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 Minimum Specifications June 2004: Pentium 3 | GHz | 256 MB RAM | 64 MB DSD Video Accelerator | 300 MB HD

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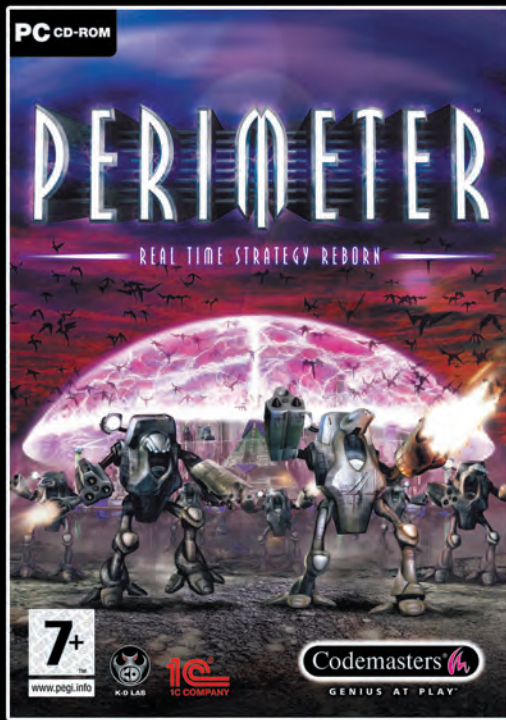


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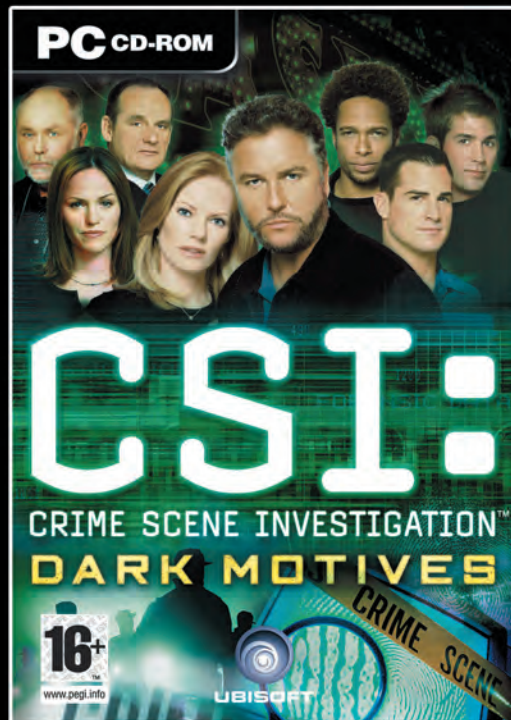
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Perimeter

Perimeter is a real-time strategy game built on the concept of territory seizure using detailed terraforming and on the subsequent encircling of these zones with a special protective perimeter. The game combines proven principles of controlling resources and unit groups with titles featuring a clear-cut seizure of living space. The gamer has three powers at his or her disposal: The first is terraforming. The second is being able to surround areas of land with an impenetrable force barrier generated by special perimeter units. The third power is being able to carry out military operations with the help of ground and air forces.



CSI 2: Dark Motives

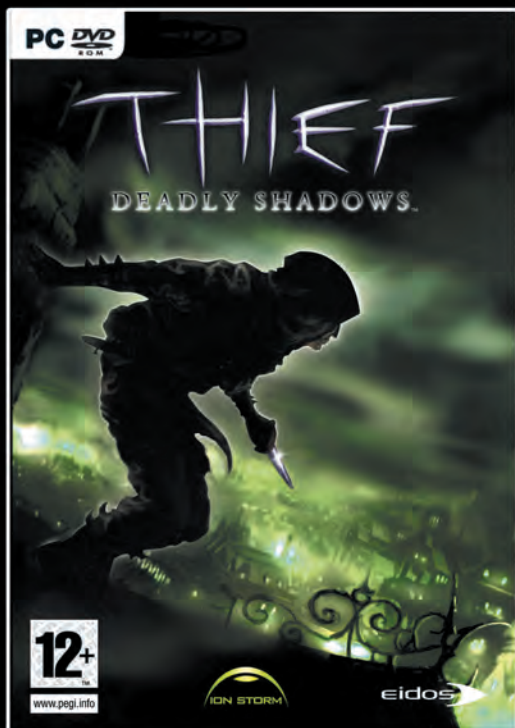
Building off the success of Ubisoft's top-selling CSI: Crime Scene Investigation PC game, CSI 2: Dark Motives is a first-person adventure game that will test players' nerves and intellect as they examine crime scenes, question witnesses and analyze evidence utilizing the latest in forensic equipment. The new CSI PC game features a number of play dynamic improvements including in-depth evidence examination, scalable difficulty and more interactive lab functionality. CSI 2: Dark Motives will once again feature the likenesses and voices of the entire CSI cast.



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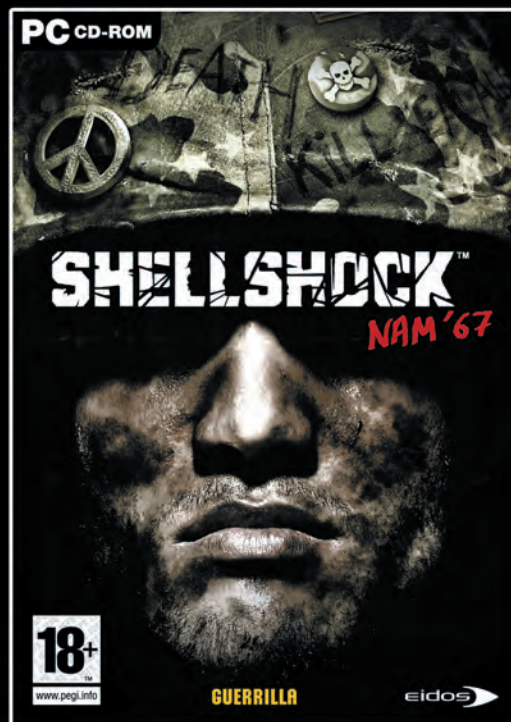
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ShellShock: Nam '67

ShellShock: Nam '67 delivers a graphically harrowing depiction of the terror of combat. You must fight your way through a variety of missions ranging from large scale battlefield encounters with the North Vietnamese Army to stealth-based missions such as assassinating a VC General. As you progress from a 'grunt' to Special Forces carrying out classified missions, you will have to rely on the same skills and tactics employed in the battlefields of Vietnam in order to survive.

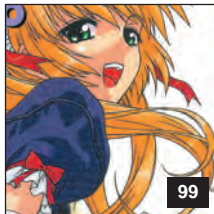


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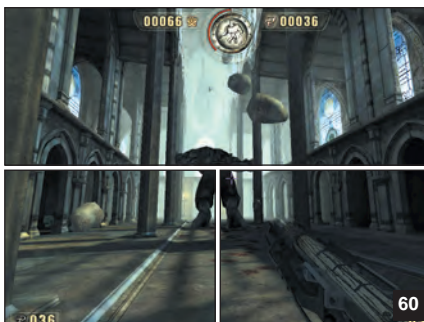
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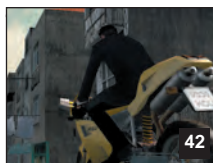
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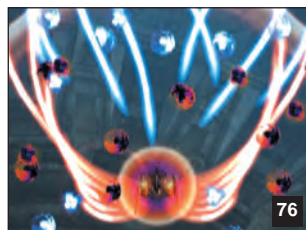
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Control



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		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
USB 2.0		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

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CRN Outlook Awards: AOpen Desktop PC
"Channel Champions 2003"

It came as a revelation, a profound moment I'll not easily forget (like the time I realised all computer games are just made up of millions of tiny dots - just zoom in really close and you'll see what I mean), anyway back to my moment.

I finally figured out what gets me up in the morning - simplicity. I love Painkiller, Far Cry and Unreal Tournament 2004 because they are easy to play [except for remembering which key combos in UT2K4 activate which adrenaline power-up]. The best example is Painkiller, here's a game where you dodge enemies, kill enemies and work your way through the linear levels and, bless the developers, collect gold coins. This is simple gaming at its best. These days I tend to steer clear of the complexities of games like Splinter Cell and even worse, Deus Ex. Can you believe how much equipment you have to manage in that game and how many different things you can do to a door knob? Even simulators are getting a little too clever for their own good; there were just too many things to do in X2: The Threat for me to enjoy the simple pleasures of climbing into my spaceship and smacking tar and laying feather across the galaxy - what ever happened to good old fashioned Quake in space [Wing Commander]? Chris Taylor had it right when he presented his revolutionary vision for Dungeon Siege at an E3 Expo a few years back - keep it simple, have a button that you can press that tells your hero to collect all the items on the ground, make a game that let's players buy a mule to cart all that crap around. In Diablo I used the Town Portal spell so much my hero started looking a little sea sick. With all the rigours and aggravation of everyday life all I expect from a game is a little simple fun. It's so bad these days that I'm at risk of having an anxiety attack when a game presents me with a fork in the pathway, all I want in my underground bunkers are bad guy grunts, lava, exploding barrels or crates and plenty of weapons. Having to decide if I must go left or right and then worry about remembering how to get back to the fork if the pathway I choose suddenly presents another fork is just too much pressure. I applaud dumb games, no wait, I give them a standing ovation; I love their simple open and shut levels, I adore their moronic play dynamic - the last place I need more stress from in my life is the games I play.

Well, that's just me.

Exciting times

There is always an electric buzzing atmosphere in the office before the madness that is E3 strikes. As I sit here pecking away, surfing a few gaming sites hoping to scalp an idea or two for this column it's exactly: 09:02:25:12... 11... 10... 9 days, hours, minutes and seconds to go until the biggest gaming event on the calendar begins. I can't go this year < sob > thanks to work commitments - great job I have, too busy with a gaming magazine to go to E3? Something seems wrong here... anyway I won't miss the 22 hours spent inside an airbus, the anal Americans at customs, the \$20 T-Shirts on Hollywood Boulevard and above all the droves of people who aren't really supposed to be at E3 but got in because their cousin cleans the toilets at Valve Software... I suppose I'm just bitter about it then. Never fear however, NAG is sending James and Lauren to Los Angeles this year to bring back all the best bits. Expect an amazing July issue packed with not only all the behind-closed-doors scoops but a full and separate E3 supplement cataloguing all the goodies at E3 2004 brought to you by our new best friends Intel. Don't miss it or you'll fall behind in life and eventually end up making beef patties when it's busy and mopping the loo at the back of a takeout joint owned by Uncle Thomas when it's not.

Things you need to know [Part 1]

We are taking a break from our Hardcor3 section this month - Tom locked himself away in a room with the new GeForce card and we couldn't persuade him to come out. But we've compensated by including a nifty article on installing a water cooling system and a quick look at NVIDIA's latest effort!

[Part 2]

On the Cover CD we've included a .PDF anime magazine - this will appear whenever the guys putting it together send me another issue.

Whatever comes to mind...

Michael James
[Editor]

Go tiger!

Yes, another story... This issue was supposed to have Spider-Man 2 on the cover but thanks to a holiday in the UK, Activision didn't send us the answers to our interview questions in time, "do any of the development team own Spider-Man pyjamas"?

But never fear Black & White 2 is near - a big thank you to Cathy at Lionhead Studios for uploading this cool artwork...

Find out more about this godly game on **page 34**



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: **June 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.

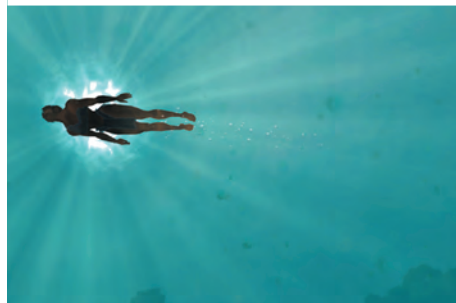


NAG's June Caption



'Jackson lights a fart in a crowded courtyard' - NAG's [63% lame] effort

April winner



"Nemo! Quick! Cover your eyes" - Gareth Cozens

<p>NAG Review Rigs supplied by:</p> <p>Your Components Solution Provider</p>  <p>www.rectron.net</p>			 	<p>Specification</p> <p>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</p>
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On the wire

words james francis

A taste of things to come

The NAG forums were recently ablaze over The Urbz - a new Sims-style game, but from the wrong side of the tracks. The debate in question - that EA is once again flogging a license to death and franchising at a speed that even made Ray Kroc raise his eyebrows. And I'm not going to play devil's advocate on this one: EA makes no small change out of pushing games series to get every cent out of them.

But that same strategy is the reason why EA has over 15% of the market share and its competitors are murmuring about mergers and such matters. This is one of the reasons why publishers have been buying up studios with zeal - it helps productivity, and productivity equals money. Where does that leave the small, independent developers? I'm not sure, but that's not the topic at hand here. Besides, the independent scene always survives - look at movies and music.

Part of the outrage was that gamers don't like seeing their hobby cheapened like that. Gamers have learned to be traditionalists because we come from an underground culture. It's in our blood to expect great games, or at least not something that feels like the past six titles. Take FIFA as an example. The vast amounts of people who play that are not what I'd call gamers with these old-school mentalities (thus my surprise when the game got a WCG slot in 2001).

But this mindset is bound to hit more and more problems in the future. Margins are higher and the need to make money is important. Game sales in 2003 in the US were around \$10 billion. Estee Lauder alone made \$7 billion PROFIT in the 2003-2004 sector.

Yes, cosmetics and games don't mix and any idiot can tell you that looking pretty is big money. But point at hand: games are still small fry. Sure, we beat the US box office, but retail and sell-thru of movies leaves digital entertainment in the dust. Something to chew on - Games make more money in the US than the cinemas, but more people still go and watch movies. I mean, compare a \$7 ticket to \$40 for a game. We're really a lot smaller than we're led to believe...

Because of this, games are continuing its fight to be taken seriously as an international industry - that means much larger revenues than what we currently see. And that means more and more commercial titles. Get used to it. And remember, it takes money to polish a gem - games like Far Cry and KOTOR aren't made on shoestring budgets.

> EMI Sues EA

EMI is suing EA over a song that appears in one of its sports titles. According to EMI, it involves several songs, but EA's attorneys say it's regarding one song that samples lyrics from another song that EMI owns.



Olsen Twins sue Acclaim

Our favourite money-making twins that haven't appeared in any edition of Playboy are suing Acclaim for unpaid royalties. A recent audit of the company revealed, according to the Olsen's lawyers, that there are "hundred of thousands of dollars in royalties" owed and that the company is also overdue in paying an agreed settlement price of \$178,000.



Look, any excuse to have more pictures of these two will do for us!

SK and Factor 5 leave Nintendo

Silicon Knights, known for developing Eternal Darkness and MGS: Twin Snakes, have announced that they will be working on titles for other platforms as well, effectively ending their exclusivity deal with Nintendo, a very unexpected move. But they are still entertaining plans to develop further GameCube games. The same doesn't go for Factor 5, developer of the Rogue Squadron series, who also announced their departure from GameCube exclusivity. Instead they want to focus on other platforms as well, but didn't mention doing GameCube titles as well. The departure of SK as a GameCube-exclusive developer has reignited rumours that Too Human might be back in development. The game was meant to be released in 2000 on the PlayStation.



PlayStation 2 sales slump

Sony has seen a 23% drop in its revenue, thanks to a 40% decline in PlayStation 2 sales. This can be because the market is slowly reaching its saturation point. Analysts are speculating that a price cut will be announced soon, and also expect production of the PlayStation 2 and PSOne to slow down.



Midway releases financial results

Midway have released their financial results for the three-month period end March 31 (First quarter 2004). The company saw a revenue drop from \$45.8 million to \$20.1 million. A net loss of \$15 million was realized, compared to \$9.6 million in the same period last year. Still, thanks to strong sales of The Suffering, the revenues are better than expected. The company also reshuffled its catalogue with titles such as Mortal Kombat: Deception, Psi Ops and MLB Slugfest all due this calendar year. In other news, Viacom CEO Sumner Redstone announced his interest in buying a controlling share in Midway - as much as 60% - basically a take-over. Sumner cited his reasons as being personal and that it's not part of a Viacom agenda. He also added that he had big plans for the company. Still, Midway's stock price dropped 9.8% on the announcement.



Pokemon on the GBA

Pokemon has always had a strong presence on the Gameboy Advance, so much so that Nintendo are taking the next step by releasing full-length episodes onto the unit. Each pack, priced at \$19.99, will contain two episodes and the console doesn't require any additional software to run. Nintendo intends to release these and other packs in July. Pokemon is currently in its sixth season and still rates amongst the top 5 popular kids shows for boys aged 6 to 11.



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Johann van Wyk National Sales Manager LG Electronics

Let's go with your most auspicious plan to date: to be one of the top 3 electronic companies in 2010. Where are you currently standing in the world?

We could never say we're truly number one, or number 5, or 4, or 3. How do you gauge it? Is it perception or brand awareness? Is it sales; is it quality? There are many aspects to that which would influence the question. We do know however, in a global sense, of everything that I've just mentioned, that LG does feature within the top 5. Going forward as a global strategy for the company LG international, the strategy is to become global top 1 and in the next 3-5 years be in the top 3. How you gauge that is going to depend from person to person. Technical people will gauge it on tech aspects. As a global aspect, we see the company's position in quality and support. That's where we're going, within 2010, hopefully sooner.

It's no coincidence that LG decided to head for the top 3 using the 'Life is Good' campaign. What is the new strategy?

Going forward, we believe the logo, LG, will in itself say "Good". If you can live that out in your product and portray that to the public, you're onto a good thing. The aspect of 'life is good with the LG product', from an IT point of view, is that it affects your way of life. The easier the fridge or washing machine can make your life, then yes, life is good. In achieving product excellence, striving for the 2010 mark, as LG increases the easiness and goodness of your life, ties in with the long term goal.

Specifically on South Africa, what challenges do you have for 2004 and what challenges have you had for 2003?

Challenges in our division would firstly be LCD, as we know CRT is a product that I wouldn't say is being discontinued, but it's declining in sales. Then there is the increase in notebook sales. Incredible



Connection said they sold more notebooks than desktops in the last while. Now, if you take other regions excluding South Africa, such as the Middle East Africa, LCD by far outsells CRT. Our major focus would be increase on LCD sales, and we've just launched our new notebook - the new Centrino.

The perception of the broad public is LG has good monitors, but they're not too aware of the LCDs, such as the recently launched premium LCD. It's good looking with sleek design and high resolutions. So the main focus going forward is definitely LCDs and notebooks, as well as DVD players and writers.

The next battlefield will be the living room, with the likes of Sony, Microsoft and all the other electronics companies rushing towards it. What is LG's approach?

South Africa is not going to realize in the next 5 years, but the integration, putting that together, that is the ultimate striving of LG. Look at the original Internet fridge. We have found that the normal hi-fi and TV and the old things we know as home entertainment is falling away. Projection, surround sound - these are the new products for the living room.

Game sales drop

The NPD's report on software and hardware sales in the US for the first three months of 2004 reveal that games have dropped a percentage point, from \$1.9 billion to \$1.8 billion, while hardware sales have dropped a tremendous 25% - from \$445 million for the same period last year to \$336 million. Portables dropped to \$157 million from \$167 million.



THQ to acquire Relic

THQ are in the process of acquiring Relic Entertainment, currently at work on Warhammer 40,000: Dawn of War, an RTS based on the tabletop strategy game. Relic is known for developing Impossible Creatures for Microsoft, and Homeworld and Homeworld 2 for Vivendi.



Bungie founder create new studio

Bungie co-founder and Halo designer Alexander Seropian has established a new development studio called Wideload Games. Seropian left Bungie a while ago, citing he might not return to the industry unless he can find solutions for creating games. Wideload's strategy will be to have a small core team and hiring independent developers for extra development needs; hence the company only has ten core staffers.

Wideload is currently working on a title, using the Halo engine, for Xbox and PC.

v Funcom gets extra funding

Funcom, the developer/publisher of Anarchy Online, have secured extra funding to develop additional MMOG games as well as expand on their current titles. The infusion came from Northzone Ventures (which is responsible for some \$4.2 million) and current investors Teknoinvest and Stelt Holding. The capital will also aid Funcom in expanding its sales and marketing capabilities worldwide. Including the ongoing development of Anarchy Online, the company is creating three MMOGs.



John Woo opts for Metroid movie

While there are far too many people out there making bad movies based on games, action maestro John Woo is reportedly interested in doing a Metroid action movie, according to Reuters. Woo has always had a keen interest in the gaming sector and is currently involved in three game projects. If he takes on the project, it means we could see a blockbuster film starring Samus Aran and her battle against the Metroids.

Sony posts high full-year profits

It seems there is no stopping the Sony Corporation as it posted higher than expected full year profits for the year ending 31 March. The company expected to post a profit of 55 billion yen (\$428 million) but instead posted 88 billion yen (\$685 million). While an upswing, it's much lower than last year's profit of 115.5 billion yen (\$899 million). The falling profit is largely due to restructuring. CEO Nobuyuki Idei aimed to lower operating costs by cutting the workforce by 13%. The Sony Movies and Financial Services sectors of the company were amongst the most profitable.



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“I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER DONE THE STATUS THING – I'VE ALWAYS WANTED MY QUALITY TO SPEAK FOR ITSELF”

ARCHER MACLEAN, AWESOME STUDIOS

AWESOME STUDIOS

Archer Maclean



When young Archer Maclean gingerly placed a shiny 10 pence coin in a new arcade game called Space Invaders, little did he realise how much it would change his life. Maclean had been creating electronic gadgets from a young age, but all this changed with the arrival of Space Invaders, Missile Command and Asteroids. "I soon realised that you can come up with a piece of software and change it much more quickly than adapting a lump of electronics," explains Maclean, who was so smitten with arcade gaming that he's now amassed a collection of over 150 cabinets. "However, I also believed that I could write complete games as good as that on my own computers and, naturally, no-one believed it." Unperturbed, he began working on Dropzone for the Atari 800 in 1980 and had the last laugh when it became a huge hit for both the 800 and Commodore 64 a few years later.


After becoming fixated with his Atari 800, Maclean entertained ambitions of working at Atari, but the firm's collapse caused him to rethink his plans. Despite this setback, he still has a deep fondness for the formative years of game development. "I miss the 'good old days' because I was single-mindedly determined to achieve a good result and only had myself to blame if it wasn't up to scratch," Maclean reminisces. With this in mind, it's no surprise that he feels his best work has always been created when he was left to his own devices. "All the games in the past that I developed on my own and sold when finished were hugely more successful than the later ones where a publisher and their management structure bugged me around for the whole time they were 'financing' it," he confirms.

Although coding could be learned by just about anyone, there were no guarantees of a hit. "Very few people had the software skills or stamina to actually finish off all aspects of a complete machine-code game," Maclean explains. "We had virtually no software, graphics and sound 'tools' in those days - you had to write all that as well as the game. I guess the perfect analogy would be 'Everyone can draw to some extent, but it takes a lot more effort to produce a Rembrandt'."

Maclean's games are works of art, in a way, as he's always sought to make them as playable as possible. IK+ and Archer Maclean's Pool were huge hits thanks to high antici-

pation among his fans. Even now, a new baize-based game from Maclean generates interest - though he's the first to admit that it can do more harm than good. "Right now, I seem to be labelled with being the bloke who created the snooker and pool genre, and sure enough they've gone on to sell a million copies, but look beneath the surface and there is a fair bit of diversity in there," he says. "Shortly, the world will see just how different my next titles are - and no, they have nothing to do with snooker. One's a sort of Dropzone 2, but it's a bit of a monumental Spielberg effort, and the other's top secret. A new IK+++ is bubbling up too, so I'd wait for that, rather than buying some inferior version from someone claiming to own the heritage." Maclean is, of course, referring to his public spat with a certain developer over the rights to the classic IK+.

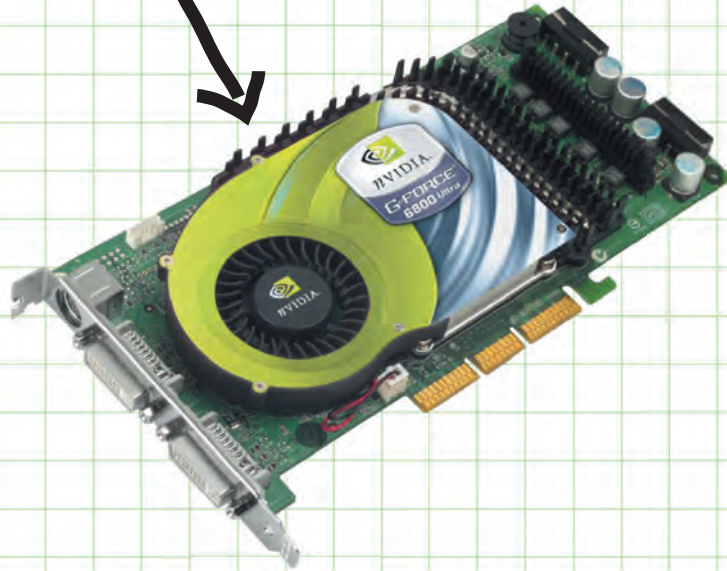
Now, Maclean finds himself putting his development duties on hold in order to head Awesome Studios. Luckily, he's well aware of the pitfalls a developer can face; something he hopes Awesome Studios will avoid with its current publisher, Ignition Entertainment. "There are lots of reasons why there is so much crap out there today," he says, "with one being due to the publishers enslaving developers to a milestone schedule set in stone, then drip feeding them on sustenance pay. Publishers are typically run by accountants and managers who just don't understand the creative process and think that entire 18-month projects with 30 people can be planned to the nearest hour and brought in on time on a budget and still be brilliant."

Hopefully, Awesome Studios' first game, Pool Paradise, will keep the publishers happy - Maclean's been designing ball physics since 1980 so it should be good. But success is not something he worries about, and once Pool Paradise is out of the way you can be pretty sure he'll be happy to go back to playing on one of his arcade cabinets... 

GeForce 6

are we ready?

words: Tom Taylor



The GPU on the NV40 has 220 million transistors. Compare that to the 130 million of the FX or the ATi 9800, which sports 107 million.

Look - a mermaid!
The point of this specific card demo: the mermaid's hair swirling in the water. This gives hope to lots of future games that involve getting your hair wet.

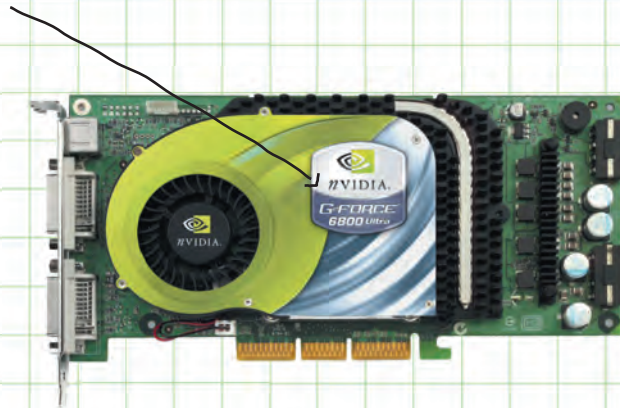


There was a lot of hype with last year's launch of the NVIDIA GeForce 5800 Ultra (NV30), but sadly NVIDIA was plagued by heat and driver issues, as well as being unable to deliver the performance gains it promised. Subsequently NVIDIA tried to rectify its mistakes by launching the FX 5900 (NV35), and the current flagship model, the FX5950 (NV38). The latter being a great performer but in most benchmarks it is beaten by ATI's RADEON 9800 XT.

This year, NVIDIA is bound to deliver a performance driven GPU which, on paper at least, has the potential to give ATI a run for its money. The card I am talking about is the recently released GeForce 6 (NV40) but recent questions, such as whether the market is ready for yet another graphics card, has been floating around and I hope to answer it further on in this article.

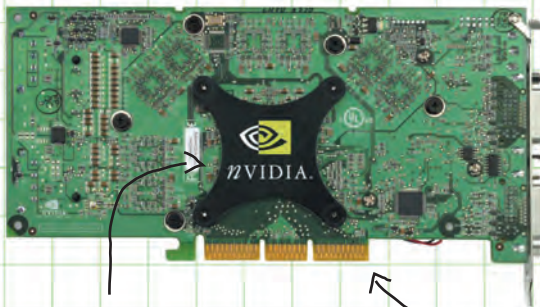
So what makes the GeForce 6, the monster that it is supposed to be? (Here comes the technical part.) Well, for one thing it features the highest transistor count of any processor currently available (including the latest AMD and Intel CPU's) the transistor count is 222 million. This can be compared to the 130 million of the FX 5950. Apart from its new technologies, which I will not go into detail with, such as its Superscalar 16-Pipe GPU Architecture, CineFX 3.0, UltraShadow II, and Intellisample 3.0 it hosts some pretty spectacular hardware specifications. Firstly its graphics core and memory interface are both 256-bit, it offers an improved memory bandwidth of 35 GB per second, and best of all, its memory data rate is 1100 MHz. All these features are an improvement over previous NVIDIA graphics cards and by the looks of it will break some new records in the benchmarking arena. The technologies included in this card such as Ultra-

Onboard you can expect either 128 or 256 MB of memory (GDR III), depending on your budget. We think 128 on a card like this is a bit moot, but that's just us...



The GeForce 6 uses two 4-Pin power connectors that aren't shared with other components. In fact, NVIDIA recommends you have at least a 480 watt power supply in your machine.

On the front - two digital outputs. While we guess the box will contain a converter to analogue signal (that short thing on your monitor cable that looks a bit like a serial port half-breed) digital is the way to go. Remember, we are talking high-performance here, folks.



GeForce's Back! No really, this is the card from the back. We are hoping 3rd party manufacturers get a bit more creative.

Though this model is AGP, the NV40 is likely to also sport a PCI-Express version, using NVIDIA's HSI bridge.

So what about ATI? Well, the rival announced its own card: the X800 Pro. Despite only running 12 pipelines and technically lower specs, the company says that a reduction on other features resulted in more speed - and thus a much faster card. Time will tell on this one.


Shadow II will be critical to some of the games which are going to be released in the near future (such as Doom III) as it allows the GeForce 6 to render complex scenes which feature multiple light sources with much less effort. If you have played the Doom III leaked Alpha version you will know what I am talking about.

When I looked at these specifications for the first time the one question constantly running through my mind was whether current AGP technology would be able to handle this sort of specification when the GeForce 6 hits its third and fourth generation. Well, the short of it is that it would not have to. If you are a technology junky like I am, odds are that you have heard of PCI Express (not to be confused with PCI-X). Let me move away from the GeForce 6 for a moment and explain. PCI Express is the new Bus which is designed to replace both PCI and AGP and will have a much higher memory bandwidth than current PCI and AGP slots. This new technology will transfer data in serial which allows it to send and receive simultaneously. This is great news for NVIDIA and it has already announced its new technology called HSI (High-Speed Interconnect) which is a bridge chip and will allow the GeForce 6 to operate at AGP 16X, that is double the memory bandwidth we have available with today's technology. PC Express is rumoured to be released toward the end of July and even though it will take some time for computer users to migrate completely, I can assure you we are in for some very exciting times if its performance gains are as high as I anticipate it to be.

