the additional shortcut keys that this model has - you can assign programs or documents to these opening them up with one keystroke.

Overall BTC have a trio of good keyboards on their hands here. Typing on them is soft and springy, not to mention that the designs are sturdy. They only come in PS/2 models and the drivers are supplied on stiffy disks - I'd copy those onto a CD as soon as you can. This is also something they should correct in the near future, since a lot of OEM machines don't even ship with stiffy drives and few users still have them.

Buying one of these should be a budget choice. If you do have a problem with paying a lot of money for your keyboard, these will make a good alternative.



Plus: Value for money | Comfortable **Minus:** Software not on CD **Reviewer:** James Francis
Supplier: Corex [011] 707 5000 **Internet:** www.corex.co.za **RRP:** TBA

PixelVew PlayTV Box II

While adding a TV card does allow one to watch TV right on your PC, there are a few problems with adding this kind of hardware. Firstly, it takes up a PCI slot. Next, it can have an affect on the running of your computer; it may take only a little processing power, but the effect is still there.

So it would seem that the PixelView TV Box II is the answer, should you want to watch TV via your monitor instead of like normal people who use an actual TV set.

The unit is a slim "box" that sits between your PC case and your monitor and speakers. Your PC video and sound signal passes into the box, and then out to the appropriate devices.

While this seems like an absolutely fabulous idea, the PixelView PlayTV Box II system does come with its own problems. First off, it adds cables and clutter to your desk. Next is the fact that it seems that the system requires a strong television signal. Those fortunate enough to have a satellite setup won't meet with problems, but others will have a nightmare of disappearing channel settings and poor picture quality. And lastly, the remote that ships with the system is utterly horrible. It either doesn't work, or responds with a double signal, or any similar problems.

The PixelView PlayTV Box II allows the user to enjoy better than usual sound quality and features a very handy picture on picture function, so that you can do other things on your PC while watching TV in a smaller screen that takes up only a portion of your desktop.

It's a handy device, despite its issues. Patience is required.

Plus: No CPU strain **Minus:** Dodgy remote, need strong signal **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Supplier: Esquire Technologies [012] 657 1111
Internet: www.esquire.com **RRP:** R 1200

ASUS Giga X Series 1105

The end is near for good old fast Ethernet methinks. High-end motherboards come with integrated Gigabit NICs nowadays, and Gigabit PCI cards are available from a variety of vendors at competitive prices.

And now there are even small and affordable Gigabit switches flooding out into the market, such as this ASUS Giga X Series 1105. Truly, this is a piece of kit which any self-respecting power user running his own small home network has to put high up on the shopping list.

This particular model features five RJ-45 ports, all capable of automatically detecting and switching between 10, 100 or 1000 Mbps modes depending on the capabilities of the adaptors in individual PCs.

The GigaX1105 is stackable too, and you can connect it to another switch or hub to add more connections to the network. You can use either a fly-lead or crossover for this link as well, and again the switch will automatically detect which kind of cable is being used and adjust to this setting.

You'll wonder how we ever managed without this newest network technology the first time you need to copy a substantial chunk of data across any network powered by a switch like this. It flies. Although the real transfer rate peaked at around 780 Mbps on my network that means that 20 gigs takes less than five minutes to copy.

With a forwarding rate of 7.4 Mbps, this switch can easily handle all five links communicating at full speed in full-duplex mode. With just four Gigabit and one 10/100 connection on my network, the LAN remained rapidly accessible even when three of the machines were copying to and from one another at the same time.

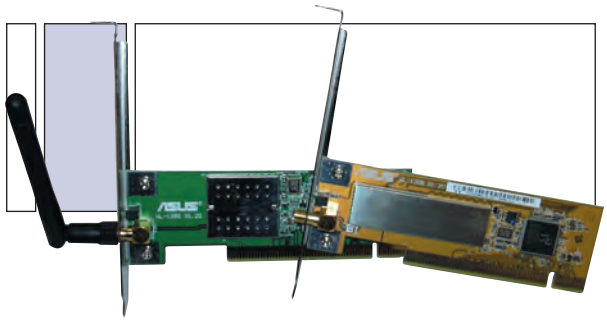
The GigaX switch is small and innocuous-looking, with its raft of LED lights blinking unbusily for the majority of the time. This particular product is even a fan-less design for totally silent operation. It does feel a little flimsy at times, but worked flawlessly during my time with it.

I was never really discontent with 100 Mbps Ethernet connections. It seemed fast enough for a while, especially when I think back to the days of 10 M. But now, after using this GigaX switch, I'm struggling to get used to that slight delay when checking a large hard disk over the network, not to mention the half-hour copying times for a mere 15 Gigs of data.

And at the kind of price that products like this are now available for, there's no reason not to take full advantage of the Gigabit Ethernet capabilities built into your hot new board...

Plus: Huge network bandwidth **Minus:** Only 5 ports **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: Corex [011] 707 5000 **Internet:** www.corex.co.za **RRP:** TBA

ASUS WLAN 802.11b and g



There can be no doubt at this point, the wireless LAN is not only the next big thing, it's already seen as a valid consideration as a network connection mechanism.

And the projected growth rates of this market have left everyone in the component manufacture industry scrabbling for a piece of the pie. ASUS gave us its offerings to look at, one 802.11g and one 802.11b PCI cards.

I love the Eastern self-image. One of the boxes contains a small line claiming "Perfect antenna design" on this particular offering. They're really small cards too, even smaller than Intel 10/100 workstation cards. Installing the software is simple, especially in XP, but can cause problems after a week or so. Reinstalling just the drivers usually fixes these though, so nothing to worry about.

Finding the WLAN you want to connect to, if you don't know the details and the site has SSID broadcasting enabled, is easy using the WLAN control panel software, and both cards had no hassles establishing the wire-free infrastructure.

Then the major problem with WLAN becomes apparent, however, especially from a gaming perspective. (Warning: Techno-rant. Sensitive readers and early adopters avert your eyes.) It really is just way too slow.

Even the 802.11 g kit never manages a better average than 30 Mbps, even with full signal strength. The 802.11 b is far slower, worse than 10 Mbps Ethernet. Just think, when was the last time you transferred anything on a 10 M network link? Yes many games can work on a 64K ISDN line, but if you leave the power-saving feature of the card enabled, it periodically "loses" the network for a few seconds and re-connects, killing any LAN game you might be playing instantly.

Cable is cheaper, widely available, much faster and more reliable, and simpler. For a laptop, perhaps yes WLAN is nice, although even laptops need power sooner or later. But these are PCI cards... how much do you move your desktop around?

These ASUS offerings are good examples of such product, although WLAN adaptors are almost as generic as LAN cards already. The signal remained at full strength for about 35 m for me, enough of a radius to cover an entire mid-sized office with just a couple of WLAN access points. And the 100 M+ standard should be arriving soon...

By then, of course, my gaming desktop will be on a small Gigabit Ethernet LAN using messy, old-fashioned UTP.

Plus: No CPU strain **Minus:** Dodgy remote, need strong signal **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Supplier: Esquire Technologies [012] 657 1111 **Internet:** www.esquire.com **RRP:** R 1200

Logitech X620 6.1 Speakers

One can never stress the value of good sound enough, particularly when PC usage goes beyond gaming and into music and film entertainment. Getting hold of really good speakers is a great way to enhance any gaming or entertainment experience on the PC.

And the speaker market is hotting up, with a large number of players trying to produce the next best speaker system. Logitech, however, have been among the leaders in the field for some time, and continue to produce top class products.

This speaker set is comprised of six satellite speakers and a large subwoofer. It allows for the (current) ultimate in surround sound, provided you have a sound card that can handle a 6.1 set-up (that would require three speaker outputs.) Of course, the X620 can be used in any configuration (2 speakers, 4 speakers) but buying this big speaker set just so that you can have a subwoofer and two desktop satellites seems a bit pointless. This is a toy for those who can handle it, or more correctly afford the hardware to handle it.

The sturdy satellite speakers have an adjustable base to allow for easy wall mounting, and are beautifully finished. The volume and power control is located typically on the right hand desk top satellite speaker. The subwoofer is equally sturdy and acts as the "hub" for all the other speakers. In addition, bass level settings are made on the subwoofer.

But the proof is in the performance. The X620 pounds out loud, clear sound even at "low" volume settings, and does not lend itself t distortion at higher volume levels. The only true problem that the system offers in this field lies in the fact that there is a minimum bass volume - rather than being able to turn the bass all the way down (thereby eliminating it) the X620 only allows the user to turn the base down to a certain level - meaning that the base can be over powering at low volume levels, even at its lowest setting. Not a train smash, of course, because we like it loud! And that's something that the X620 has in spades: loud.

It's an extravagant system, but those who can afford it and related hardware should take advantage of the usual level of quality we can expect from Logitech.

Plus: Good performance **Minus:** Heavy Bass **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius **Supplier:** Logitech SA
Internet: www.logitech.com **RRP:** R 1299

Logitech diNovo Media Desktop

Logitech have made an ambitious leap into Bluetooth technology, announcing a plethora of mice and keyboard/mice combos at CES this year. The diNovo Media Desktop stands out the most from the new pack, thanks to the unique concept where the numpad has been developed into a separate unit that connects to the mouse cradle, which doubles as a Bluetooth hub. On this pad you'll find duplicate media controls that are on the main keyboard - play, stop, skip, mute and volume controls. The aspirations of the separate pad are that of a media controller - through it you can remotely change audio and video clips playing on your machine. It will also notify you of messenger and email events as they happen. Since it is Bluetooth-powered, the device has a 10 meter range and requires two AAA batteries; the power-lifespan is quite long. It also acts as a calculator and will let you transfer calculations to spreadsheets and other programs.

The keyboard itself has a stark black design, unlike most keyboards which opt for the more streamlined approach. It certainly makes it seem more formal than its competitors. The keys feel very similar to those of a laptop's - soft and quick to react. Onboard are shortcut keys for your web, email and search functions, as well as a sleep button.

Thrown in with this combo is the MX-900 mouse, complete with a recharge cradle that doubles as the Bluetooth hub, which in turn can support seven devices (4 after the keyboard, pad and mouse). The mouse is very responsive for a cordless, rivaling even most corded versions. In fact, I have to tip my hat to Logitech's new Bluetooth mice purely for their new speed and elegance. Combined with the keyboard and pad, it's a pretty sweet setup.

Sadly, it doesn't go beyond this. While the keyboard itself is very sturdy and great to work on, and the detached pad and included mouse work great, it feels like things were left a bit short. The keyboard lacks additional functions. For instance, if the pad was aimed at an office environment, where is the scroll wheel and copy/paste buttons that made Microsoft's Office keyboard popular? And if it's for home use, it pales a bit compared to the Logitech Cordless Elite. These aren't necessarily bad things, but it does enforce a status that the diNovo is a serious keyboard, competing with the likes of Microsoft's Desktop Elite. It's a comfortable and sturdy enough input device to do just that and it is very, very comfortable to type on. But it does negate the appeal as a media control unit. If you need a good keyboard without bulky extras, but with Bluetooth and an oft-useful Media pad/calculator plus a good mouse, it's worth taking a look at. But the diNovo isn't suited to the majority of the market.

Plus: Comfortable, lots of functions **Minus:** Expensive **Reviewer:** James Francis
Supplier: Logitech SA **Internet:** www.logitech.com **RRP:** R 2999

Freecom Beatman Flash 128 MB

I have always seen Freecom as the nice-gadget company and their latest MP3 player is no exception. Their original Beatman MP3 player (as featured in January's MP3 player H@rdcor3 group test) was quite popular thanks to its size but it lacked certain features, thankfully their latest version proudly addresses these. Let's first look at the hardware; a great feature of the Beatman Flash has always been its size, measuring in at a tiny 56.7 x 52.6 x 17.5mm (its weight is 44g) this MP3 player can be carried around virtually anywhere. One of my favourite features, as strange as it might sound (pun intended), is the earphones that are bundled with this device which are Sennheiser MX300's. The sound produced by these babies is crisp, loud, and offers well defined tones. Even though I loved them I would have liked it if they produced slightly better bass sound but that is not such a major issue. Looking a little closer at the actual unit, it is powered by one AAA battery, it sports a multi-line LCD, and only has five buttons built in, this excludes the volume control. The two new features that set this unit apart from its predecessor is its support for WMA (Windows Media Audio) and it's built in FM radio. It still sports its internal 128MB flash memory and I was kind of disappointed not to see the inclusion of a slot for adding more memory via a Smart Media card. The Freecom Beatman Flash 128 MB also has a built in microphone which allows you to use it as a voice recorder. As with the Beatman I reviewed earlier this year, this one still does not get recognized by Windows and in order to transfer music to it the Freecom Digital Audio Manager I software needs to be installed; this can make life a tad difficult especially when you want to "legally" copy music from another computer.

In terms of functionality this MP3 player has it all, the FM radio can store up to 20 preset radio stations, can display the ID3 information of each MP3, and it has five preset equalizer modes. Overall this is a great unit and it produces awesome sound, ideally though, I would have preferred it if I did not need to make use of the software to copy and remove music tracks from the Freecom Beatman Flash 128 MB.

Plus: Size, weight, and sound **Minus:** Needs proprietary software **Reviewer:** Tom Taylor
Supplier: Square One [011] 321-5900 **Internet:** www.freecom.com **RRP:** R 1700

PixelView FX 5700

The NVidia GeForce FX series of graphics hardware has, I must confess, failed to impress me all that much since launching. Although the 5950 Ultra does compete head to head with ATi's range-topping Radeon 9800 XT in most scenarios, it's in the lower-end segment that the Radeon adaptors have really been giving the GeForce cards a bit of a pounding.

The GeForce FX 5700 is here to try to remedy this situation, and right off the bat I have to say I was actually more impressed with it than I have been with many NVidia-based mainstream products for the last few months.

