

**EXCLUSIVE
REVIEWS!**

MORROWIND + DUKE NUKEM: MP

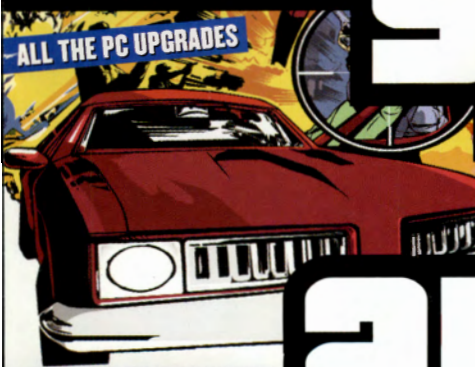
PC GAMER

The World's Best Selling PC Games Magazine

10 COOLEST SECRETS



ALL THE PC UPGRADES



grand theft auto III



CARS! GIRLS! GUNS!



THE WORLD EXCLUSIVE REVIEW!

**PC GAMER
JOINS THE
U.S. ARMY**

- **Neverwinter Nights:** 22 top tips for great DMs
- **Deus Ex 2:** Exclusive screens and the latest info
- **The Movies:** Peter Molyneux plays Hollywood
- **TheVede answers** your TOP 10 tech questions

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07

SOLO EDITION
JULY 2002 · VOL. 9 · NO. 7

Monsters ▶

- Animals ▶
- Dragons ▶
- Elementals ▶
- Giants ▶
- Planar ▶
- Humanoid ▶
- Insects ▶
- Miscellaneous ▶
- Constructs ▶
- Undead ▶
- NPCs

- Balor
- Succubus
- Vrock

<<Loadmodel_Demon: 12443>>Balor

Spells	Scripts	Advanced	Comments
Basic	Statistics	Appearance	Abilities
BALOR			

Drag



Drop



INWN_DEMON

Custom A.I. script

Imagination...

Drag, Drop, Play – that is the essence, and the power, of the Neverwinter Aurora Toolset. The dungeons you design, the monsters you make, and the characters you create. Neverwinter Nights brings the adventure of your dreams directly to the screen.

Enable Multiplayer. Server size: 64 players

Aggression: maximum

Combat Round Started...

Fight

Bridge



Bridge_01



Bridge_02



Bridge_03

F8

F9

F10

F11

F12



BioWare/Infogrames

Neverwinter Nights...

With Neverwinter Nights, the game you've always imagined playing is the game you finally get to play; because with the Neverwinter Aurora Toolset, the game you play is the game you build. And all you've got to do is point and click.

New game



Campaign

Single player

Multiplayer

Tutorial

Module Name: Unlimited Adventure

From the Power of your

Tileset

- City
- Rural
- Dungeon
- Crypt
- Castle
- Forest
- Mines
- Sewer
- Interior
- Cavern

Creating area

B

F1

F2

F3

F4

F5

FORGOTTEN REALMS

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS



The land of Neverwinter is a gravely imperiled place over which an ancient evil has fallen. It is a place that must be restored, and it is your quest to do so. From faraway stricken dells, to fog-enshrouded forests, to labyrinthine dungeons and caverns, you will be called upon to combat the most formidable foes – wild beasts, powerful monsters, conspiratorial humans. It is an arduous campaign, a fast-paced adventure fraught with unimaginable danger and epic challenges. To triumph, you must utilize the full variety of weapons within your vast arsenal. So choose those tools wisely and ready yourself for the quest of a lifetime, because the fate of Neverwinter is in your hands.



Journey through Neverwinter Nights with over 60 hours of gameplay and up to 64 players on line.