Another concern I had when I read the original NVIDIA briefing on the GeForce 6 was its power requirements. If you remember, the GeForce 5800 Ultra which was released last year was the

first graphics card to require external power; this was obtained by connecting a 4-pin power cable directly from the power supply to it. The new GeForce 6 6800 Ultra will require two, 4-pin, power connectors to be connected to it, yes you read right. According to NVIDIA, both these 4-pin connectors must not be connected to anything else, in other words it must be connected directly to the card. The reason for this is to prevent any power drains caused by other hardware if it is piggy-backed off, say, a CD-Writer. NVIDIA also recommend that you have at least a 480 Watt power supply in order to use the GeForce 6800 Ultra. These factors might pose some problems for gamers as most of the power supplies currently available only have three or four power connectors coming out of the power supply. On the other hand, gamers interested in purchasing this card would already have a fairly high-end computer as the GeForce 6 will not be a cheap graphics card.

Looking at the average 6 month cycle of graphics cards, the release of the GeForce 6 could not have come at a better time. We are all anticipating the release of DOOM III and Half Life 2 and I am sure most of us are praying that our hardware will satisfy the requirements of these games. We really need this new technology, not only to play the latest games, but to allow game developers to make full use of the amazing advances being made on this front.

Sadly though, as with all high-end cards, the GeForce 6 will be very expensive, but if you start saving your pocket money now I am sure that you will be able to afford the first down payment. I for one am excited about this release as I am really looking forward to seeing ATI's answer to it. 

THE ART OF 1337

words: Anton Lines

For the first time in Unreal's history, we are starting to see the online servers fill to capacity every night of the week - a massive leap for a community that struggled to even get ten players registered for a competition last year. The main reason for UT2004's sudden popularity is that, this time around, Epic have made their game a lot more friendly to newcomers. Anyone can join a server and participate actively in the game, regardless of skill or previous exposure. Even modem users are able to play a pivotal role. There are currently no big updates required to get online, and there has never been an easier time to join the community.

How to Kill People

As world champion Laurens Plummakers once told South Africa's Nico-Louis Joubert, it's all about positioning. Once your opponent gets the hang of aiming with UT2004 (which is just practise), then it's pretty simple for him to kill you, even if you have more health and armour. The trick is positioning yourself so it's difficult for him to hit you at all. The most obvious advantage is height - if you're above, it's easier to hurt him with splash-damage weapons like the rocket launcher. He has a far smaller target to aim at, whereas as you have the ground around him. Otherwise, attack from behind or back him into corners. The key is to move about so much that he loses track of you, at which point you deal the crushing blow. Another worthwhile tactic is the ambush. Lie in wait at important items - getting the first shot in can often swing a confrontation in your favour. Then learn to predict his movement. If he jumps, fire a rocket where you think he will land, and eventually you will be able to bounce him around at will. Of course, don't

attack at all if you don't have enough health and the weapons you feel comfortable with. Selecting the correct weapon for your situation is essential. Don't attack close range if you only have lightning; don't let him whittle you down from afar when you only have a rocket launcher. Don't stand still when you shock combo, as this gives players like Mburrr more than enough time to headshot you. The link gun and biorifle take a lot more skill to use, so avoid them until you are experienced, and even then they are purely a last resort. Rather stick to the lightning, rockets and minigun. They are more effective and more consistent. Obviously, time your shield packs and power-ups (especially the redeemer and target painter in onslaught), and never underestimate the importance of health vials.

Le Parkour

Trick-jumping may seem like just a gimmick, but mastering it provides a substantial improvement on your game for only a small amount of effort. The first trick is plain old dodging. Double-tapping any movement key will make your character dodge in that direction. Press jump a split-second after the





dodge, and you will dodge-jump a much further distance. This is invaluable for avoiding enemy fire, and is also the standard movement method amongst the "pros" (if you were wondering how they move so quickly). While in a fire fight, jumping up against a wall then dodging or dodge-jumping off it can catapult you right over your opponent, giving you a few seconds to abuse him until he realises where you are. This is called a wall-jump. Also remember that dodging against an inclined object will hurl your character upwards, and this can often be used to climb to otherwise inaccessible areas. A shield-jump is done by aiming at the ground, pressing your jump key, and then immediately firing the shield cannon. This is useful for when there is no inclined surface to dodge against, and can allow you to collect items from surprising directions. The final trick is called the lift-jump, and is performed by pressing jump while standing on a moving lift. The momentum will fling you upwards much faster than usual, and this is a requirement for getting certain items like the lower 50 shield on DM-Deck17. Take some time to experiment with the movement on your favourite maps; it will only make you better.

International Trends

Unfortunate as it may be, South Africa doesn't make the rules. We are forced to follow what international bodies such as the World Cyber Games and Electronic Sports World Cup dictate to us about the game. If you are interested in competing for the WCG this year, the game type is again one-versus-one deathmatch with a time limit of 15 minutes. The official maps are DM-Rankin, DM-DE-Ironic, DM-Deck17 and DM-1on1-Roughinery. In

a controversial move, Double Damage has been turned off (along with the usual adrenaline and super weapons), and there is still no word on whether brightskins will be allowed or not. Hopefully there will also be team tournaments announced later in the year.

Onslaught

This brings me to the main section of the strategy guide - the strategy. The most important thing to remember is that onslaught is not about individual frags, it's about controlling the map. You may kill someone, but he'll respawn and be back at your throat in seconds. Instead, your focus should be on power nodes and vehicles, and the art of keeping them under your influence. In a way, it's like golf. The perfect swing doesn't worry about the ball. And so I would almost go as far as to say, "ignore the other team". Follow your game plan. Don't be distracted by petty skirmishes.

Often the entire match is won or lost in the first five minutes, as it is remarkably difficult to turn things around when your enemy controls the map. Concentrate on an initial strategy to get as many power nodes up as possible before you come into conflict. Leave the slower vehicles behind to start off - you need to get everyone to the front lines as soon as possible. Don't focus only on a single chain of nodes, get every one you can. All you have to do is send a single player to briefly touch the node, and you suddenly have five more vehicles at your disposal, as well as a comfortable buffer between you and the enemy should they decide to change their attack route.

The game is very similar to soccer: when the team is on an offensive, even the defenders move up. It is only when you've formed a complete chain and

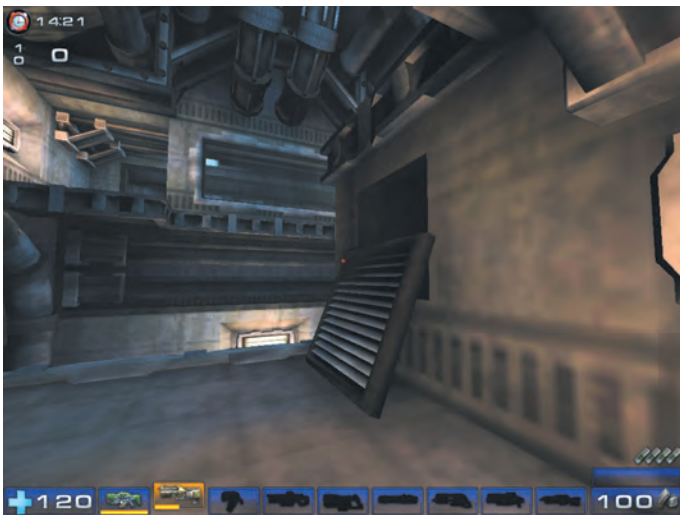
exposed the enemy power core that you need to leave defenders at the last node. All of the other ones will be protected automatically. When assaulting the last node, you should have two players waiting inside the enemy base, ready to start dealing damage to the core. If the opposing team is competent, you won't get much time to do this before the node is taken down again. Conversely, when your power core is under attack, forget about trying to defend your base. Instead, get rid of the enemy's final node. When you're attacking it, they can't spawn there.

Contrary to deathmatch, the link gun is the most useful weapon in onslaught. It is used for all manner of tasks: constructing power nodes, repairing vehicles and turrets, and powering up your team mates. The name "link" should give you a clue to how to use it - fire the secondary at your team mates and, in turn, this makes their link gun stronger. Forming link chains of two or more is the fastest way to put up nodes, repair the bigger vehicles, and do insane amounts of damage.

A link chain is faster than players linking something (i.e., a power node) individually.

Know Your Equipment

Anyone will tell you that being inside a vehicle is preferable to trudging it out on foot. The maps are simply too big to run from node to node, and the vehicle weapons are, for the most part, far more powerful than the hand-held ones. If you do find yourself out in the open, the AVRIL is your closest friend.



Look for inclined objects to dodge up



Construct power nodes for great justice

There has never been a simpler gun to use - all it takes is to point it in the general direction of an enemy vehicle, wait for it to lock on, and fire.

Homing missiles are guaranteed to take down all but the most evasive vehicle operators. This still doesn't solve the problem of getting around, though, and so the conservation of vehicles is a major factor. There are only a limited number, and the only way to get more is to construct more power nodes. Use the ones you have wisely.

Designate players to their favourite vehicles. Develop an understanding that Joe Bloggs will take the raptor and John Doe will take the Tank. When you leave a vehicle, destroy it so it can respawn, or repair it (with the link gun secondary) and give it to a team mate. Whatever you do, don't let it get hijacked.

There are still a few players who are unaware that you can select your spawn location on the map when you die, and that you can teleport between nodes you already control by pressing the "use" key.

The Green Goblin

This term, coined by Nick of Team 42 (watch Spiderman to find out why), refers to the Manta and its many, many uses. Not only can it reach power nodes faster than any other vehicle (with enough practice), but it can be used for transporting your entire team.

The thing about the raptor is that you can't stand on top of it. The manta, however, can easily accommodate four or five players in addition to the person piloting it. Anyone sitting on top should be linking all the time. The manta is repaired extremely quickly, and is nigh on impossible to destroy when it's continually being repaired. Learning to pilot is crucial, naturally. Use the jump function as often as possible, and you will find you can use this wonderful machine to get anywhere on the map just as easily as the raptor. Once you get the hang of it, you will be able to fly directly from node to node, dropping off team mates as you go, putting

up all of your nodes before your opponents even have their first.

It's All About the Leviathan

As much as I'd like to say there isn't a single thing that wins games, having control of the leviathan is just that. Let's look at its statistics - 5000 armour, four auxiliary turrets, and a main gun that fires an ion cannon. When it's not in locked-down mode, its bullets home in on any target in the vicinity. Once your enemies possess this apocalyptic super weapon, there is very little you can do, short of having a phenomenal raptor pilot on your team or a leviathan of your own (in which case it's whoever gets the first shot in). Put all your effort into taking that first node where it spawns, and when you do have it, protect it. Repair all the time and make use of those turrets. One shot at the enemy power core is all you'll need. 📺



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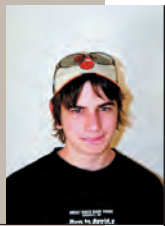


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Player of the Month

Name: Jonathan Attwell
Nick: boRn2pwn (ZeRo-1)
Age: 18
Occupation: Student
Clan: 7th Day
Games: Unreal Tournament 2004 | Quake 3 | WarCraft III
Achievements:

- 1st place in UT2003 at WCG Cape Town 2003
- 2nd place in UT2003 at WCG Finals, Johannesburg 2003
- 4th place in UT2003 at ESWC Qualifiers 2003

Quote: "What a disaster!"

You recently spent two months in England. How did the standard of play compare to the South African community? And did the experience improve your game?

The skill varied from the very noob to the very professional, but the very professional were at a much higher standard than our South African pros. (I played on ADSL broadband, which costs the same as 56k in South Africa). I got the opportunity to gain some essential experience against players that only a select few in South Africa (often the same few) get to play against. I think I've developed a better understanding of the game. What I discovered was that international players play on a much higher psychological level. We just watch demos and copy what we see. We don't know why we do it, but we do it because we see them do it.

What has the local community's response been to UT2004? How different is the new version?

They prefer it to UT2003. Onslaught and the other new game types draw in a lot of players from other games like Battlefield and MOHAA. Many people would disagree with me, but I think the movement has changed a great deal, and favours UT1 players more so than UT2003, which favoured Quake players.

How does winning and losing affect you?

It mainly depends on who I lose to or who I beat. If I lose to a better player, I don't feel bad since I've learned something about them, and next time I'll have an advantage.

You play WarCraft III as well as first person shooters. Do you think a player can be successful in both game types?

I think you'd have to be dedicated to one more than the other, so I don't think you can succeed at both at the same time. But, for sure, an FPS player can learn a strat-based game if he's willing to put in the time and effort. With a normal, active sport, such as soccer, to develop to a pro level a person would have to play from when they're very young, dedicating themselves to the same sport for their whole lives. With gaming, a new game comes out every few months and one can start competing already, without having to go through the initial stages of learning.

ESWC Quake 3 Masters Tournament

While Quake 3 was not an official game at the Arena 77 Electronic Sports World Cup Qualifier this year, the ESWC Organising Committee have again opted to add it to their final event in Poitiers, France, as an invite-only competition. Last year, South Africa's Stephen "Ph4ntom" Cloete was invited as one of the best twenty players in the world. This year, South Africa has been chosen as one of sixteen countries to compete in the Masters Tournament. Each country will be represented by four players, and the competition will follow a format similar to the Davis Cup tennis. Players will need to be skilled in both one versus one and team deathmatch. The four South African representatives will be selected from an initial short-list of eight players who have performed consistently well over the past few years. Sponsorship for the team to attend this event is currently being discussed with the ESWC Organising Committee. Local support is also being looked into. The final team will be announced when / if sponsorship is secured.

Players eligible for selection:

- Balki
- Gandulf
- Lickwid Ice
- Mielie
- Ph4ntom
- Shadowlord
- Undead
- Viper

Destroyer, who came second at last month's Top 32 Invitational, is unavailable for selection as he is already representing South Africa in Counter-Strike.

WCG Game List 2004

The World Cyber Games have announced the games they will be supporting at the 2004 championship in San Francisco. The list is made up of six PC and two console titles, including, for the first time in a major international tournament, two racing games. All the old favourites are still present, although in an interesting move, Counter-Strike 1.6 has been replaced by Condition Zero. The full list is as follows: Counter-Strike: Condition Zero (PC), FIFA Soccer 2004 (PC), Need For Speed: Underground (PC), StarCraft: Broodwar (PC), Unreal Tournament 2004 (PC), WarCraft III: The Frozen Throne (PC), Halo (Xbox), and Project Gotham Racing (Xbox). South Africa will most likely be holding qualifiers for Condition Zero (five-man team), WarCraft III (individual) and UT2004 (individual) so you had better get practising.

TRANSFORMERS



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GET READY TO PLAY...



Mexcom Electronic Sports World Cup Qualifier

by anton lines



WarCraft III

- 1) nf-sWoop
- 2) nf-Zick
- 3) nf-Juvenile
- 4) MoD-TreNd
- 5) nf-Cavalier
- 6) BB-Sage
- 7) nf-Manichean
- 8) MoD-Black

Counter-Strike

- 1) Evolve Aim
- 2) Zero Effect (formerly Evolve Ignite)
- 3) Ethereal
- 4) Infinity
- 5) Albatron Team Africa
- 6) Synergy
- 7) Bad Habit Boys
- 8) X.Krew

One could say that Len Nery, co-director of the event production company Arena 77, has the curse of King Midas upon him - everything he touches seems to turn to gold. Of course, Len isn't the only person to take credit for the resounding success of the 2004 Electronic Sports World Cup Qualifier, it's just his face we always remember from prize-giving. Credit must also be given to one of the unsung heroes in this business, Lauren Das Neves (who probably does more work than everybody else combined) and to the many other staff members who all made valued contributions.

As I have said many times in the past, the key to running a successful event is proper preparation. But little did I realise just how seriously the VC Crew would take this advice. VC were the power and network operators for the event - a team of dedicated LAN organisers from the Vaal Triangle who succeeded in setting up the Carousel Sports Arena to comfortably accommodate over 400 gamers. They tested (and replaced where necessary) every single network point and cable, specifically routed power to the required areas (with the assistance of "Powerman 5000" Badboy), and had the foresight to test every box and monitor that was brought into the arena, on a separate circuit breaker. The only power drop (that I am aware of) over the entire weekend occurred due to a faulty multi-plug brought in by one of the competitors, which VC then replaced in minutes. The network was steady and as fast as can be expected, somehow managing to pacify even the Counter-Strike teams who usually complain if their ping even exceeds 5. The open LAN was run with a personal touch, and the staff greatly outnumbered the problems. Two big screens were erected above the main area, showing music videos and live video feed from various locations within the Sports Arena. Comments have been made that perhaps the big screens should have been showing more gaming-related content, and this has been noted for the future. Otherwise, my commendation goes out to ShadowOrphan, Wolvenoid and the rest of the VC staff for a sterling display of professional workmanship.

While banners adorned almost every wall, I felt the sponsor presence at the event was not on the same personal level as it

was in 2003. Nevertheless, there were some impressive displays of new technology and much to spend one's hard earned cash on. Also on the topic of spending money, the food was still rather pricey, but certainly more affordable than last year. The facilities in general were convenient and well-suited to an event of this size and nature. The Sports Arena was an ideal venue for a gaming competition, despite the usual hassle of having to drive all the way out to The Carousel.

The tournament itself didn't quite seem real at first. We have almost come to expect a significant time delay at these sort of competitions, but for the first time in South African history, the games got underway at 9am sharp, precisely according to schedule. Thirty-two Counter-Strike teams and sixty-two WarCraft III players battled through round robin group stages, from where the top players / teams progressed to double elimination. Most of the games were completed on Saturday, leaving only the final few for Sunday morning. That night, the Chickenhead clan hosted their customary party (the "devo"), and entrance to the Cheyenne Saloon was free to all gamers at the event. Needless to say it was a late Sunday morning for the majority. Those still in the competition, however, miraculously arrived on time for their matches. The final games were broadcast on plasma screens to spectators around the event, and the Counter-Strike championship match was played on high-end sponsored PCs in a designated stage area. Concerns about the tournament included the lack of a public announcement system for the Counter-Strike area and the need for silence during important matches when several teams had already been eliminated. These small problems aside, the competition staff handled their jobs admirably, and I would like to thank Recon, Xpert, Solidus, Nexorsist, Freshfruit, Immortality, Equinox, Buda, Unleaded, Dayglow and Undead for the hours of hard work.

The overall winners of the competition will be flown to France to participate in the ESWC finals. For a more detailed run-down of the prizes given out (to the top eight in both game types), visit the Arena 77 website at www.arena77.com. For info on the Grand Final in France go to www.esworldcup.com

a word from Arena 77

Our sincere thanks to Mexcom our amazing headline sponsor, DFI LanParty and Axiz for once again supporting SA gaming, Intel for the awesome servers, D-Link for the brilliant networking equipment, Iiyama and WCS for the fantastic 19" flat monitors, Eurobyte who sponsored both Vivendi and Megarom with small form factor pc's to help showcase the latest software available in SA, and The Carousel Casino and Entertainment World for playing host to the Mexcom ESWC SA qualifier in style!

INBOX

Letter of the moment

FROM Ross

SUBJECT Skeletons Anonymous

I would like to begin this letter with a thank you to all who are part of the construction of your magazine. You guys really whip up a storm every month with your quirky jokes, stunning reviews and of course your hilarious captions. Well done! You guys have inspired me to become a writer and journalist [Oh no, NAG Ed]. But as I am sure you get these compliments all the time I will get to my point. Have you ever played Diablo or WarCraft or how about Dungeon Siege or Return to Castle Wolfenstein and many more? If you have then you will notice that they all have something in common, skeletons! I have consulted you on this issue because I for one find it terribly cruel to put skeletons in every game so that they can get the sh!t kicked out of them. They have already died once before for goodness sake. Not to mention the odds of them actually winning a bout. Have you also noticed that you never ever get to play a RPG with a skeleton as the hero? It's just not cricket old chap. I think that they should start a union or a Skeletons Anonymous or something to compensate for their ill luck, don't you agree?

Well you must be thinking that I am insane at this moment in time but don't, please. This is for the good of their kind. That is all I have to complain about. NAG is one of the finest magazines around so keep it up!

Oh do come on... these chaps are staple gaming fodder, if you removed them from the mix along with mutants, dark corridors, lava, military bases and exploding barrels you'd have nothing left - gaming as we know it would wither and die. You get the letter of the moment for actually daring to put such heresy down on paper. Shocking! Next you'll be suggesting we ban the in-game collecting of colour-coded key cards. NAG Ed.

FROM Drake

SUBJECT Copyright for 2

I have a legal question for you about copyrights of games. I want to buy a game and I told my friend that I was going to. He told me that he also wants the game so he was willing to pay half the price and then one of us keeps the original while the other keeps a copy. Now my question is this, is it legal to make a copy of a game to keep if you only paid half the price? Please answer this because I think that there are a lot of other gamers that would like the answer too.

No, you may not copy the game and share it - it's like a movie ticket - only valid for one person. Try this - you both buy a different game and then after a few weeks swap. NAG Ed.

FROM Lone Skinny -QD-

SUBJECT High Ping

I have a 192 Kbps ISDN connection and want to play Counter-Strike and Quake III Arena on the internet. I joined the "normal" servers that you get in the game (i.e. Quake III: Multiplayer - Internet) but I get an average ping of 800. So, I beg of you to show me where I can join local (ZA) servers.

Why do you want to play Counter Strike anyway? Go to these places and click on any button that says server: www.gamezone.co.za [MWEB] games.saix.net [SAIX] www.arena77.com [Arena 77]. NAG Ed.

FROM Morgue [FLB]

SUBJECT The processor cold war

How about giving us an idea as to where the AMD vs. Intel war stands? I don't mean to take sides, of course. It's a new year (well, it was, just a

few months ago), people are looking to upgrade, especially in light of upcoming games, so how about it? [You know, it's okay to say if you like one over the other, really it is. I won't tell a soul...]

Cyrix, buy Cyrix they're making a big comeback...

Actually, gentlemen prefer Intel and the financially challenged are forced to buy AMD which they then defend to the ends of the Earth. Come on, you know I'm right! Right? NAG Ed.



FROM Not stated

SUBJECT Paranoid rant 666 barcode

The reason why such a chip won't be able to function in your left hand is because of the way your heart pumps the blood throughout your body. I suggest you brush up on both religion and biology before dismissing such "paranoid" rants. I'm not saying this isn't one... but I for one am not implanting anything unless it's a penis extension that vibrates or something...

You're a double standardised hypocritical paranoid rant-spreading nut job. NAG Ed.

FROM G!FT!G

SUBJECT FPS and PC specs

I read your magazine a lot and it's packed full of useful info (ok most of it ;)). I checked out the UT2003 review in one of the older magazines and found that its recommended specs were a PIII 733 MHz, 256 MB RAM and a 32 - 128 MB GFX card. So I thought perhaps you guys can put in with your review the specs ones pc will need to run the game at 60 FPS and 100 FPS. It will be useful for people upgrading and people that want to know how their PC's will perform.

A good suggestion, but a logistic nightmare. NAG Ed.

FROM William

SUBJECT Life Skills

Right, so the education minister is spending millions on teaching pupils life skills, by revising and editing our current educational system. My thoughts are that it is an absolute waste, seeing as he could just as well spend millions on allowing the pupils to play computer games. Computer games teach like skills. Let's take an example - RTS games involve micromanagement of units. Convert these Units into money and they are taught how to manage their money (units). They will question where each and every cent goes.

Next example, FPS, when in ones workplace, your people skills will come drastically into play (excuse the pun). If a person disturbs you, just scream the following: "Listen you newbie, stop bothering me or I will frag your ass to kingdom come." That outburst may deter them from bothering you in future or depending on their hearing may also get you a date. My point is games are good for the young and impressionable, play games - it's the right thing to do.

Based on your mail I'm guessing you're a barely passing school pupil that spends all his study time playing games and all this exam time thinking about games. This kind of behaviour will get you nowhere life - just look at me. NAG Ed.

FROM Unknown

SUBJECT Scratches & PS2 Prices

Is there something to protect a CD from scratches and if there is can you please tell me where to get it and if there isn't I have an idea that anyone can tell

SHORTS

FROM Morgue [FLB]

SUBJECT Acrimonious Acrobats

With reference to Contract J.A.C.K. being the sequel to NOLF, what does NOLF stand for? No One Lives Forever? I thought that was a Bond game...

You thought wrong - it's not a Bond anything. NAG Ed.

FROM Evil Cow's Friend

SUBJECT About Ramjet

I'd like to say that your magazine is the funniest magazine I have ever read and I am going to ask you very nicely to please tell me what the hell Ramjet's real name is.

Arnold J Mortimer, NAG Ed.

FROM YUDI

SUBJECT Long Game Names

I would say the longest game name is: "Kiss: Psycho Circus: The Nightmare Child". I remember the writer commenting on the length of the name when "Kiss..." was previewed (long ago) in NAG.

This is one - not sure if it's the longest - anyone else? How about: The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King? Some of the plebs in the office say it doesn't count because you have to use 'The' a lot. NAG Ed.

FROM Chris

SUBJECT Half-Life 2

I went on to amazon.co.uk today and went to the new and future release section of PC and video games. I was shocked that Half-Life 2 will only come out on 12 November 2004. That's more than one year after its planned release date. Can you confirm that date though please? **Okay, it's confirmed. NAG Ed.**

FROM Unknown

SUBJECT Number

Would you be so kind as to give me your cell phone number? Please! I promise to prank... Oh, how is that mouse fluff ball coming?

083-get-help. The fluff ball got wet after some plod left the office window open during a thunderstorm - it either dissolved or grew a sticky mucous foot-like appendage and hopped off somewhere. NAG Ed.

FROM majik

SUBJECT An Idea for Life

I had a good idea, if the PS2 has a vibration pad why can't Microsoft develop a keyboard with vibration and/or a mouse. I think it is a very clever idea and can change the gaming experience quite a lot.

I'm not sure if this is a good thing or not. Logitech tried this concept not too long ago with mixed results - why would you want your keyboard vibrating anyway? Are you lonely? NAG Ed.

FROM Seraph

SUBJECT I have a question

Thanks for a wicked magazine, you guys rock! I was just wondering if you get hate mail, because if you do there is something wrong with those people.

I would like to make a couple of requests:

1. Please put the third Star Wars [snip, Ed]

Didn't you have a question you wanted to ask? NAG Ed.



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



a CD company. They should make a CD cover that you put around your CD so that it doesn't scratch while you put your CD in DVD-ROM CD-ROM case or what ever and if the CD cover becomes filthy or full of scratches you can just put a new cover on your CD.

There is a product that you can stick onto the reading surface of your CD that protects it from scratches. The only problem is I can't remember where I saw it. Maybe you can try asking someone at a large music store - they might know or some helpful reader will write in and tell us? Shryke says the stuff works but it's expensive, he also can't remember where to get it or what it's called. NAG Ed.

FROM Ravage
SUBJECT Blizzard

Just was wondering if I was the only person in the world who thought that Blizzard should make a new StarCraft Strategy game! Just like they did with WarCraft 3. I'm sure it would sell quite well! Could you maybe hold a poll for this question!

My guess is that they are waiting for a large enough gap to form between strategy titles - it's no good diluting one big strategy title with another so soon after release not to mention the expansion options. There is another 'theory' that Blizzard has a genre release cycle that they follow closely so therefore the next game after World of WarCraft should theoretically be Diablo 3. But you should know how unreliable these theories are. NAG Ed.

FROM Not Sure
SUBJECT N-Gage

Hi there, here's a thought for your magazine. Why don't you review Nokia N-Gage games in your magazine because now with the new technology out there, mobile gaming is the in-thing. So keep it in mind, I will be looking forward to it in the May issue of NAG - that's if you guys want a bigger sales increase in your magazine.

Well, thanks for your in-depth business plan - we'll take it under advisement. We'd love to review more N-Gage games but there are so few in circulation at the moment that I think we've reviewed them all already. But I really don't know... NAG Ed.

FROM Teras
SUBJECT Rader Comment

I would just like to point out that gamers are expecting too much from Half-Life 2 and therefore they are turning a blind eye to other promising titles like DOOM 3, Painkiller etc. Since when did we start judging games before we've played them? Just because the first instalment of a game was good doesn't mean that the second will be too. Don't get me wrong, Half-Life 2 could be and most likely is an excellent game but it has happened in the past where the first instalment of a game was really good where as the second sucked. For example: Dungeon Keeper was excellent but the sequel sucked [Really? I thought the sequel was really excellent, NAG Ed]. I think that we should only judge a game after we've played the actual game. **Agreed, although I don't expect DOOM 3 will be ignored much. We pre-judge titles because it's our**

nature. I've stated as much before. Gamers are a different breed - we live in the future of our hobby, never in the present and this is why what's coming is always more compelling than what is or has been. NAG Ed.

FROM Morgue [FLB]
SUBJECT Monthly Errata

Dear Literary Bunglers
Hey, you guys are comedians. No, really. I almost fell off my chair I was laughing so hard. Some "journalist" referred to "brass tax" in the March issue, page 80. Brass tax? What the poor wretch doesn't know is that it's supposed to be brass tacks. As in thumb tacks.

I had a word with Shryke, and he agrees that he's wrong. However, he points out that he works for a gaming magazine and you don't. I think the direct quote was "nya nya!" Of course we'll just gloss over how this makes me look... NAG Ed.

FROM Morgue [FLB]
SUBJECT If you review a preview, does it become a review?

I'm curious to know if your reviewers read other reviews for the title that they're reviewing, before reviewing their reviewable code. :) Are their judgements clouded? Do they go with the crowd? It certainly looks that way. Scores are typically in the same range as comparison scores from the web. It's worth remembering that the SA market and mindset (and therefore audience) is different to the rest of the world. We have a different sense of humour, a culture all of our own, a different way of looking at things. If a US-military based game is given a high score by a US website, bear in mind that their sentiments may have no correlation to those of gamers here in SA. Just like in the movie Pearl Harbour, all the patriotic US imagery is lost on us. This detracts from the value and appeal of the game (to South Africans), and the score should reflect this.

The rule is write the review first before reading any other reviews. We also sometimes get review code at the same time as overseas publications/websites so there is nothing to compare our review to at the time of writing. Just try and imagine that we actually know what we're doing for a few seconds. NAG Ed.