This PixelView offering features 256 MB of dedicated DDR RAM, and looks ready for battle encased in its Blue Icy Super cooling solution. This system consists of a massive copper construction encasing the PCB entirely, with purposeful-looking venting all around the edges, and a single medium sized fan which lights up blue to make the inside of your case look pleasingly eerie.

Built into the copper is a plasma display which provides you with a digital, real-time readout of your GPU temperature and fan rotation speed. Colleagues in the NAG office were concerned that, when installed into a tower case, the display was positioned upside down, but in fact the positioning of the card has been considered and the figures are the right way up. This forethought doesn't really make seeing the numbers all that much easier, though, as you still have to position your head near the bottom of your case to see the numbers clearly. Or perhaps I'm just too damn tall…

That fan deserves mention for being so impressively quiet, however. Even when you're running the card hot, the noise never becomes obtrusive, despite the solution looking like an even more serious version of the infamous hair dryer units attached to the first batch of FX offerings.

So the card looks cool in your system, but can it cut it in the performance stakes? Actually, yes it can.

The 3DMark03 score of 2858 with no FSAA is decent but not stunning, but turning 4-sample FSAA on is where you really see the power of this newer chipset. At 1929 3DMarks, this represents vastly improved FSAA performance over the 5600 offerings, mostly because of the fact that this chipset is based on the one used in the FX 5900 with the CineFX 2.0 for improved high-end shader performance.

It shows in Aquamark 3 as well, the improved DX9 capabilities helping the PixelView card to an impressive 23 416, some 400 points better than the 9600 XT reviewed in this issue, on the exact same machine.

This PixelView FX 5700, then, comes highly recommended for anyone looking to get the best 3D gaming performance at a reasonable price. NVidia are fighting back from the bottom end, it seems, until the NV40 storms in to retake the 3D graphics leadership position for the company.

Plus: Advanced shader performance **Minus:** Not top of the line **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: Esquire [012] 657 1111 **Internet:** www.esquire.co.za **RRP:** R1600

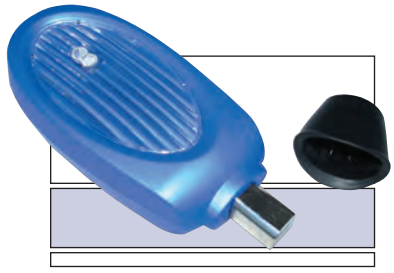
Chronos USB Bluetooth Printer Adaptor

The market still seems a little suspicious about just what a wireless PAN (Personal Area Network) really is. The Bluetooth protocol, as a result, has been slow in making any impact.

Little gadgets like the one on test here could help the situation however. It plugs into your standard USB printer, with its own separate power source, and turns your dead-average piece of kit into a wireless-enabled workgroup printer. Well, wireless enabled at the very least.

The Chronos adaptor can enable laptop printing support at distances up to 30 m from my results. And PDAs, PCs, cellular phones - anything with Bluetooth capabilities in fact.

Quite easy to use, although it does take away from the famous USB plug-n-play-ability, this adaptor is crucial for anyone with Bluetooth technology looking for a simple and practical use for it.

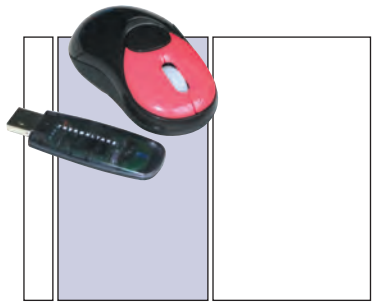


Plus: Bluetooth printing on non-Bluetooth printer **Minus:** Compatibility issues **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett **Supplier:** Esquire [012] 657 1111 **Internet:** www.chronos.com.tw **RRP:** R 700

Thermaltake Xwing Bluetooth Mouse

Bluetooth mice have had a major rise to fame of late, the convenience of wireless coupled with the ambiguity of Bluetooth have seemingly made perfect bedfellows. The Themaltake Xwing Bluetooth optical mouse seems quite attractive initially due to its petite nature (obviously aimed at laptop users), but issues with its software add some frustration to the existing problem of the mouse being too small.

A bonus however, is that the Bluetooth USB Adaptor which the mouse uses can function as a Bluetooth hub, allowing you to use Bluetooth keyboards, modems, headsets and other devices easily without an extra purchase. The Xwing manages a decent run off its two AAA batteries and as an 800dpi optical mouse using it feels very smooth indeed. If you're looking for a small mouse to accompany a space-saving laptop, the Xwing remains a good option.



Plus: Convenient blue tooth hub **Minus:** Too damn small **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Supplier: Corex [011] 707 5000 **Internet:** www.corex.co.za **RRP:** R 600

Powercolor Radeon 9600 XT

Mainstream 3D graphics offerings are being released thick and fast at the moment, as new entrants enter the fray in which giants ATi and NVidia are already embroiled.

The Radeon 9600 XT here, a Powercolor offering, is targeted squarely at this hotly contested market and claims to offer high 3D gaming performance at a palatable price point. This Powercolor board features 128 MB DDR RAM and replaces the older Radeon 9600 Pro in the product family as the pinnacle of the midrange offerings.

Interestingly, this manufacturer has eschewed the ubiquitous, and very appealing voucher for a free copy of Half Life 2 and have instead included a more standard package of bundled games which are at least real titles right now. Tomb Raider AOD, Big Mutha Truckers and WinDVD form what is a pretty basic and unimpressive packaged software bundle.

The hardware itself is largely indistinguishable from other ATi-based boards, a red PCB housing a modest cooling solution over the GPU itself. And driver installation is, once again, very familiar but easy to complete.

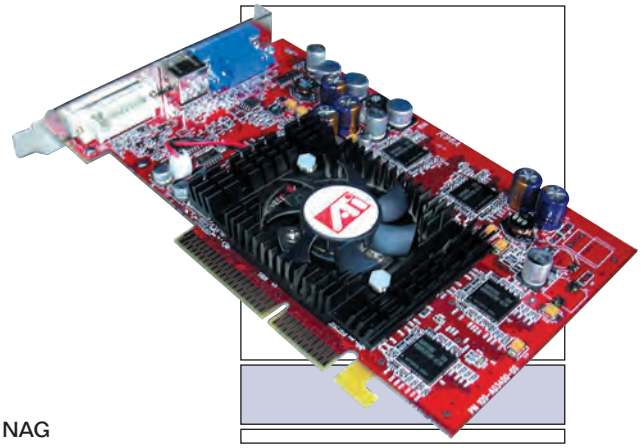
But it's the 3D performance that really counts, after all, not what the card or graphics bundle looks like. How quickly the hardware can throw polygons around a screen is what really counts.

3DMark03, running at 1024 X 768 with no FSAA, credited this Powercolor product with 3538 3DMarks. This is a very good score for a budget-conscious offering like this one, although it isn't really any faster than an older 9600 Pro could achieve. Turn 4-sample FSAA on, and this figure falls to 2002, and running like this it clearly shows a definite advantage over its older siblings.

Aquamark 3 gave the card a DirectX9 performance rating of 23 073. Again, while this is enough power to play the latest games at near to highest levels of detail, it doesn't represent a great leap over older technology, and I wonder if it's enough for the company to maintain its lead over the new entrants into the space, or over mortal enemy NVidia's latest midrange offerings.

Laying the latest titles on this card revealed some choppiness, particularly when running Far Cry at max detail. But take off the FSAA and drop some detail down to "High" and the game is perfect.

This Powercolor 9600 XT is still a good choice for gamers whose budgets can't stretch to the high-end offerings, but the lack of any real performance progress since the older offerings could spell trouble for ATi in the medium term.



Plus: Affordable **Minus:** Disappointing performance progress **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: Esquire [012] 657 1111 **Internet:** www.esquire.co.za **RRP:** R1500

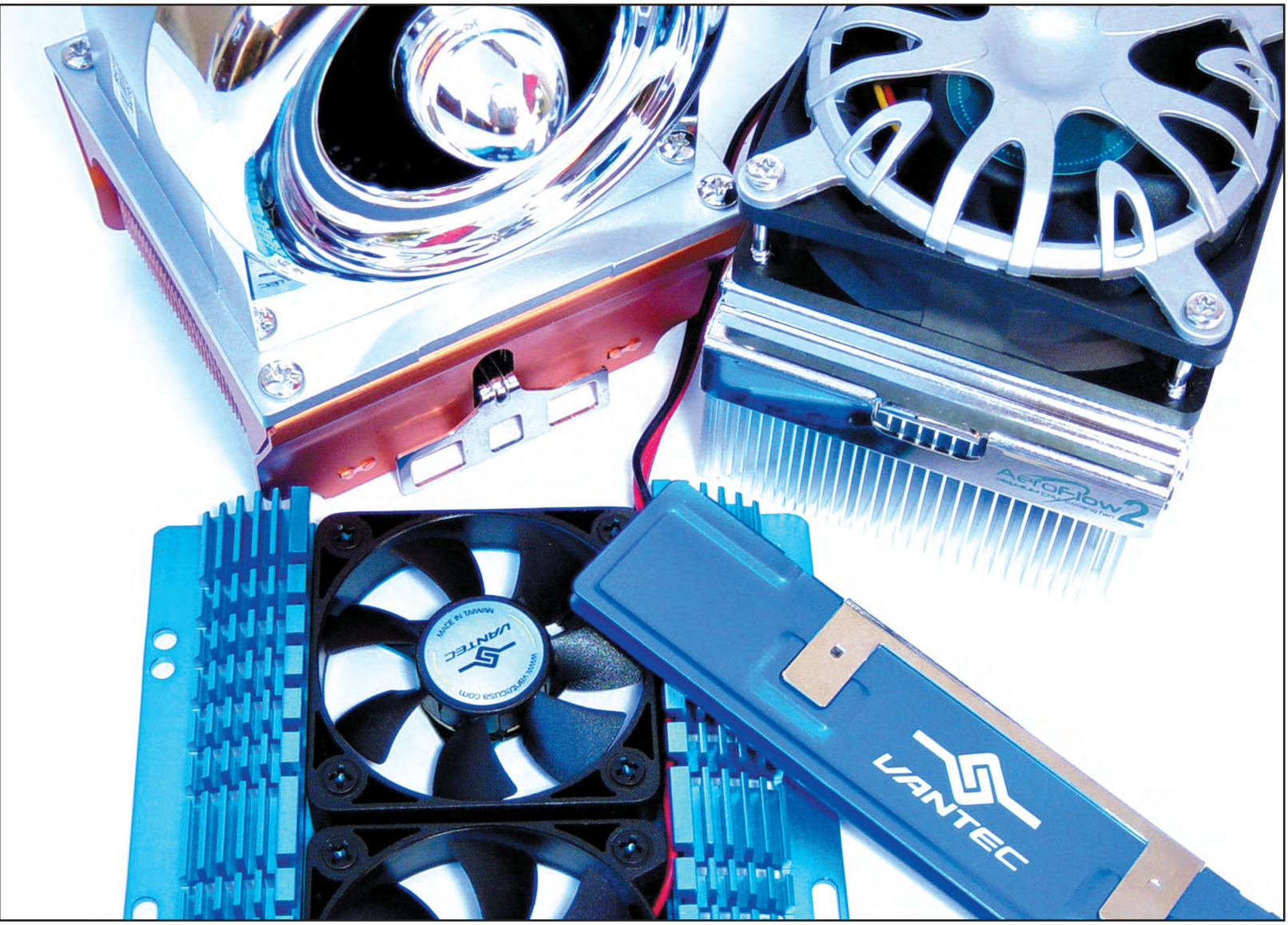
H@RDCOR3

Case Modding

writer: Tom Taylor

Yes, it's here again, the original Case Mod roundup which is often copied but never improved on. Case modification seems to be the new hobby of the computer enthusiast, and the "next big thing" which is on everybody's lips is water-cooling. I had the pleasure of playing with the Koolance water cooled case kindly supplied by Synapsys. I was obviously unable to cover this topic thoroughly in this roundup but I will focus on it in another issue of NAG.

I must also apologise for the lack of Thermaltake goodies, there were a couple of products I requested from Corex but they were unable to supply me in time. But enough blabbing and onto the action!



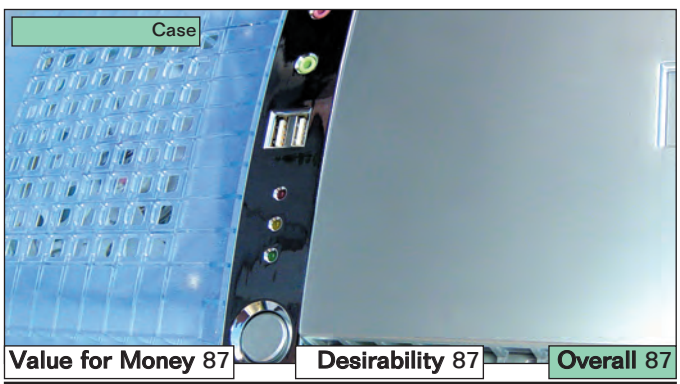
EMERALD
brilliant thinking

Test PC by Light Edge Technology

2 GHz Intel Pentium 4 | MSI 865PE Neo2 motherboard
Transcend Radeon 9700 | Philips 107E 17" Monitor
Transcend 512 MB DDR500 RAM
Western Digital 80 GB HDD 7200rpm
LG DVD/CD-RW combination drive

Antec Super LanBoy

In the last H@rdcor3 Case Mod roundup I was not particularly impressed by Antec's LanBoy case. They have since released the SuperLanboy and I can happily say that this is a much better case. The first noticeable thing is the big blue grid on the front of the case, this is where you will find a 120 mm Blue LED fan. Above this fan is a chrome panel with a microphone and headphone socket as well as two USB ports. Opening the front bezel door you will find three 5 ¼ inch bays and two 3.5 inch bays. Because the case is aimed at the LAN gamer it is made from a lightweight aluminium material and something I found particularly useful is the utility tray next to the 3.5 inch bays. This tray can be used to place your screws and tools. Looking at the inside I was impressed to see that there are nine hard drive bays and each bay had rubber vibration absorbers built in, the 120 mm fan also sports rubber vibration absorbers.



Plus: Lightweight **Minus:** Could be slightly small for some gamers
Supplier: Frontosa [011] 466-4728 **Internet:** www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R1045

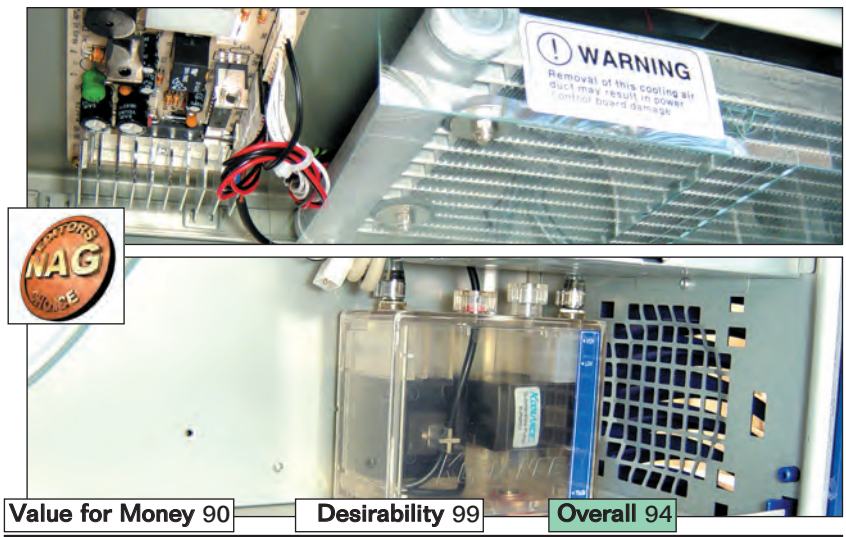
Antec P160

Now this is truly a stylish case, it is also constructed of lightweight aluminium and sports a swivelling control panel which houses the power and reset buttons, two USB ports, one IEEE-1394, as well as a microphone and headphone jack. What surprised me was that this panel is also able to display the temperature and you simply need to place the sensors on the hardware you wish to monitor. The three slots at the bottom end of the case are what make the P160 look so great; the chromed bottom ends are not just for show and when the computer is switched on, a blue LED in each slot will shine down onto the chrome making for a very nice visual effect. In between these slots there is a black mesh grid behind which you can mount a 120 mm fan. Inside the case there are four drive bays with rubber vibration absorbers and the feature I liked the most was the removable back plate which will make adding a hard drive so much easier.

Plus: Price | 8MB buffer **Minus:** Nothing **Supplier:** Rectron [011] 203-1000
Internet: www.maxtor.com **RRP:** R2599

Koolance PC2-650BU

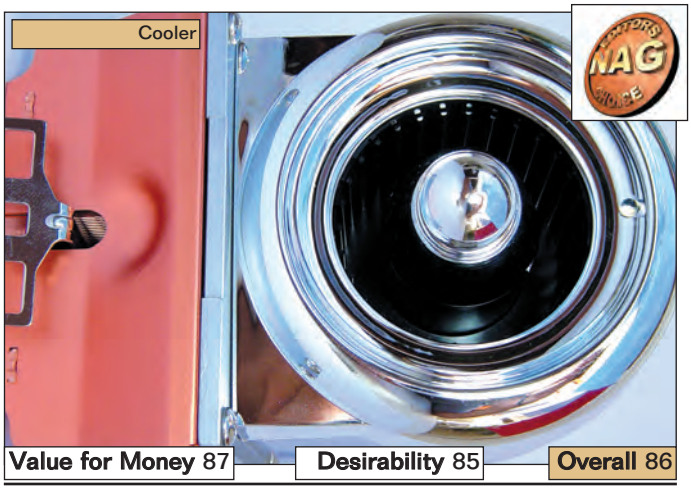
The PC2-650BU is a case which looks much like the Antec PlusView 1000AMG (reviewed last time around) but this one has one distinct difference - it has a water cooling radiator built in. Koolance has also redesigned the bezel door with some funky looking LED patterns. The case is quite heavy, obviously, but looking at what it can do the weight is the last thing I was concerned about. Being a pre-built water cooling case, all the necessary bits of the radiator and water reservoir is neatly laid out and all you need to do is purchase the individual bits to use with, say, the CPU, Northbridge, GPU. If you wish to go the water cooling route then this is definitely the way to go, not only does this unit look good but even my grandmother can set it up. Keep a look out for the water cooling article very soon.



Plus: Everything **Minus:** Once you are hooked you will never go back to air cooling **Supplier:** Synapsys [011] 447-9175
Internet: www.koolance.com **RRP:** R2399 (Case) R579 (300W CPU Cooler) R449 (180W GPU Cooler)

Cooler Master Jet 7+

Wow! Now this is the mother of all heat sinks and fans. Built on the popularity of the awesome Aero 7+ and Aero 4 the new Jet 7+ lends its design from a jet engine, hence its name. The Jet 7+ is designed for the AMD Duron and for the Athlon XP (socket A and Socket 462) processors; you can also use it for the Intel PIII and Celeron processors which use the old Socket 370. Apart from looking really stylish, the design, as with the Aero range, is really practical and offers effective cooling. The design of the fan on the Jet 7+ allows it to "capture" more air and blow it with a lot more forced onto the heat sink, also, because there are no blind spots created by the centre of a traditional fan you are ensured an optimal air footprint. Because you cannot see when this fan's blades are rotating, an innovative white flashing LED is situated on the front of the Jet 7+ and on the back is a red LED, mimicking the flames seen on real jet engines. There is also a Pentium 4 version available and the maximum RPM for both is 3500 which can be adjusted via the included controller.

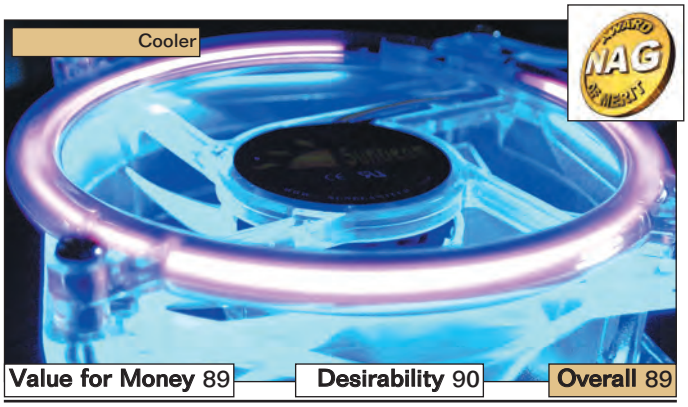


Value for Money 87 **Desirability** 85 **Overall** 86

Plus: Looks stunning | Optimal airflow **Minus:** Higher RPM would be nice
Supplier: Rectron [011] 203-1000 **Internet:** www.coolermaster.com **RRP:** R380

Sunbeam Round Cold Cathode Fan

Sunbeam always seems to produce the products that everybody wants and they seem to be producing new products by the minute. I have personally bought a couple of their products and I have been very impressed. The Round Cold Cathode Fan is, simply put, an 80mm fan with a specially designed CCFL (Cold Cathode Fluorescent Light) on top of it. In the package you will find the fan, a PCI bracket with a switch to turn the CCFL on or off, and an inverter so that you can invert the voltage to the required spec for the CCFL. Each inverter can accommodate two of these fans so as to make it easier to install more than one. The two I reviewed this month were the clear fan with blue CCFL, and my favourite, the UV blue fan with UV CCFL. These fans look awesome and they are very affordable at that.

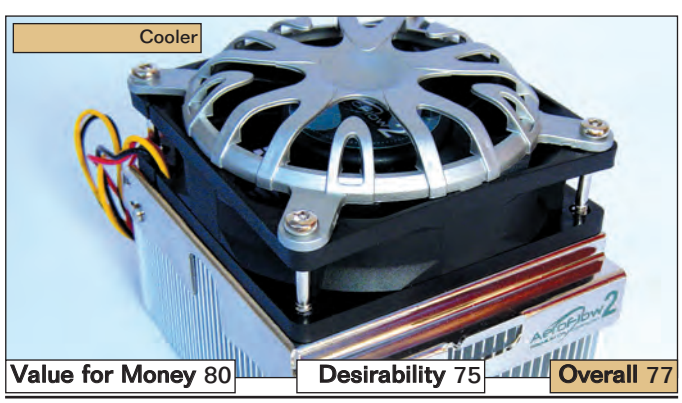


Value for Money 89 **Desirability** 90 **Overall** 89

Plus: Looks funky **Minus:** My case can only accommodate so much **Supplier:** ModShop
Internet: www.modshop.co.za **RRP:** UV - R129 | Normal - R119

Vantec AeroFlow 2

The AeroFlow 2 is Vantec's latest CPU cooler and the one supplied to us for review was designed for the Pentium 4. Even though it is great in many aspects, the one feature it lacked was the ability to control the fan speed. The fan speed is 4000 RPM and even though it is not very noisy, in a quite environment it could become a hassle as most CPU coolers do. The heat sink itself is made of aluminium and it has a copper core to dissipate the heat faster. Another interesting feature are the four fins which are built into the heat sink allowing air to be directed to the four sides of the unit. Aesthetically the AeroFlow 2 looks stunning but I am still reminded of the fact that it has a fixed RPM rating. There is also an AMD version available which is compatible with socket A and Socket 370.

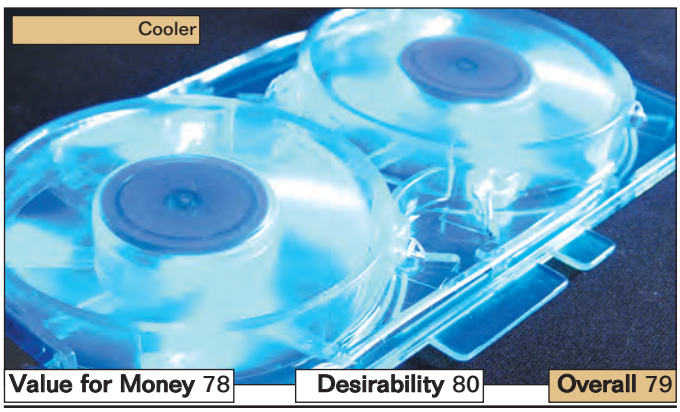


Value for Money 80 **Desirability** 75 **Overall** 77

Plus: Copper core **Minus:** Fixed RPM **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R281 (Intel) | R269 (AMD)

Vantec Spectrum Fan Card

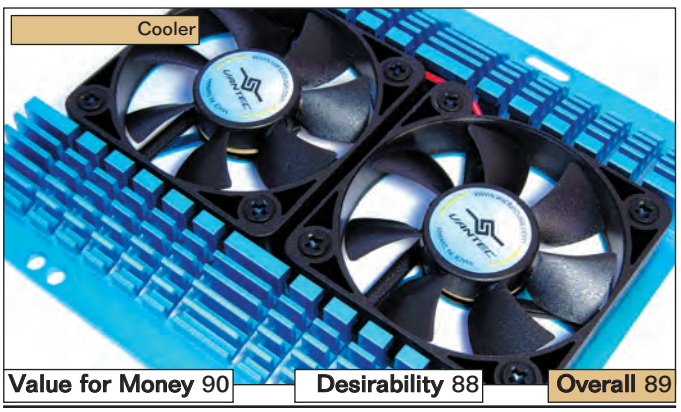
Over the years there have been many devices such as the PCI card cooler which sucks in air from the outside. Vantec's offering sadly does not do that particular function but still is a well designed piece of equipment. The Spectrum Fan Card is basically a PCI bracket with a fan control switch attached to a thick plastic "card" which houses two 70mm fans. The fan speeds range from 2400 RPM on its lowest setting to 4000 RPM on its highest setting. When attached the Spectrum Fan Card lights up in a cool-blue colour and cools surprisingly well. I would have preferred it if it had a small duct to suck air in from the outside, but if your current cooling setup is up to scratch then this product would be the perfect add-on to cool your graphics card or other PCI device.



Plus: Works well | Looks funky **Minus:** Pricey **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R169

Vantec HDD Cooler

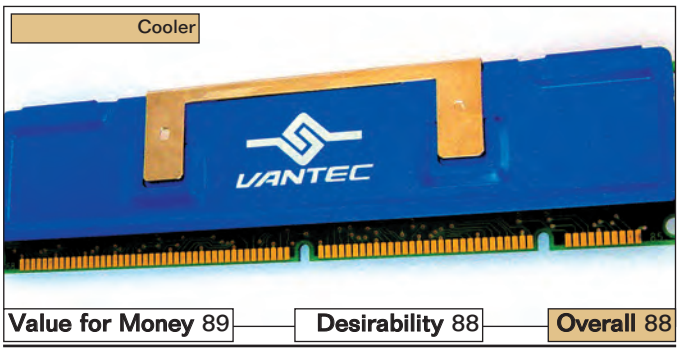
Even though this HDD cooler from Vantec is not as advanced in terms of features as some of the other products I have reviewed, it works surprisingly well. In essence all that this product is, is an aluminum alloy heat sink with two fans built into it. It screws onto the bottom end of the hard drive (where the circuitry is). I actually found it more useful on the top end of a hard drive but the problem comes in when you affix it to that side as there are no screw holes. The two fans built into the unit spin at 5000 rpm. In my test run my 7200 rpm Serial ATA hard drive actually dropped by about 7 degrees under load, not bad for a product in this price range.