FROM Rob
SUBJECT An important issue in gaming today

I would like to start off by complimenting you on a great magazine - or at least what was a great magazine. I remember the first ever issue of NAG that I ever read (January 2003) - marvellous! But since then it appears that your new format of finding exclusive previews and so on, has lead you to only dredging up the dregs of satanic production teams' efforts. It seems also, that your magazine staff have also been drawn into a heathen / satanic state of mind. You at NAG believe yourselves to be 'gods' - a very large and exaggerated misconception of a group of people that in the real world are actually

only just normal human beings. I applaud Gunther's letter in the April issue regarding the taking place of the events, as described in the Book of Revelation. Have you ever read Revelation? No? Well then I strongly recommend you acquire a Bible and do so before even thinking of believing yourself worthy of commenting upon it. The events described are not to be called paranoid or nonsense, but as the truth of the ending of the World. I'm sure I can expect a malicious and sarcastic answer from you, placed in your brain by Satan's demons, but no matter, I will pray for you, your staff and all of the evil producers out there. I am not here to condemn you, but I ask you as a friend - read the Book of Revelation and see how it relates to the World that we live in today.

I thought you had an important issue in gaming to discuss instead of this ranting about Satan and evil thoughts. We only appear as gods to some people. NAG Ed.

FROM Ashley
SUBJECT Girls

First off, congratulations on the great cover of April - nice girls. I've been reading NAG since it first started and what a great magazine it is indeed. But here is a very interesting subject - girls, I have always considered NAG as the most humble of all the other gaming magazines. And I finally realized that you guys actually "care" about us readers. I think that April's cover is a break-through for you. Let's look at "PC Format" (I'm sure their editor will not mind!). Have you ever noticed (I sure have) that there I always a cover girl. It is basic psychology. The reader looks at this beautiful girl and turns the page (drooling). He then sees this great top-of-the-range graphics card and thinks that the reason he is drooling is because of the card. He then goes and buys it - easy and very basic. So my message to you is this - more cover girls.

Someone described this kind of thinking with the term, dull cow eyes. If NAG is going to put women on the cover of our magazine then we'll do it properly and appropriately [but we're not above this kind of thing] ;) I'm also not sure the editor of PC format is going to like what you just said about her readers. NAG Ed.



3D Artwork - this disturbing image was laced together after playing Splinter Cell and Deus Ex Invisible War for too long according to Onryou.



Did you know: www.badger.com is not about badgers

Badger Hunt #5 Winner [April Issue]

[Ed: Well, only 30 of you managed to find the badger in the April issue unfortunately the May badger is almost impossible to find - it's too well hidden. The June issue badger will be much easier. Below is the winner and his letter].

He is hiding on the balcony on **page 18** in the top left picture, Bart Bride.

Badgers are your friend...

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!



"Games don't affect kids. I mean, if Pac-Man affected us as kids, we'd all be running around in darkened rooms, munching magic pills and listening to repetitive electronic music."

The Domain of The_Basilisk

WAKE UP, OH DEAR SOUTH AFRICA

There was once a time when my opinion of South African game developers was nothing short of optimistic. But as I have come to realise, perhaps due to having more experience now than I did several years ago, that optimism was in fact all for nought. I now find it highly unlikely that South Africa will ever succeed on a global level in the gaming industry, just like we will never make it in film, television, music, or any other industry for that matter. The reason is, unfortunate as it may be, that most of us possess what I have dubbed the "African attitude". We're a third world country at heart and it shows in everything we do.



And it's far simpler to be content with average production standards even when copying someone else's success. Instead of putting in the effort and arriving at a revolutionary idea for a television program, South Africa does Big Brother. Instead of Gigabit internet connections, we have Telkom. Instead of a thriving game-development industry, we have small and simple endeavours, hundreds of potential developers with absolutely no commitment to their work, and a sole "success" that is nothing more than a clone of a rather ordinary international trend. South Africans need to sit down and start thinking about their attitudes towards work and professionalism, or there will never be a change. The hardworking exceptions will leave for greener pastures (I certainly don't blame them), and our country will forever remain a dirty spot on the rear end of the world. I have no sympathy left for the local developers complaining on obscure forums about lack of opportunity and technology. The imperfection is theirs. A true professional can overcome these setbacks (if you read autobiographies of some of the world's most successful businessmen, you will see that this is actually a common occurrence) through dedication and perfectionism. Stop settling for average. Stop complaining and make the solution happen.

For the love of God, give me something positive to write about. ☒

Maybe it's the weather. Maybe it's our geographical isolation. Maybe it's our troubled political history. These are some of the possible explanations for the failure of South Africa, but none of them are any legitimate excuse for the poor standards to which our local "professionals" conform. The United Kingdom has arguably the most depressing weather in the world, Australia is about as isolated as a country can get, Germany lost two world wars, China has been dealing with absolute poverty for decades, and Japan had atom bombs dropped on them (!). All of these countries pulled themselves together and are now major players in the modern global village. There is not a single area where we've had it the worst. In addition to this, South Africa has natural resources that make the rest of the world salivate. And yet, we're nowhere. We've achieved almost nothing. Sure, we have apparent exceptions such as Anant Singh (film producer), Seether (rock band), Nadine Gordimer (author) and, the most obvious example in the gaming context, I-Imagine (developers of "Chase" for the Xbox), but apart from the important consideration that they are extremely rare as exceptions go, not one of them has made any real impact. There is no individuality, originality or conceptual groundbreaking. They will all be forgotten.

I was thrilled upon hearing that a local developer (I-Imagine) had been accepted by Microsoft to produce a game for the Xbox, but what completely crushed my elation was their announcement that

it would be, wait for it, a racing game! Imagine that, South Africa finally gets a chance to showcase our supposed talent and we give the world something that's been done a hundred times before. A stunt-driving game. Yes, very original there. Let's give ourselves a pat on the back because, out of an infinite stream of original ideas and possibilities, we chose to follow a convention. This, of course, has not helped the local industry in any way and, well, nobody is going to remember Chase in a few years time.

Let's look a little further. Why is this the only South-African-made game to be published internationally? At one point the question baffled me: I was young and naïve, and did not quite appreciate the level of indolence in our working society. But now my eyes have been opened, and it is the "never do more than you have to" mentality that explains it all. From conception to final product, laziness pervades the South African workforce. This is evident everywhere - applying for a phone line, hiring a builder, listening to a university lecture, or playing a game developed in South Africa. The simplest and easiest route is always taken, and standards are low. People become complacent and after a while these standards are just accepted. We can contrast this to the counter-examples I gave above. The "first world" is not characterised by its circumstances, but by its people. There is a sense of pride, no matter how small the project may be, and the overriding principle is work-ethic. People are continually trying to better themselves, to let their work reflect positively on them. This is reinforced right from childhood. The unprofessional and mundane are weeded out, leaving only the most accomplished. In turn, it motivates the rest to try harder.

We don't have that here. It's far easier to copy a successful formula than to invent something new.

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Menhirs, anyone?

A long time in the making, this dynamic Gaelic duo of Asterix and Obelix finally returns to the videogame market with **XXL**. 6 massive levels and over 40 challenges, **XXL** should prove to be one heck of a party, by Totatis. Expected Q3. [Xbox | PC | GC | PS2]



MMORPG gets an interesting boost and (you have been warned) the Russian are coming!

The creators of Blizzard's Battle.net service decided to start their own company (ArenaNet) and make games on their own. Their first title, **Guild Wars**, promises to turn a few heads in the Massively Multiplayer area. With original game dynamics and a business model that won't charge gamers monthly fees, it's easy to see that this is something online fantasy role-playing sorely needs. Release TBA. [PC]



Cindy thinks twice about her decision...



No monthly costs... what a bash-fest this will be!



Big monsters... exactly what this game needs!



And not a drop of Vodka in sight...

The Russians are at it again, this time in the form of a rather unique looking CRPG, called **Blood Magic** that tries to break some moulds. Cooperative and competitive multiplayer modes included, expected released date TBA. [PC]

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PLAYING GOD

the alpha and omega of Black & White 2

It was a game that both broke new grounds in play dynamic and at the same time disappointed a lot of the gamers eagerly waiting for it. But as ambitious as it was, **Black & White** appears to only be a taste of things to come. Over the past months, the Lionhead team have been showing off bits and pieces here and there in videos and screenshots that draw a definite line between what the game was and what the sequel will be. But what can you really expect from the final game, apart from new graphics and a land in the turmoil of war?

Building a heavenly sequel

Annually, one of the events to look forward to is the release of a game from the creative mind of Peter Molyneux and this year there could be a number of titles from his studios. With a number of products in development, delegation now seems to be the order of the day for the industry visionary. Derek dela spoke with Jonty Barnes, Head of Black & White Studios, about the state of play with Black & White 2.

Having received all the plaudits for Black & White, the obvious move was a sequel but many will wonder how you better an already ideal game taking into account that technology hasn't really advanced enough to add any real technical innovations. Never a studio to sit on its laurels, a number of intriguing new elements are being worked on, as well as finely tuning some old ones to ensure Black & White continues to be a flagship title for Peter and his team!

In Black & White 2 you return to your role as a powerful deity in search of a following and revisit the once idyllic world of Eden, where the discovery of weaponry and warfare has tainted the beautiful landscape. With the help of your gigantic Creature that you raise from infancy you must earn the respect and worship of the natives. How you choose to do that, whether through nurturing them or terrorising them, is up to you. Although the basic overview sounds the same, it goes without saying there will be many surprises on offer. Jonty started by summarising how the team move on.

"Although Black & White was a well received game, we learnt a great deal from it. The team who worked on Black & White were very critical, plus we worked with the players of Black & White to understand what they felt Black & White lacked. The conclusion of all this went into the design for Black & White 2."

"Once we had a design, we then worked closely with the B&W

community using our bulletin boards, and flying fans in from across the world to listen to them to see if it was right. It was important to us that B&W2's design answered all the flaws of the original, as well as taking what we did a step further."

3, 2, 1 Let's go to War

If you are familiar with Black & White there are a number of ways to approach playing and understanding the ideologies, which are direct and to the point. It appears that the choice between Good and Evil results in either sprawling metropolises or conversely a war stricken land; so is it possible to play through entirely on one side, i.e. if you're good throughout the entire game will you never have to wage war on other tribes?

"It's completely up to the player how good or evil they approach the game. However, if you are completely good it doesn't mean ►







that you'll avoid war – absolutely not. Like it or not, the world is at war, and your very presence is not always welcome. As a good player you will need to protect your people and convince the enemy that fighting is useless and that they should join your empire.” Jonty continued: “What you tend to find is that as a good player the game comes to you, whereas the evil player tends to build large armies to go out and conquer.”

As the player begins *Black & White 2*, and the fact that Eden is now at war, immediately poses a question to the player. Will he choose to create and command large armies to dominate, conquer and encourage this world at war? Or will the player choose to protect and nurture his empire, turning villages and towns into cities protected by their godly powers? The various tribes have the power to build huge fortresses around their settlements, and to gather large armies to defend their fortresses from opposing warriors or creatures from rival Gods. Fiercely protective, the tribes will defend their settlements to the death.

What makes the *Black & White* world so vibrant and plausible is the fact that there are so many knock on events from what you execute and get involved with. There is an affinity between the player and this world and a lot of this revolves around the superb Artificial Intelligence the team has created. It's been noted that the AI of both the villagers and creatures have been significantly enhanced so that they will automatically take care of their own basic needs without player interaction.

“If you look after your people's basic needs, they will manage themselves. You are no longer an errand boy to your people – you are a powerful God. Now you easily have the time to affect your people's lives as a nation, not worry about where their next meal comes from. Though, if you want to mess around in the detail, helping farmers, you are still able to. “As for the Creature, you choose your Creature at the start of the game, and its innate nature and intelligence will mean you won't have to teach it the basics - it can fend for itself. However, each Creature starts off with its own personality, for example the Cow is a





little quirky and kind, whereas the Lion tends to play to its predatory background.”

Playground of the Gods

The team has revisited everything in B&W2 and this includes the eye catching and wonderful hand gesture system, which will be more intelligent, and it is used in more areas of the game. However, if it isn't to your taste you can play the game without the need to use it.

The breathtaking 3D world is more highly developed with new weapons, technology and smarter creatures that can learn strategies and master new abilities and skills. Creatures will also have the ability to command armies, and be the 'ultimate' unit.

“The story has a very clear goal which leads you through 12 lands. However, the story morphs in its telling depending on the player's actions. Unlike B&W1, the whole world exists all the time, so if you have been to one land you can revisit it at any time and play God. Your people may have progressed since you last visited them though...”

Discussing the PC technology is always fascinating with the Lionhead people who have a seamless synergy when it comes to game evolution and technology advancement.

“Things are getting better, but it would be brilliant if all the players of PC games had incredibly powerful graphics cards, with huge amounts of memory! Oh, and all had the same card. Graphics power has really been a large challenge for B&W2. We want to create a beautiful world, more amazing than anyone has seen before with thousands of people all wondering around under AI. The world has to look great from up really close and great pulling back into the clouds, which is the unique challenge B&W2 faces.”

We have created new technologies, and a rendering engine which can draw thousands and thousands of objects – which look great on the top graphics cards as we're doing things nobody has done before, but all this also has to work and look good on the older graphics cards too - which is a real bore.” Things are easier than they used to be, but there are still some very real challenges, and you cannot just dismiss the older graphics cards as it has to look good on all machines especially when most of the players' cards will be reasonably old technology.”

With Black & White 2 gamers will know basically what they expect to see and the ambiance of the game is set in stone.

“Some ideas have come from what we have learnt from B&W1, but really at the heart of Black & White 2 is the passion of the team. The reason B&W2 is so ambitious for a sequel is that the team (including Peter) is driving the ambition. We feel we have a really great opportunity to make something special with B&W2, and we're not willing to rush it.”

The design has taken some time to get right and everyone has input into it - we're still adding more detail as things get into the

game. It actually seems to evolve almost every day as something exciting or amusing happens on the project. Recently when the weather system went in we got morning mists in low land for free, which really added to the atmosphere and when we got the thermodynamic system in place, someone worked out a way to link it to the terrain technology in such a way that the snow could be melted and reveal the correct terrain underneath – while this will not make the game play any better, it is an example of someone's passion to make the game world feel real and dynamic.”

Managing it all

Some of the key features discussed in the game are about waging massive wars, sieges and battles, discovering and using new 'Epic Miracles', including the ground-ripping Earthquake and volcanoes, which cause rivers of lava. You can choose and customize the Creature that's right for you from a selection, including old favourites like the Ape, Cow, and Lion, plus many others. There is research and players can create new forms of weaponry, from swords to bows to siege machines. Build and design unique defensive gates and walls. Control and marshal huge and varied armies. Create and control settlements that include housing, farming, and many other buildings, like fountains and lush gardens (if you're Good) or stocks and guillotines (if you're Evil). Multiple tools to help train and improve Creatures are on hand. As well as using sticks, whips, and feathers, players can create their own unique tools.

“The thing I am most proud of is that the game 'makes the player feel like a God'.” Jony added, “In Black & White 1, you never felt significant enough – you felt like an errand boy. In Black & White 2 you are a powerful God – you control a huge Creature who does your bidding, you can build huge empires, you can lead huge armies to battle, you can save or destroy nations, and you can tear the land apart with Miracles if you choose to. You really affect the world and the lives of people within it.”

“The world is bigger, better, and it seems more important. This all comes together so that when you let the enemy 'feel your wrath' by casting an earthquake towards their army. Not only does this look impressive, but it feels Epic and very satisfying! In Black & White 2 you are given the opportunity to be a God with a huge Creature to do your bidding. Will you build, protect and nurture your people and build great-defended empires or will you build great armies, tear the land apart, and go out and conquer your enemies by force? It's your choice.”





Half-Life 2

by daniel wilkes
revisited...



Almost 5 years after the launch of Half-life, out of the blue came the news that Half-life 2 will feature at last year's E3. Fans and all FPS gamers rejoiced and suddenly E3 2003 was one of the most anticipated events of the year (even more than usual). Everybody was anxious to know what the second coming of the "God" of action games would be like. Understandably, expectations were sky high, but what Valve Software demonstrated during the event literally blew every journalist away. The original Half-Life redefined the First Person Shooter genre, but Half-Life 2 is going one step further – it's going to rewrite the textbook on how games should really be made.

Although Valve Software has also released a series of technology demo videos on the Internet, it wasn't until Vivendi Universal took us on a road trip to Seattle, home of Valve that I finally got up close and personal with the developers and the game itself. Here, we managed to catch a more intimate glimpse of Half-Life 2 and spoke with Gabe Newell and Doug Lombardi. Oh, and I got to play a really early alpha-build of the game too!

Gabe claims that the Source engine is capable of doing four things far better than anything available, which is, rendering realistic human models, high quality graphics comparable to those available in movie studios, significantly better AI and last but not least physics and interactivity as close as it gets to the real world. For instance, the surface areas in the game can have their displacement maps altered dynamically and thus their appearance can change depending on events that occur in the game. Just as

in reality, all objects in Half-life 2 are made of materials with each material having its own physical properties. For example, objects made of wood, look like wood, break like wood, float like wood and to be precise, behave like exactly wood when you interact with them [as wood would do? Ed]. There is no limitation on the complexity of the interaction, i.e. if several objects are thrown in water, the ones that have a density greater than water sink and those with a lesser density float, and all the objects bob and move about on the water as they would do in the real world. The level of detail is amazing.

A good reference to the physics and interactivity aspects of the game was made in the "Coastline" demo that I played, where I accidentally wandered [in my buggy] too close to the sea and managed to get the vehicle stuck. Under normal circumstances, you as the player would simply ditch the buggy and move along. Not in Half-Life 2. Doug, on my right, could only muster a grin and hinted that I should just whip out Freeman's "Manipulator" gun (a gravitational weapon of sorts) and consider all my options really hard. So I did just that. With the Manipulator, Freeman (me, in this case) could push the buggy to dry land and drive again! The enemies are also a hell of a lot smarter this time round. In a later part of the same map, I came across an alien race called the "Combine" soldiers. Remember the badass Marines, who'll roll, duck and dive away, from the first game? Think of the Combine as even more badass versions of them. They'll not only adopt the above-mentioned behavior, but will also exhibit intelligent tactics according to the

Half-Life 2 revisited...

situation. Hide in a building blocking the entrances and they'll attempt to flush you out by lobbing grenades through an opening such as a window. Engage them in an open area and they'll spread out to flank you on both sides. Such A.I. and environment versatility and interactivity does give a lot of added value to the game – try using different tactics on your second attempt perhaps? With such a powerful engine, also think of what you, if you're the creative type, can do with the game's included map builder.

Another highlight of Half-Life 2 is the ultra-realistic facial models. The human models have around 40 muscles in their face and thus are capable of displaying several emotions. The facial expressions are based on inputs provided by a renowned research psychiatrist. Also, the lip synchronization is near perfect, i.e. the words the characters speak and their lip movements compliment each other very well. If that's not enough, the models are multilingual. Just give them a voice (and text), and their lips will move just like a real person's lips would. Again, just think of what this means to amateur developers (a talking counter-terrorist in Counter-Strike 2.0?). Also there are several characters in the game and no two of them look alike, which is really impressive. And there are also more characters appearing in this sequel, both new and old (yes, our dear beloved Barney is back too).

For those of you who loved the story of Half-Life, the same writer (Marc Laidlaw) has returned to work on Half-Life 2. You resume

the role as Gordon Freeman (oops we forgot to mention that earlier), the scientist who was present during the events at the Black Mesa facility. You've accepted the offer by the G-Man and seem to be located in "City 17". No other location was given out, which was expected. You have to play the game to find out what's really going on. However, Gabe and Doug did mention that you would no longer be visiting the alien planet Xen.

With the physics of the engine being updated so much, gamers should expect an incredible new twist in game-play. As stated before, the interaction you can have with the world around you is simply mind blowing. I think it's safe to assume that players will stand around looking for amusing ways to interact with the scenery before charging in guns blazing.

Valve cannot emphasize enough that the game events aren't scripted. This is all coded into the A.I. Computer controlled characters get an idea about what to do, and then they do it. That's pretty smart if you ask me and also extremely complex but most of all, entertaining to watch – and play. So when will the game be out? Unfortunately, Gabe can't give a definite date. But whatever the case is, Half-Life 2 is so going to make us lose sleep when it finally hits the shelves. **N**







BORN TO DRIVE 3

With each new Driver game do you set yourself goals and challenges in terms of technology innovations and what do you see as one of the most innovative features of this offering?

The focus this time was to get back to the knock about fun of Driver 1 in the most realistic driving environment possible. This meant detailed cities obviously, but also complex lighting and shadowing systems so we could present the player with the most realistic interpretation of a real city yet seen on a console. We also wanted to expand the physics system to push the PS2 harder and I think we have one of the most robust and advanced physics systems seen on current consoles.

Could you tell us about the storyline to Driver3, its significance, maybe the kind of cross over from previous Driver games it has, and that of the central character, especially if you are new to the brand?

In Driver 3 you play the part of Tanner again, an undercover cop based in Miami who has to bring down a gang of car thieves who steal cars in Miami and ship them to Russia, using stop off points in Nice, France and Istanbul Turkey. To do this you need to infiltrate the gang and gain their trust, which involves performing a lot of car based missions for them. Eventually Tanner learns enough about the gang to bring them down. The story is not linked to the previous games in any way save for the central character and a hitman by the name of Jericho.

Tell us about the locations to the game and how important they are in terms of the game design/game dynamic?

They were chosen for their diversity mainly. Miami was an easy one. It featured in Driver 1 and is Tanner's home; very flat with wide open



streets which gives the player a lot of room to manoeuvre. It's actually a good training ground for learning the car handling. Miami is also a pretty dramatic US city and one, which most Americans have visited or seen on TV. Nice introduces some pretty extreme hills which aside from being a huge visual change alters the balance and handling of the car - fast down hills, slow climbing hills, jumps and so on. Istanbul features the hills as Nice but introduces very narrow back streets and 'rat-runs' These are very tricky to negotiate quickly. The research involved was vast; tens of thousands of digital stills for both reference and textures plus hours of digital video. We actually sent the art teams to each city for a week for the collection of these materials.

The 'in game' car physics and modelling has evolved throughout a number of years. How near to perfection are you in terms of the machines you are working on and what kind of limitations are you under?

Absolutely nowhere near it. Stuntman and Driver are still full of physics compromises and we probably will be limited by the hardware in this respect for the next 2 or possibly 3 generations of machine. We are very pleased with the physics system within the confines of the hardware but there is always room for more realism, more debris from explosions and collisions!

As the name of the game implies, it is all about driving but what other aspects have you worked on and included to give it a more wholesome feel?

Tanner could get out of the car and steal other cars in Driver 2 but in Driver 3 he can now use a range of weapons. Machine

guns, shot guns, hand guns, even a grenade launcher! The out of car action is only around 25% of the game time; as you say - Driver is all about driving. Or car chases to be more precise. We have included other non driving options in the game such as the film director but they still serve to enhance the whole TV style car chase experience. The film director allows you to set up cameras after a chase so you can actually shoot your own car chase action sequence and save the results off to a memory card or hard drive.

Could you tell the readers some of the objectives for the game and possible go into details on one exciting event in the game that sums up the essence of the brand?

The objectives are laid out for the player through the cut scenes and most of these involve stealing and delivering cars for the gang. One mission involves racing to 3 locations and stealing performance cars from inside car show rooms. You smash through the glass front then have to rendezvous with a moving truck, which serves as your drop off point.

If you had to pick one game idea or element in Driver 3 that you feel is pretty slick what would it be?

Aside from the film director mentioned above we also have another feature, which works really well in Driver - the Thrill Cam. At any point in Take a Ride or a mission you can squeeze the left and right shoulder buttons to take a TV/Movie style view of the action. Squeeze the buttons harder and the action slows down 'Matrix style'. There is no limit to where and how often this feature can be used so there are hours of fun to be

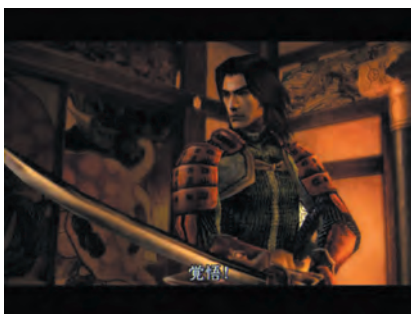
had using this feature just before jumps, collisions, explosions and so on.

Do you feel it is more than a coincidence that many of the original Psygnosis teams have gone on to great success?

We were all involved with Psygnosis during a very creative time. Development costs were so much lower that we were able to experiment. Psygnosis was also a company that pushed the graphics hard and was not afraid to publish on machines that were more powerful but not as popular. I remember when we made Shadow of the Beast on the Amiga the Atari ST was outselling the Amiga by something daft like 10 to 1. It paid off however as so many Amiga owners bought the game to show their ST owning friends! It was certainly a crazy creative time. We slowed down the flywheel of the Amiga's disc drive with a big cornflakes box when writing the game so we could fit more on the disc! Yes we still see everyone around, usually at trade shows and so on.

What has been the hardest area/task in the making of Driver3?

There are a lot of complex aspects to Driver. The sheer size of the cities - 156 miles of road and 35,400 buildings was an enormous task. The most complex area probably though is the physics, which has taken us around 5 years to develop. It's not just the job of getting it to work that's complex but getting it to run quickly and to be memory efficient. The other obvious area is the shadowing system we use which allows objects to shadow not just the surrounding scenery but also themselves. Getting this to run quickly on a PS2 was a challenge. **N**



What advancements in terms of play dynamic do you feel will make Onimusha 3 even more enjoyable than the previous two offerings?

Onimusha 3 is more of an action game than the previous title. I feel we have combined the very best elements of the first two titles and added some fantastic new ideas as well as taking the Onimusha universe into full 3D. I have no regrets about the series ending. My plan was always to make 3 titles. Onimusha 3 will make a thrilling climax to the saga.



There are a number of innovations and improvements set for Onimusha 3. How focused are these actually on pushing PS2 technology or are you merely using a new approach? Also how debilitating are hardware restraints in terms of what you would wish to do?

I think that we've tried to push the PS2 to its limit with Onimusha 3. We've tried our hardest to make the game look and perform as near perfectly as possible.



The team spent a lot of time in France capturing the essence of certain locations. You have taken many photos and graphics assets. What was the reasoning for France and how do you pull in/use this imagery in the game?

I love Europe, especially the beautiful cities within it, such as Paris and London. It felt natural to bring in Paris as a key location. I feel that classic structures, such as the Arc de Triomphe and Notre Dame, will add to the brevity and stature of the game.



The game is a collaboration of many experts, film actors, directors, and computer graphics experts. With so much talent isn't it hard to get full agreement?

Everyone on the team has the chance to state their opinion so graphic artists, along with every other person on the staff, have lots of input. The total quality of the game depends on how well the team work together, and of course on everyone's honest input.

We are not exactly sure how you create your animations. We believe they are

hand drawn. Can you tell the readers the advantage of hand drawn animation as opposed to using more precise Motion Capture?

Motion Capture provides for a better sense of fluidity and realism. That being said, hand drawn animation makes for some truly emotionally moving animation (as shown on Link's face in the last Zelda game). Also, with hand drawn animation you can do and show wild and crazy things that just aren't possible via motion capture. (It's easier to make a person 'fly through a solid object' when animating them using hand-drawn techniques instead of motion capture). Basically it really does depend on how you use the animation and where you use it.

We are told the story is deeper with more content and ideas. Can you give the readers the basic premise to the storyline?

The basic premise is that Akechi Samanosuke and Jacque Blanc get accidentally sent to different places in time and space. However, they must try to work together to uncover the mystery behind the time slip and ultimately defeat evil warlord Nobunaga Oda once and for all.


What qualities were seen in Jean Reno to be called into the project and what is his part in the project?

He was a perfect choice. I have always thought he is an amazing actor so the first opportunity I got to work with him I took. As for his part, he had to work closely with the motion capture guys and of course the voice recording studio.

How different in terms of actions, controls, even ideas, does 3D mean for the game?

We received a lot of criticism in the past for using pre rendered backgrounds. I really hope we have now answered this with the introduction of full 3D environments in the game.

Can you briefly tell us the characteristics of the dual characters and will there be new weapons on offer?

Samanosuke's weapons are all brand new but still blade based, while Jacque's weapons are based around whips. Both characters will be able to use magic via their Oni gauntlet. 

Although it is not until near the end of the year that Onimusha 3 will be released the fanfare and excitement builds as Capcom continues to release more news about some of the exciting elements and features within the game, the most recent of which were the names of some of the celebrities who will join this multi-million dollar project. These will include Takeshi Kaneshiro, who returns in his role as Samanosuke Akechi from the original title in the series, alongside Jean Reno, the world-renowned movie star who is best known for his roles in 'Leon', 'The Big Blue' and 'La Femme Nikita'. Derek dela Fuente spoke briefly with Keiji Inafune, the game's producer (also the creator of the Mega Man series), about Onimusha 3.



WOULD YOU LIKE SOME
WASABI WITH THAT?



鬼武者



FlatOut Developer Diaries [part 1]



PC | PS2
XBOX

Developer: Bugbear Entertainment · Publisher: Empire · Supplier: WWWE [011] 462 0150 · Genre: Driving
Release Date: Q4 2004

Every month the team behind the upcoming dirt-racing game *FlatOut*, due later this year from Empire Interactive, will reveal more in this set of developer's diaries, delving into how development is progressing, what you can expect with the final game and what it takes to make a game in which nearly everything on your car is bendable and breakable. In the first edition: making those cars for the game...

Hello, and welcome to the first part of developer diary covering the creation of *FlatOut*. My name is Ilari Lehtinen and I'm a 3D artist in the car team - smack in the middle of things where it's good to see what's going on, just in case I might have to write about it one day. And just as tempting the fate goes, here I am. I'll skip the boring jabbering and get right down to the dirty stuff. Being a car modeller, I'll start from cars.


We have just finished the base work for all the cars in *FlatOut*, and we're now polishing them to their final features. In other words, we have long bug lists and to-do -lists in front of us just next to the deadline date. Looking

over the older models done way-back-when-ever, we've noticed lots of little things such as lack of detail in front masks, round bits too angular, or just "not quite right" looking bits here and there. It's mainly due to the inevitable changes during the development, such as engine optimizations which suddenly gave us a whopping amount of polygons to play with, which in turn meant that cars from the number 5 or 6 onwards were far more detailed than the previous ones. Sometimes looking at the car models, I wonder when did the term 'low-polygon modelling' say "OK, I'll get my coat" and quietly excuse itself out of this industry?

Modelling cars for *FlatOut* is a breeze, to a point. Practically we just design and model the bodyworks and then include a pre-made chassis and engine. After texturing come the first in-game tests to check how the whole thing behaves, and if they are ok then comes detail work such as crash modelling. Remember when you were a kid and had a Matchbox toy car which you hammered flat just for the fun of it? Making crash models isn't any different, really. It's just a different set of tools for the same task. We've made

field trips to the insurance company's warehouse, where all the wrecked cars are taken, to observe how metal has deformed in the real-world crashes, and how to mimic it in *FlatOut*. In addition, there are also all the shadow objects, collision stuff and other little things to add to the cars but covering that would just depress everyone.