Plus: Works very well | Cheap **Minus:** Not intended to cool top side of a hard drive **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728 **Internet:** www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R82

Vantec Iceberq DDR heatspreader

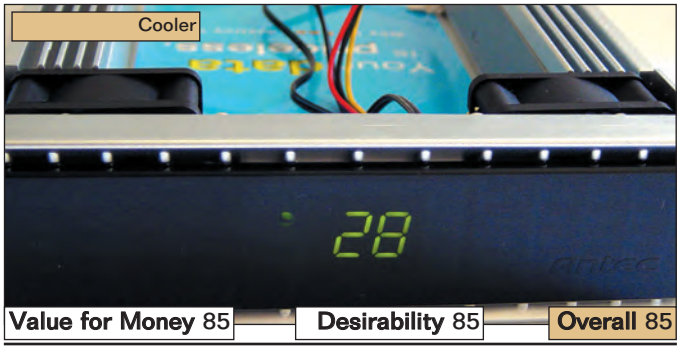
One of the most difficult tasks of over-clocking involves keeping your RAM stable. In most cases the main problem lies in bad quality RAM, but once you have decent, over-clockable RAM then life becomes a lot easier. Sadly though most of these over-clockable RAM modules have no passive cooling (meaning they have no heat sinks to keep them cool), this could become a problem as RAM that overheats is very unstable. Luckily Vantec has a solution, this product looks, smells, and tastes exactly like the coolers found on most high-end RAM modules. Installing it is extremely easy and will work on both single sided (RAM which has memory chips only on the one side) and double sided (which has memory chips on both sides) RAM. The Iceberq DDR heat-spreader consists of two aluminium sides with a clamp to fasten them together and to the RAM module.



Plus: Works great **Minus:** Nothing **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R82

Antec HD Cooler

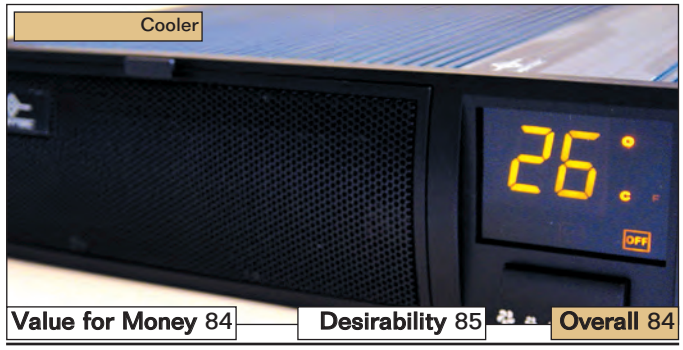
Antec is another of those companies who produce superb products. Their latest hard drive cooler offers no fancy colours and knobs but its simplicity is what makes it so great. The HD Cooler fits into an open 5 ¼ inch bay and has a black front panel. When switched on only the green digits, indicating the temperature are visible. For the most part, the HD Cooler is just a big heat sink, on the inside of the front panel are two fans which are thermally controller and have a maximum speed of 5500 RPM. The hard drive you wish to cool simply needs to be screwed into place between the two heat sinks. There are two temperature sensors included with the kit. The fan speed is determined by the temperature of the hard drive, if the hard drive is 30 degrees or below it will spin at 4500 RPM, anything over 40 degrees Celsius will cause the fans to spin at 5500 RPM. The fans are very quiet and should not pose any noise hassles.



Plus: Simple operation | Works very well **Minus:** Price **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R389

Vantec Vortex

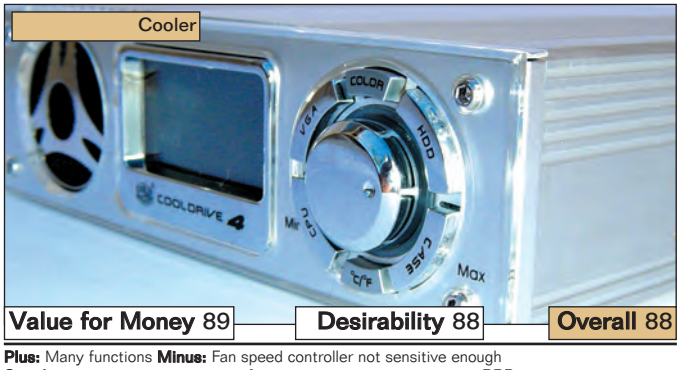
This is another of those stylish products you just have to have. Essentially this is also just a hard drive cooler but has a couple of extra's which are very handy to have. The Vortex also fits into an open 5 ¼ inch bay and sports an LCD, function button, and a mesh door. The LCD displays the current hard drive temperature as well as the fan status, this can been toggled between off, low, and high. The mesh door is the first of the handy extras on this unit. Behind the door is a special sponge-like material which is used as a dust filter. This dust filter is removable and washable and a spare one is also included in the box. Opening this door also reveals the barrel-type fan which works in the same principle as the Cooler Master Jet 7 + heat sink and fan. Inside of the Vortex you will find special noise dampening brackets on which your hard drive will fit. All in all this hard drive cooler sports all the essentials and looks great at that.



Plus: Dust filter | Noise dampeners **Minus:** Pricey **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R465

Cooler Master CoolDrive 4

This unit looks extremely funky and sports a Multi line LCD with a blue backlight, on the left side of this LCD is the air intake hole for the hard drive fan and on the right is the control panel. This panel allows you to choose which of the temperature sensors to view at any given time. By using the four supplied thermal sensors you are able to view the temperature of your graphics card, hard drive, CPU, and case. You can also use the three supplied fan extension cables to connect three fans to the CoolDrive for monitoring. The round dial in the middle of the control panel is used to adjust the fan speed of the connected fans and a feature I really liked was that the CoolDrive will sound an audible alarm when any of the connected fans drop below 500 RPM. Even though I really loved the CoolDrive, the fan adjust dial was not sensitive enough to my liking and in order for me to get the fan speed to its minimum I had to turn it about three to five times.



Plus: Many functions **Minus:** Fan speed controller not sensitive enough
Supplier: Rectron [011] 203-1000 **Internet:** www.coolermaster.com **RRP:** R460

CoolerMaster AeroGate 1

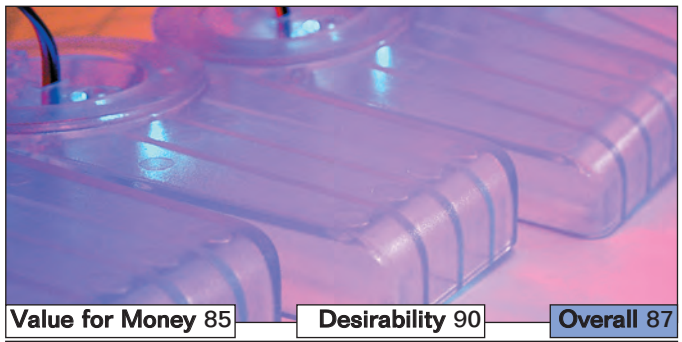
A fan control system allows you to turn down the noise levels when you are not gaming and put all the fans on max when you are. I have reviewed many fan controllers all of them work practically the same, it is for this reason that it is always difficult for manufacturers to come up with something new and exciting that would make consumers want to buy it. The AeroGate 1 is one such product. It sports a futuristic design and is able to control up to four fans. Each of the controllers are sensitive enough to get a fan from minimum to maximum RPM in one turn. Around each controller is an LED and there are three different colours you can choose from by simply pressing the Colour button on the right hand side of this product. Even though I liked the AeroGate 1 I would honestly spend the extra amount and get the CoolDrive 4 which offers the same functionality and more.

Value for Money 85 **Desirability** 85 **Overall** 85

Plus: Futuristic design **Minus:** I still prefer the CoolDrive 4 **Supplier:** Rectron [011] 203-1000
Internet: www.coolermaster.com **RRP:** R300

Sunbeam Case Chassis

If you own an Antec or Thermaltake case then this mod is for you. The feet of the cases I mentioned are all roughly the same and so are their fittings. The Sunbeam Case Chassis (the name is very confusing, I know) or case feet as I call them, are translucent and have an LED built in. ModShop supplied me with the blue LED version and I can honestly say this is a very nice mod to do. When I installed this onto my case it reminded me of the cars in the Fast 'n Furious movies with the under-car lighting. If that is your sort of thing then you would appreciate this mod even more.

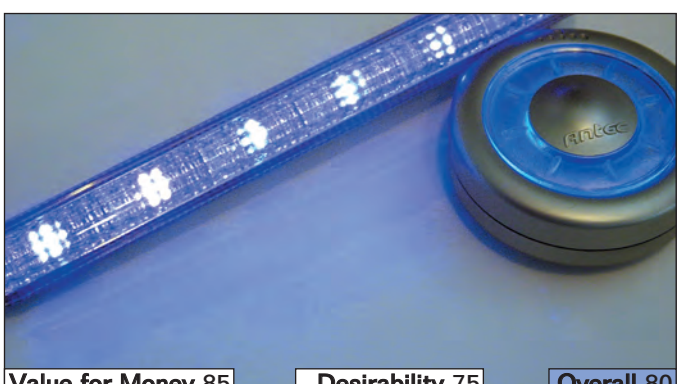


Value for Money 85 **Desirability** 90 **Overall** 87

Plus: Creates a nice effect **Minus:** Does not fit all cases **Supplier:** Modshop
Internet: www.modshop.co.za **RRP:** R 187

Antec iLuminte UV

The Antec iLuminte UV consists of three parts, first there is the UV light tube consisting of 6 UV LED's, then there is the PCI bracket which allows you to turn the unit on or off or activate the sound control, and lastly there is the external sound sensitivity dial. This external dial is quite an intuitive accessory. It is basically a round dial with a blue LED built in, the dial is used to set the sound sensitivity to which the light tube will react. What I liked about this external sound sensitivity dial is that it takes the functionality which is usually found at the back of the computer and brings it to the front. This external dial does not need to be connected in order for the light tube to work, which is great if you carry your PC around a lot.

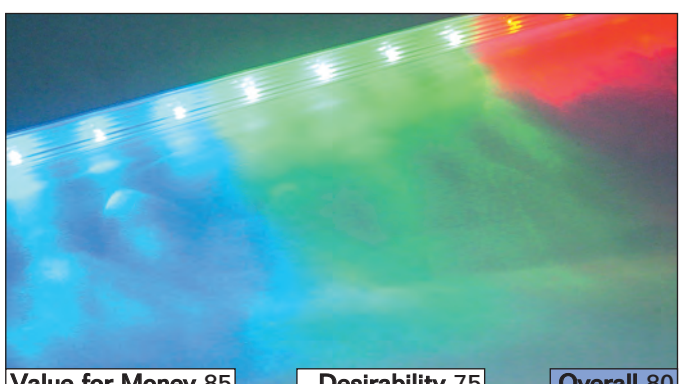


Value for Money 85 **Desirability** 75 **Overall** 80

Plus: External control dial **Minus:** It's not a UV CCFL **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R209

Sunbeam Meteor Light

If you can think of it, Sunbeam has probably manufactured it. The Meteor Light is basically a light tube with 12 LED's built in. Modshop supplied us with the multi colour version which consists of red, green, and blue LED's but single coloured versions are also available. This light is controlled via a PCI bracket which has an on/off switch as well as a function button that allows you to toggle the Meteor Light between one of eight speed settings. These include random flashing, synchronized flashing, and various fading routines. The LED's on the Meteor Light are quite bright and should light up most large cases. The only thing missing was a sound control module, which would have allowed the meteor light to react to sound, but as is, it is a funky light even though it is not really my cup of tea.

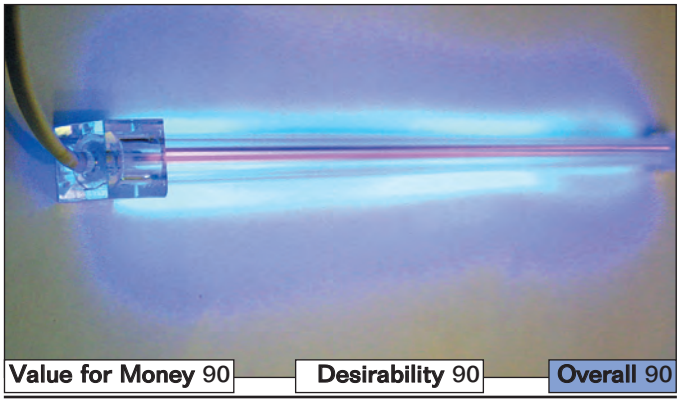


Value for Money 85 **Desirability** 75 **Overall** 80

Plus: Bright LED's **Minus:** Not everyone will like the colours **Supplier:** Modshop
Internet: www.modshop.co.za **RRP:** R165

Sunbeam UV CCFL

The Sunbeam UV CCFL is basically a UV tube connected to an inverter and a switch. What I liked about this particular switch was that it can be mounted on the front side of your case by simply drilling in your chassis or one of the face plates. This UV light is quite powerful and in conjunction with some other UV goodies such as the Sunbeam PSU mod, UV fans or the Vantec Cable Sleeving kit your case is bound to turn heads. Also if you have one of the DFI LanParty motherboards then this is a must.

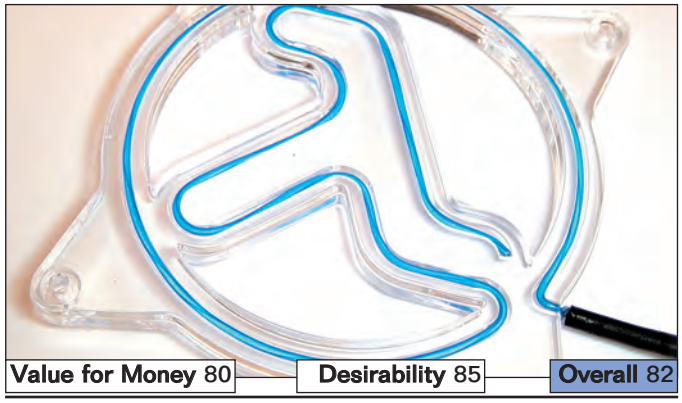


Value for Money 90 **Desirability** 90 **Overall** 90

Plus: Powerful UV CCFL **Minus:** Needs UV "compatible" mods to be effective
Supplier: Modshop **Internet:** www.modshop **RRP:** R79

Sunbeam EL Wire Fan Grill

This product really impressed me when I connected it for the first time simply because it looks so damn good. The Sunbeam EL Wire Fan Grill is constructed from a fairly thick plastic with EL wire sandwiched in the middle. The light emitted from the EL wire is not too bright making it a great choice for people who want a subtle case modification. Strangely, the only design currently available is the one I reviewed which sports the Half-Life symbol. This in itself is not bad but a variety to choose from would be so much better. I only had one concern regarding this fan grill and that was that the plastic part of it made up most of the design, this means that there is less airflow through this fan grill. But if you are a dedicated Half-life fan and want to show the world, this is the product to get.