It has been interesting to follow the discussions about *FlatOut* in various forums, now that the racing fans have seen videos of the game. In almost every thread there has been someone expressing his or her dismay over how the cars come apart so easily. Cars come apart in the current build easily because it makes things easier for us and emphasizes the wrecking aspect, which we feel is miles above others. So of course we love to show it off. We're the proud parents of the coolest kid on the block... et cetera. Misty-eyed egoism aside, the final game will have sturdier bodyworks. Right now we can test our crash models on the first telephone pole we come across, instead of throwing the cars around the forest like a madman hoping for hefty impacts.

Anyways, my space runs out right here, so I'll stop now. 



The new Ford Falcon Hawk Eagle... some assembly required





Burnout 3




PS2 | Xbox

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

Despite a lacklustre launch of the series with the first Burnout, its sequel is still wholly regarded as one of the best Arcade racers in existence; its intensity and top-quality visuals setting it apart from the norm. Predictably, Criterion did not focus on going overboard with additions and changes in Burnout 3, but instead added on more cars, better graphics and the usual trimmings yet still making it much more than the generic sequel it could have been.

Even with the preview code, Burnout 3 showed an obsessive aptitude for displaying heavy inner-city traffic as well as spectacular special-effects, considerable attention to detail was paid to the areas of collision and general car-to-car action. Sporting an interesting 'points' system, players are heavily encouraged to take their cars and use them bodily as weapons against opponents. Forcing your rivals into oncoming traffic not only rewards you with copious amounts of points and more fuel for your booster, it also slows down time and pans around the havoc you've caused, giving you a detailed look at the denting, twisting, crushed wreck of your opponent and any other innocent cars caught in the bouquet of metal and glass.

There is even some benefit to your own eventual collisions with traffic, despite losing whatever headway you might have had in the race. The more spectacular your crash, the more points you get from it as well. Near-misses and driving under the spinning wrecks of opponents add multipliers to your score, while various other score modifiers fall into place as you take out multiple cars in a row or at once. Opponents react well to the environment and your own advances yet manage to avoid the common racing pitfall of being too perfect; they crash as much as you do, really. The preview copy revealed a variety of racing modes, ranging from the common 'cross the finish line first' to the more interesting 'one on one' battles, as well as the usual 'elimination' mode. Cars ranged from the more classic speedster variety to the modern Super car designs while the Race Online option blinked alluringly. Criterion has promised that online play for both PS2 and Xbox versions will be 'lag free' despite the level of detail the game achieves, although locally it's an obvious moot point. Even in its early state, Burnout 3 already has all the polish and quality needed for its spot upon the pantheon of the genre. 





Beggars who choose from poor stock

words ed dracon



"I've been terribly disappointed (yet enlightened to the mentality of the average gamer) by the "praise" surrounding games such as *Knights of the Old Republic* for their amazing storytelling, only to find the storytelling is amazing only for the fact that it exists compared to most games in which it is almost nowhere to be found".

These recent disheartening yet true words from a friend got me thinking. Characters and plots have remained about as complex as the average programmer can dream up while watching "Predator", which in itself could be considered both good and bad. Onscreen avatars have not, despite leaps and bounds in processing power, gained any incidental animations. They don't lean against walls to which they are close, they don't sit on stools when they are tired, nor do they interact with everything they touch or even generally emote their feelings. That's where games were heading, once upon a time, but not anymore it seems.

To illustrate the thought that games have actually declined in quality, I could draw up an ambiguous comparison between Bethesda's *Daggerfall* (1996) which was full of life, depth and wonder, against the dead, shallow limbo that its sequel *Morrowind* (2002) inhabits. Everything today is about raising the graphical bar, trying to reach the 'Pixar-level' of detail which, yes, is quite possible. Already we're seeing graphics cards capable of outputting a small nuclear-powered explosion of polygons, pixel-shaders and other technical terms that even the marketing people selling these cards don't understand. At the end of this 'hyper-realistic' line of graphical improvements? Gamers will have fully articulated, muscularly defined, photo-realistic characters with about as much life in them as a doll of Jeff Goldblum, acting out deadpan scenes from a script written by a board of trustees who want to make sure it has everything the current market-trend wants, or believe it wants.

Games are becoming visually more detailed than anyone from the 80's could have imagined, yet the quality and depth of both story and characterization is slowly fading as the generation who remembers the complexity of games-gone-by slowly fades into obscurity.



> *Myst IV: Revelation*

Ubisoft has announced that the *Myst* franchise will grow again later this year, with the coming of *Revelation*. The story will involve the feud between two evil brothers, and uncovering characters' motives will be necessary in order to unravel the mystery. The soundtrack will be complemented by a track composed by Peter Gabriel specifically for the game.

Far Cry on consoles

Ubisoft's Montreal Studio is at work on *Far Cry Instincts*, a version of the PC shooter *Far Cry*. The game will not be a port, but rather an entirely new title based on the original. Dates and platforms have not, as yet, been announced.

Rocky Legends

Ubisoft and MGM Interactive have signed a deal granting the games developer rights to develop *Rocky Legends*, a game based on the *Rocky* series of films. The game will feature characters from the films, and will allow online play via Xbox Live. It is expected in about six months, on PlayStation 2 and Xbox.



> *Brothers in Arms*

Ubisoft will publish Gearbox Software's upcoming World War II shooter, *Brothers in Arms*. Besides emphasizing realism, this title will attempt to involve players on an emotional level, with a story that requires balancing the importance of the mission with the wellbeing of team-mates. Much of the content offers authenticity by being based on true stories and recon photographs taken during WWII.



< Battlefield: Modern Combat

In about half a year's time, PlayStation 2 owners will be treated to the arrival of Battlefield: Modern Combat, a new Battlefield game from EA and Digital Illusions. The game will offer three playable factions (American, Chinese and Middle Eastern) and will support up to 24 players using a PS2 Network Adapter. A persistent online element will track players' progress and reward them with rank. Additionally, EA and Digital have revealed that Battlefield 2 is in the works for the PC. The game will be similar to Modern Combat in terms of background setting, and will boast features such as material penetration physics and a commander mode option in online team games, allowing a player to direct the battle from a strategic vantage. Another promising feature is the fact that maps will scale according to the number of players in the game, offering appropriate game balance regardless of the size of the engagement.

vv
vv
vv

Interplay plans resurrections

Interplay has been toying with ideas to revive several old franchises. For starters, the company has handed over development of Kingpin 2 to Gray Matter Studios. Furthermore, Interplay is considering creating new titles in the Descent, Earthworm Jim, Fallout and Dark Alliance properties.

Zoo Vet

Legacy Interactive is working on Zoo Vet, to be released on PC and Mac in July. The game will cast the player as a veterinarian at a world-class zoo, requiring the character to attend to the day-to-day care of the animals, as well as dealing with life-threatening emergencies.

Karaoke Revolution sequel

Microsoft Game Studios and Sigil Games Online have announced Vanguard: Konami Digital Entertainment and Harmonix Music Systems are at work on Karaoke Revolution Volume 2, which will feature a range of enhancements over the previous title. A USB headset will be required in order to play this, which is tentatively scheduled for release on PlayStation 2 in July.

Call of Duty: United Offensive

Activision has announced an expansion pack to Call of Duty, titled United Offensive. The add-on will offer new character abilities and maps, and will focus on a range of historical engagements. A new feature of the game will be the inclusion of tank warfare, though it hasn't as yet been made clear what form this will take.

Middle-Earth Online delayed

Vivendi Universal and Turbine, publisher and developer, respectively, have announced that their upcoming Middle-Earth Online will not be released this October, as originally planned, but rather some time next year. The additional development time will allow the inclusion of more content, as well as more extensive beta testing.

R99



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< **Sims move to the city**

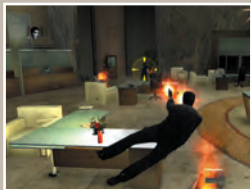
Electronic Arts will present a range of new Sims games for consoles later this year. Separate versions of The Urbz (current working title) will appear on PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube and Game Boy Advance. The new titles, which will take place in the city, hence the current title, will require players to build their characters' reputations while working on thwarting a nefarious plot. The PS2 version will support the EyeToy, allowing players to import images into the game. A multiplayer aspect will also be included.



< **Empire Earth 2**

Vivendi Universal has announced the development of Empire Earth 2, with no indication of a release date as yet. The game promises to be revolutionary within its genre in several respects. Weather effects will influence battles, requiring players to adjust their methods accordingly. Temporary rewards will be given to players who have excelled in some way, affecting the battle for some time. Team games will benefit from a war planning screen that will allow team-mates to make diagrams of troop movements and the like. Multiplayer cooperative scenarios, much sought by many players but largely lacking in most games, will also be provided.

International Release Dates



Exarch Online	PC	RPG	June 1
Front Mission 4	PS2	Strategy	June 1
Inquisition	PC	Action	June 1
Malice	PS2 Xbox	Platformer	June 1
Mashed	PC PS2 Xbox	Racing	June 1
MTV Music Generator 3: This is the Remix	PS2	Music	June 1
Perimeter	PC	Strategy	June 1
Powerdrome	PS2	Racing	June 1
Traps of Darkness	PC	Action	June 1
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	GBA GC PS2 Xbox	Action	June 2
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	PC	Action	June 4
Colorful Box	PS2	Adventure	June 6
ShellShock: Nam '67	PS2 Xbox	Shooter	June 7
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures	GC	Action	June 7
RibbitKing	PS2	Sports	June 8
Room Zoom	GC Xbox	Racing	June 8
Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2	PS2	Sports	June 8
Drake	PC	Action	June 14
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	PS2 Xbox	Action	June 14
Carmen Sandiego: Secret of the Stolen Drums	PS2 Xbox	Action	June 15
Daredevil: The Man Without Fear	PS2	Action	June 15
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	PS2	Fighting	June 15

Need for Speed Underground 2

Official confirmation has arrived from Electronic Arts that Need for Speed Underground 2 is in the works, and is expected to be completed later this year. The most striking aspect of the upcoming racing title is that it will allow players to drive around a city freely looking for excitement, encountering potential racing opponents and dealers in aftermarket parts.



Swat 4

Vivendi has announced that SWAT 4 will be released early in 2005. Powered by the Vengeance engine players will control up to five squad members whilst performing hostage rescues and escaping from terrorists. The game will include three multiplayer modes as well as a co-operative mode.



Star Wars Episode III

LucasArts will be promoting its upcoming Star Wars: Episode III game in the Star Wars Trilogy DVD box set, with a game demo of the Xbox version and assorted "making of" material. At this point, it is expected that Star Wars: Battlefront, which will be available for PC, PlayStation 2 and Xbox, will be released around the same time as the movie, which will debut in a year's time on 19 May 2005.

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< Colin McRae Rally 2005

Colin McRae Rally 2005 has just been announced for a late 2004 release. The game will include a multi-event Career Challenge and online head-to-head rallying for up to 8 players. The game will be sporting a new bonnet cam as well as enhanced damage and scenery models. PS2 | Xbox

> Sonic and EyeToy





Sega's Sonic Team studio is busy with a new game that will make use of the EyeToy camera accessory for the PlayStation 2. The game is titled Sega Superstars, and will include Sonic the Hedgehog, among other famous characters from the company.



Web Scores

PC Games	Breed	Dues Ex Invisible War	Painkiller	Sacred
NAG /100	77	83	82	80
gamespy.com /5	n/r	4	4	2
gamespot.com /10	4.2	8	8.5	7.6
pc.ign.com /10	7.3	9	7	7.8

Console Games	Rise to Honor [PS2]	Forbidden Siren [PS2]	Socom II [PS2]	Ikaruga [GC]
NAG /100	90	70	80	82
gamespy.com /5	2	4	4	3
gamespot.com /10	6.6	6.7	8.5	8.8
ign.com /10	5.8	7.7	8.8	8.3



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< Worms Forts Under Siege

The Worms franchise will see a new playing field when Forts Under Siege is released towards the end of this year. Using the basis of castle sieges, settings will include Ancient Egypt, Troy, King Arthur and the Samurai. Players can look forward to using a variety of 30 weapons, discovering hidden maps, and taking on challenging missions in good old Worm style gameplay. PC | PS2 | Xbox

> Final Fantasy XI Chains of Promathia

An expansion to the online world of Final Fantasy XI will be released later this year. Chains of Promathia will feature new areas of Vana'diel, new secrets and unravel mysteries.



< Ookami (Wolf)

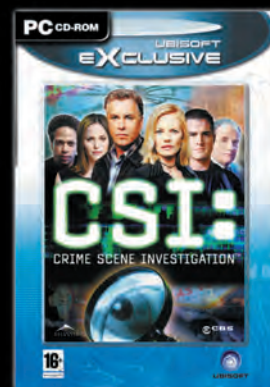
Very little is known about upcoming Team Viewtiful title, Ookami (Wolf), aside from the luscious visuals obviously inspired by the success of Viewtiful Joe and that it's being touted as a 'nature adventure'. PS2 | GC

> Spyro: A Hero's Tail

Eurocom Entertainment Software is at work on Spyro: A Hero's Tail for PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube. The game will be published by Vivendi Universal near the end of the year. Players will be able to play as Spyro or any of his four major cohorts, and will travel through environments that vary between good and evil in real time, the mood being represented by visual aspects and musical score. All the characters have been imbued with new moves and abilities.



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reviews



Raising the bar

Comparing games (in a review context) can be a tricky business. Just where should the mark be set?

Every now and then a title comes out that effectively "ruins" a genre for a few months. Last month we saw a review of Far Cry, which created quite a stir. Now it is used as something of a yardstick for first person shooters as a whole - even games that don't fall entirely into its category.

This kind of event makes the great disparity in the game creating community more than a little apparent. But the fact is that games like these aren't the norm. They are the exception to the rule and, while they do show what developers are capable of, they should essentially not be used to judge other games by. By way of comparison, it's a little like looking at someone like Albert Einstein and then calling the rest of humanity "sub-standard" because they don't share his level of intelligence.

Yet it's difficult to keep things in perspective. Reviewers' stock in trade lies in comparing one product to another; after all, this gives them something to draw comparisons to, and comparisons are one of the most useful ways of writing a review. Of course, choosing the right product to

review against is quite tricky. Choose something too good, and everything else seems like rubbish. Go the other way and use a bad product as the measure, and everything else looks great.

Many reviewers will actually draw attention to their comparisons by naming compared titles in their reviews. This makes "placing" their expressed opinion a little easier for the readers, but it's still not a perfect system.

In the end, the reader has to make several unconscious judgments while reading a review, including what's currently on the market, what the reviewer looked at previously and the reviewer's general attitude to the type of game being reviewed.

So if things seem a little skewed at times, take note of what has come before - particularly in the last few months. Good games have a way of making waves, and their impact can be picked up on for quite some time afterwards.

Of course, if a game is being run down in comparison to a title that is more than just a few months old, well... that just speaks for itself, now doesn't it?

In case you didn't know yet...

Award of Merit

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



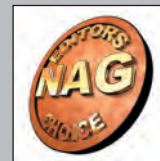
Award of Excellence

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



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 - because we can. Live with it.



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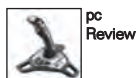
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Breed



Suggested Retail Price: R 299.00 · **Developer:** Brat Designs · **Publisher:** CDV
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 1GHz · 256 MB RAM · 2 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1.2 GB HDD

Breed is a long awaited title that has a lot of people quite excited. But its timing stinks. With titles like Far Cry and Painkiller hitting the market, those games that rely on a first person shooter basis need to bring something very special to the mix or face relegation to the realms of dated mediocrity. This is the problem that Breed faces. Had it been released a few months earlier, things would have no doubt looked a lot better for the game as a whole.

The premise behind the game is that humanity, while its armed forces were off fighting an alien race, was decimated by the same aliens. Returning home, the military finds its planet overrun by bad guys. That's where you come in. You take control of one soldier, or a squad (depending on the mission) to wipe the Breed out.

The player can also control aircraft

and tanks.

If the player is only controlling one character, Breed does just fine. The major problem comes in with squad based missions. You can switch between characters easily, meaning that you can apply a "right tool for the right job" principle. When you are not controlling the characters, their AI takes over, and you can issue simple squad based orders. All fair and well, except for the fact that the squad is a little thicker than pig poop - which means that they get into all kinds of trouble, waste ammunition and generally get themselves killed when you're not looking. This element of the game adds an annoyance factor that is very high indeed. The Breed themselves are fairly smart, which results in the player being effectively outgunned. There isn't much variation in the types of enemies faced, however. Where this may work in certain titles, Breed gets bland quickly

thanks to its lack of varied opponents.

Of course, driving a tank makes you a little stronger in the fight, and is by far the most enjoyable part of the game. Not all vehicles are as much fun... flying aircraft is more of a pain in the neck than a pleasure, to be honest, and leaves the player almost as frustrated as playing squad missions.

Graphically, Breed is pretty enough to hold its own in the competitive FPS market. The problem, though, is that things get a little boring after a while. Everything looks fairly similar to everything else. Destroyable terrain means (in Breed terms) that trees and large buildings can be blown up, and the overall look of the special effects is not bad at all, if somewhat unrealistic.

Good graphics have resulted in the fact that the player can make use of very long range attacks to take out enemies, even without a sniper rifle. This does make the game a touch easi-



er, seeing as how enemies tend to react to the player only when the player is up close. Spotting certain enemy units in the rather bland environment can get a little tough, though.

I am always one for arguing the benefits of good sound. The sound effect themselves are not bad but the voice acting is abysmal. The voice acting is so bad, in fact, that it also makes the game annoying. Other than that, the sound is quite satisfactory.

The other big thing with first person shooter games, obviously, is control. Breed's default controls are a little confusing, at times, and the overall movement feels somewhat sluggish. Not a train smash, though, because the basic level of control is accurate and fairly sensitive.


Breed features an overall style that reminds one of Starship Troopers. Huge drop ships and all out battles are the name of the game, along with a gung-ho attitude that permeates the entire title.

Breed is all about fast paced action

and overcoming overwhelming odds. As a first person shooter title, it certainly is a lot of fun, despite the problems mentioned above. Unfortunately, though, the title's timing results in the game feeling somewhat dated. The Brat development team could have put a lot more detail into the title and should have included aspects like ragdoll effects on enemies killed.

If you're not too picky, Breed will prove to be highly entertaining. It's full of action and the missions tend to have varied content (in other words, you will have a number of goals to achieve, and will be able to use vehicles as well as be on foot.) The game is pretty linear, sadly, with set out waypoints directing the player through each mission. Its multiplayer is a little more exciting (at least you don't have those dumb bots to deal with) but it still faces a tough race in this field too.

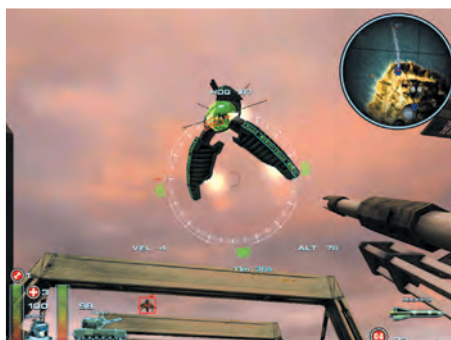
Whether this game will compete favourably against titles like Far Cry and Unreal Tournament 2004 only time will tell. What is certain, though, is

that it has a tough time ahead of it to outperform titles like these. It will probably gain a cult following, but won't be a smash hit. 

"With titles like Far Cry and Painkiller hitting the market, those games that rely on a first person shooter basis need to bring something very special to the mix or face relegation to the realms of dated mediocrity. This is the problem that Breed faces."

All out first person action that will probably garner a cult following rather than wide success.

60



Deus Ex 2: Invisible War



Suggested Retail Price: R 299 · **Developer:** Ion Storm · **Publisher:** Eidos · **Supplier:** MegaRom [011] 234 2680
Genre: Action Adventure · **Reviewer:** Iwan Pienaar
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 4 1.5GHz · 256 MB RAM · DVD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 2 GB HDD

Deus Ex: Invisible War begins twenty years after the events of the 2000 Ion Storm hit. The player takes on the role of Tarsus Academy trainee Alex D. The game opens with terrorists destroying Chicago in an attempt to eliminate Tarsus and its cadets. Alex and Billie Adams are the only trainees to survive the attack and get sent to Seattle to continue their training. However, shortly after their arrival, terrorists infiltrate the facility and force the player to escape to the relative safety of the city and find out what is going on.

Players can choose from six character portraits divided evenly between the sexes to depict the character. The cut-scenes, voice acting and non-player character responses adapt accordingly. While Invisible War is played through a first-person perspective, this is not a first-person shooter by any stretch of

the imagination. For those unfamiliar with the Deus Ex franchise, Invisible War can be described as combining elements of political intrigue, stealth, action and adventure.

Ironically enough, this jack-of-all-trades approach has seen the title get criticised for being too restrictive. Some view the small levels as limiting the player while others believe that the apparent lack of narrative focus might cause players to become bored very quickly into the game. However, Ion Storm set out to create a game world and story that would both be engrossing and realistic (from a science-fiction perspective). It is left to the player to find his/her way through the world and figure out the political, social and economical mores. In this respect, Invisible War succeeds.

There are several rival factions in Invisible War, all wanting to gain the player's assistance in conducting covert

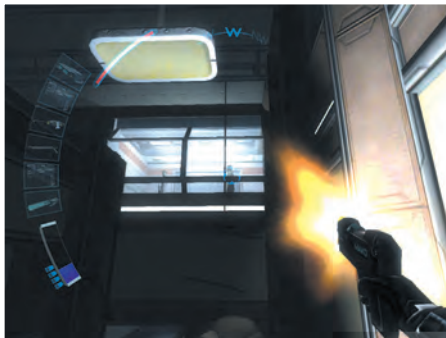
(and not so covert) missions. Initially, the player will be able to complete missions for different factions without too much conflict. Eventually though, the factions force the player to make a choice between them. For example, there is a prominent scientist that the one faction wants assassinated while another wants him protected. Cause and effect are valuable lessons learnt early in the game.

Of course being a student of the Tarsus Academy for several years means that the player is able to use biomodular nanotechnology implants. There are five assignable biomod slots corresponding with various parts of Alex's body (see box elsewhere on the page). Each biomod can be upgraded a maximum of two times. Unfortunately, the player cannot use more than one biomod in a specific area at a time. Apart from the normal biomods on offer, there are several

Improving the flesh



Biomod list		Black market biomods
Arm		
Strength enhancement (passive)	Biotox attack drone (active)	Bot domination (passive)
Cranial		
Cloak (active)	Hazard drone (active)	Neural interface (passive)
Eye		
Vision enhancement (active)	Regeneration (active)	Spy drone (active)
Leg		
Speed enhancement (active)	Move silent (passive)	Health leech drone (active)
Skeletal		
Aggressive defence drone (active)	Thermal masking (active)	Electrostatic discharge (passive)



black market canisters that give the player some interesting abilities.

The biomods are all logical in their features and cater for players with a variety of gaming styles. Some are more useful than others like the black market neural interface biomod that allows you to enter security terminals and withdraw credit almost at will.

Biomods are sub-divided into active and passive ones. Active biomods drain bio energy as long as they are in use (similar to losing mana when casting spells in Diablo), while passive biomods are always on and do not drain energy.


Ion Storm is particularly proud of the physics engine and for good reason. The player can almost literally pick up and throw anything in the game. It is especially fun picking up a body and dumping it down stairs or from a height to see the engine in action.

What looks particularly impressive is when you hit a light source. The light shakes and shifts according to how it would in real life.

The rag-doll effects might be over-exaggerated at times, with pieces of furniture moving around as if an elephant is tap-dancing around it when you move quickly through a room. However, the physics engine combines beautifully with excellent graphics. This does come at a price though as you will need a reasonably high spec machine to be able to run Invisible War without any hitches.

What you get from Invisible War depends on how you approach the game. It is not as open-ended as Morrowind but then again it is not as restrictive as a standard game.

The number of missions you get from the different factions should see you playing through the game a few times just to see the different permutations involved. It has a strong story but it sometimes comes to the detriment of the play dynamic with enemy artificial intelligence being one of the casualties.

Having said all that, Invisible War is definitely a title that will stay on my hard drive for some time. 

Selected factions

WTO

As close to the current World Trade Organisation as you can get. This faction believes in economic progress and materialism above all else.

The Order

Exact opposite of the WTO, The Order believes that materialism is what caused the great collapse. Members strive to preserve the state of nature.

Tarsus Academy

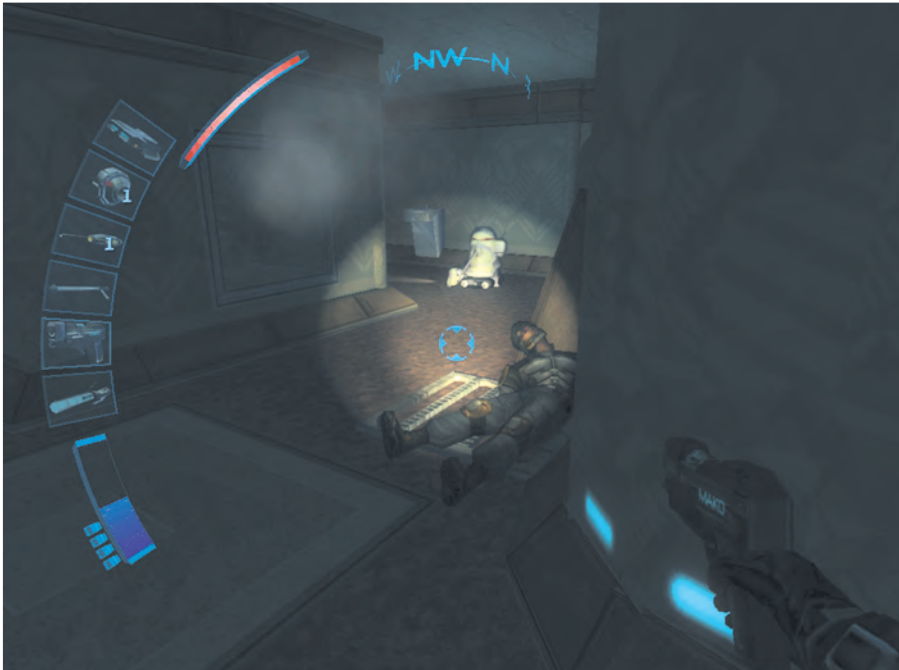
These schools specialise in the education of nano-enhanced humans. Alex D begins the game as a trainee in the Tarsus Academy.

The Knights Templar

This faction believes that nano-enhanced humans are against the natural order of things and all biotechnology should be destroyed.

Invisible War is an engrossing title that will see gamers clamouring for more.

83



Painkiller



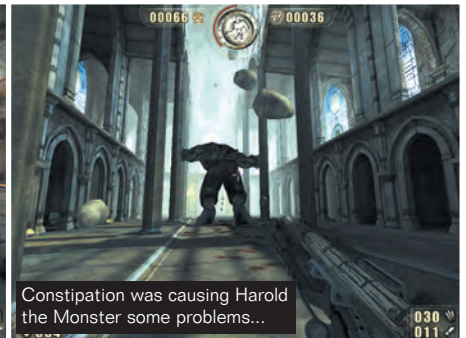
Suggested Retail Price: TBA · **Developer:** People Can Fly · **Publisher:** Dreamcatcher · **Supplier:** TBA
Genre: First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** Anton Lines
Minimum Specifications: Pentium III 1.5GHz · 384 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 64 MB Video Card · 1.2 GB HDD

When developers People Can Fly admitted they were influenced by the rapid-style play dynamic of Quake 1, they weren't kidding. In fact, Painkiller resembles the old classic in a variety of ways, good and bad: its theme, level design, physics, visual motif and (unfortunately) its artificial intelligence are all remarkably similar. The single-player missions, in which you fight off hordes of advancing monsters, also reminded me a great deal of the Serious Sam games.

But let's begin with the technicalities. What exactly is Painkiller about? Well, if you're looking for an adventure-based shooter with a gripping storyline and intelligent characters, you're looking in the wrong place. This is all about mindless slaughter. And lots of it. You play the role of a man who, after being killed in a freak car accident, finds

himself in purgatory - trapped between Heaven and Hell. Confused as to why he was denied entrance into Heaven, he is confronted by an angelic figure who informs him that he has been chosen to defeat the armies of Lucifer which have begun massing for an invasion. Yes, entire armies. When he has completed this task, he will have his answers. Of course, he is the only one who can succeed, and so on and so forth. There really isn't much else to say about the story, other than that it's largely uninteresting and, for the most part, irrelevant. I don't honestly know why the developers even bothered to include it. Very little work went in, and it shows. The same is true for the intro movie and cut-scenes throughout the progression of the game. They are long-winded and tend to drag on, not to mention they're terribly modelled and animated. The missions follow the same route. You are confronted with an

almost never-ending stream of monsters, but they are terribly unvaried and the AI is shocking (of 1996 standard). The entire game is also repetitive. Some of the bosses do manage to make one briefly sit up and take notice, but if you trace back far enough, you will find they've all been done before in other games. These aspects just seem to have been neglected, which is a shame considering how good the game feels behind the controls. Painkiller's feel is indeed its redemption. Your character seems to flow through the maps with a kind of martial-art-like elegance. The movement is smooth and incredibly natural, simple to pick up and never frustrating. My only concern is that it is perhaps too easy and thus may not form part of the skill of the game (although we will have to wait and see what happens when the global competitive community gets a hold of it). But as far as single-



IRC News

In a recent IRC chat session with the Painkiller community, [PCF] Adrian, one of the lead developers, explained a few of the changes planned for the upcoming version 1.1 patch. The main issues include removing the auto-aiming ability of the ElectroDriver gun (which has been confirmed as a bug), improving the weapon balance (specifically by toning down the Stake Gun damage) and correcting some problems with the net code. "The netcode is pretty good for LAN, but if you have a ping of 80 it sucks," admitted Adrian. "That's because it's very hard to do client prediction with the Havok engine, since Havok works differently on every PC. But we will do what we can for patch 1.1. There will be improvement to the Havok-based code, so you should feel it." Also included in the patch will be essentials such as demo-recording, spectator mode, a voting system, and a new map.


player goes, the controls are flawless.

The graphics are not as good as I expected them to be, although they're still pretty impressive and run surprisingly well on lower-end systems. While not up to the standards of Far Cry and Unreal Tournament 2004, they do serve their purpose. The game uses the new PAIN engine, making it capable of putting out higher polygon models than most other current releases, although the models often lack detail. Dynamic lighting is used effectively, as are the latest pixel shader effects, and there are a few scenes which just ooze realism, but the modelling and texturing could have been done a lot better on the whole. The Havok 2.0 physics engine itself is also stunning, but doesn't quite translate into the single-player experience as much as it could have.