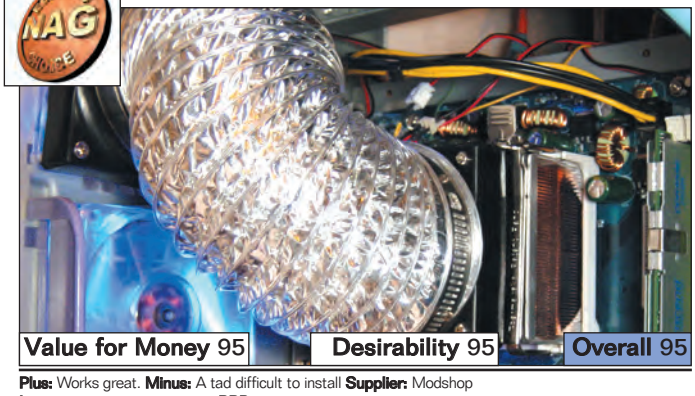


Value for Money 80 **Desirability** 85 **Overall** 82

Plus: Looks great **Minus:** Could obstruct airflow **Supplier:** Modshop
Internet: www.modshop **RRP:** R129

Sunbeam Overclockers Kit

In essence this is a ducting kit, it includes the foil-like ducting and all the necessary adapters and clamps, and there is even a dust filter included. Take note though, that the adapters will only work if you have 70 mm or 80 mm fans on either your CPU and case fans. The theory behind this kit is to allow for cool air from the outside of your case to be blown directly onto your heat sink. Traditionally only warm air is blown onto it because the air inside your case is naturally warm, even if you have good air circulation. Practically my CPU temperature dropped as much as 10 degrees, this on my 3.2 GHz Pentium 4 which now runs idle at about 30 degrees and under load just under 40 degrees. For an affordable cooling method, second only to water cooling, the Overclockers Kit is a must have.

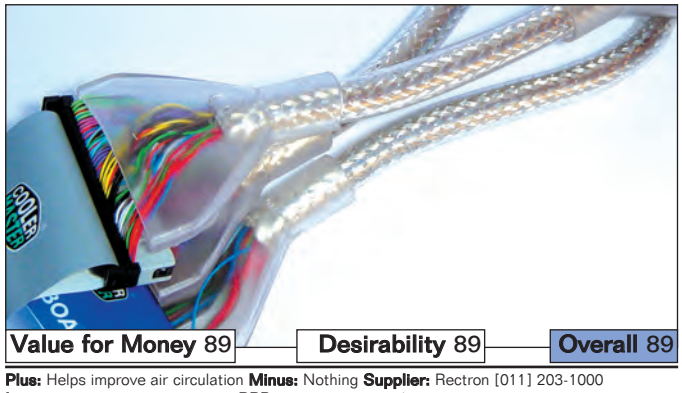


Value for Money 95 **Desirability** 95 **Overall** 95

Plus: Works great. **Minus:** A tad difficult to install **Supplier:** Modshop
Internet: www.modshop.co.za **RRP:** R165

Cooler Master Aerodynamic Cable

Rounded ATA cables have been around for a while and are usually the first thing a newbie case modder purchases as they not only look good but also helps to improve the air circulation inside your case. These cables are available in various colours but I personally prefer mine to be a neutral colour, such as the transparent cables from Cooler Master. Called the Aerodynamic Cable, these cables sport a woven aluminium foil shielding which not only looks good but also help to shield the cable from electromagnetic interference. Rectron stocks both the 60cm ATA-133 cable which is used to connect to your hard drives and the 45 cm floppy cable which connects to your stiffy drive. A feature I particularly liked was that they are colour coded and tagged so that you will easily know which sides should plug into which device.



Value for Money 89 **Desirability** 89 **Overall** 89

Plus: Helps improve air circulation **Minus:** Nothing **Supplier:** Rectron [011] 203-1000
Internet: www.coolermaster.com **RRP:** R135 (ATA-133) | R75 (Floppy)

Vantec Cable Sleeving Kit

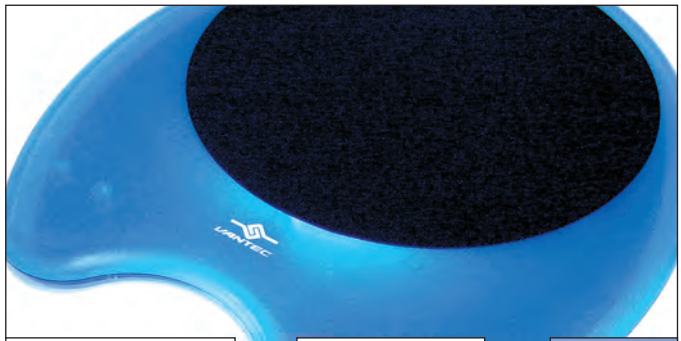
Buying round IDE cables is easy enough to do, but what do you do with all the other cables such as the power cables which look unsightly next to the rounded IDE cables? Vantec has come up with a solution, the Cable Sleeving Kit allows you to bundle any set of wires neatly and easily. The kit's contents should be enough for about two PC's wires and includes four different sized cables as well as three different sizes of heatshrink tubing and 10 cable ties. Each cable sleeve is able expand up to 150% its own size which makes pulling it over connectors no problem. Once the sleeving is in place you can use the heatshrink or cable ties to tie up the ends. Frontosa sent me both the blue sleeving and UV red kits. This is an innovative product with many uses, even outside your computer case.

Value for Money 88 | **Desirability** 88 | **Overall** 88

Plus: Many uses | Very handy **Minus:** Nothing **Supplier:** Frontosa [011] 466-4728
Internet: www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R115 (Blue) | R125 (UV)

Vantec Spectrum Mouse Pad

For the case modder who has everything, there is the Vantec Spectrum mouse pad. For the most part, the Spectrum mouse pad is made of thick plastic which has a hollow centre. In this centre there is a blue CCFL which, when switched on, illuminates the entire base. The mouse pad surface is made from PVC and offers a very smooth mousing (if there is such a term) experience. The bottom of the Spectrum mouse pad is made of rubber which is great for extra grip. The CCFL in this mouse pad gets its power from a computer's USB socket and an adapter cable is included, this cable also has a duplicate USB port allowing you to piggy-back another USB device off it. The fact that this mouse pad is slightly raised makes it all the more comfortable and the only gripe I had with it was that the mouse pad surface is not big enough and that it is slightly on the pricey side.

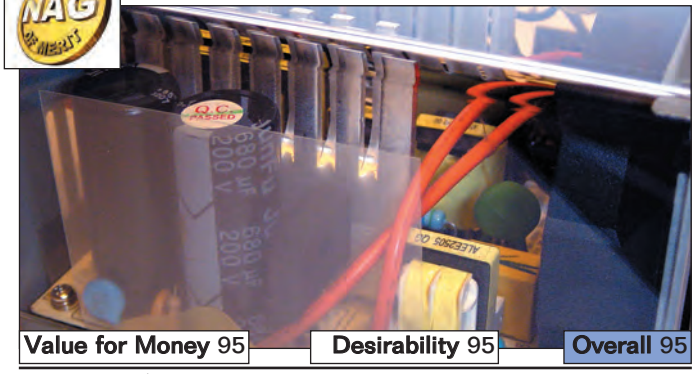


Value for Money 75 | **Desirability** 85 | **Overall** 80

Plus: Innovative idea | Looks great **Minus:** Price | Mouse pad size
Supplier: Frontosa [011] 466-4728 **Internet:** www.vantec.com.tw **RRP:** R 299

Sunbeam PSU Mod

The PSU Mod from Sunbeam is a translucent acrylic cover which replaces the one on your power supply. There are various models available including translucent UV acrylic and clear acrylic. If your power supply has a fan built into its cover there is a PSU mod which has the fan holes already cut. Installing it is very simple and should take about five minutes to do. Once the old cover has been removed, the acrylic PSU Mod can be mounted to the PSU by using the supplied double sided tape around the edge of the PSU. At about R60, this is a great mod for a great price and if you have a translucent case this is an absolute must have.

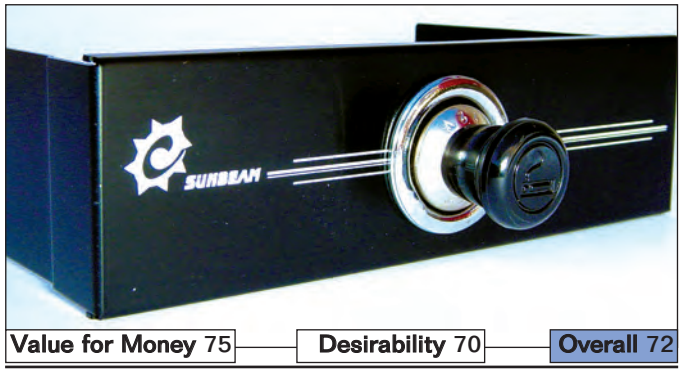


Value for Money 95 | **Desirability** 95 | **Overall** 95

Plus: Great price | Looks good **Minus:** Nothing **Supplier:** Modshop
Internet: www.modshop.co.za **RRP:** R55 (without blowhole) | R59 (with blowhole)

Tsunami Deva Mobile Storage

Now I have seen everything, the ultimate accessory for the chain smoker. This gadget is a 5 ¼ inch bracket with a 12V cigarette lighter built in. The cigarette lighter is the same as that found in most motor cars and if you want you can even connect a cell phone charger which you use in your car. When pressed, the lighter takes about 10 seconds to heat up and pops out thus if you are worried about heat issues inside your case don't be. The back of the bracket also sees a fuse holder and a fuse should the lighter or any accessory you connect to it draw too much current. Sunbeam has also already produced a 5 ¼ inch bay which not only has the cigarette lighter but also an ash tray or beverage holder. This is a novel idea which should appeal to smokers but how popular it will be in South Africa is anybodies guess. A silver version is also available.



Value for Money 75 | **Desirability** 70 | **Overall** 72

Plus: Great for smokers **Minus:** Pricey **Supplier:** Modshop **Internet:** www.modshop.co.za
RRP: R169

Anime Legends

The Pillows

Formed in 1989, The Pillows were a struggling four-piece rock outfit, trying to make it in the cut-throat world of Japanese popular music. Consisting of Sawao Yamanaka on the microphone and rhythm guitar, Yoshiaki Manabe on lead guitar, Shinichirou Satou on the drums, and Kenji Ueda on bass, the band released their first album, entitled "Moon Gold" in 1991. Heavily influenced by such western acts as Simon and Garfunkel, The Beatles and The Pixies, the first album was met with minor success - which was enough to keep them going. While Ueda (the bassist), left the band in 1992 to form his own record label, the rest of the band embarked on a tiring nationwide tour to promote themselves, borrowing a bassist from "Nino Trinca" to fill in for the missing member. The tour was an unprecedented success and ended with the recording of "White Incarnation", their second album, which was far more original and matured. By their third and fourth recordings, they had become a phenomenon in Japanese rock.
However, it is thanks to their work on the Anime Soundtrack "FLCL" in 2000 that they came to be known by western audiences. Including both original songs and remixes of previous hits, the soundtrack was released in three volumes, and was immediately acclaimed by critics the world over. The first CD, "Addict" is available through Amazon.com at $14.98, excluding shipping. Their latest independent album, entitled "Penalty Life" was released in December last year, and can be purchased, also from Amazon.com, for $46.49.

Anime DVD

FLCL
Format: Series [6 Episodes]
Language: Japanese with English subtitles
Availability: www.amazon.com - $76.68 excl. shipping. (3 separate DVDs)

The OVA or "mini-series" is quite common in the anime industry, usually telling a complete story that would be too long for a film, but not long enough for a full series. Gainax had a rather large reputation to live up to after the success of Neon Genesis Evangelion, and it was in this format that they chose to release their follow-up work, FLCL. The result was spectacular.
Also known as "Furi Kuri", or "Fooly Cooly", the story entails the life of a young teenage boy named Naota, whose older brother has recently moved to the USA to play professional baseball and left his girlfriend Mamimi behind. One day Naota receives a letter from his brother, boasting that he has got a new (American) girlfriend, and this leaves the boy the unfortunate task of breaking the news to Mamimi. The strange moments between them since his brother's departure make this even more difficult. And it is at about this point that an insane-looking woman runs over Naota in a motor-scooter and then proceeds to hit him over the head with an electric guitar. It turns out that this woman, Haruko, is Naota's new housekeeper.
Following a dual narrative, the series focuses on a rather absurd save-the-world saga and, at the same time, a sincere exploration of emotion and relationships. Seldom will one find characters so perfectly drawn, both in writing and animation. The soundtrack, composed by The Pillows, is a grungy, experimental rock arrangement which supports the visuals in quite an astounding way. This is a show packed with originality, humour, pathos and intelligence that addresses an incredibly broad spectrum of important issues. A masterpiece indeed.

Super Manga Blast
Dark Horse Manga
R 46.50

Released monthly, Super Manga Blast is Dark Horse's entrant into the manga anthology market. The company already has strong ties with Japanese publishers, since it already releases a lot of manga serials in the US. This by default makes SMB a good buy. Sporting 128 pages, it is black and white and carries about 5 stories a month from a variety of writers/artists, spanning a variety of topics from real-life to sci-fi and fantasy. The stories tend to either be continuations of storylines from older comics, or translated reprints of stories that have already appeared in Japan, varying from very recent to the early 90s. The only problem is that a lot of the stories are serials, but at least each has a prelude explaining what has happened so far.

Oh My Goddess!
Dark Horse Manga
R 26.95

Most manga and anime fans are familiar with the Oh My Goddess! series, created by Ksuke Fujishima. It's been going for years and years and years - so long so that an English translation of the serial has been around for a long time as well. Translated by Toren Smith, one of the foremost manga translators in the industry, the Dark Horse version gets a big thumbs-up from its creator, who insisted Toren and Studio Proteus take responsibility for the English editions.
Released monthly in black & white, it's 40 pages of three goddesses, their friends and situations in life in modern Japan. It's not what you'd expect and one of the vintage romantic comedy titles. Definitely give it a look.

Monster Gaming

Ben Sawyer • R236.95 [excl. del.]

Monster Gaming is perhaps one of the strangest books I have read in a long time. It is written by self-proclaimed "hardcore" gamer Ben Sawyer for anyone wanting to know about this hobby that alternates being addictive, frustrating, expensive and fun all in the space of one night.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters covering topics as diverse as "How to become a better gamer", competitive gaming and "Putting your game habit to work".

As is the case with similar books, Monster Gaming is very US-centric. Its message should therefore be treated more as a guideline than as gospel. Sawyer's insight into the gaming market is entertaining if not especially enlightening. Still, Monster Gaming contains a number of useful Web links that will point most newcomers in the right direction.

Due to legal issues, his guide to retro gaming is very politically correct in its advice. He is very MAME-biased and for good reason as this is an excellent emulator. Unfortunately, he merely describes how to control the emulator and what you can expect to do with it.

As a game reviewer I found his chapter on making money from gaming interesting. This should be considered as prescribed reading to anyone who is even considering becoming a game reviewer.

Monster Gaming is not a bad book. It is certainly an entertaining one to read and should keep you busy for an evening or two. However, do not expect amazing insight into the industry if you are more than just a casual gamer.

Music CDs

Egotrax | Various Artists | Alter Ego
A definitive compilation of the best new and remixed EBM around, Egotrax is an essential addition to an alternative music collection. Featuring 14 tracks of brilliant alternative dance music, including a few exclusive tracks.

Now 36 | Various | BMG
A typically eclectic mix that one would expect from the Now series, featuring everything from Gareth Gates to Limp Bizkit.

Northern Lights | Covenant Alter Ego
It's not the worst EBM around, but it certainly isn't the best Covenant album ever. Fans may be disappointed.

Dream Collector | Diary of Dreams | Alter Ego
All the greatest hits from this goth icon are available on this release. It's dark, depressing and great!

100 Bullets: Hang Up on the Hang Low

DC Vertigo • R76.95

What if you were given 100 bullets that are untraceable and you know that you can shoot anyone you want without consequence. This is the temptation Agent Graves presents in the epic 100 bullets series. This third graphic novel brings together the story of "Loop" Hughes, given the chance by Graves to confront his father who left him before he was even born. But the Son is soon caught in his father's criminal lifestyle - and in trouble with the mob.

While this collection doesn't explore the mythos behind Graves at all, it is a twist in the normal stories that the series tend to have with the father-son dynamic and makes for compelling reading.

The Vampire Chronicles: Blood Canticle

Anne Rice • R119.95 [excl. del.]

Ever since the release of Interview with the Vampire, Rice has succeeded in creating a world where vampires are fighting an intense emotional battle between themselves, society and what it means to be a vampire. Now, with Blood Canticle, the tenth Vampire Chronicle, Lestat is back and this time he is in love with Rowan Mayfair, a neurosurgeon that doubles as a witch.

Rice writes each Chronicle as a self-contained story as not to alienate readers not familiar with the series. Events of previous novels are mentioned, but these are not crucial narrative elements.

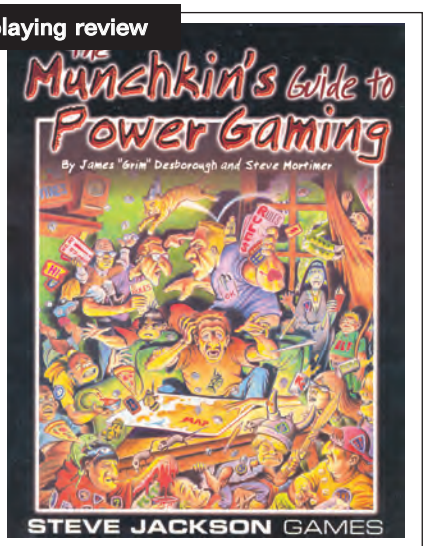
Lestat is almost as much pompous as he is engaging. He is at pains to stress to the reader that he only wants to do good in the world. He even goes so far as to imagine himself to be a saint, with all the virtues that go with it.

Unfortunately, all the witticism and wry humour of Lestat cannot save Blood Canticle from being a mediocre novel. The first half plods through. It comes across as being more of an elaborate soap opera than a stylish vampire novel. This is a pity since many of the characters are entertaining and at times even engaging. The mood of the novel is evocative of being a light-hearted comedy. However, the seriousness of the situation the various characters find themselves in remains at the forefront. Rice never wants the reader to forget that it is Lestat the powerful that is dictating the pace and not her.

books supplied by

kalahari.net®

Role playing review



The Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming
Steve Jackson Games
RRP: R 400.00

This month we take a slightly different direction in the RPG review section, because the book we're reviewing is not an RPG at all. True, it is produced by Steve Jackson Games (the guys who make GURPS) and it does deal with role playing, but it is not a game. In fact, it is a parody of gaming.
The Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming is a parody of role playing and, more accurately, role players themselves - you know the ones: power hungry maniacs who try to squeeze every ounce out of their characters. The book is divided into several sections that cover every aspect of being a power gamer. With sections on each of the main role playing genres (as well as a few general rules) the Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming covers every aspect of becoming a massively annoying gamer.
The book is riotously funny, mainly because you can see the truth in it when you read through sections like "Extra XP for Stupid Games," "Uses for Halflings," "Magic and the Art of Cheating" and "Twisting the Game." Guidelines for fudging dice rolls, defacing character sheets (so that you can hide your bad stats and claim to "remember" them later) and distracting the GM so that he loses his train of thought are all included.
There is a useful section of the book, believe it or not. Right at the end, a GM guide for dealing with power gamers has been included and there is a lot of good advice hidden in the off beat humour.
The Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming is a book that every role layer should read, even if just for the fact that it's a cracking good laugh.
That said, there s a lot of truth spoken in jest… GMs may want their players to read this book just to drop a hint or two. Then again, power gamers being what they are, they probably would miss the point entirely. But they should read it anyway.

Clix

There are those who would declare the old days of painting your own miniatures for use in tabletop warfare as the only way to play. While veteran players of games such as Warhammer 40,000 (an example of such tabletop warfare) generally scoff at the newer generation of turn-based tabletop games, it's a rapidly growing market for the exact reasons the older players don't like it. It's easy to get into and you don't have to paint the miniatures yourself.

To digress, the 'Clix' series of games by Wizkids is essentially a turn-based tabletop game in which two or more players fight each other using pre-painted miniatures. Each miniature has its own statistics and abilities, though the most unique aspect of the Clix franchise is that unlike the older games of this style of gaming, each figurine has its statistics contained within itself. When looking at the base, you can see the values that reflect how strong the character/unit is, how much damage it can take and so forth. As damage is dealt to the character, you turn the base several 'clicks' (hence the name) which then updates the statistics to reflect what the unit can now do, after that damage. Each unit has a 'point cost' assigned to it; the more powerful units cost more 'points' to put into your army while weaker ones cost less.
Clix come in a variety of genres/styles to suit almost everyone's tastes. For the more fantasy inclined, MageKnight and MageKnight Dungeons allow players to fight each other using your standard mythical creatures and characters.
Hero Clix allow players to fight using the popular DC, Marvel and other Indy comic characters (solving the questions of who would win Vs who) while Mechwarrior Dark Age pits massive Mechs (robots) against each other in a battle for dominance. Although most of the Clix games are played on a normal surface such as a table, dotted with either bought bits of landscaping (trees, toilet rolls etc) to add spice to the game (units can't shoot what they can't see), Hero Clix is played on a 'grid' to make movement easier since it's aimed at a slightly younger audience.
With the dynamics of playing made easier thanks to the click system and the rules made mostly understandable for anyone, the Clix series of tabletop gaming is a fun (and often better) alternative to a computer game. Starter Packs for each series usually retail around R130 (containing enough units for one army) while boosters (packs that contain randomly selected units, usually 4) retail for R65 (MageKnight and HeroClix) and R95 (MechWarrior).

MAGIC The Gathering®

The world's best Trading Card Game will pitch your wits against your opponents'. You'll need all the help you can get: strong creatures, nerves of steel and some serious muscle - like the one between your ears. To start playing Magic: The Gathering, nothing beats the Core Game Starter Set. It has everything two people need to play their first game. The step-by-step demo CD-Rom makes playing the first game easy.

gaMes empoRium

Distributed in South Africa
by Games Emporium
www.geon.co.za
magic@icon.co.za

The Magic: The Gathering logo and the play level logos are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. ©2003 Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Hasbro

Wizards of the Coast®

Sandman Incarnations
R 495.00

The Sandman Incarnations set features three figures, as shown here, from the Arabian Nights (with a stand and "crystal ball") and Dream Hunters incarnations of this popular comic hero. Additionally a figure of Baku (the dream eater) is also included with the set.

Carl Cthulhu
R 200.00

He's cute, he's cuddly, and he's Carl Cthulhu! Somewhere between a cute polyethylene doll and the destroyer of worlds, this figure features an electronic Gaze of Madness (flashing red eyes) and can be posed... a little.

Supplied by Outer Limits (011) 482 3771

Hellboy Weird Tales
Darkhorse
R 23.95

The red devil who goes out looking for the monsters of the night will soon have his own movie on the big screen - not bad for a character that has been obscure at the best of times. Thankfully if you aren't willing to try and get into the monthly series, Weird Tales might be exactly what you need to learn more about Hellboy. Released bi-monthly, Weird Tales is a collection of stories written and illustrated by different artists. It explores the world Hellboy lives in, based around events he was involved in and that he and his team investigated. These range from monsters of the night to undead hitmen out to settle a score to strange occurrences in World War 2. Well worth reading, if only for the extensive variation in stories.

The Darkness
Top Cow
R 23.50

The Darkness originally saw the light in the late 90s when the Top Cow brand launched. Immensely hyped, it was the collaboration between artist extraordinaire Marc Silvestri and writer Garth Ennis, whose creation honours include Dicks and Preacher. Both have since left, but the series still goes strong and has recently gone into Volume 2, so new readers should easily hop on and learn more about the mysterious hitman who has the power of The Darkness - something he can't quite control but helps him in his job, not to mention some really nasty things that are attracted to his abilities... It's over-the-top, as you'd expect from Top Cow, but the art and design is top notch, with a good story to back it.

www.vietnamwar.net
It is Vietnam month this month with the release of the new Battlefield, so an education is in order. While this site looks as exciting as a bowl of peas, it's very substantial in information regarding the conflict. It even covers the history of Vietnam itself and links to a plethora of books and other sites on the subject. A must-read for anyone who still thinks Charlie Sheen had something to do with it.

www.lordoftherhymes.com
Ah, what do you get when you combine geekdom, a fascination with a bunch of books written over a century ago and bad hip-hop? You have this site. Okay, the little rap overture about Tolkien stuff isn't that bad, but the fan photos are just plain scary. Look, just because you look like Gollum it's no excuse to go running around in a thong with a piece of rope around your neck...

www.callofcthulhu.com
The official website to one of the more promising shooters coming out this year is finally up. From the layman's perspective there's little to get excited over, but if you have an interest in games that run towards Lovecraftian horror with open tentacles, or just shooter with heavy horror influences (like Undying), you should be very interested.

www.lexandterry.com/doc-olsen-twins-countdown.html
A quick vote around the office confirmed that this site actually contains useful information: a countdown clock of when the Olsen Twins will be of legal consent. Yes, the two blondes have come a long way since playing a little girl in that awful show that also gave us Bob Saget. Alas, they still make crap movies and games. But hey, every depraved generation needs a pipe-dream.

www.gamedesignx.com
No, it's no Game-sutra. In fact, it's far from it, but anyone who is interested in game design should at least give this guy's page a look. A game designer himself, he posts the occasional article on art, though you'd probably be more interested in the forums as well as the interesting Hall of Fame, covering some of the greater game design minds (and not all of them are Japanese).

www.worldofmi.com/features/comics/
Certain games just seem to amass strange cult followings that spawn a ton of fan-based creations - something that might not always be a healthy pass-time. For instance, Final Fantasy sprite comics are very common. Monkey Island also has a bit to show off in this area, though hand-drawn stuff is more the ilk. This site hosts two fair examples that are a good read if you're bored.

www.suite101.com/files/mysites/AskAlice/Clock.htm
Our resident internet snob and webmaster snubbed this site, mumbled something about random delays and went back to complaining about formless Flash. But the rest of us, being in tune with the common man and all, love cool looking yet useless stuff - and this site embodies that in a weird text clock that flows over the page as you move your mouse. In fact, it looks so cool it must be important.

Classic Machine

SPECIFICATIONS

Though bulkier than its Sinclair rival, there was no doubt that the C64 packed the meaner punch.

Processor	6510
Speed	1MHz
RAM	64Kb
Size	404 x 216 x 75mm
Weight	1280g

WHY DID THE C64 HAVE TO PLAY SECOND FIDDLE TO THE SPECTRUM? IT WAS GREAT...

Though many agree that the Spectrum was the 'Daddy' of home computers, there's an equally large group of old-school gamers who'd argue otherwise and not without good reason.