The multiplayer is a different topic altogether and, in this department, Painkiller is one of the most exciting new releases in recent gaming history. The developers' preference towards competitiveness is clear, and a lot more

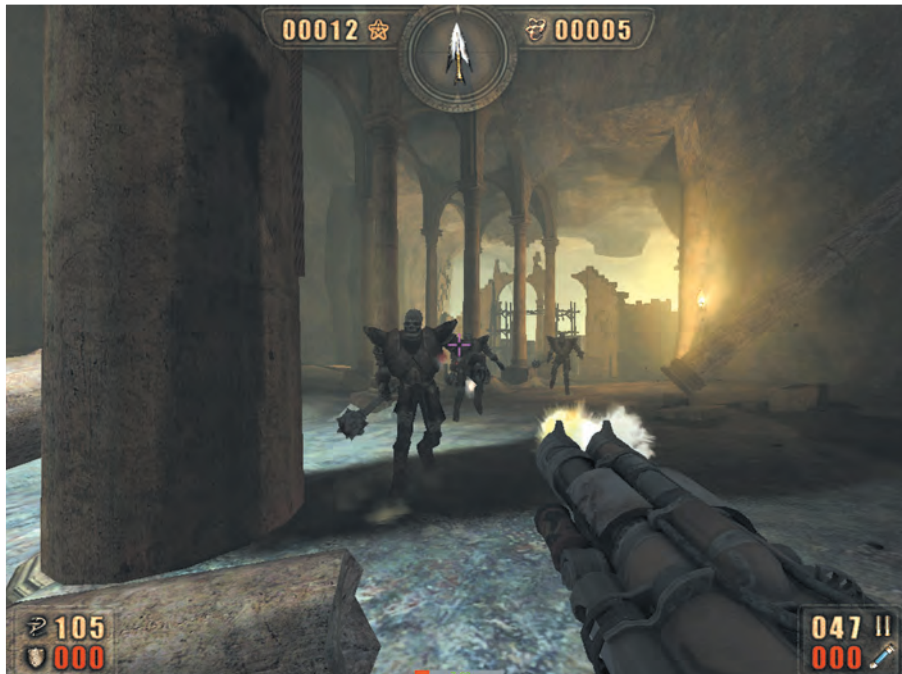
effort seems to have been put into making the game appeal to this particular audience. While, again, the style is very much like that of Quakeworld, there have been a number of highly original new additions, such as the Stake Gun, which injects a completely new slant into today's railgun-focussed mentality; and the default weapon, called the PainKiller, which is actually useful as an offensive weapon unlike in many other FPS titles. Each weapon has a primary and secondary fire mode, as well as the ability to combine the two into a third. There is a problem with weapon balance, in that the Rocket Launcher / Chaingun combination is by far the strongest, and spawning with the stake gun is a little silly, but People Can Fly have already shown their desire to listen to the gaming community, and are likely to fix these balance issues in time. The physics in multiplayer, unlike single-player, sets the game apart from its competitors. You get a sense of your character actually having weight, and effects like

weapon kickbacks can make a difference to movement. Rocket-jumping has been included for the benefit of Quake fans, as well as bunny-hopping, although I have yet to see anyone pull off a strafe jump. Over the course of the next few months, we will probably start to see the more advanced applications of Painkiller's physics engine come to light.

The final score I gave this game is not a true reflection of its unique strengths and weaknesses, simply because they are so extreme and widespread. Despite its regrettable shortcomings, I think everyone should play Painkiller. The international community support seems to be there, and it could very well become one of the next major tournament titles. Or, then again, it could just fade to obscurity - we all know how fickle gamers can be. 

A game with huge competitive potential but a somewhat bland single-player.

82



Second Opinion

Serious Sam and Quake (one) had a bastard child, so they aptly named it Painkiller. Look, there's a lot I can say against the game - that it gets long in the tooth, that it lacks more creative weapons, that some monsters are as dull as a Sunday drive. But there's so much going for it here: killer graphics, a suitably over-the-top physics engine and a very arcade-like feeling, complete with gauntlet-style levels and rewards for finishing levels to certain conditions. Perhaps Painkiller caves in on its own grandeur. Let's face it, if you can kill the first boss in under 2 minutes, suddenly the things ahead don't seem that intimidating. I predict only real addicts of fast paced, carnage filled games will finish it, but that shouldn't detract from what is a great shooter that pays homage to the old school of FPS titles.

James Francis 90%

Rise to Honor



PlayStation 2
Review



Now
Available



Silver
Award

Suggested Retail Price: R 500 · **Developer:** SCEI · **Publisher:** SCEE · **Supplier:** Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900

Genre: Fighting · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon

Requirements: 1 Player · 100k Memory

As an action packed martial-arts fish in the big bowl of Hollywood, it was only a matter of time before Jet Li got his own videogame.

Unlike the norm in this circumstance however, this time round the game actually has real involvement from the actor it's based on. It even contains the actor himself, playing his role in the story. Development on Rise to Honor started in 2002 when SCEA and Jet Li teamed up to create a title that would let martial arts fan boys jump into the shoes of Jet Li and try out the actors signature lightning fast kicks and punches.

A lot of hype surrounded the touted '360 degree fighting system' which raised a lot of dubious eyebrows. For once, the hype wasn't entirely wrong. As you follow the story of Kit Yung (played by Jet Li, of course) on a journey to avenge his father's death, you'll

experience the rather innovative fighting system as you assault hordes of gangsters, assassins and various other killer-type baddies. The story itself may be simplistic, yet it does an amiable job of getting the player into the game and interested in playing more. Deeper into the game, the story itself becomes quite solid and well worth the time, especially if you're a fan of martial arts films.

With a quick initial explanation of the fighting system at the beginning of the game, things kick off fast and packed with enough action to rival any movie. In a bold move, SCEA have opted to break the mould of the usual button-mashing brawlers and instead use the right analogue stick for full control over the direction of your kicks and punches. As enemies attack from all angles, you simply slap the analogue stick in their direction and Jet Li, sorry, Kit Yung, will attack in that direction. Attacking from one direction to another

in quick succession allows for combos and other impressive moves. Holding down a certain button while attacking will use up your Adrenaline bar and slow down time, presenting you with more than ample opportunity to unleash Adrenaline-powered attacks and combos. Adrenaline is also very useful for the shooting sections dotted across levels, letting you dodge in a direction while firing in another. Everything looks and feels exactly like you'd expect it to, like you'd expect from a Jet Li movie. Cinematic flare literally oozes out the seams, situations and events perfectly orchestrated. Parts have you running away from an attack helicopter; other parts require precision timing to kick incoming motorcyclists off their bikes. Certain areas of combat even require you to time your attacks with a partner, often you get to use said partner as a weapon in innovative ways. There's even an angry Chinese



Is that Jet Li or Keanu Reeves?

chef.

As you progress through a level, you come across context sensitive actions that allow you to pull off non-conventional moves, such as throwing people over high ledges or dragging them across hot stoves. Sounds appealing, and works incredibly well. It's obvious in every move that Jet Li was closely involved in the whole production of the game, providing both the voice and motion capture for his character. Certain levels require stealth, guards patrol areas and will spot you if you break the beam of their flashlight. To avoid these guards, you can hang on pipes or even throw chairs into guards, distracting them enough to let you take them down silently. These stealth sections are painless and flow well; very little frustration involved in what is usually a tedious aspect of a game not specifically made for fans of stealth titles.

Everything together in one appealing package, Rise to Honor succeeds where a lot of 'actor based' games fail

dismally. Involvement from Jet Li himself truly sets the title apart from other similar attempts. Progression is rewarded not only with a plethora of locked content such as 'making of' movies and selectable music tracks, but also with stylish real-time videos of a young Kit doing his martial arts training. Each level you complete can be replayed at any time, perfect for showing off stylish moments to your friends or simply experiencing some of the finer moments of the game again. No game is without its flaws however, though Rise to Honor has sparingly few mostly in the form of the boss fights. While the fights themselves happen in interesting locations and contain impressive visuals, the bosses themselves act in predictable patterns and are generally a pain to defeat until you figure out the pattern. Certain normal enemies suffer from the same flaw, though this is easily overlooked in light of the entertaining combat systems and interesting scenarios. One would think that a title of this calibre would suffer from the

'too dang short' syndrome, yet Rise to Honor contains a reasonable amount of levels and then some, providing you with a good amount of time to pretend you're Jet Li while playing one of the few games fans of this genre simply must have. [N](#)

“Certain areas of combat even require you to time your attacks with a partner, often you get to use said partner as a weapon in innovative ways.”

A sterling action title with enough depth and quality for fans of this genre.

90



Jet worked hard to get onto the Olympic Head-stomping team

Singles



Suggested Retail Price: TBA · **Developer:** Rotobee · **Publisher:** KOCH Media · **Supplier:** TBA
Genre: People simulator · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 500MHz · 256 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1.5 GB HDD

Games certainly are growing up with gamers (seeing as how the gaming generation that weaned itself on Atari and Commodore is getting a bit long in the teeth) and Singles is a definite example of where they are going in the future.

One could quite easily confuse this game for a glitzy Sims rip-off, but calling it the "sins" would be a lot more accurate. See, Singles is basically an exploration of human interaction, with a definite focus on that most base (but certainly most enjoyed) activity: sex. Yes, Singles does feel like The Sims in many ways, but the fact is that it deals with a far more adult subject matter, and it makes an effort to explore the intricacies of human relationships in far more depth than The Sims ever did.

Great graphics allow Singles to achieve much of what it gets right. Without high end graphics, the overall

realism (and we're talking absolute anatomical correctness, folks) would have been lost, and the impact of the game would have gone with it. Added to this is a competent use of sound and a simple, Sims style control interface. This interface, however, is pretty much where the similarities end.

A few noticeable differences (like the inclusion of weekends and the lower amount of action options) are immediately apparent, but it's when things hot up between your Singles characters that the true nature of the game reveals itself. Singles doesn't pull any punches. Full frontal nudity and near pornographic sexual sequences are the order of the day in this very adults only title.

While Singles misses the mark in terms of overall complexity, it holds a massive amount of interest in terms of the interaction aspect of the game. It's the ultimate virtual voyeur pursuit, with

hetero and homosexual relationships available for play [odd how all your screens feature only women, Ed]. The characters apartment can be improved, much like other people simulators, but all characters are pre-set (and there is a rather limited choice of them at that.) In fact, all choices available to the player are limited, but the focus of this title has little to do with buying nice things for the characters and everything to do with them doing nice things to each other. If you are a prude in any way, avoid this title - it requires complete open mindedness.

A very sexy, adults only people simulator in which getting laid is the main aim.

84



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between a fashion outlet,
a fast food restaurant
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Sacred



Suggested Retail Price: R 299 · **Developer:** Ascaron Entertainment · **Publisher:** Ascaron Entertainment
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Adventure · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 800MHz · 256 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 16 MB Video Card · 1.6 GB HDD

With regards to the more traditional computer Role Playing games one could consider the lack of action a negative, much how one could see the lack of substance found in Hack & Slash Role Playing games to also be a negative. Sacred manages to somewhat bridge the gap between the two Role Playing genres and even introduce a few new angles. Initially Sacred appears to be no more than a clone of Diablo 2 - further investigation however reveals something more of a cross between Baldur's Gate and the aforementioned Diablo 2.

Deviating from the usual character classes, Sacred opts for the more esoteric groups such as angelic descendants Seraphim and the elusive Dark Elves. Each class plays differently, the Barbarian allowing for more brutal direct assaults whereas the High Elves

prefer to take enemies out from a distance using arrows and immobilising spells. As you gain experience you can choose from a variety of skills, some make purchasing of items cheaper while others allow you to regain Stamina quicker. Stamina, much like Mana in more traditional RPGs, is used to cast spells or activate abilities. Abilities/Spells aren't learned, but rather found in the form of Skill runes. Paying a Combo Master to string skills together allows one to create a flurry of attacks or tactically link spells together, adding interesting strategy to skills.

As you explore the world of Sacred is seamlessly streamed to you; a functional mini-map and log book helping you keep track of the multiple quests you have to complete, also keeping track of the overall story. You can accept multiple quests, though some quests require you to complete them within a certain amount of days. Helping you get from

A to B, purchasing a horse helps make the distances bearable. Sacred contains possibly the largest amount of terrain to explore to date, even weeks of play will only dent the 'percentage discovered' statistic in your logbook. Due to the large map, up to 16 players can comfortably roam the land, forming parties and hunting down monsters or completing quests. Both Internet and LAN play are supported, both performing amiably despite the vast amount of data being sent.

Despite slightly lacklustre graphics (trees and other worldly items feel static) and problems with certain CD ROM drives not accepting the CD (a patch is available online to solve this), Sacred is a must-have for fans of the genre. [N](#)

While not as polished as it could have been, Sacred remains a good, solid title.

80



A Big Place

A few weeks of playing will likely only reveal around 20% of the world to you, unless you're the type that just has to explore every nook and cranny, in which case Sacred has more than enough to keep you busy.



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Rainbow Six: Athena Sword



PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 199 · **Developer:** Red Storm · **Publisher:** UbiSoft
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** James Francis
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 800MHz · 128 MB RAM · 8x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 2 GB HDD

Sneak! Infiltrate! Kill! Kill! Kill! That's the modus operandi for Raven Shield, arguably the best game yet in the Rainbow Six series, mostly thanks to its great use of the Unreal engine. But we can't paint the expansions with the brush. In fact, so far they've offered little more than new maps and new weapons. The latest, Athena Sword, offers little more than this as well. A new multiplayer mode called Capture The Enemy (an interesting hybrid to Jailbreak) is a welcome addition,

adding spice to team-based play, but the rest is standard at best, mediocre at worst.

Based in Europe, the new foreign areas are nice to look at, but the single player missions are boring, and sometimes pointless. You'll find yourself in places like Greece and Monte Carlo, but this doesn't change anything else. Apart from generally uninspiring map design, some missions re-use maps and the new weapons do not really add anything to the game. It's more Rainbow Six and it is a sure-fire fix for

fans of the series, but it doesn't escape the moniker of "more of the same".

The remade original Rainbow Six maps are a nice touch, but it's time for a full-blown sequel or something really revolutionary. The expansion will please fans, but only for a short while. [N](#)

It has some nice touches, but it's nothing revolutionary.

68



MX Unleashed



PlayStation 2 Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 469 · **Developer:** Rainbow Studios · **Publisher:** THQ
Supplier: Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Racing · **Reviewer:** Adam Liebman
Minimum Specifications: 1 - 2 Players · 488kb Memory

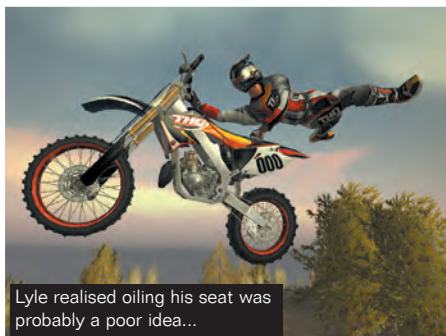
The MX series of games have always aimed to please both motocross fans and mainstream gamers alike, and the tradition is faithfully continued with MX Unleashed. The game is split into two sections, namely racing, which sees you competing against computer controlled opponents on a variety of courses, and freestyle, which is more trick-orientated and open-ended. Also on offer is a split-screen multiplayer mode - a welcome diversion, even if it feels more like an afterthought than an

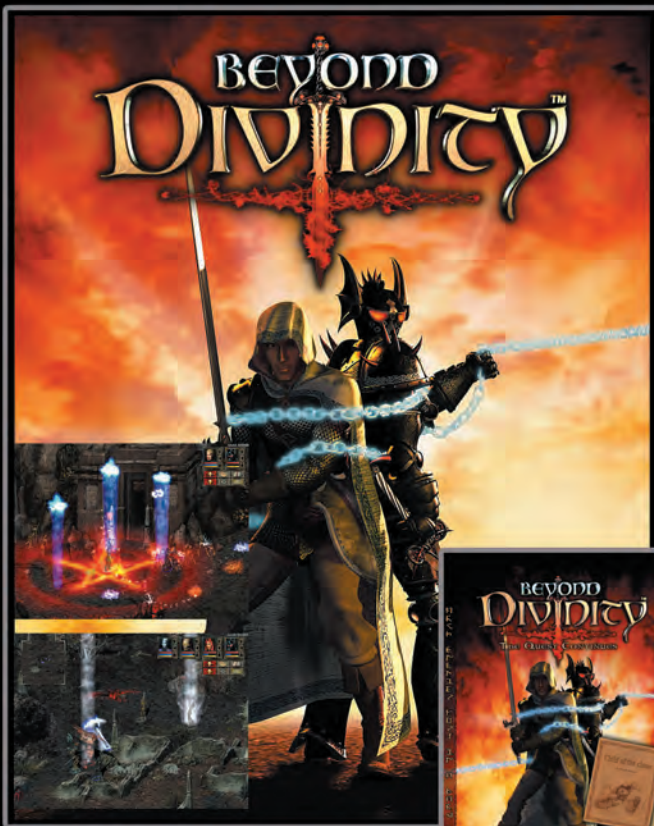
integral aspect of the game. In terms of playability, intuitive controls and responsive handling make MX Unleashed easy to pick up and play, though there are a few complexities, in the form of clutch-usage and preloading that need to be mastered in order to succeed. The trick system is also well-implemented, though the amount of different tricks available may be slightly lacking in variety. MX Unleashed succeeds with well detailed and animated riders, and particularly good crashes - needless to say, a pre-

requisite for this sort of title. Realistic sound effects and what feels like a standard-issue hard rock soundtrack round off the package. MX Unleashed is an enjoyable title, that manages to cater both to fans of the sport and casual gamers. Anyone looking for an entertaining, two-wheeled, dirt-bound experience should give it a look. [N](#)

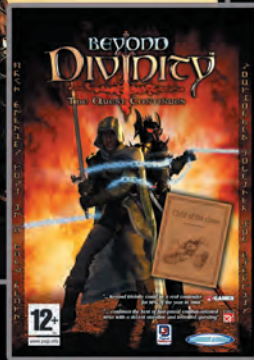
Visually impressive, highly enjoyable and very accessible motocross title.

75





PC CD-ROM



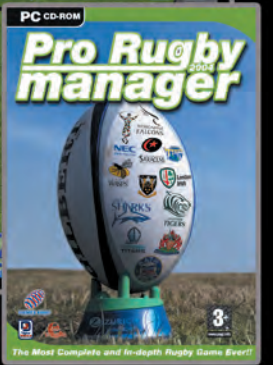
PlayStation 2



PlayStation 2



PC CD-ROM



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GET READY TO PLAY...



Against Rome



PC Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299 · **Developer:** Big Ben Interactive · **Publisher:** JoWooD
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Real Time Strategy · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 800MHz · 256 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 16 MB Video Card · 1.2 GB HDD

It seems that coming up with an original idea for a real time strategy title has become something of a developmental brass ring. Every so often a new RTS title sees the light, and it will have a few new ideas thrown in to hide the shameless rehashing and idea-snatching that makes up the most of the game. While this is true of Against Rome, it does appear that the original ideas seem to outweigh the rehashed bits. In fact, the game initially seems incredibly refreshing but it spirals towards sameness after a while.

The player can use one of three races (Teutons, Huns or Celts) who were the primary enemies of the Roman Empire. No options to play the Romans exists which is a little sad, but understandable given the game's title. The single player campaign is a mix and match of the three races, with different missions requiring the use of different nationalities. Single player "never ending"


games are also available (quite cool, build up your army as the computer replaces any enemies you have defeated) as well as standard multiplayer fare.

The crux of the game is the player's chieftain. This specialised character gains glory through victories, which can be used to purchase upgrades for the chieftain, units and village, as well as to motivate troops who might be a little low on morale. This approach is rather unique, and allows the player to grow his nation's strength without relying on the usual "technology tree" principle.

Another nice touch lies in the fact that the player can only create military units from civilian units that he previously created; hardly an original idea, but the sex of the civilians created effects which military units can be made.

For a game that claims to be historically based, Against Rome does rely on the mythology of the various races

rather heavily. However, except for spell casting priest units the game is fairly on the mark in a historical sense (although the voice over actor constantly pronouncing the word Celts with an "s" sound as opposed to the proper hard "k" sound had me screaming.)

Overall, the game is fun, but the battles are slow and cumbersome, with military units being grouped together rather than being individual soldiers. A little patience can turn Against Rome into a rewarding experience, but the game is only just better than run of the mill, when all is told. 

A bit better than run of the mill, with a few new RTS ideas.

73



What do you mean we can't use the wood from your palisade for our braai?

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Dead Man's Hand



Suggested Retail Price: R 199 · **Developer:** Human Head · **Publisher:** Atari
Supplier: MegaRom [011] 234 2680 · **Genre:** First Person Shooter · **Reviewer:** James Francis
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 800MHz · 256 MB RAM · 8 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 2 GB HDD

Do you remember Gunman? Of course you do. It's pretty damn easy to get nostalgic in this industry, because things tend to move very fast. But Gunman isn't really that old - I think it was released in 2000. Basically, it was a futuristic western-themed shooter powered by the Half-Life Engine. Dead Man's Hand follows a similar trend, except it's not futuristic and this time the Unreal engine does the graphical chiselling.

The real reason why it gave me a pang of past relish is because it has the same spirit of Gunman: a low-budget diamond-in-the-rough that could have benefited from just a little more time and maybe some more money. Luckily Atari are well aware of this, which is why they never released it as a triple-A title.

The last western shooter we've seen was Outlaws, a sprite-based affair

from LucasArts circa 1997. I never played it, but the response was mixed. But the Wild West with a pretty gun-happy smack of American history, so it's inevitable that someone would look at it. In this case, you play a Mexican outlaw who goes after his old gang, travelling all over Texas and taking out the individual members plus their operations - all leading up to the final boss. Along the way you'll get a few bonus missions, which range from a standard bounty to a shootout against an army gone cannibal to trashing someone's mansion just to send a message.

If Dead Man's Hand did enough things wrong (and it does a lot wrong) I'd be in a different frame of mind about it. The bad stuff list is quite extensive. Look, Human Head could have just done this as a quick cash-in (and personally I think they could have done a bit more research with the music) but despite its many flaws, Dead

Man's Hand is a fun, fast-paced shooter. The difference: it's not a run-and-gun. You'll duck from cover to cover, taking out bad guys - who are always aware of where you are. In a very arcade-like fashion, enemies only appear once you are in a specific section and then open fire. You have a choice of a pistol, shotgun and rifle (plus some extras) and you can replay levels for better scores.

It lacks polish and it made me motion sick, but I still kept playing it, because it's fun and a nice change from all the War and Sci-Fi shooters out there.

As unpolished as a cattle herder, yet still a great shooter to play at least once.

74



In the cards

Legend has it that the Dead Man's Hand was the poker hand held by Wild Bill Hickok when he was shot in the back and killed. The hand was made up of two black eights and two black aces. The fifth card not known, but there have been a few guesses.



Railroad Pioneer



PC
Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299 · **Developer:** Big Ben Interactive · **Publisher:** JoWooD
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Railway management · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 3 750MHz · 128 MB RAM · 20 x CD ROM · 32 MB Video Card · 1 GB HDD

While many people will immediately want to call this title a Railroad Tycoon clone (right down to the logo)

Railroad Pioneer is quite a different game to other train management simulation we have seen before.

Sure, it's got trains and the basic premise is all about supply and demand, but that's around about the place that the similarity stops. Where Railroad Tycoon was a large scale game that had everything to do with

running as many trains as possible, Railroad Pioneer relies on fewer trains and more on the management aspect of running a railroad. Where Tycoon was macrocosmic, Pioneer is microcosmic, and concentrates on more detailed management tasks. Trains do not automatically determine their own loads, for example, and the player has to schedule maintenance rather than relying on the game to take care of it. Additionally, where Tycoon showed the player the map from the start, Pioneer expects the player to use scout groups

to explore the area before being able to lay railways. Additionally, these scout groups deal with dangers in the landscape to build railways to. Also, while Tycoon at times spanned continents, Pioneer concentrates on smaller areas. Railroad Pioneer may have been based on an unoriginal idea, but the game's overall approach is very new. [N](#)

A fresh approach to railroad management.

81



Neighbours from Hell 2: On Vacation



PC
Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 299 · **Developer:** Big Ben Interactive · **Publisher:** JoWooD
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Puzzle · **Reviewer:** Walt pretorius
Minimum Specifications: Pentium 2 233MHz · 128 MB RAM · 4 x CD ROM · 8 MB Video Card · 130 MB HDD

That lovable yet rather nasty hero from Neighbours from Hell is back. Yep, it's the return of Woody and his neighbour, Mr Rottwiler. Only this time the myriad of nasty moves you can pull to make him blow his top are not just in his house...

Neighbours from Hell 2: On Vacation takes the Incredible Machine style puzzle action of the first title and, retaining all its sadistic malice, puts it in various exotic locations, ranging from the Far East to South America and even

aboard a cruise ship. Things have been made a little tougher in this new visit to the Neighbours from Hell TV show, with the inclusion of Rottwiler's mother. She is probably nastier than her son, and is just as willing to beat the tar out of your character at a moment's notice.

With fun graphics and a simple yet engrossing game dynamic, On Vacation is perfect for those who enjoyed the first title in the series. And those that never tried the first title will find it just as much fun. Its challenge varies widely, with a wide variety of

booby traps available for the player to set up.

The game does seem to pass a little too quickly, but the potential to improve on previous scores does get the player coming back for more. [N](#)

More neighbour torturing fun in exotic locations.

83



Forbidden Siren



PlayStation 2
Review



Now
Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 520 · **Developer:** SCEE · **Publisher:** SCEE · **Supplier:** Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Survival horror · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon

Requirements: 1 Player · 70kb Memory

In-house development is experiencing a boom of late, one good example being *Forbidden Siren*, the Japanese flavoured fruit of Sony Computer Entertainment America's own development team. Evil abound and lumbering around as zombies tend to do, players are treated to a rather novel new survival horror. 10 seemingly unrelated characters each have their parts to tell when they become involved in the scenario, each with the rather remarkable ability to 'sight-jack' which roughly involves 'stealing' the vision of an enemy or nearby villager, allowing you to predict their actions. Tuning the sight-jack requires rotation of the right analogue as if to tune a television until the static slowly fades into a recognizable image (hopefully not one of yourself, as a zombie evaluates how to eat your brain), after finding it, a monster's vision can be assigned to a button for

quick access.

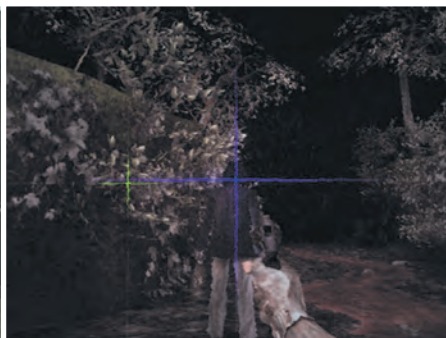
As the game progresses, the rather ludicrous amount of missions (78 in total) plays out non-sequentially. As you play, you experience small parts of the 3-day storyline through each of the characters. Only after stringing all the hours together will the full story come into view, making for an interesting method of bringing this dark occult tale to life. While the sight-jacking and non-linear story manage to create a satisfying dark survival horror and are generally well designed, there are minor shortcomings. Breaking the spooky atmosphere of the game, each time the player reaches a point where an action is available, the game pauses for you to choose that action. While this may be helpful from a difficulty point of view, it breaks the fluidity of the game and detracts from the overall atmosphere.

Regardless, ambient effects and musi-

cal score do a brilliant job of accentuating the story, despite slightly convoluted explanations of concepts and off-kilter British accents for the Japanese villagers. Everything else has its heart in the right place, the graphics are strong and solid, each character and enemy detailed and animated. Every cut-scene seems disturbingly realistic, the facial detail of the characters playing a key part in bringing the sharper edges of reality into the game. As far as survival horrors go, *Forbidden Siren* may not reinvent the genre or bring anything incredibly new to the table but it does manage to provide gamers with a fresh new take on the genre. **N**

Remarkably fresh for its genre yet unable to break new zombie-infested ground.

70



Spawn: Armageddon



PlayStation 2
Review



Now
Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 499 · **Developer:** Namco · **Publisher:** Namco · **Supplier:** Ster Kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Action · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius

Requirements: 1 Player · 69 kb Memory

Todd McFarlane's Spawn has never met with great success as a game idea. The previous PSOne incarnation was actually used as an example of a really bad console game when I got into the whole console thing.

The PS2 has allowed the Spawn gaming franchise to be improved, however. The bad graphics and dodgy controls of the previous game are a thing of the past. The new Spawn title is much slicker and easier to play.


But these things need to be done in

perspective, and so the title needs to be compared to its PS2 contemporaries.

Spawn: Armageddon features action like one would find in titles like Devil May Cry 2, complete with all the running, jumping shooting and fighting that makes this kind of title so much fun. Sadly, though, Spawn: Armageddon falls short of other titles in this category due to a few minor problems that developers could have addressed rather than leaving in place.

The biggest issue is one that crops up often in PS2 titles; a camera that leaves

a lot to be desired. It often makes play difficult, because it is unclear about what needs to happen next.

Overall the game is rather plain. With the potential offered by a character like Spawn, one would think that the developers would have explored a few more possibilities. It's fun but nothing about it makes it stand out from the crowd. 

It beats the last PS Spawn game, but it doesn't stand out from the crowd...

72



SOCOM II: Navy Seals



PlayStation 2
Review



Now
Available

Suggested Retail Price: R 479 (R 679 with headset) · **Developer:** Zipper Interactive · **Publisher:** SCEE

Supplier: Ster kinekor [011] 445 7900 · **Genre:** Tactical action · **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius

Minimum Specifications: 1 - 4 Players


Tactical shooters are still ever popular, and the SOCOM series is back with its second instalment of sneak and peek action. There isn't much different between the original SOCOM and this new version, to be honest. The graphics are still good, the missions are still varied and challenging and the control still takes a bit of getting used to. The game does seem a little easier than the previous version, though, and is less dark (in terms of more daytime missions.) The story behind the game is

a bit better than before.

Other than that, it's the same squad based game you would expect. And yes, it still uses that nifty headset which enables you to issue voice commands to your team mates, but is still menu dependant. It's also used for online and multiplayer games.

That said, SOCOM II: Navy Seals certainly is worth the effort. It requires a very careful, tactical approach that many games seem to try to achieve but never actually get right. Many people may find this degree of tactical detail

frustrating but for those who like their games in depth and requiring lots of thought, SOCOM II: Navy Seals is almost perfect.

The controls do take a bit of getting used to, seeing as how there is a lot to do with a limited controller (and certain ideas are a bit different as far as control is concerned.) Lots of fun. 

More squad based tactical action, complete with a headset...