You see, while the Spectrum was massively popular in the UK, it was the Commodore 64 that went on to become the world's most popular 8-bit home computer. Launched in America in 1982, the C64 (as it became more widely known) was the successor to Commodore's first home computer outing, the VIC 20. Initially, the C64 was seen as overpriced - particularly in the UK - where the hefty £400 price tag was deemed a tad expensive in a market where the inferior (in terms of processing power) Spectrum 48K was much more competitively priced. All that changed in 1984 though, when the C64's price was lowered to a more reasonable £200.

It was this decrease that sparked the war of the home computers that would rage until the end of the decade only to finally peter out the early Nineties. N

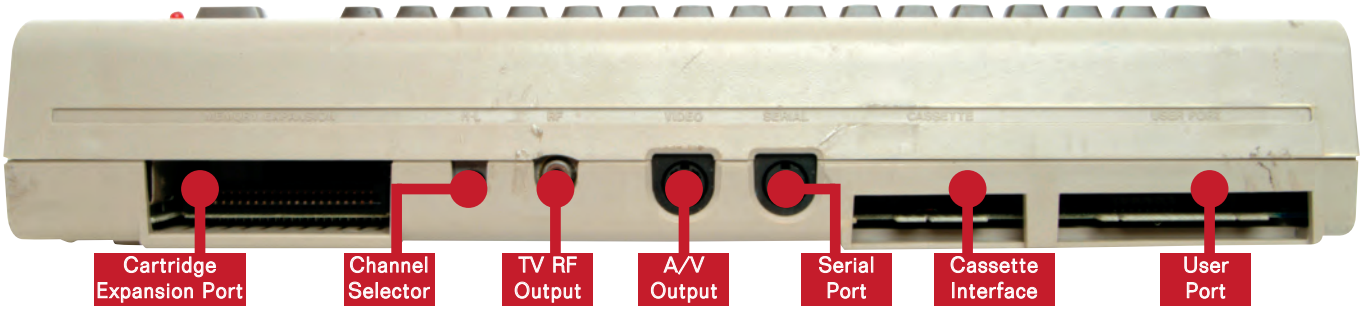
commodore

A WHITER SHADE OF, ERR, OFF-WHITE

The first C64s were off-white in colour, bearing a strong similarity to their predecessor. This soon changed (presumably to distance the computer from its older sibling), and the brown version seen above is best remembered. However, as the C64 became more successful, CBM (Commodore Business Machines) decided to capitalise on the success of the brand by releasing different versions of the machine.

The C128 was more powerful than its predecessor but didn't take off as developers preferred to design for the C64 and its large installed user base. The C128 had a C64 mode for running the older machine's software, but it still failed to match the sales of the earlier version. Attempts to release variants of the C64 were also mired by the fact they either weren't compatible with the C64 or were seen as lesser versions of the original.

Poor product design also played a part. For example, the SX64 (left) - a portable C64 complete with 5-inch screen and disk drive - didn't have a rechargeable battery (duh!) and the screen was too small to use...



© Highbury - Paragon Ltd 2003

Key games

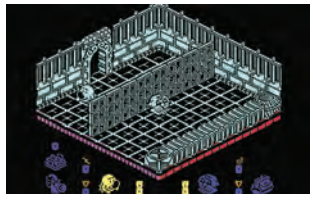
There were many crossovers between the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC range and the Commodore, but these are our favourite games for the C64

THE SENTINEL

Widely regarded as an all-time classic, Geoff Crammond's perfectly executed and unique game enthralled C64 users back in 1986. This strategy game featured 10,000 levels pitting you, the Synthoid, against the threat of the eponymous Sentinel. Taking the Synthoid, you had to make your way toward the Sentinel while remaining undetected in an electronic game of cat and mouse. Detection meant that the Synthoid's energy would be drained, so making your way to a position where you could see the square that was home to your foe (and thus drain the Sentinel's own power) was devilishly difficult. Fancy repeating the process a thousand times? No? Thanks to a blindingly addictive play dynamic and stunning graphics (for its time), plenty of people tried…

HEAD OVER HEELS

For those of a certain age, the isometric puzzle games of Bernie Drummond and Jon Ritman were, and remain, really rather special. Batman had demonstrated what the two were capable of but it was Head Over Heels that took the genre to new heights. Released in 1987, the game placed you in control of two characters, Head and Heels. Each had special abilities that you had to use independently to access rooms containing the requisite tough-as-a-tough-ened-nut puzzles. However, at some points you could actually combine the two (hence the title of the game) which merged their abilities to enable you to tackle yet more of the 301 locations on offer. Beautiful to look at and harder than steel, it remains a true classic that we'd love to see return…



WIZBALL

It's a game about a wizard who's trapped in a ball - get it? Another Ocean classic and certainly one of our favourite games of 1987, here you had to do battle with Zark, who had drained your world of colour. Your mission (with the aid of your cat) was to restore colour to each of the increasingly challenging levels. It was essentially a shoot-'em-up, the twist being that you had to learn how to control said ball-shaped wizard. Mastering this bouncy magician took some doing, but as the level of difficulty increased you were also awarded much-needed power-ups. A triumph for original gaming, Wizball combined gorgeous graphics by Mark Jones with some impressive music and sound effects.

PERIPHERALS AND ADD-ONS

As is the case with most hardware, the Commodore 64 was home to a surprising number of peripherals and add-ons to help keep pace with changing times and needs of its users. As the machine was supposed to be a home computer, many of these were tailored to serve more serious purposes.

The C64 could happily support a printer, a housebrick-sized 170K floppy disk drive and a Datasette. However, a modem was also released as well as a mouse, which made playing Arkanoid even more of a joy. Most importantly, the C64 had two joystick ports, which is all that really mattered.

"WHY I LOVE THE COMMODORE 64"

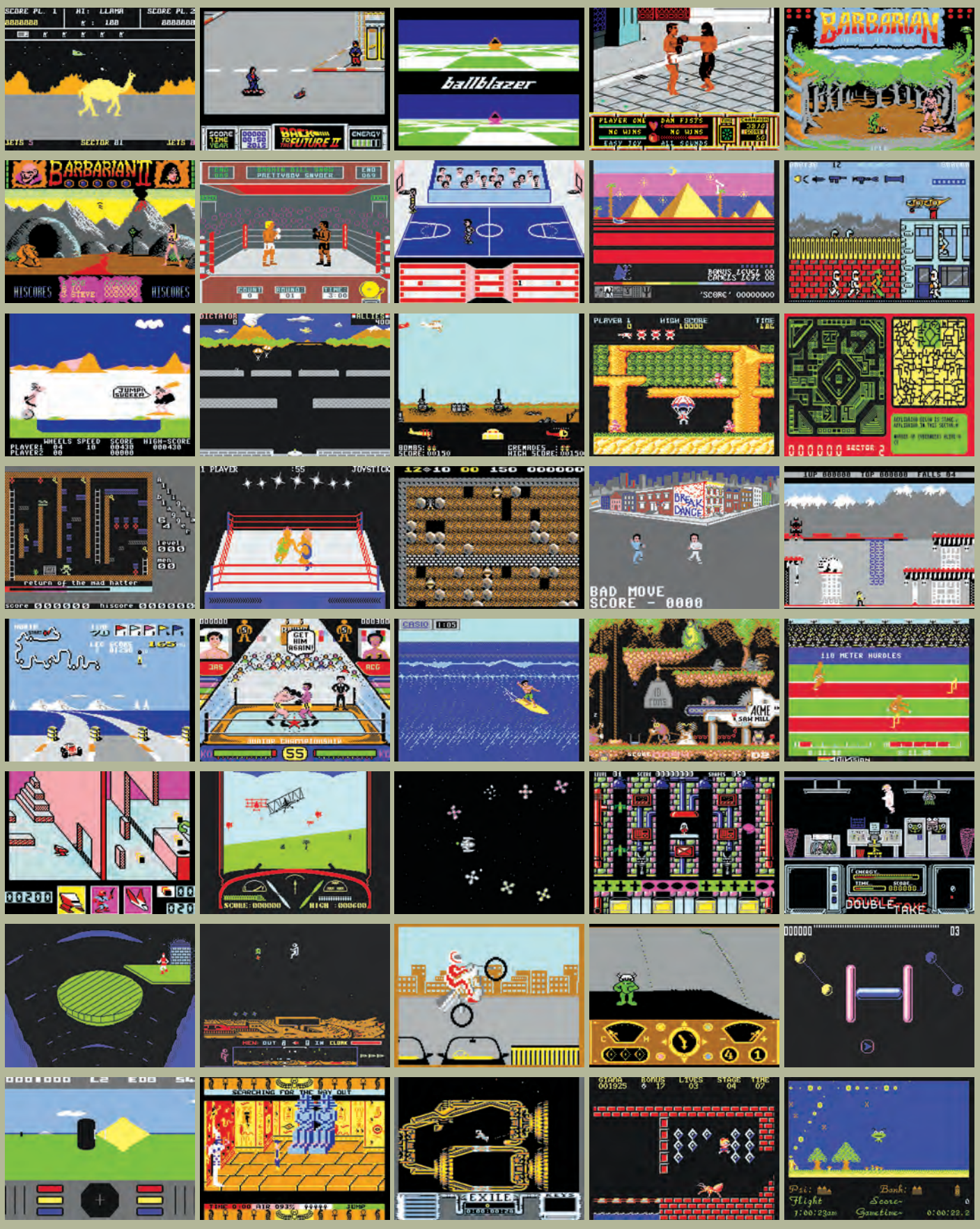
My first real glimpse of the eye-stinging ultra-colourful world of the sublime Commodore 64 was playing Rocket Ball and then Knight Games at Mark Tyrie's house. I simply couldn't believe the difference in quality between this sumptuous block of fudge and my faithful old ZX Spectrum, which by now had gone through its second keyboard membrane and fifteenth Quickshot microswitch joystick.

I was determined to join the C64 club and fortune smiled on me - during work experience in the Computer Cabin (now a flower shop), I discovered a forgotten pre-order still in the box. Up the jumper, down the fire escape and away, as they say.

Before the fuse blew and I upgraded to an Atari ST and then MegaDrive, my hearing-aid-beige wonder allowed me to sample the delights of Psi-5 Trading Company, Uridium, Paradroid, Wizball, Zak McKracken, Buggy Boy, Gunship, Armalyte, Law Of The West and my favourite, Bubble Bobble. And of course, if you download the appropriate emulator you can now enjoy the delights of all these games without the tape loading hassle. Bliss.

Damian Butt

commodore 64



Classic Machine

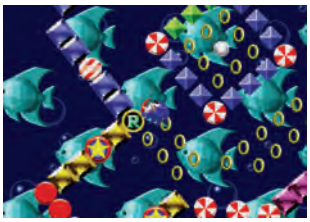
Page 1 [top to bottom left to right]
Attack of the Mutant Camels, Back to the Future, Ballblazer, Bangkok Knights, Barbarian, Barbarian II, Barry McGuigan Boxing, Basket Master, Batalyx, Bazooka Bill, BCS Quest for Tires, Beach Head II, Biggles, Bionic Commando, Blade Runner, Blagger 64, Bop n Wrestle, Boulder Dash, Break Dance, Bruce Lee, Buggy Bog, By Fair Means of Foul, California Games, Creatures, Decathlon, Deceptor, Deep Strike, Delta, Dizzy Panic, Double Take, Dragons Lair, Dropzone, Eddie Kidd Jump Challenge, Eidolon, E-motion, Encounter, Entombed, Exile, Great Giana Sisters, Gribblys Day Out

Page 2 [top to bottom left to right]
Grogs Revenge, Hate, Hacker, Hardball, Hawkeye, Hunchback II Quasimodo's Revenge, Hypaball, I-ball, Imhotep, Impossible Mission, Pac-Land, Pac-Mania, Paradroid, Parallax, Paratroopers, Park Patrol, Ping Pong, Pirates, Pitfall, Pitstop, Platoon, Power Drift, Predator, Sanxion, Summer Games, Super Pipeline, Tapper, Target Renegade, Test Drive, Thing on a Spring, Thundercats, Up n Down, Uridium, Usagi Yojimbo, Way of the Exploding Fist, WEC Le Mans, Westbank, Wheel Soccer, Wheelin Wallie, William Wobbler

LEGACY

Sonic the Hedgehog

It's everyone's favourite Hedgehog! Sonic has been around for nearly 15 years, so here's a rundown of his career...



Sonic the Hedgehog (1991)
Gamegear, Sega Master System, Genesis

Sonic the Hedgehog 2 (1992)
Gamegear, Sega Master System, Genesis

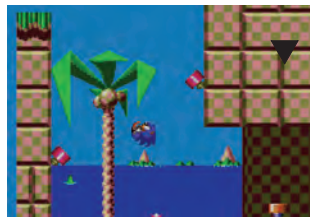
Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (1993)
Genesis

Sonic CD (1993)
PC, Sega CD

Sonic R (1997)
Windows, Saturn

Sonic 3D Blast (1996)
Windows, Genesis, Saturn

Sonic & Knuckles (1994)
Genesis



Sonic the Hedgehog Chaos (1993)
Game Gear, Sega Master System

Sonic Adventure (1998)
Dreamcast

Sonic Shuffle (2000)
Dreamcast

Sonic Adventure 2 (2001)
Dreamcast

Sonic Advance (2002)
Gameboy Advance, N-Gage

Sonic Battle (2004)
Gameboy Advance

Sonic Heroes (2003)
Gamecube, Xbox, Playstation 2

Sonic Advance 2 (2003)
Gameboy Advance

November 2003

December 2003

January 2004

February 2004

March 2004

April 2004

May 2004

Subscribe now and save R 80.00

For your money you get the following:

■ **12** issues of New Age Gaming delivered to your postal address ■ **12** Cover CDs attached to the 12 issues delivered to your postal address ■ **12** clear plastic bags containing 12 issues of New Age Gaming delivered to your postal address also containing 12 Cover CD's ■ **Interesting** text to read each month… ■ **Exciting** files on the Cover CD ■ **The** satisfaction of knowing you have people out there who will pretend to like you because you paid them money ■ **A** nice 'suck-up' letter once a year reminding you to renew your subscription ■ **B**eing able to say, 'I'm a subscriber' when you call or e-mail us and thinking we're going to treat you better than everyone else. What else…Umm, Yes! Save R 80.00 a year!
Hang on… there's one more thing - never run the risk of missing an issue because you were too slow one day.

Yes, [I bought into the marketing hype] and I want to subscribe for R 340.00 - so hurry up and send me my first issue!

Your Title [Mr. or Mrs. Etc]: _____

Your Name [first name]: _____

and Surname [last name]: _____

Only R 340

◄Postal Address

_____

_____

_____

Where must we send the magazine [please triple check this - if it's wrong and we have to send another issue just because of something you messed up, it's going to be deducted off your total remaining magazines]

The day you were born: _____

Your age: _____

Please choose payment method

Bank Deposit ☐ Cheque ☐ Postal Order ☐

Contact Details►

Telephone work: _____

Telephone home: _____

Fax: _____

Cellular: _____

E-mail: _____

Can we send unsolicited material [special offers] to your postal address or E-mail address - you'll like them!

Yes ☐ No ☐

Here are the Bank Account details [use these details when putting money into our bank account]
NAG Magazine - Nedbank - Account Number:1469 083 280 - Branch Code:146905 [Hyde Park]
Once you have paid the money into our account fax us a copy of the subscription form plus the bank deposit slip to [011] 704 2948 - no deposit slip = no subscription.

Please make cheques and postal orders out to 'NAG Magazine' and then mail the completed form above [Photostats are acceptable] to 'Subscription Department' P O Box 237 Olivedale 2158.

For further information please contact the subscriptions office on **[011] 704 2701** between the hours of **09h00 & 15h00** or **subs@nag.co.za** anytime.

For those of you lacking a military background that's 9am in the morning to 3pm in the afternoon - if you can't call between those times then send an e-mail to subs@nag.co.za and if you don't have e-mail then send a fax anytime to [011] 704 2948. Please make sure you write clearly. With e-mail and fax enquiries expect to be contacted within 24 hours of sending your enquiry.

Please allow 4-6 weeks delivery for your first issue. Although we try our best to ensure you have your magazine before everyone else this sometimes just isn't the case. Just remember the point of a subscription is convenience and saving cash - not getting it before everyone else.

Please note that all the outlined subscription rates and offers are only valid for postal addresses in South Africa. If you live outside the borders of South Africa and would like to receive the magazine on a monthly basis please contact the subscription department directly for pricing.

Lost a letter to... RAMPAGE

Criticism is wonderfully useful... when you can make out what it says...

Here at NAG we have a simple mission that we pursue every month. It is, quite simply, to bring our readers the best possible information relating to electronic entertainment, and the lifestyle that surrounds it. We work hard (believe it or not) to make this mission become a reality each and every time we go to print. But sometimes one has to sit back and think... why do we bother?

Why? Because I firmly believe that the intelligence of the readers we create this magazine for can be measured through their complaints... and they aren't very good complaints.

We enjoy constructive criticism here at the office, because we like to keep improving our magazine in ways that make it more valuable to our readers. A well thought out and intelligently written letter pointing out faults that could be addressed is valuable to us. By reading these letters we can create a better magazine for all those out there who read it... feedback is great. The truth of the matter is, though, that we very rarely get feedback or criticism that contains any value whatsoever. Mostly, we get things like "this and that SUX and I don't like the smell of teh ink and I think (insert name here) is a n00b and..." Hardly valuable criticism at all, I am sure you'll agree. This kind of letter needs to be almost business-like in its approach, if it is to be taken seriously. A well written letter is far more likely to get a positive response from us.

So, to help us by helping you, I am going to give you a few pointers on how to write a good letter of criticism.

1. Learn how to spell. Really, it helps.
2. Learn about punctuation... you know, those strange dots and squiggles that truly literate people use.
3. Realise, for once, that there is a definite divide between num bers and letters. Your friends may think that your command of leet speak is awesome. We don't.
4. Make a point. Saying something sucks is not a point. Providing arguments for why it sucks is.
5. Sentences have structure. Sentences need to make sense. It's called grammar.
6. Use a dictionary to check all those big words you're using. You will probably realise that you're not as smart as you think.
7. Sign your name. It's hard sending letter bombs to anonymous people.

Next Month

Soft Stuff: [Grade 1 mathematics]
Okay, we admit - this part of the magazine is a bad idea. Next month… who gives a blown nose about next month when you're still busy with the current month? If things don't improve soon expect this to disappear. Anyway, next month [sigh], we'll probably have a strategy guide for Unreal Tournament 2004 and reviews of Breed, Deus Ex: Invisible War and Forbidden Siren, and… oh, someone gave us a CD with 5 free Barney the Dinosaur games on it, so if we're pushed for space… [Hey, it's better than Counter-Strike].
James also didn't really have anything solid in terms of features at time of asking - he's still a little shaken and won't admit to still hiding under his duvet after he got 'too close' researching the survival horror feature - so no dice there.

Look. Bottom line, it's another issue of NAG next month - how bad could it be? Oh, we also put on our Spider-Man pyjamas and get into bed with Peter Parker…

Hard Stuff: [Quantum physics]
As usual hardware is difficult to see, just like the future. From certain items laying around the office it's fairly certain that we'll be talking about wireless networking or wireless Internet [if we can fill in the 189 required forms], and we'll also have a look at PCI express technology and use more terms designed to add to your already full head. Interestingly, in the retro section we dig about inside the ZX Spectrum.

Timing:
The June issue will be on-shelf 27 May 2004.

Disclaimer: *Tinkering around with explosive and religious cults is bad for you - play games instead.*

NAG

publishus:
replay itv media (pty) ltd

editorius sittius aroundus:
michael james
ed@nag.co.za
+27 83 409 8220

featurius hackorii:
james francis
james@nag.co.za

sellus addus:
len nery
sales@nag.co.za
+27 84 594 9909

staffis motivationorus:
lauren das neves
lauren@nag.co.za

stickustuffus onpagii:
walt pretorius

webbus discus plebus:
edouard dracon

writerii stuffius:
adam liebman
alex jelagin
andrew stephens
anton lines
daniel wilks
derek dela fuente
eddie francis
edouard dracon
grant charlton
iwan pienaar
james francis
michael black
russell bennett
tom taylor
walt pretorius
scribus maximus

nag magazine
p o box 237
olivedale
2158
south africa
tel +27 11 704 2701
fax +27 11 704 2948

subscriptions department
09h00 - 15h00
subs@nag.co.za

internet
www.nag.co.za

printing:
print ability
+27 11 785 4000

distribution sa:
junk mail distribution

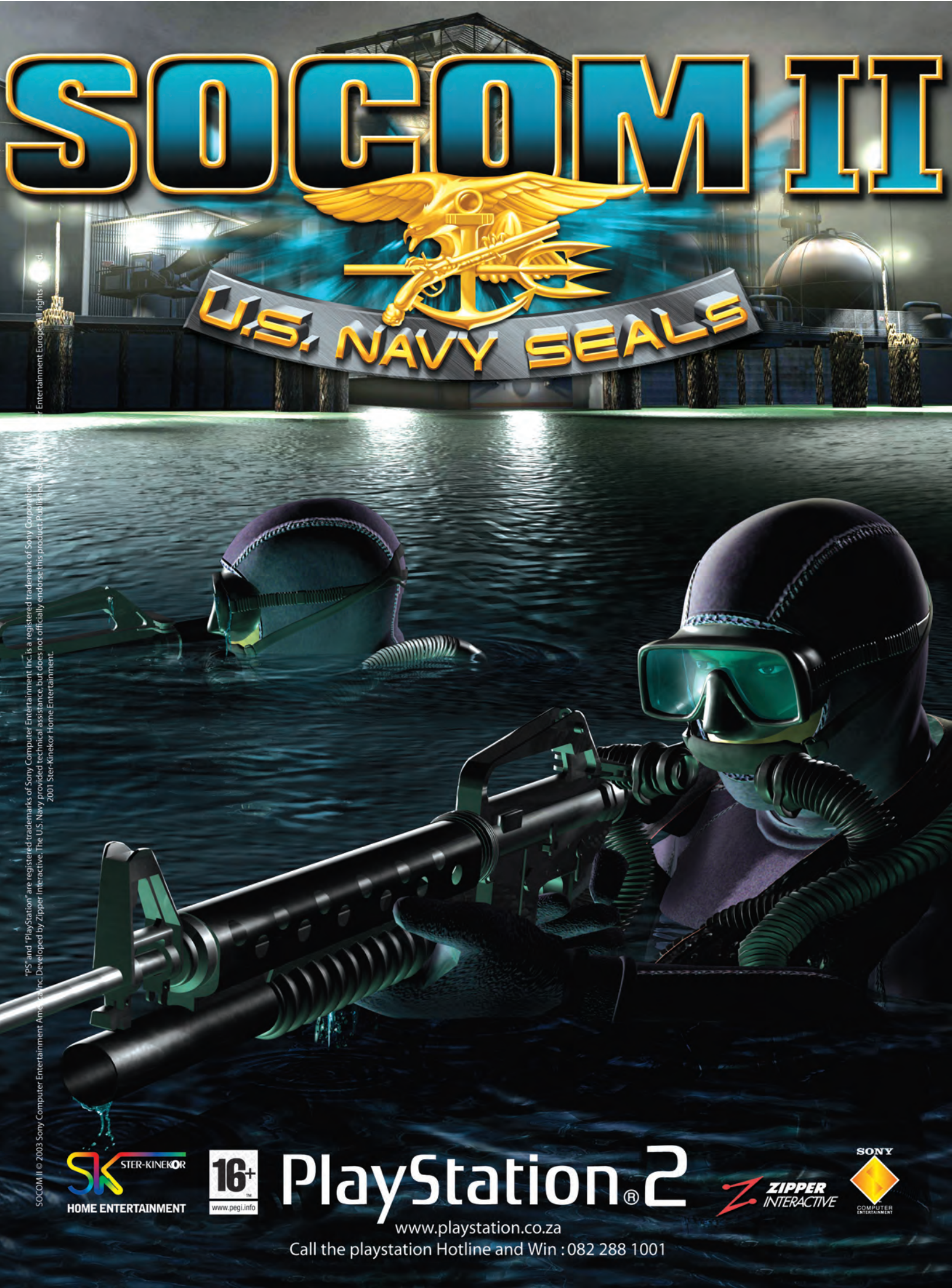
distribution international:
stp distributors

games™

Richard Huddy interview and Commodore 64 are reproduced from the magazine games™ under licence from Highbury - Paragon Ltd.
© Highbury - Paragon Ltd 2003
Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth BH1 2JS, United Kingdom.
Tel: +44 1202 200 205
www.paragon.co.uk

Copyright 2004 Replay ITV Media (Pty) Ltd. All rights reserved. No article or picture in this magazine may be reproduced, copied or transmitted in any form whatsoever without the express written consent of the Publisher. Opinions expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Publisher or the Editors. All Trademarks and Registered Trademarks are the sole property of their respective owners.

"Miktar and Priest, sitting in a tree..."



"PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. is a registered trademark of Sony Corporation
SOCOM II © 2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Zipper Interactive. The U.S. Navy provided technical assistance, but does not officially endorse this product. Published by Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. All rights reserved.
2001 Ster-Kinekor Home Entertainment.

STER-KINEKOR HOME ENTERTAINMENT

16+ www.pegi.info

PlayStation®2

ZIPPER INTERACTIVE

SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

www.playstation.co.za

Call the playstation Hotline and Win : 082 288 1001

AOpen

XCcube edition
Fun Your Life

www.aopen.com

Young · Sporty · Active

Perfect for an Active Lifestyle

EX65/EX18 Sporty XCcube PC

The XC Cube symbolizes a new computing life style, complements the most modern interior-design; quietly simplifies new home-leisure comforts; and provides a new way to connect to the world.
Enjoy all the fun of your life with your XC Cube.

For an Active lifestyle

Front USB & Audio Front Firewire

Digital Audio output

Yuppie & AV Edition

XC cube - Yuppie

Compact aluminum chassis
220W power supply
Intel 865G / nForce2GT chipset,
Support P4 / AMD K7
Support Dual DDR400
Front USB & Audio
1394, S/PDIF support

XC cube - AV Edition

Compact aluminum chassis
Intel 865G chipset,
Support P4 800MHz
Front USB & Audio & 1394,
& S/PDIF support
Support Dual DDR400
Built-in TV card /
FM Tuner & Remote Control

SPECIFICATIONS:

		EX65PE	EX65	EX18
CPU	TYPE	Intel P4/Celeron	Intel P4/Celeron	AMD K7
	FSB	400/533/800	400/533/800	200/266/333
CHIPSET		Intel 865PE / ICH5	Intel 865PE / ICH5	nForce2-GT/MCP-T
VGA		None	8X AGP (OnDie)	8X AGP (OnDie)
SOUND		AC97 5.1	AC97 5.1	AC97 5.1
LAN		10/100/1000	10/100/1000	10/100/1000
SATA		2	2	None
USB2.0		2	2	2
IEEE1394		2	2	1
DIMENSIONS		300(L) x 200(W) x 185(H)mm	300(L) x 200(W) x 185(H)mm	300(L) x 200(W) x 185(H)mm

Johannesburg: Tel: (011) 203 1000
Cape Town: Tel: (021) 555 7111
Durban: Tel: (031) 571 8888
Port Elizabeth: Tel: (041) 363 8088
Bloemfontein: Tel: (051)430 0000

CRN Outlook Awards: AOpen Desktop PC "Channel Champions 2003"