80



Space Invaders: Anniversary Edition



PlayStation 2
Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 249 · **Developer:** Empire Interactive · **Publisher:** Empire Interactive
Supplier: WWE [011] 462 0150 · **Genre:** Shooter · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Requirements: 1 - 2 Players · 200k Memory

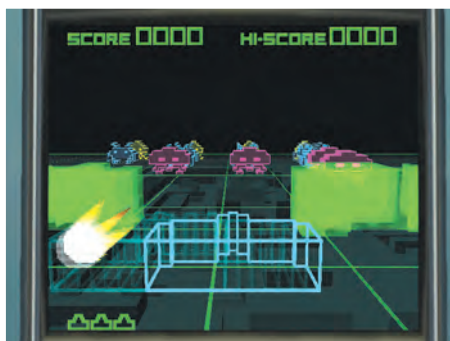
If you're the type to go all misty-eyed at the thought of your halcyon days in some run-down fish 'n chip shop, spending your hard earned/stolen money playing a second-hand Space Invaders machine, then you're probably already out the door and on your way to buying this title. This aptly titled Anniversary Edition was created to celebrate X years of blocky, space alien blasting goodness and to make it easily available on your PS2 (to compliment your already large collection of original arcade machine,

PC emulated version and handheld copy). It features everything you could want out of Space Invaders, including the original version, the old cellophane coloured version, a two player version not to mention a completely new 3D version. It's still Space Invaders however; don't expect any changes to the original game dynamics or an overhaul of the graphics. It's all still there; unchanged, pristine and classic. Access to each version of Space Invaders is handled through a nostalgic yet cliché virtual representation of an 80's

arcade, but seems to lack the finer traits such as gum under the cabinet, an old Italian guy who constantly asks if you're going to buy anything and your parents finding you there, hauling you back home with threats of damnation. It's still just Space Invaders, though. [N](#)

It's Space Invaders, nothing more, nothing less.

NA



Ikaruga



GameCube
Review

Suggested Retail Price: R 499 · **Developer:** Treasure · **Publisher:** Atari · **Supplier:** WWE [011] 462 0150
Genre: Shooter · **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Requirements: 1 - 2 Players · 4 Memory blocks

Short run of its console lifespan aside, owners of the powerful and under-supported Dreamcast had a big one-up on the rest of the gaming world; they got Ikaruga before anyone else. The premise behind a 'vertical shooter' such as Ikaruga: one high-tech ship (or two if you have a friend) travelling in an upwards direction with insane amounts of firepower/incoming fire. Stagnation by uninspired releases was ended when Ikaruga came along and shot new life into this underappre-

ciated style of game. The basic premise remains unchanged but with a few changes. In Ikaruga, incoming fire is either black, or white. Your ship is either black or white at the press of a button; your own outgoing fire is the same colour. When you shoot an enemy that is the opposite 'polarity' of your ship, you do double damage. The real trick, however, comes with the 'Bullet Eater' technique. If your ship is the same polarity as incoming fire, you can 'absorb' the bullets so as to charge your missile shot. Opposite polarity

shots will kill you instantly, of course. Ikaruga manages obscene amounts of incoming bullets yet prefers moderately placed enemies and structures, lending itself to a frantically strategic style, gloriously presented in 3D. With enough options and locked content to keep fans interested, Ikaruga represents the pinnacle of the genre. [N](#)

If you are a fan to this genre, you shouldn't be caught dead without this game.

82



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Tech Musings:
Cold beer vs. Hot graphics



words james francis

What do I want to talk about this month? It's not like I haven't been handed ample material: I could either go on a tirade about the GeForce 6 and Ati's response in the X800. Or I can mill some words over the 'leaked' Xbox plans, sporting 3 RISC processors. Or I can go on about the N-Gage QD, which is actually a big step in the right direction. But that's predictable and we already have articles on these things (except the bogus Xbox leak, but hey - we already know its going to be a powerful beast). Instead, let's look at USEFUL technology for a change. In this case - a self-cooling beer can. Through a genius of engineering and other fancy things that prohibit yobs like you and me from making one, a firm in the UK has started to promote a can that claims to cool beer to 3 degrees Celsius in three minutes. And several brewers are already interested, not to mention people like me who abhor hot beer. Imagine this: you could carry a can of beer or cold drink with you all day - no need for a cooler - and when you need that refreshing drink, it's a matter of three minutes and you'll only need that glass with the ice falling off its sides.

THIS is useful technology. THIS redeems scientists from not figuring out how to make a car hover or fly yet. Not another new graphics card that promotes technology we only really see implemented when its passé and part of the package. Hey, these guys have to make a living and they need to push the envelope. It's just annoying that their cutting edge technology is blunted and part of the wallpaper by the time it actually reaches mainstream gaming. Doesn't it frustrate anyone else that consoles rival PCs in their graphical displays, even though they don't use as much spec power? Maybe the living room revolution will finally force the PC market to embrace some real standards. At least my beer stays cold.

v Technics SL-DZ1200 digital DJ station

This month, Matsushita will introduce the Technics SL-DZ1200, a digital reincarnation of its SL-1200 turntable deck, which has been around for over 30 years. In all respects, the system will deliver the same functionality as traditional turntables, but applied to almost any digital source, including CD and MP3 or AAC on SecureDigital cards.



MAX Drive

Datel has released a USB memory card for use with PlayStation 2 and Xbox, dubbed MAX Drive. The 16MB card is intended for multiple game saves and for recording EyeToy footage. Data can be transferred to a PC, allowing it to be emailed to another location for use on another console, or carried around. Datel is setting up an online server containing "cheat" and "walkthrough" game saves for various titles, and is promising other digital assets to be published at later dates. www.codejunkies.com

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> Nokia 7200 Limited Edition

Fashion snobs will love the new Nokia 7200 Limited Edition, presented in a pure white tailored leather case. The phone is functionally a 7200, with built-in camera, colour screen and FM radio. Additional embroidery or pattern options will be on offer, but only 7200 of these units are being produced, and these will only be available in select boutiques and the like, if available locally at all.



< BenQ DC C30 and C40 cameras

These new models of digital camera feature 3 and 4 megapixel resolutions, respectively, and also support MPEG-4, allowing recording of video at 30 frames per second, with sound. The cameras also boast a graphical user interface, simplifying use.



VTV-101 watch TV

In Japan, the VTV-101 wristwatch TV set recently became available. The device sports a small LCD clock that is separate from the TV, and a 1.5" LCD display that reproduces TV signals decoded by a small Sony tuner. The ear-phone cable also serves as antenna for the unit. Unfortunately, the battery only provides 2 hours of operation, which is hardly surprising given what the device manages to do.



Nokia Medallion

Interactive electronic jewellery seems to be the in-thing at the moment. The Nokia Medallion necklace, which is targeted at men, has a digital photo viewer built-in and can store up to 8 colour images.

Ferrari 3000

For true Ferrari fans this exclusive Acer notebook is a must. Sporting that signature Ferrari red colour as well as the official Ferrari logo, the notebook and matching mouse is a statement in itself. Not only does it look super cool but it has all the little extras you could ever need to fit your mobile computing needs.

It comes equipped with an AMD Athlon XP 2500+ processor, 60 GB hard drive, ATi 9200 128 MB graphics card, 4 USB 2.0 ports, dual DVD drive, 56K internal modem, high speed wireless LAN, integrated fast Ethernet LAN, 15" TFT screen and Bluetooth enabled. This notebook was a head turner of note, no matter where we took it. Call yourself a true Ferrari fan and got R20 000.00 to spare?

Acer is the official supplier of notebooks, PC's, servers and monitors to the Ferrari Team. www.acer.co.za



New notebooks from Apple

Apple's new range of iBooks and PowerBooks are based on the PowerPC G4 CPU and include AirPort Extreme 802.11g, Bluetooth and DVD recorder. Both boast either Radeon or GeForce FX graphics, and a wide range of connectivity functions, including Gigabit Ethernet on flagship models.



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Case modding on wheels

James Anderson, a professional case modder, has recently completed his latest masterpiece. A self confessed car nut, James spent around \$50 000.00 to make "Heavy Metal". The project design took in the region of a hundred hours and even sports a complete powered chassis. For more information go to www.twistedmods.com



> US Robotics wireless gaming products

US Robotics has introduced a range of wireless connectivity products that the company claims offer sufficient data throughput to satisfy gaming applications. The new Wireless Gaming Adapter and Ethernet Bridge can connect to any gaming platform, including Ethernet-enabled consoles, and automatically finds and connects to the nearest access point. It can, alternatively, be used to connect an Ethernet-capable video recorder, jukebox or Internet appliance. The SureConnect ADSL Wireless Gateway allows multiple users to broadband connect online with a built-in firewall.



< Sony wireless optical mouse

Sony has released a round-shaped optical mouse for the fashion conscious techie. Sporting six funky colours the mouse will retail for around \$69.00.



Sony products

Sony has added two products to its QUALIA family of products. The Q017-MD1 is a mini-disk player that includes a remote control, earphones and AC adapter, and is available in gold or silver finishes. It has three playback modes, offering 21, 27 or 33 hours of playback time. Another new-comer to the range is the Q010-MDR1, a set of earphones.



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Nokia N-Gage QD

Second time lucky? If you ask us, Nokia really has something going here...



1. Nokia insisted high and low this isn't the N-Gage 2. That only makes the future seem brighter, because the QD is actually one great little phone. A remodel of the original N-Gage (which isn't being taken off the market) was very obviously needed after disastrous sales and it looks like they actually consulted some game-playing folk this time around. The phone is now even smaller than a GBA. The screen is still the same size, but the buttons have been reshuffled. Plus, they added a Select button (just below the d-pad) and removed the FM and MP3 player features.

2. The model has a few other new perks as well. First, the Taco look is far gone, as are the swappable face plates, making it a far sturdier and more robust unit. And no more side-talking! Instead, hold it flat against your face like any other cell phone. Another nice touch are the two holes at the top and bottom - ideal to clip to a lanyard. It also boasts longer battery life and a significantly improved screen light, making for a much more vibrant screen with crisper colours.

3. Games are now hot-swappable. Well, kind of. While pulling the card out directly without telling the phone you are going to is a bad idea, the same goes for the GBA (but everyone does it anyway). Still, this is now located at the bottom and doesn't require removing the battery. Game wise, the N-Gage seems to be building up a great line-up, finally, but we're not allowed to tell you about them yet. Still, they'll more than make up for the awful Red Faction.

4. Everything seems to have been rubber-padded on the QD, including the new caps for the game and sound areas. Set at the top is the spot to plug in your power as well as earphones. Gone is the two jack design of the first phone, replaced instead with a single jack. This encompasses the whole design of the phone, which is overall more comfortable to hold (plus you don't look stupid with it in public).

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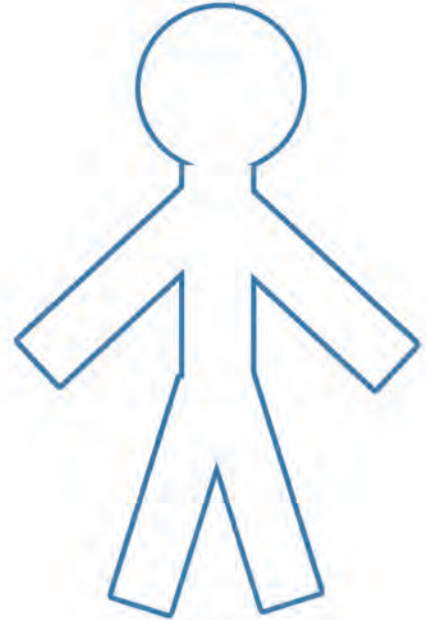
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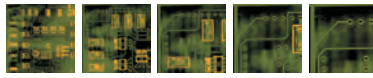
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Asus V9950 Gamers Edition

The Asus V9950 Gamers Edition 3D graphics card on review here is rapidly becoming yesterday's technology.

What with the recent introduction of the latest 6800 range from the 3D hardware giant, which is likely to reach South African shores in the next few weeks, this older chipset will move one notch down the ladder of performance and become a more mainstream oriented offering, with a reduction in price to reflect this new status no doubt.

For the moment, however, any card based on the FX 5900 should still achieve good scores in our benchmark suite, and these results should reflect in the latest games titles. This Asus offering is something of a minefield from the beginning however, with the nomenclature suggesting that this card uses the newer FX 5950 chipset, which it doesn't, and even screenshots of benchmark results showing scores from an FX 5900 Ultra on the back of the box, which it isn't.

This Gamers Edition offering features a dark blue PCB and conservative cooling solution for a GeForce FX offering. Connectivity is today standard fare in this market segment, namely one VGA, one DVI and one S-Video for TV output. The software bundled with this offering features a number of less than thrilling 3D games like Battle Engine Aquila and Black Hawk Down, as well as the proprietary Asus DVD Player software and Asus GameFace software

for online video and audio communications.

Let me get straight to the benchmarks, however, as it's in this empirical discipline that the V9950 throws a few interesting curveballs.

3DMark03, at 1024 X 768 and with no Full Scene AntiAliasing (FSAA), credits the Asus board with an excellent 5237 3DMarks. With 4-pass FSAA enabled, the product is even more impressive managing 3637. These figures suggest something of a 3D powerhouse, able to run with the best of the best cards which you can buy from stores right now.

However, during the benchmark runs you'll notice some irregularities, something which the manufacturer is now famous for in gaming circles. Shortcuts implemented by the ForceWare driver itself to boost the performance figure. So let's move right along to Aquamark 3, a fairly reliable indication of DX 9 performance.

Once again, the V9950 manages to eke out enough of a score to place it just below the highest ranking competitors, at 37081. This figure suggests that even the latest, graphics-intensive games like Far Cry should run at maximum detail without too much sweat on this card, but the truth of the matter is, it really doesn't.

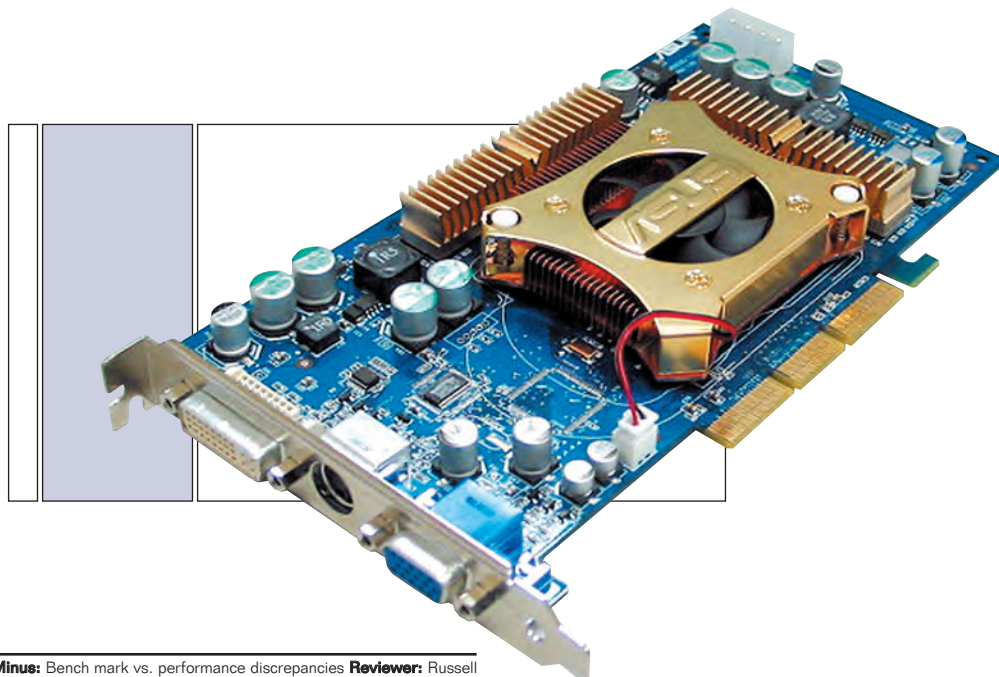
Far Cry has to be cut to a mixture of medium and high detail levels to get a playable frame rate, and don't even think of trying to turn FSAA on in this title. Other graphically demanding titles

being played at the moment suffer similar issues - running UT2004 at max detail on this card would make the player an easy frag for LAN opponents, and PainKiller struggles all the way unless you lower some settings.

X2: The Threat really highlights the strange discrepancy between the benchmark figures and true performance. In the benchmark mode of this title, the card manages a very healthy 57.73 fps with FSAA turned off, and a frankly unbelievable 53.19 with this image-sharpening trick enabled. Yet even in the benchmark, you can see more lag than these numbers indicate.

What's more errors and shortcuts are immediately noticeable here. Lights which simply aren't generated, transparent surfaces which become three distinct bars of differently shaded glass rather than a seamless surface, and a fogging effect which shouts "problem" as it's a solid line being drawn across the scene beyond which objects are muted.

The Asus V9950 GE is an adequate card at a fairly attractive price level, but in my opinion the problems it has will be far more palatable once the ready availability of the newer NVidia offerings drives the price down another significant notch or two. If you're in the market for a new card right now, this would not be the one I'd suggest. Wait a while and buy one for much cheaper or you're sure to feel cheated.



Plus: About to get cheaper **Minus:** Bench mark vs. performance discrepancies **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett **Supplier:** ASUS [011] 781 4204 **Internet:** www.asus.com **RRP:** R 2500

Gigabyte 3D Cooler Pro

Hardware manufacturer Gigabyte clearly know that one of those things that the enthusiast market is interested in is impressive-looking aftermarket cooling solutions, and has provided just such equipment in the form of the Gigabyte 3D Cooler Pro.

This is a cooling system for processors, and fits most any of the currently available range of chips from both Intel and AMD. The clips for each type of CPU are supplied in the bundle, although it's up to you to decipher the Far-Eastern English used in the installation manuals and choose the clips you need. Once this selection is made, however, this monstrous cooler is as easy to install as the ones shipped de facto. As for the small panel with the fan speed dial mounted on it, simply screw it into an open 1.44" drive bay, plug it in and you're good to go.

The 3D Cooler Pro looks damn impressive, lighting up with an appealing blue glow when your system is turned on. And it's very effective to boot. My 533 MHz FSB 3.06 GHz P4 chip would sometimes reach up to 50 degrees C under heavy load with the standard cooler in place, a dangerously high tempera-

ture. But with this Gigabyte product performing these duties it never went beyond 40 [and that was with the speed-adjustable fan set to its lowest and quietest at 3000 RPM]. Twist the dial up to 5000 and within minutes this temperature would drop below 30.

Although not generally a big fan of aftermarket coolers this one worked very well. Two relatively small things did bother me about it however. First, the fairly flimsy plug connecting the fan-speed dial to a PCB on the chunky heatsink/fan combination came loose at one point, and rather than automatically switching the fan to the noisy maximum speed, this event resulted in the fan simply shutting off completely. Potentially dangerous if not noticed soon enough.

Second, and this applies to a number of vendors supplying necessary heat paste with hardware. Why not include a decent heat paste rather than the cheap and nasty stuff which tends to harden and bond when heat is applied? If you buy the Gigabyte 3D Cooler Pro, a really good product to consider if you want to make sure your CPU is kept safely chilled, make sure you get a tube of quality heat paste with it and don't use what is supplied.



Plus: Excellent CPU cooler **Minus:** Bundled heat paste **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: Rectron [011] 203 1000 **Internet:** www.rectron.net **RRP:** TBA



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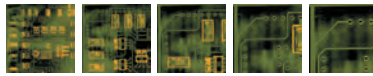
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Tyan Tiger K8W Opteron motherboard

Tyan motherboards have long been admired throughout the industry, but locally can be somewhat difficult to track down at times. Fortunately for us, local supplier Corex have access to this manufacturer's product set, and supplied NAG with a Tyan Tiger K8W

Opteron workstation board so we could re-discover just what it is that makes these offerings stand out from the crowd.

The distributor was also good enough to provide a couple of Socket-940 Opteron 240 CPUs, the baseline of this server-targeted 64-bit AMD range running at a comparatively paltry 1.4 GHz, and ECC registered DDR 400 RAM.

While the Opteron CPU itself is intended for operation in server systems, this Tiger K8W brings the 64-bit multi-processor capabilities of this platform down to the workstation level. This means that the board can be used in a standard ATX form-factor chassis with ATX12V power supplies and doesn't require a server chassis and EPS12V PSU.

This Tyan offering built on the AMD 8000 chipset includes all the features which any workstation or even low-end server system could need. There's an integrated Intel (fairly ironic I know) LAN adaptor capable of switching speeds all the way from good old 10 M through 100 right up to 1000. There's a Realtek 6-channel audio solution built-in, 2 USB 2.0 and 2 USB 1.1 ports, Via IEE 1394a Firewire controller and two ports, and the graphics subsystems supports adaptors of all AGP variants from 1 X right up to 8 X managed through the AMD 8151 AGP 3.0 tunnel.

Storage systems are taken care of through either an IDE interface or Serial-ATA with four connectors available on the motherboard and SATA RAID provided by the Silicon Image Sil3114 SATA Accelerated RAID controller.

Upon booting the system, the first thing you're likely to notice is the abundance of options available in the AMI 8.0 BIOS screens. Everything from memory type and performance through to tweaks to the HyperTransport bus can be toyed with. Going through these screens can be bewildering but if you're one of those who demands control of all aspects of

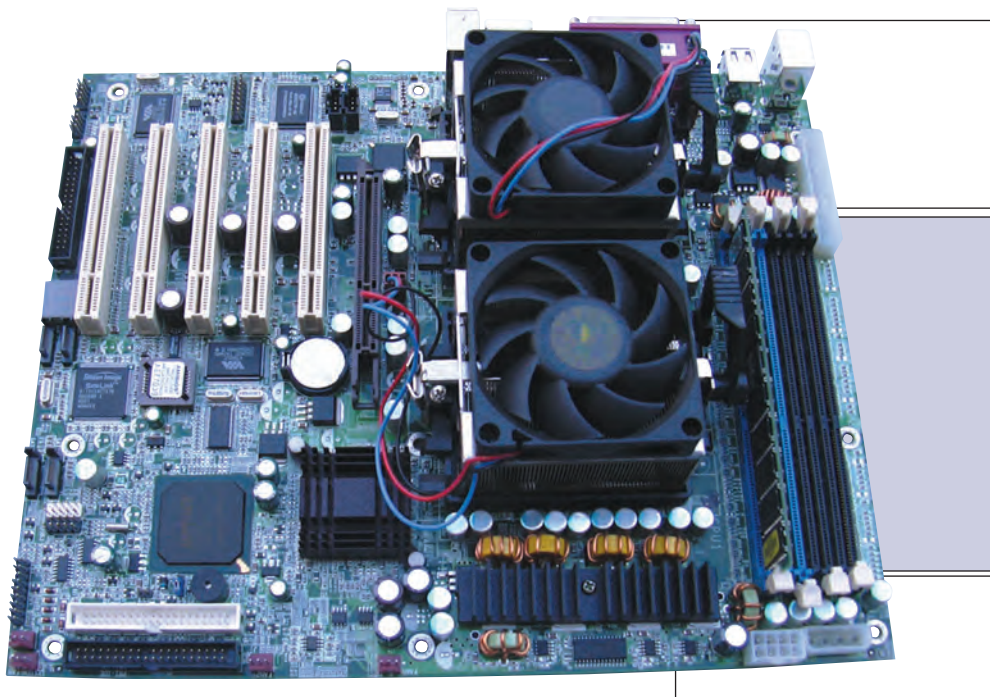
their system at BIOS level you'll appreciate every cryptic setting.

The actual performance of Opteron boards is still a slightly tricky thing to measure, partially due to the fact that the memory controller, like in the newer desktop-oriented Athlon 64 chips from the same product family, is integrated into the CPU itself and therefore doesn't rely on a manufacturer's Northbridge implementation at all. While this makes the systems memory bandwidth scale upwards with each CPU added in some ways it is a curse as well as a blessing, as it means that once the new DDR 2 DIMMs start being released you'll need a redesigned CPU to use the newer modules - but this is only a potential issue once the newer standard arrives.

Nonetheless, this Opteron system using the Tyan Tiger solution performs quite astonishingly in most areas. Using a Linux distro capable of taking advantage of the 64-bit core properly, the system was near untouchable compared to reference dual-Xeon systems. Large databases are handled with aplomb, and the Whetstone benchmark rated the system significantly higher than competitors could manage.

Under Windows XP, the system shines less in benchmarks despite being incredibly responsive in the desktop. Benchmarks like PC Mark 04, SiSoft Sandra Professional 2004, and even file-compression tool WinRAR aren't able to fully utilise the strengths of this system and the solution lagged behind the reference scores in most cases. Xmpeg did manage an excellent DivX encoding rate of just over 90 fps however demonstrating the raw power that is available even at such low CPU frequencies.

Despite having all the features, I can't help but wonder if the Tiger K8W is perhaps poorly targeted. As a server, this system scores incredibly well. But as a workstation it fails to really impress, and this is the target market for this particular Tyan offering. But the manufacturer does have an extensive range of server-oriented products available which seem more suitably focused.



Plus: Great high end ability **Minus:** Dodgy lower end performance **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: Corex [011] 707 5000 **Internet:** www.corex.co.za **RRP:** R 3500

USB 2.0 dock

With just about every peripheral from the standard mouse to speakers now available using the USB interface, its becoming clear that the 4 USB ports generally attached to modern motherboards, or even more critically the meagre 2 USB ports available on older hardware, could quickly become used up.

And hence the creation of equipment such as this USB 2.0 docking station. A small, attractive little box with a glossy blue and grey finish, this product makes an effort to solve the shortage of USB ports on a desktop and more.

Plug the USB 2.0 dock into your system and any XP or 2K system immediately picks it up as an additional USB hub and starts using it. The device not only provides an additional 3 USB 2.0 ports and one USB 1.1 port, you can also plug in your PS/2 keyboard and mouse, and even an LPT printer and RS-232 device (a modem for instance) into the same stylish box.

All of these connections make the USB 2.0 dock a very useful addition to any PC. No more shortage of USB ports combined with the ability

to have the additional interfaces positioned wherever it's most convenient for you rather than around the back of your systems box.

I found the USB 2.0 dock with these additional ports far more useful than simply an extension of my system's USB capabilities. Moving my machine for a LAN was so painless, just needing to plug in the one USB cable to the back of my machine and having the ports for my keyboard and mouse readily available a true boon to my aching back.

It's a pity that this particular product was only supplied with a power converter using an overseas plug-type. If not for my collection of international converters I would have been unable to make the dock work at all.

The USB 2.0 bus itself stood up admirably to the demands placed on it by this dock. Even with a USB hard disk, keyboard, mouse, printer, ISDN modem, and disk-on-key plugged in the throughput never became choked and unusable. I wouldn't suggest even trying this dock on a system only equipped with USB 1.1 however.



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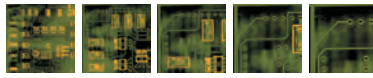


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Plus: All the connectivity you need **Minus:** Overseas power converter **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett
Supplier: World Computer Systems [011] 823 2002 **Internet:** www.wcs.co.za **RRP:** R 699



Gigabyte Wireless Optical Mouse

Deviating from the current technological norm of using Bluetooth for almost every conceivable peripheral, Gigabyte has opted to use RF (Radio Frequency) for their Wireless Optical Mouse. The initial impressions of the mouse are quite favourable. The RF Receiver that the mouse uses is stored inside the mouse itself, pressing a little catch causes it to flick out, allowing you to easily take mouse and Receiver anywhere without fear of losing the Receiver. While the Receiver is stored inside the mouse it also cuts off the batteries, helping with their lifespan. The software installation for the mouse however left something to be desired, each restart rife with problems of getting the mouse working. The mouse itself is the standard 'two buttons and a mouse wheel' design, nothing to write home about. An ever-useful USB extension cable comes bundled, great for PCs with

hard-to-reach USB ports. While not directly related to RF technology, this specific mouse seemed to have sampling problems, making the mouse cursor move erratically instead of smoothly. The design of the mouse itself could have been slightly more innovative, the rear of the mouse rises slightly more than normal which could be uncomfortable for certain hands. Considering the price of equivalent Bluetooth wireless optical mice, the Gigabyte Wireless Optical may have a slight advantage but fails quietly in every other area. A bonus, however, is the inclusion of a thin optical-friendly mouse-pad.



Plus: Convenient design **Minus:** Low wireless sample rate **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Supplier: Rectron [011] 203 1000 **Internet:** www.rectron.net **RRP:** R 385

Iiyama Vision Master 1404 17" CRT screen

Japanese monitor manufacturers Iiyama have only been in the SA market for a comparatively short time, but have already made good strides with their attractive price levels. But do these prices come at the cost of quality as some international hardware sites suggest? We got our hands on a workhorse 17" Iiyama CRT offering, the Vision Master 1404, to decide for ourselves.

From a design standpoint this particular offering is in no way out of the ordinary. It looks very much like every 17" screen out there, albeit perhaps slightly more rounded about the CRT itself.

The OSD is very extensive offering every which way of geometry adjustment one could ask for. This is also, however, where I noticed what turned out to be my biggest complaint about the quality of this particularly unit.

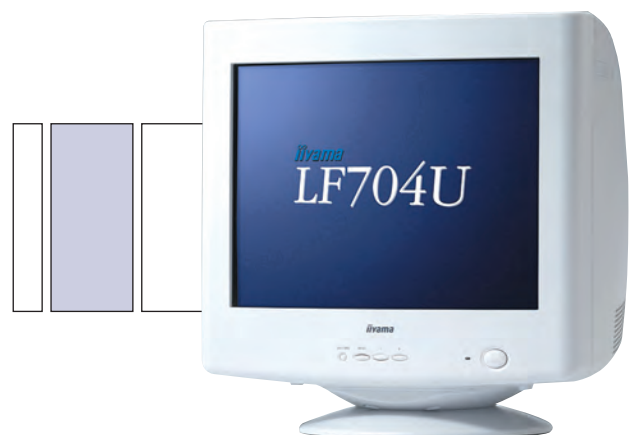
Despite the range of geometry adjustment available, I could not achieve a nicely rectangular display even after some time fiddling with the parallelogram, pincushion, trapezoid and pin balance values.

In terms of display quality the Vision Master could not be faulted, offering good brightness and contrast and excellent pixel precision. Interestingly, the screen is only claimed to be good for 1280 X 1024 although I found that much higher resolutions continued to work perfectly.

What I also appreciated about this Iiyama offering is its minimal heat generation. As I often absent-mindedly put heat-sensitive things like CDs on top of my screen I found the Iiyama didn't make them nearly as dangerously warm as some other makes of displays I've tested in the past.

And it remains affordable too even for less well-endowed wallets. It's perfect for gamers, offering excellent clarity and brightness for a competitive price indeed. The geometry problems found on this particular offering are most likely specific to the unit supplied and therefore not likely to be an issue which many customers will encounter.

The Iiyama Vision Master 1404 can't be classed in the highest echelon of products available in this arena, but with such a small and barely noticeable delta between mid-range offerings like this one and the best of the best the affordability of this CRT monitor makes it a very attractive option.



Plus: Good quality/performance ratio **Minus:** Geometry issues possibly specific to review unit **Reviewer:** Russell Bennett **Supplier:** World Computer Systems [011] 823 2002 **Internet:** www.wcs.co.za **RRP:** R 1249

Mini Keychain Digital Camera

Supporting a convenient keychain size and a fetching black pouch to protect it from the elements, this Mini Digital Camera has a lot going for it. It just doesn't go anywhere. Its simple logic; a cheap digital camera the size of a largish matchbox, is simply not going to take ultra-high quality photos. That's fine. It's not unreasonable however, to at least expect photos are either larger than a thumbnail, or better quality than a very low quality image. The Mini Digital camera can only take 26 photos at 640x480, but it can take up to 99 photos in the ultra-low resolution of 320x200. All images are heavily compressed, detracting from the quality even more. To make matters worse, despite being a USB device one cannot simply 'plug n play'. Installation of a custom TWAIN driver is required before the camera is plugged into the computer, making things difficult. The driver itself is unpolished and causes several hassles with software trying to acquire photos from the device. While plugged

into the USB port, the camera can act as a low-quality webcam without the requirement of batteries, at least. On the subject of batteries, if the AAA battery the camera uses dies, you lose all the photos on the camera. This can lead to quite a bit of annoyance, especially if you've spent the entire day taking your 26 photos, only to lose them all before you can transfer them to the PC. None the less, one would be hard-pressed to find a cheaper digital camera, this small, though one would have to carefully weigh the relative cheapness of the product against its shortcomings.



Plus: Small **Minus:** Lacks quality **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Supplier: World Computer Systems [011] 823 2002 **Internet:** www.wcs.co.za **RRP:** R 249

VideoMate TV Gold +

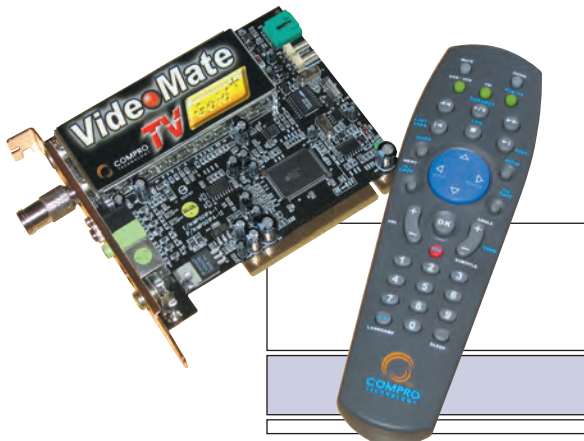
There isn't too much that can be said about TV cards anymore. In fact, one TV card is pretty much as good as another, when all is said and done. However, there are little tweaks and bundles that make all the difference.

A handy "power-up" system allows this unit to start up your pc, record your favourite shows, and turn the PC off again. It's handy, true, but it adds the extra install irritation of having to route your PC power switch to this card fist, and then to the motherboard.

The picture purifying

technology that the TV Gold + uses also allows for a clearer picture.

Overall, it's a good TV card, with a decent FM receiver built in. But it makes no huge leaps and bounds technologically to make it truly stand out from the competition.



Plus: Nice features **Minus:** Nothing really revolutionary **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Supplier: Naked IT [011] 482 5493 **Internet:** www.nakedit.co.za **RRP:** TBA



Vantec Nexus NXP-301 Fan & Light Controller Tweak with Style!



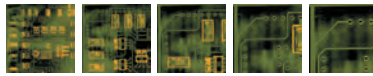
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VideoMate Live USB 2.0

TV cards for the PC are not a new thing, though the advent of USB has always given the opportunity for a slightly more able approach to the whole deal of trying to watch TV or Videos on your PC. Up until now, most TV cards have been exactly that, cards you have to slot into a PCI slot inside your PC, taking up space you'd rather keep for something else. The VideoMate Live USB 2.0, as its namesake implies, instead uses your USB port to do its deed of TV and Video reception. While this aspect does come as a major pro in its favour, it has its side-effects. If you don't have a High-Speed USB port (2.0), then you'll be met with jerky and low quality video, not a good thing. If you have a High-Speed USB port, then the VideoMate Live gives you reasonable image quality, though nothing above the usual PCI-Card based TV Cards. On the down side, the



VideoMate Live has a '5 second' delay between what's actually happened on the TV/Video Machine, and what you see on your screen. While this is fine for watching TV where if the 6 o'clock news is 5 seconds late it's not a big deal, it does cause major irritation when watching DVDs and your selections only appear 5 seconds later. For playing PlayStation2 or GameCube games, the VideoMate is completely unsuited, the delay in video feed making it impossible to play games. The

delay makes sense from a hardware point of view, as the VideoMate tries to keep a buffer of frames in case frames are dropped for whatever reason, though an option to turn this functionality off would have been a plus. In its favour, the VideoMate Live comes with every conceivable cable and attachment you could need, as well as a full-featured remote. If you're looking for an alternative TV solution and don't want to use up a PCI slot, the VideoMate Live does the trick.

Plus: Does not take up a PCI slot **Minus:** Low image quality **Reviewer:** Miktar Dracon
Supplier: Naked IT [011] 482 5493 **Internet:** www.nakedit.co.za **RRP:** TBA

Iiyama E431S LitePro 15"

LCD monitors are really coming into their own, slowly clawing away at the CRT market and taking a place in high-performance markets. The mere fact that future graphic cards seem more focused on digital output will boost LCD popularity even more.

The problem, though, has always been the monitors themselves, since they tend to under-performed versus their tube-based counterparts.

This has changed over the past months, with companies like Viewsonic releasing high-quality but expensive options for us to look at. Iiyama, not a newcomer to the game, has also been aiming at the high-performance consumer market. Finally arriving in SA, the brand's focus had usually been on the professional in the past, but now the home-market beckons.

The screen has all the standards: analogue and digital inputs, a swivelling base and crisp display combined with high refresh rates. In that it's not a bad monitor at all. But it didn't stand out in any particular field as well, except that it's a far more cost-effective model to buy. This does mean that you don't get certain perks - for instance, the screen doesn't rotate nor can the base extend higher or lower.

Game performance is okay, but I'm yet to see an LCD that really makes a difference when it comes to games. The display is crisp and sharp and I didn't get refresh stutter on any titles I tried.

The Litepro comes with its own set of built-in speakers, which do hold their own, but high-end users probably have their own speaker sets anyway. So in the end, it's not a spectacular LCD, but it's affordable and there's nothing wrong with it, especially in the department of refresh rates and image crispness.



Plus: Cheap | Good quality **Minus:** Static base **Reviewer:** James Francis
Supplier: SA Mobile Technologies [011] 394 7675 **Internet:** www.iiyama.co.za **RRP:** TBA

WIGO CVM100 MP3/WMA Player

Not too long ago an MP3 player was a prized asset. Now they are everywhere, ranging from truly horrible knock-offs to glitzy, alien-like designs (with a beefy price-tag to boot). But the most of the models sit at this spectrum: a fair model at a good price.

Wigo's 256 MB falls more or less in this section - offering fair features at a good price.

The model looks very sleek and its USB plug is hidden by a nifty swing cap that clicks into place. Onboard you'll find MP3 and WMA playing capabilities, an FM tuner, one voice recorder (able to record at quite a few encoding levels) and the ability to encode



directly to the player.

The software proved an equalizer, bass and treble settings plus a few extra features. The CVM100's lowest point hits here: using the random song setting is moot - it only skips one or two songs head, instead of really playing a random track.

Apart from that, I just didn't like the gloss finish (a unit like this should either appear more rugged or come with a pouch) and the lack of play controls on the headphones. It's also a bit bulky for an MP3 player, but not everyone wants a tiny player that really is just a memory stick.

Plus: Rechargeable batteries **Minus:** Bad shuffle rate **Reviewer:** James Francis
Supplier: Bluesoft.net [012] 654 2525 **Internet:** www.bsdn.co.za **RRP:** R 1375

Air Duct Kit

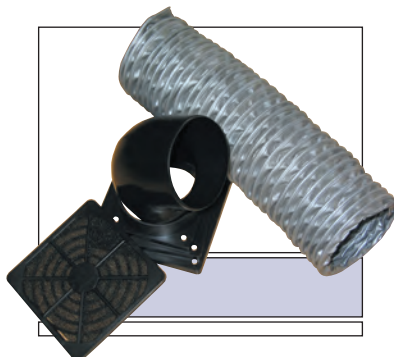
With cooling being such a, umm... hot topic these days, everyone is trying to come up with a huge bunch of new ideas to revolutionise the process of keeping PCs cool.

Here is an idea which is good, innovative and, best of all, actually works. A flexible tube is connected to one of the fan openings of your PC case, allowing cool external air to be pumped right to your CPU. A dust filter is included to keep all the bad stuff out as well. The system is claimed to drop your CPU temperature by up to 10 degrees C.

While the whole affair does work, it has a couple of problems. Firstly, the system clutters the inside of the case to a large degree - the pipe is quite thick, and it may affect the

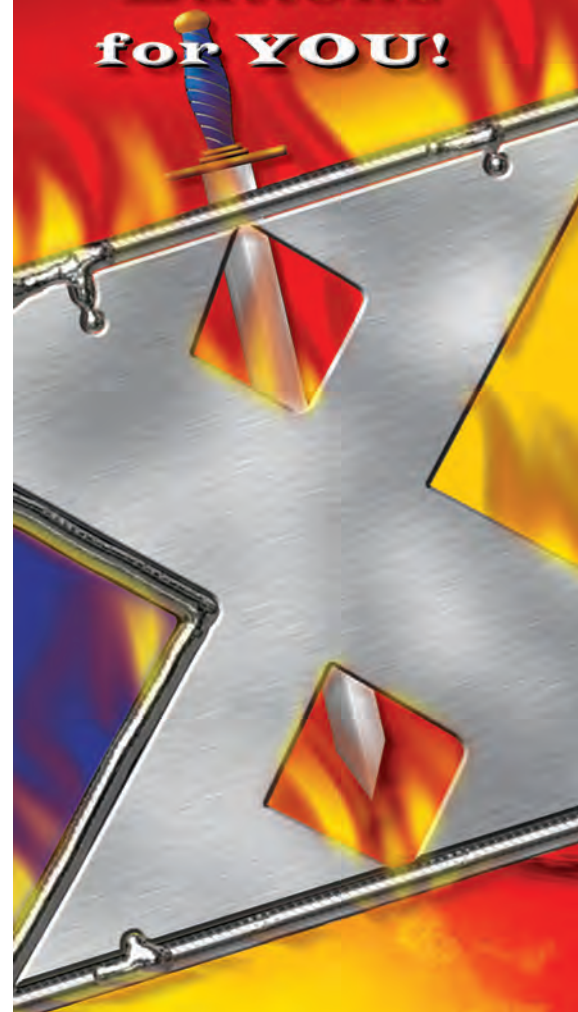
internal airflow of the box (which can cause other components to rack up too much heat. Additionally, cleaning the air filter requires a bit of disassembly, which is a little annoying.

It may not beat water cooling but the Air Duct Kit is an interesting way to cool your CPU. It looks good in a modded case too.



Plus: Cools well **Minus:** Bulky **Reviewer:** Walt Pretorius
Supplier: Naked IT [011] 482 5493 **Internet:** www.nakedit.co.za **RRP:** R 159

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Water Cooling 101

After air-cooling, the next logical step is to move to water cooling, as we all know that water is one of the best conductors of heat. Of all the liquids, water (second only to mercury) is capable of conducting heat the fastest. Its thermal conductivity is about 30 times that of air and not only does it hold more heat it takes more than four times the amount of heat to raise the temperature of water compared to air.

One of the biggest misconceptions of water cooling is that tap water is used. Anybody who is knowledgeable on this subject will tell you that is the biggest mistake you can make. You see, normal tap water contains many impurities and chemicals which, in a closed system such as a water cooling setup, will wreak havoc. There are numerous types of chemical reactions that can negatively affect a water cooled system. The "battery-effect" is the most common one and is caused by galvanic corrosion; using tap water will accelerate this effect. You can not use bottled, de-ionized, or purified water as all of these will eventually cause organic growth or corrosion. Unless you want your own little bacterial habitat in your water cooled system the best "water" to use is distilled water, but even this needs extra chemicals to be added to ensure your system stays corrosion and bacteria free. According to Arthur from Synapsys, the best home-made mixture should consist of 85% distilled water, 10% anti-freeze, 5% Water Wetter (similar to anti-freeze) or equivalent, and a few drops of Jik and/or Sunlight liquid. Or you could just opt for the safest and easiest method by purchasing Koolance's own chemical coolant which is obtainable from Synapsys and costs about R80.

The Koolance chemical coolant also features anti-corrosion additives that are commonly used in the engineering field to avoid reactions. In either case it is recommended that you change your "water" about once a year. Looking at whether to mix your own coolant or purchasing an off the shelf mix such as Koolance's, my thoughts are simply this, if you are going to invest a lot of money in a water cooling system for your PC why try and save a couple of rand in trying to mix your own coolant?

A question I get asked quite frequently is, why not use other liquids such as oil or

alcohol (no it cannot be used as a keg) to cool your computer? Water is the second most conductive liquid, thus it is logically better to use, unless of course you invest about R7000 in a phase-change cooling system which is able to keep your CPU in below freezing degree temperatures.

There is a lot more to a water-cooled system than simply its water quality though and factors like water pressure and the heat dissipation of the water-blocks play a very important role. There are a lot of misconceptions about the water pressure in water cooled systems. Some people say that a higher flow rate (meaning the water circulates faster) is better to keep a water-cooled system cool, this is not true. Water pressure is the key element, keep in mind that in a water-cooled system the liquid needs to move at the correct pressure to allow it to cool effectively in conjunction with the radiator. Also of high importance is the heat dissipation factor of the water blocks. Water blocks can be compared to standard heat sinks in that they too have different dissipation factors, more about this in the step-by-step guide.

There are a couple of water cooling systems available on the market, not so many locally, but the one's which have always stood above the rest for me were the Koolance products. Besides the fact that Koolance offers one of the best all-in-one products the quality of the components are top class, as you will see in the guide. The unit I am looking at for this step-by-step guide is the Koolance PC2-650BU, which features a built in water-cooling system. If you have a computer case you do not want to change or get rid off, an external water-cooling unit is also available, called the Exos.



Dangers of water-cooling

The first thing many people think of when considering a water-cooled system is what if the water leaks? Well there is no absolute guarantee against this misfortune happening to you, especially not if you buy cheap water cooling hardware. You need to ensure that the hardware you buy has excellent quality PVC tubing, hose clamps, and that the water blocks themselves are constructed of the highest quality. It is thus a very, very, important step to test your water cooling setup before you add any hardware. This can be done by simply connecting the hoses and water blocks and letting the system run for a couple of hours. Once your setup has passed the only other thing you need to be worried about is the level of the water in the reservoir. This should be checked every 6 months and topped up accordingly and as a rule of thumb the water needs to be replaced every 12 months.

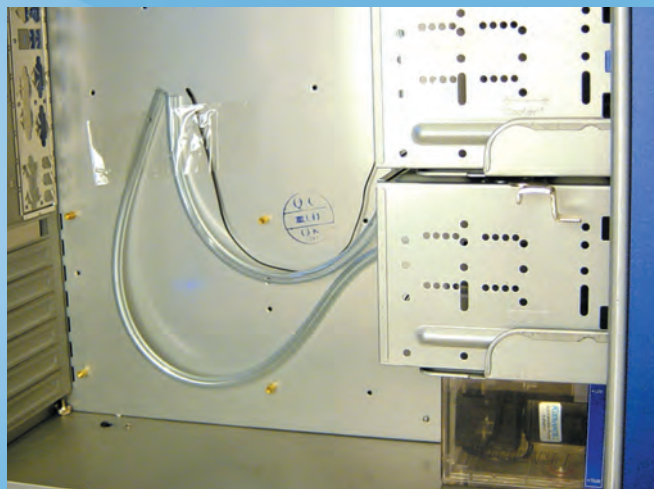
My first concern about water cooling was whether I would be able to carry my PC around, to LAN's for example. Well the answer is simple; if you invested in decent quality products you should not encounter any hassles. The Koolance system I am using has travelled quite a bit and has had a couple of bumps along the way and I have not encountered any water leaks or damaged pumps. Again I will emphasize, do not buy cheap, no-name branded water cooling hardware, the risks are not worth it. Don't say I didn't warn you.

How to install a water-cooling system

Setting up a water-cooled system is relatively the same process no matter which products you choose. The product I am using as a case-study is the Koolance PC2-650BU which has a water pump and radiator built in.

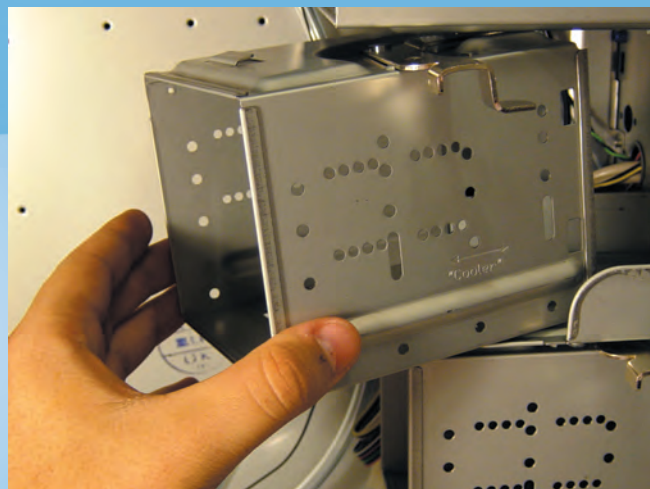
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In this image you can see the water reservoir (bottom right-hand corner) and the two PVC tubes (one coming from the reservoir and the other from the radiator) which you will use to connect your water blocks. Water cooling works by pumping the water from the reservoir to the radiator which cools the water that has passed through each of the various water blocks you have connected.



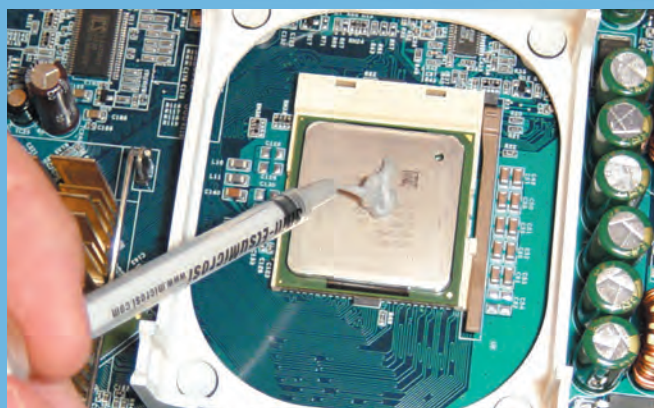
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The Koolance PC2-650BU case is very similar to the Antec PlusView 1000AMG, which is a popular case amongst gamers, with the exception of the water cooling bit of course. What is really great about this case, for one thing, is that there are two 5 ¼ inch bays which can be removed allowing for easy installation of the hard drives or quick removal thereof.



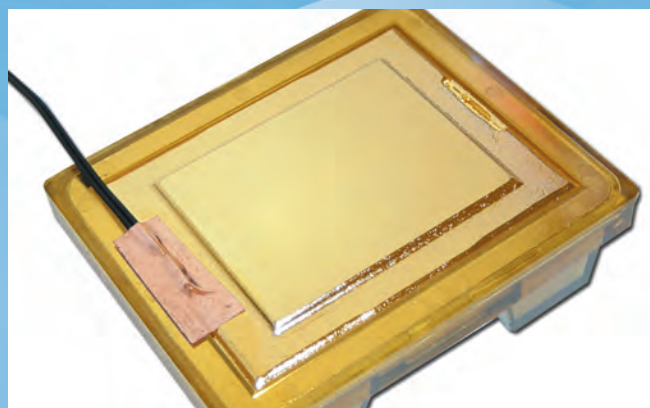
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Once the motherboard has been installed, and the CPU correctly inserted, place a small amount of heat sink paste in the centre of the CPU. Do not spread it as it will automatically spread when you install the CPU water block, you also do not want your greasy fingers to interfere with the effectiveness of the paste. Only a small pea-sized blob of paste is required. **Tip:** do not touch any of the contact surfaces with your fingers as grease and dirt prevent effective contact between the processor and water block.



4

The CPU-300 is the water block I used for this guide. It is made of pure copper and is 21k gold plated. It is compatible with both the Socket 478 Pentium 4 and the AMD Athlon 64-bit CPU's. It is able to dissipate up to 300W of power which should be more than sufficient for any of today's CPU's. At the bottom end of this water block you will find a grooved slot on either side. This is for attaching the temperature sensor - you can attach it to the side which suits you best. This temperature reading is what is displayed on the front LCD of this case.



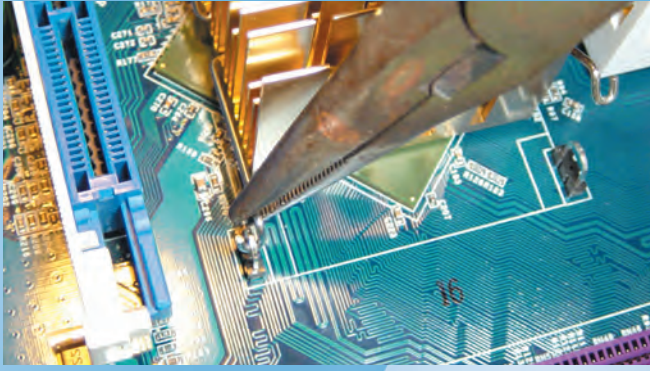
5

The CPU water block comes with an interchangeable bracket that allows it to be used on either AMD or Intel based motherboards. What I really liked about the CPU-3000 is that it uses thumb screws to fasten the tubes. On the top of this water block (between the two PVC water tubes) are three holes, this allows the bracket to apply pressure at the correct point on the CPU. The centre hole is used for Intel based CPU's and the two outer holes (only one is used) are used for AMD CPU's. The innovative thumb screw works on a ratchet mechanism which prevents you from over tightening the water block thus avoiding possible CPU damage. A big thumbs up to Koolance, if only the other vendors would catch on.



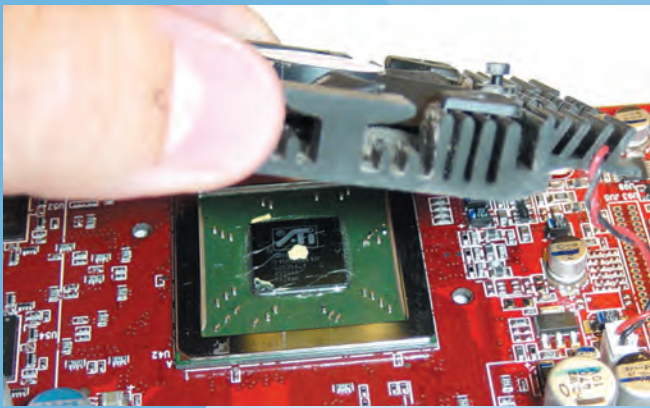
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The next step involves carefully removing the heat sink from the Northbridge. This differs from manufacturer to manufacturer but the Albatron motherboard I used to have a quick release metal clip I could simply press on with a pair of pliers. Some motherboards require you to unfasten the plastic bits on the back of the board. **Tip:** caution is recommended when applying this kind of force to any of the delicate parts inside your PC. *[It looks like you need new pliers, Ed]*



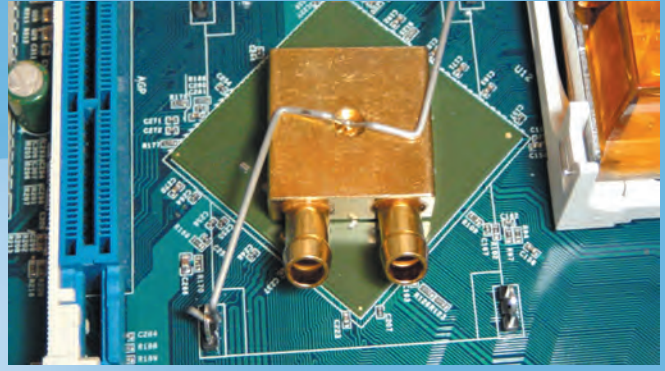
8

Connecting the VGA water block also requires you to remove the heat sink and fan from it. Please note though, that removing the heat sink from your graphics card could void your warranty. This method could also differ slightly depending on the manufacturer of your VGA card, but most VGA cards simply require you to squeeze the plastic grommets on the back of the card to release the heat sink. When you have removed the heat sink carefully remove the heat sink paste and replace it as you did with the CPU.



7

This photo shows what the Northbridge water block should look like once installed. The water block I used is called the CHC-A05 and is constructed of aluminium and is also 21k gold plated. The PVC tubes are fastened to the two connectors via clamps which can be locked into place by using a pair of pliers. The heat dissipation of this water block is only 30 Watts, which should be sufficient for the Northbridge but not for any other chipset, such as a VGA card. I installed this water block without connecting the tubing first to see what the bracket looks like, I suggest however you install the tubing first.



9

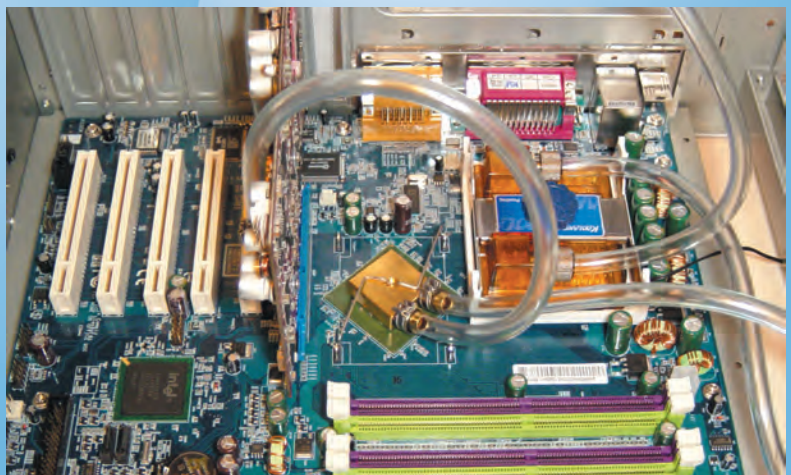
Again it is recommended you attach the PVC tubing before installing the water block, but this photo should give you a slightly better insight into its basic setup. The VGA water block used is the GPU-180-H06 which is made from pure copper and is also 21k gold plated. It is able to dissipate 180W of heat and is compatible with both the ATI Radeon 9800 XT and the NVIDIA GeForce 5950. The GPU-180-H06 kit also includes mini heat sinks for the RAM chips on your VGA card.



10

Once all of the tubes have been correctly attached and installed your system should look like this. Remember I pre tested this system. All that is left now is to fill the reservoir and hotwire the power supply to start the water pump. This is done by using the supplied jump-wire and connecting pins 4 and 6 on your ATX power connector. Full instruction as to the method is explained in the manual that ships with the water cooling system. Now sit back and enjoy the silence of a water cooled system...

Disclaimer: It is highly recommended that you install the water cooling system before you install your hardware; this is to ensure that you have done it correctly and that in the unlikely event of a leak you will not damage your hardware. For the purposes of this review I have pre-tested the equipment to make sure there are no leaks. The following tutorial will assume that you have done the same.



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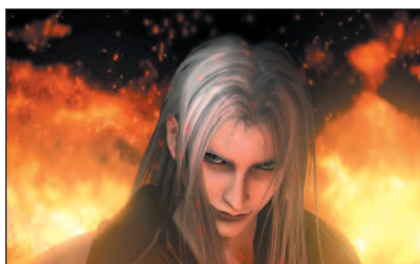


Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children

After months of speculation, Square Enix have released the essential details of Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children, which will (now by official word) be a special edition DVD movie, based on the events and characters from the ever-popular FF7 game.

This puts to rest the rumours that Square were working on a remake for the Nintendo GameCube, although Square Europe have hinted that such an undertaking (not necessarily for the same console) is still a possibility for the future.

This is the first time since Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within that Square have ventured into the movie business. After the dismal failure of the big-screen release, Hironobu Sakaguchi had been adamant that his company would never again attempt such a project. However, it seems they have warmed to the home video market instead, and the film will be released directly to DVD, primarily aimed at Japanese audiences. The movie will have a running time of approximately 60 minutes, and will take place in an apocalyptic setting two years after the ending of the game. Cloud Strife, the original hero, is back along with his nemesis Sephiroth (at least, in some form). The musical talents of Nobuo Uematsu will feature once again, including new tracks (classical, rock and folk), as well as remakes of parts of the original soundtrack. The film will be showcased at E3 this year, and the Japanese release date is currently set for 10th July 2004, although there is none set for the English release at the moment.



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Format: Series [13 Episodes]

Availability: www.amazon.com - \$53.92 (Four DVDs)



When Yagyu Jubei, one of Japan's greatest historical swordsmen, is lying on his deathbed, explaining to his disciple that he must pass on the secret martial art to a chosen successor by bestowing upon him/her the "lovely eyepatch", one begins to get the feeling this show is going to be a little strange. When the disciple asks how he is to recognise the chosen one and Jubei replies, "Big... bouncy... bon-bons..." then dies, one is pretty sure this is going to be a profoundly weird experience.

The "chosen one", of course, is a busty teenage girl. Jiyu Nanohana, nicknamed "Jubei-chan" by her father, has just moved to a new area and a new school, when she is ambushed by Yagyu Jubei's disciple and begged to accept the lovely eyepatch (or, as the Japanese pronounce it, the "rubbery" eyepatch) and become the re-incarnation of Jubei himself. Jiyu, however, just wants to live a normal life.

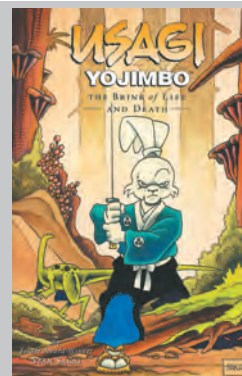
Apart from its whacky nature, the plot isn't exactly original. It's the same martial-arts situation comedy (mixed with the usual bit of emotional drama) that we're all used to seeing, just from a slightly different angle. Sometimes the humour can get a bit stupid, and the main character is possibly the least intelligent leading lady in the history of anime. The other characters are stereotypical and not particularly memorable either. However, the show is still funny and, for the most part, doesn't leave one bored. It's a series for those who watch a lot of anime and want something to fill the gap in between the latest episodes of Naruto. But I wouldn't recommend Jubei-chan unless you've already seen all the better martial-arts anime out there.

Do yourself a favour and take a look at the Cover CD this issue. On there you'll find an electronic magazine called LO Magazine - it's an anime magazine in .PDF format. Please note this magazine is not created by NAG Magazine - we're just providing the vehicle...



Usagi Yojimbo
Dark Horse
R180

Another strange concept here. This is a very traditional samurai story, full of lost love, duty, honour, and the way all these things can conflict, when you live in a society so rigidly controlled by the code of bushido. If you thought the choices and decisions were difficult in "The Last Samurai" you haven't seen anything yet. You will finish reading any of the stories in this collection, exhausted and excited, and waiting for the next exciting episode. Then while you are waiting, you will start thinking about the situations, and whether you could deal with them in your own life. Only after you have gone through this whole process will you realize you have been reading the story of a rabbit, whose best friends are a Rhino and a fox.



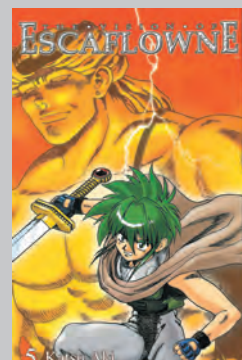
Escaflown
Tokyopop
R 96.95

In typical Manga style, Escaflown manages to mix a little bit of everything into one story.

We follow the adventures of Prince Van, and his companion, the school-girl Hitomi, as they try to rescue the kidnapped Queen of Fanelia from the clutches of the evil Zaubach.

A good fantasy story set in the mythical realm of Gaia.

Then Hitomi gets transported to the real world, and modern times, with a little difficulty adjusting to the lifestyle. At last back in Gaia we get to meet Escaflowne, a god and a robot. Confused? You should be. Whatever you want, it's in here somewhere.



How To Draw Manga

Sirius publishing • R200.00



A large series of books here for those who like Manga comics, but can't ever find the right story. Learn how to do it yourself.

Each book covers a different aspect of the art. Some fairly conventional, like layout and perspective, but then there are some that deal with things unique to the art form. Things like costuming and the unique character scales that show in a very simplistic form all the detail you need to know about the character.

Maids and Miko is one such unique example. The Manga maid has many similarities, at times with the traditional French maids outfit. But there are distinct differences, turning it from sexual to sexy, and often completely innocent.

The Miko character is the courtier or shrine priest, and uses very traditional, almost

samurai clothing, but without the armour. Once you have seen how to draw the layers of clothing here, you will have respect for these people, just for getting dressed in the morning.

The Video Game Theory Reader

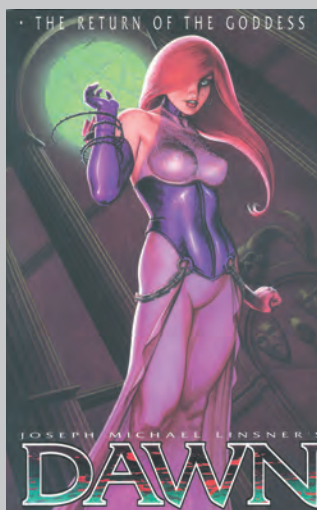
Mark Wolf & Bernard Perron • R288.76 [excl. del.]



If ever there is a book that every gamer should have then this is the one. I will be the first to admit that The Video Game Theory Reader will not be an easy read for many people, even hardcore gamers. If you are willing to put some effort into this book, you will be greatly rewarded. At its heart, this is a collection of thirteen essays that examine different elements of gaming. The contributors discuss the relationship between video games and other media and look at the sociological, cultural, industrial and economic issues that surround gaming. This might seem like a mouthful. The younger generation of gamers might not appreciate all the intricacies, but this book is focused rather on people who are looking for something more than the standard gaming experience.

With headlines such as Post-modern Identity Patterns in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games and History, Narrative and Temporality in Combat Flight Simulator 2, the essays might cause more than a few people's eyes to glaze over. If this collection succeeds in anything, it is to show the reader that gaming is more than the "mindless" entertainment that many make it out to be. Of particular interest is the essays Psychoanalysis and the Avatar and Simulation versus Narrative. The Video Game Theory Reader is refreshing in its approach to gaming and the aforementioned issues that gaming creates. If you are someone who wants to broaden your gaming repertoire to more than just playing, then this is a must-read.

Dawn Sirius publishing • R200



A bit of a controversial story here. The stunning artwork of Joseph Michael Linsner, brings you the tale of Dawn, the original earth goddess. Though most of the story is seen from the perspective of her lover, Darrian, we do get to see her

visiting hell and heaven, and even meeting the other love of her life, the Spirit of Death. Amidst the esoterica there are also battles to be fought, demons to be beaten, and the quest to find Lucifer's halo. A mix of pure fantasy and real world religion dawn will leave you breathless at the artwork, and forcing you to take a look at what you believe, and why you believe it.

This is perhaps not for the religious fundamentalist, but if you have an open mind and a desire to look at things in a different way, give it a try.

Odd Thomas

Dean R Koontz • R119.96 [excl. del.]



His name is Odd Thomas and he is a twenty year-old fry cook living in the small town of Pico Mundo, California. His soul mate is Bronwen Llewellyn, a dark-haired beauty who prefers to go by the name of Stormy.

What makes Odd different (other than his name) is the fact that he can see dead people. At least, as Odd puts it, he does something about it. Being the proactive person that he is, Odd seeks to help the restless dead to ease their path into the next world.

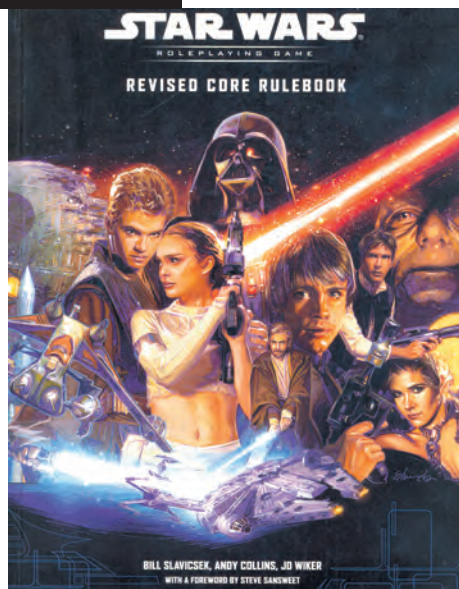
However, after a stranger arrives in Pico Mundo, Odd is more worried than usual. There is something about this man that Odd knows will cause terrible things to happen. This, in brief, is the premise of horror writer Dean Koontz's latest offering, Odd Thomas. While this might seem like another Sixth Sense copycat, Koontz has infused the novel

with a dark persona that is as well-crafted as it is engrossing.

He has produced a mainstream horror tale that succeeds in combining humour with a brooding sense of terror. While Odd Thomas is an enjoyable read, I am in two minds about the second-last chapter. Some people might view it as an easy "Hollywood" escape while others will appreciate it for its logic. In fact, if you read the book closely, you would be able to predict what is going to happen. Odd Thomas is not Koontz's best work, but it is definitely a nice read for a dark, wintry evening.

books supplied by

Role playing review

**Star Wars Revised Core Rulebook**

Wizards of the Coast

RRP: approx. R 400.00

The Star Wars role-playing game has been around for quite a long time and small wonder. With one of the most successful franchises of all time backing it, the game was very successful for the company that used to make it... FASA Corporation.

However, FASA did manage to fall on hard times and, when it was eventually bought out by Microsoft (who was after some of its software rights apparently) it seemed that the Star Wars role-playing game was on the endangered list. However, when Wizards of the Coast revamped its purchase, Dungeons and Dragons, and launched the increasingly popular D20 system, Star Wars was set for a reintroduction to the role-playing world.

The release of new Star Wars films also meant that it was time for the Star Wars role-playing game to get something of an update.

The end result is the Star Wars role-playing game revised core rulebook. This thick book contains all the information you would need to run a Star Wars role-playing game in any of three definite eras: the pre-Empire setting covered by the latest films, the Rebellion and the post-Empire period covered in books by writers like Timothy Zahn.

Unlike many games using the D20 system, the Star Wars rules in this revision have been tweaked considerably to suit the genre of the game. While the basics of the system are still D20 rules, there are a number of streamlining factors which suit the game perfectly. The book itself is very extensive, full of information that would allow a game master to successfully run a decent Star Wars game. Of course, there is a lot of additional source material to add to these rules, but a good knowledge of the films (and possibly novels) will allow a GM to pull off an incredible campaign with just this one volume.

Of course, a game master does need to be careful when running a game like this - there are a huge number of very dedicated fans who know the Star Wars universe backwards and a game master wanting to impress such players is going to have to do his homework.

It is not surprising that there are a large number of role-playing games based on films. In fact, other than original settings, film games seem to be the most popular basis for role-playing titles. The reasoning is quite simple: because role-playing games require a large amount of imagination from the players, it helps if they have something to base their mental images on. And films, being that they are visual and aural in their stimulation, help to create a brilliant source for imaginative inspiration.

Although other forms of entertainment do affect role-playing game creators (like books and computer titles) films are still a staple for RPG inspiration.

The advantages for games based on films are rather obvious. The players have an obvious basis for their mental images, and the game master has a wealth of inspirational and research material as far away as the nearest video store. Additionally, creating appropriate images within the mind of the players is far simpler, particularly if the players have seen the film the game is based on. Other stimuli, like sound tracks and catch phrases, can be used to further the effect.

The drawbacks to running a game based on films are a little less obvious. However, they are pitfalls that can ruin the game for one or more of the players and may possibly even wreck the whole game campaign.

Certain films have quite a following, and these are the films that games tend to be based on. Take the Star Wars series, for example, or the James Bond films. Fans of these movies tend to be well informed about the films, verging on obsession. Should these fans be part of the group, and should the GM not be as well versed in the films as he could be, problems may certainly arise... particularly if the players are unforgiving, uncompromising types.

Film based games can lead to excellent role-playing sessions. For one thing, being able to capture the dramatic feel of films definitely adds to the enjoyment for all involved. This does require a lot of trust in the GM, as he will need to make snap judgments and override the need for dice rolls... but a good GM will be able to pull this off without players even realizing that he's doing it.

If you want to run a game based on a film, keep in mind that, as the GM, you will need to put in a little extra work to ensure that you don't lose the overall spirit of the film in a fog of dice rolls, rules and misinformation. But other than that, you may find it to be a wonderfully rewarding gaming experience.

Role Playing and the Silver Screen



MageKnight 2

Dark Riders is an entirely new expansion to the collectable miniatures game MageKnight, adding an entirely new dynamic to the tabletop warfare game. Aside from introducing the Avatars of the Apocalypse, extremely powerful units entering the battle for the first time, Dark Riders also adds the ability for riders to dismount; riders and mounts can be attacked and destroyed independently of each other, riders can also ride many different types of mounts. A Dark Riders Booster Pack contains four randomly selected, pre-painted miniature figures.

PLAY BIG



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

In 1993 Magic: The Gathering® created the trading card game industry. Today, it's the biggest and best game of its kind. 6 million players worldwide. Over \$3 million paid out last year alone.

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12 Inch Goth Dolls
R 225.00

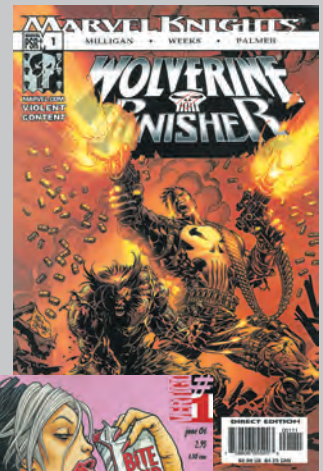
Series Two of these demented figures come as 12 inch dolls with real clothes, real body piercing and real attitude. With fun names like Suzi Sin, Victoria Creeeper, and Abcynthia Chaser they are guaranteed to bring the tone of your room down to a good creepy Gothic level. Show your alternative side, while still getting away with owning a doll. Get the Bleeding Edge Goths now.



Supplied by Outer Limits (011) 482 3771

Wolverine Punisher
Marvel Comics
R22.95

When Wolverine isn't being a namby-pamby member of the X-Men, he's a down and dirty kind of a guy. The Punisher lost his family to the mob, and he wants payback. Put the two of them together in the same series and you have a very messy book. In the best, action packed kind of way. Oh and the two of them usually hate each other as well. Just because the Punisher once drove over Wolverine's legs with a steamroller. It was justified, really! The story is written by Pete Milligan, one of Britain's oddest comic writers, so expect a lot of weirdness, like a bad guy called Napoleon, complete with silly French uniform. Action and humour all in the same book. Mmmm good.



Bite Club
DC Comics
R22.95

Now here is a look at the mob from the other side. And vampires as well. Vampires have been accepted as part of society, mainly because they have lived long enough to have money and power in all the right places. Of course one of the right places is the mob. Unfortunately someone has just bumped off one of the vampire mobs biggest dons. Now everyone wants to know who will take his place. Apparently the answer is his son. A fairly normal event one would think, except, as well as being a vampire his son, Leto is also a priest. First rule of bite club, expect the unexpected.



www.downhillbattle.org
 There's a lot of huff-and-puff these days over the RIAA suing just about everyone who downloads music and the grey area of whether copyright infringement is actually a crime or the faceless corporates flexing their muscles. This site takes the side of the little man and focuses on the freedom of music, arguing for free culture and the freedom of music. It's interesting stuff and you can snag a few of the illegal mix albums that had the RIAA and record labels in a knot not to long ago.



www.geekasaurus.com/cornholio.html
 Man, this is sooo 90s... but it rocks nonetheless. Mike Judge might only be known for two things - Beavis & Butthead and schlock comedy movie Office Space, but we like both. Especially the first one, starring a duo that even South Park can only hope to equal. Fans of the series will get a kick out of this site, reciting most of the instances where the word "Cornholio" was used, including the cornholio song. Pity you can't save them...

www.zombiepinups.com

Okay, this site might not be showcasing the most sophisticated, or breathing, ladies around, but it sure has a sense of style. Not that we promote an active lifestyle involving necrophilia at the office (though we are used to congregating with the living dead at LANs). Zombie Pinups is a tongue-in-cheek version of the classic pinup girls. It might seem grotesque, but if you don't like zombies then you're bound not to appreciate this site anyway. After all, what do you expect from a site with a catchphrase like "Beauty and Braacains"?

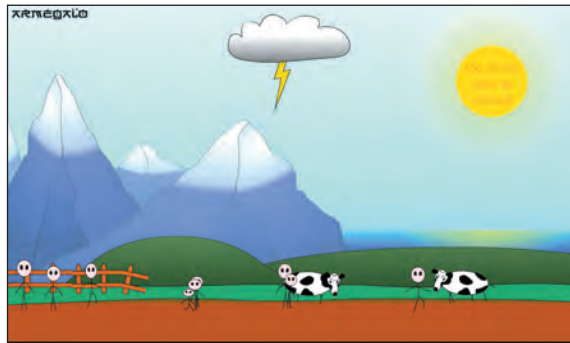


www.aci.com.pl/mwichary/guidebook/interfaces

A museum of OS interfaces! Yes, this is a very remarkable site as it goes out to catalogue all of the past GUI interfaces over all the OSs that have existed. Called the User's Guidebook to Interfaces, it includes MacOS, Windows, Rhapsody, OS/2, Linux and more. The interface isn't that obvious - ironic considering its theme - but it's a great place to see how interfaces have evolved and influenced each other.

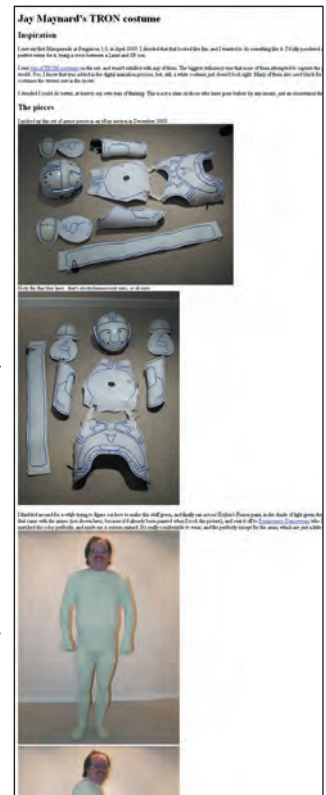
www.nion0.com/files/wrath.swf

A mindless Flash game where there is no score and no reason to play it, other than being a god and consequently throwing lightning bolts at people and livestock, watching them gib into bloody chunks. And if that isn't enough reason, we don't want to know what real reason is!



www.ibiblio.org/jmaynard/TRONcostume/

"Game cosplay!" someone at the NAG office squealed when this site popped up. And while we are all for girls running around in cute, skimpy costumes emulating some fictional character, a line has to be drawn somewhere (and often, this is nearly everywhere). This TRON suit is another point to why not everyone should be allowed to make their own costumes, except if there's a consensus on who's going to wear it. That said, the site is pretty in-depth, and if you can get past the photos, a TRON suit is just a few hours away...



A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE WITH THE COMPUTER THAT STARTED IT ALL BY POPULARISING HOME GAMING...

IT'S MADE OF RUBBER

The Spectrum's keyboard was made out of rubber, with a membrane underneath that struck the switches and registered a key press. With many code listings in magazines, and users learning how to program BASIC for the first time, keyboards took a real bashing. If you were particularly keen you'd have to replace the rubber membrane a few times.

Launched in April 1982 and coming in either a 16K or 48K model, the 8-bit Sinclair ZX Spectrum was the first foray into computing for many gamers. It was a friendly computer, with spongy rubber keys, a BASIC language that wasn't hard to learn and, best of all, it had hundreds of great games available at pocket money prices. This was the computer that invented the British software industry, with a little help from the Commodore 64. Companies like Ocean, Elite, Software Projects, Bugbyte and Ultimate were creating the equivalent of today's Grand Theft Auto and Metal Gear Solid but with prices starting at £1.99 (ranging to an extortionate £9.99 for the bigger games). Of course, piracy was also a problem then as it is now, with tape-to-tape recorders churning out copies for friends to swap in the playground. But then this home grown production line also served to give the computer the popularity that it so richly deserved. **N**



POKE ME, PLEASE!

Ah, the POKE. By writing mini-programs in BASIC, typed in from magazines, players could give themselves infinite lives, health, ammo or fix bugs in the software by POKE (ing) areas of the Spectrum's memory. This worked fine, as long as the listing in the magazine was printed without mistakes.

ZX SPECTRUM



VARIATIONS
[CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT]
Spectrum+ (the same as a 48K Spectrum but with a different case), Spectrum 128K (more RAM for bigger games), Spectrum 128K+2 (with an added tape deck), Spectrum 128K+3 (the tape deck was replaced with a 3" disc drive).

"WHY I LOVE THE ZX SPECTRUM"

To me the Spectrum was more than just a machine for playing games, it was a way of life. Of course, I moved on to the Amiga and eventually the Mac, but I never forgot my first love.

I think that initially it was the cute factor - looks are always important and the Spectrum was a beautiful machine. Then there was the world of possibilities that were open to you. Programming your own games, writing letters on thermal paper, painting with a light pen and, of course, playing games. Personal favourites included Back 2 Skool, Gunflight, Roller Coaster and Cybernoid. Just think how great they'd look on a modern plasma screen...

Nick Roberts



Classic Machine

All this for only £175!



SPECIFICATIONS

Sir Clive Sinclair really packed the technology into the Spectrum. It had everything that the bulkier Commodore computers had, but in a small, neat package.

The computer is based around the Z80 chip which meant a 256x192 pixel screen and two colours for each 8x8 pixel square (this gave rise to colour clash). A small memory capacity also meant the invention of the multi-load game and the immortal phrase "Press Play On Tape".

Processor	Z80A 3.5 MHz
Memory	16 Kb Basic ROM, 48 K RAM
Graphics	256x192, 8 Colours
Size	232x144x33 mm
Weight	552 g



A simple 9VDC power adaptor was all that was needed to get your Spectrum powered up.

The expansion slot held infinite possibilities. Printers, micro drives, light pens, 32K RAM packs... they were all connected here.

Loading software meant shelling out for a tape recorder too - but any model would do.

Using the ear and mic sockets you could record and play data to and from your tapes.

The all-important TV socket. Many players grew up playing games in black and white.

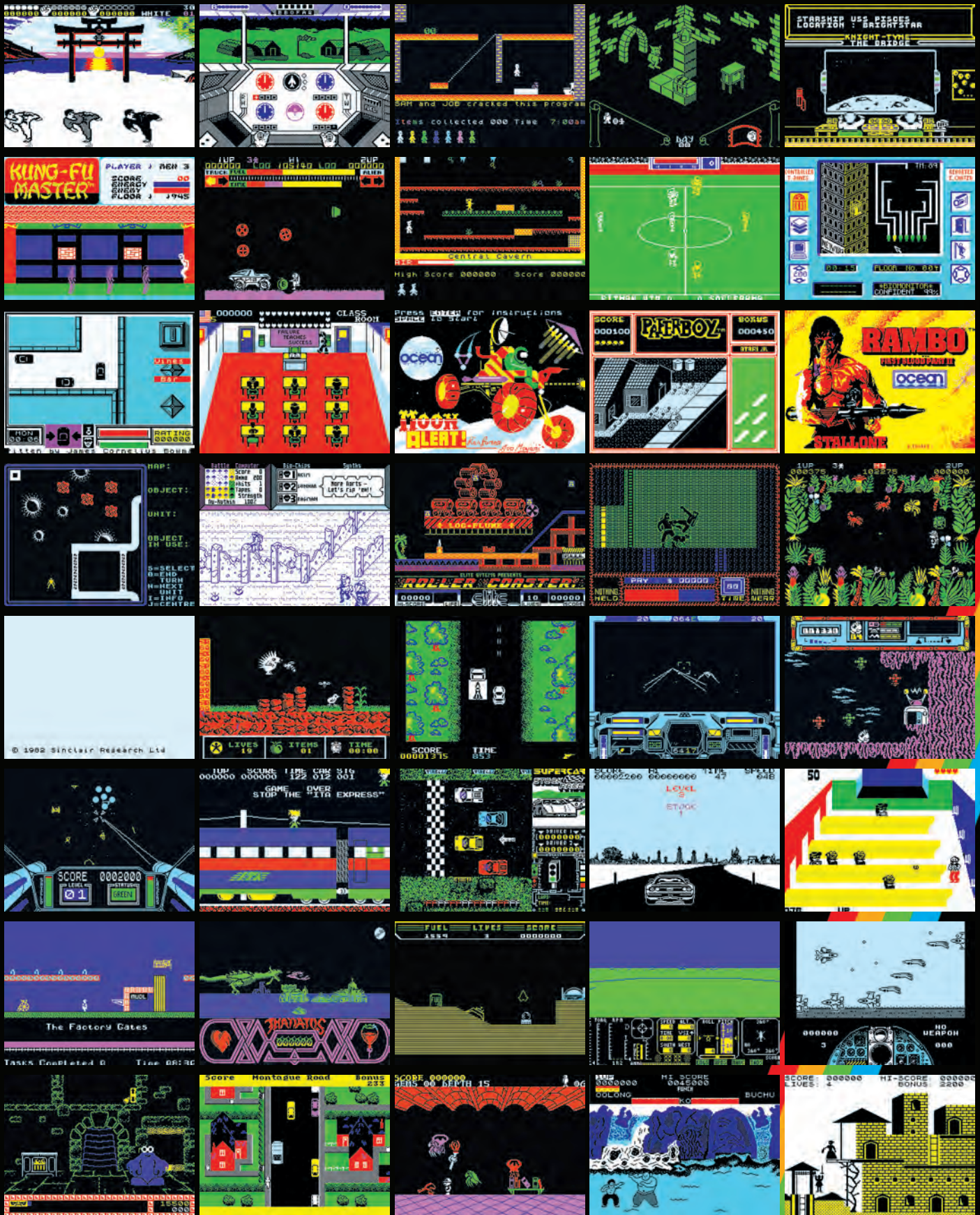
Classic Machine

Page 1 [top to bottom left to right]

Agent X2, Arkanoid, Army moves, Avenger, Back to skool, Barbarian, Barry McGuigan World Championship Boxing, Batman, Bobby Bearing, Bombjack, Bubble Bobble, CS CLIVE, Cauldron, Cauldron 2, Chuckie Egg, COBRA, Contact Sam Cruise, Cyclone, Cyrox, Dan Dare, Dandy, Danger Mouse, Deathstar Interceptor, Decathlon, Doomdarks revenge, Driller, Eagles Nest, Eddie Kid, Elite, Enduro racer, Exolon, Fat Worm blows a sparky, Fighting Warrior, Firetrap, Grange Hill, Great Escape, Green Beret, Gunfight, Gunship, Head Over Heels

Page 2 [top to bottom left to right]

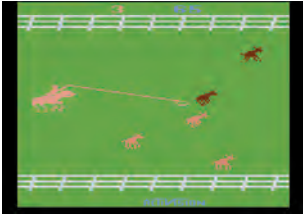
IK*, Infiltrator, JetSet Willy, Knightlore, Knightyme, Kung-Fu Master, Lunar Jetman, Manic Miner, Match Day 2, Max Headroom, Miami Vice, Mikie, Moon Alert, Paperboy, Rambo, Rebel Star, Rogue Trooper, Rollercoaster, Saboteur, Sabre Wolf, Spectrum screen - use, Spiky Harold, Spy Hunter, StarGlider, StarQuake, Starstrike, Stop the Express, Super Stockcar, Supercars, Tapper, Technician Ted, Thanatos, Thrust, Tomahawk, Tornado, Trapdoor, Trashman, Underworld, Yi-Ar-Kung-Fu, Zorro



LEGACY

Wild West-themed Games

The wild, wild west is a lot more popular as a gaming destination than you'd think. Saddle up!



Stampede
(1981)
Atari 2600, Intellivision



Wild Gunman
(1984)
NES



Lost Dutchman Mine
(1989)
DOS



Back to the Future III
(1991)
DOS, Atari ST, Amiga,
Commodore 64



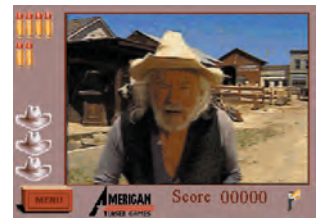
Wild Guns
(1994)
SNES



**Mad Dog McCree 2: The
Lost Gold**
(1993)
DOS



Sunset Riders
1993
SNES, Genesis



Mad Dog McCree
(1993)
DOS, Sega CD



Alone in the Dark 3
(1995)
DOS



3 Skulls of the Toltecs
(1996)
DOS, Windows



Outlaws
(1997)
Windows



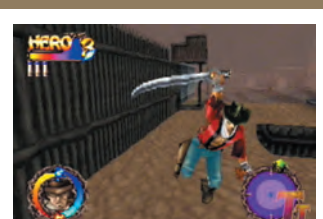
**Lucky Luke: On the
Daltons' Trail**
(1998)
Windows, PlayStation



Desperadoes
(2001)
Windows



Gunman Chronicles
(2000)
Windows



**Rising Zan: The Samurai
Gunman**
(1999)
PlayStation



FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T WAIT.

The complete game comes out in September. For those of us who can't wait that's a very, very, very long time. Fortunately there's Gran Turismo 4 Prologue with 46 license tests, the Making of GT4 movie, 54 cars to unlock – each with realistic handling and dynamics. Get it now and taste the speed monsters.



MUSICA.
THE SOUL STORE

A CONSOLE A DAY...

PAMPAPE

Tired of all NAG's console content?

Tough!



I remember when I first started these little venom bits, way back around five years ago. The first article I wrote was about piracy, which was the obvious starting spot, and the next one was about the attitude of gamers towards other gaming platforms. It looks like I have to remind people about that one, though, because the stupidity of some readers is absolutely beyond bounds.

Apparently (according to some users on the nag.co.za forum boards) NAG is heavily tipped towards consoles. More heavily than towards computer gaming, in fact. Now, I know that the idiots that make up so much of the world's population are everywhere, but come on folks! I really thought our readership could count properly.

NAG has always been tipped towards PC games, more heavily than console games. Go back through all the years of the magazine, and you will find that there has always been a bigger focus on PC games. Not that it really matters anyway...

Let's be honest, guys. It's all gaming, no matter how much you try to argue the fact that console games are not games (a stupid notion, really, but it does seem to be where you are headed.) In the international market, as a matter of FACT, console gaming makes up a much larger chunk of the consumer base than PC gaming does. Just because you can't play Counter-Suck with your prepubescent, pimple ridden idiot friends on a GameCube doesn't mean it's not an enjoyable and viable gaming platform. If we really want to get picky, gaming started with consoles... the first home electronic entertainment device was a console game called Pong. Came as a little silver box with paddles. Remember? Oh, sorry, I forgot, you morons only crawled out from beneath the rocks that spawned you yesterday.

NAG is an electronic entertainment magazine. That means we look at everything to do with electronic gaming (and a few things beyond.) That means the exclusion of consoles would indicate that we weren't doing our jobs properly.

So you claim to be a gamer? Really? What do you play? Counter-Suck exclusively? Probably.

I don't understand the animosity that so-called gamers hold towards consoles. Wake up and smell the silicon, guys, because they're here to stay. They're here to stay in the world market place, they're here locally, they're here as gaming platforms and, most importantly, they're here to stay in NAG. Live with it.

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NEXT MONTH

Soft Stuff: [Box of fluffy toys]

Next month is July, and July can only mean one thing... June is finally over! No, really [silly little joke there]. July means you get our monster E3 supplement - probably the only one of its kind in the whole world. Starting from right now we're going to be saying things like Intel rules and we love Intel and Intel is the best because they are sponsoring the incredible E3 supplement. So, next time you buy a chip make sure it's an Intel see!

Besides E3 we've got a review of Fight Night 2004, good boxing fun in the afternoon after a couple of beers, while the girls wash the dishes and talk pottery. We should also have an in-depth reading on a number of other good games that we don't have right now so you'll just have to step out there onto the edge and believe in us.

Hard Stuff: [Box of Viagra pills]

Although the focus will be on E3, that little backwards game flea market also features new hardware - so watch out for the PSP among other things. As usual you can expect new outrageous technology that'll never be commercially viable but fun to tinker with nevertheless. Did we mention Intel rules? Stepping away from shameless brand worshipping and E3... in the magazine proper we'll take a peep at all things wireless. Wireless LAN, wireless Internet, wireless wires and even wireless desks, but not wireless mice and keyboards - we're tied of those. Anyway, enough trash - see you next month... bye!

Timing:

The July issue will be on-shelf 24 June 2004.

Disclaimer: People read this thinking it'll have some funny little joke or comment - sorry... Try next month.



Also in July - the new Hitman game... Shush! Not so loud!



HITMAN

CONTRACTS

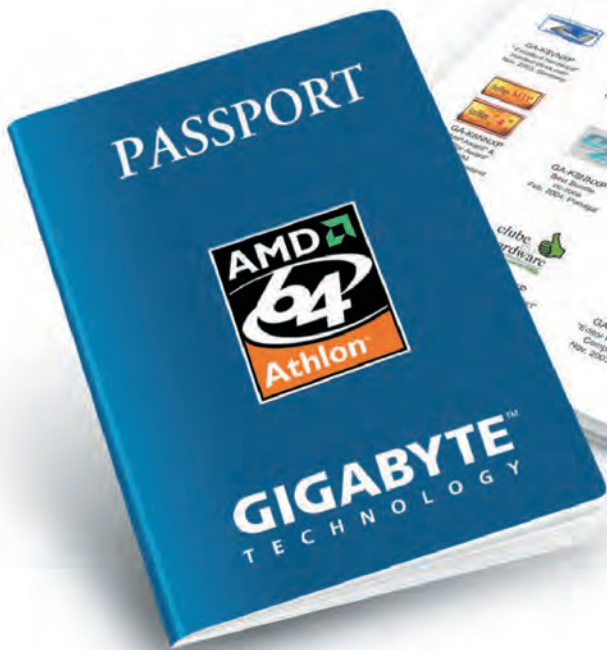
PlayStation[®]2 

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