RATING PENDING
RP
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ESRB

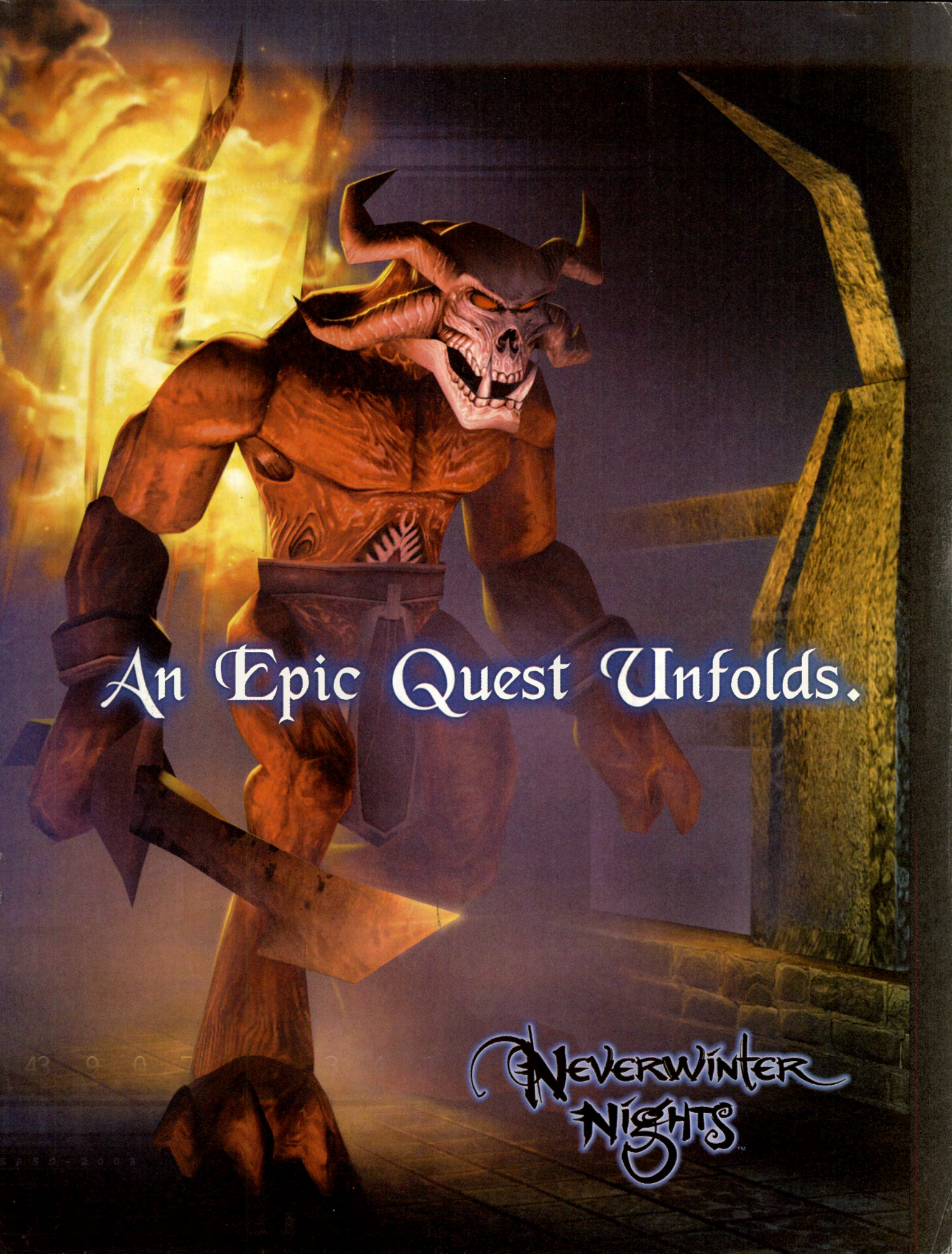
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An Epic Quest Unfolds.

NEVERWINTER
NIGHTS

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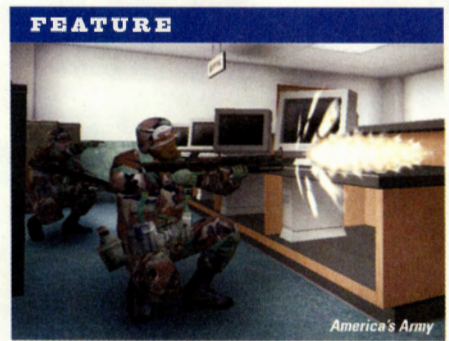
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CD-ROM EDITION
JULY 2002 VOL. 9 NO. 7



40 PC Gamer Joins the Army

The Army — as in the real U.S. Army — is using an *Unreal Warfare*-powered game as a recruitment tool. We sent Dan Morris to boot camp to find out if the government is keeping it real. (Just don't blame us if you feel the need to sign on for a four-year hitch.)

47 Neverwinter Nights: How to Be a DM

Who's afraid of the Great White North? Not us. We went to get all the facts regarding BioWare's upcoming RPG, including a close look at the game's much-hyped DM mode.

SCOOPS

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This stunning sequel promises interactive environments, open-ended gameplay, and fabulous visuals. We've got all the updated details.

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EA *finally* gets serious about delivering a quality NASCAR title on the PC. Is the sky falling?

18 The Movies

Peter Molyneux is at it again, and this time he gives you the power to manage your own movie studio. Genius in the making!

20 The Y-Project

It's got the *Unreal* engine and looks to offer gobs of action. And it lets you kill giant insects — something we always try to work into our day.

22 Shadowbane

This long-overdue MMORPG hopes to set the genre on its ear. Can Wolfpack pull it off?

26 Hands-On

We brave the dangers of space in a beta of *Earth and Beyond*. Want to know how it's looking? Read our full report, you lazy bum.

COVER STORY

56 Grand Theft Auto III: World Exclusive Review!

In the annals of gaming, few franchises consistently satiate our thirst for great gameplay in a sprawling, open-ended, living, breathing game world. With *Grand Theft Auto III*, not only do we get to club people, but we also have fun while we're doing it. After dominating the console sales charts for months, *GTA III* has finally arrived for the PC. Is it as good as we'd hoped? Read our exclusive first review to find out.





ON THIS MONTH'S PCG CD Sweet mother of mercy! We've got the EXCLUSIVE demo of *Dungeon Siege*, along with strategy for *Ghost Recon: Desert Siege* and *The Sims: Vacation*, plus mods for *Quake III* and *Half-Life*. Who loves ya?

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"If we're the only people in the universe, it would be an awful waste of space."



The whole MMORPG market is at a fascinating juncture as we await the brave new world of the second generation. What have we learned so far? That between *EQ*, *UO*, and *AC*, there are about 900,000 willing subscribers. Generation 1.5 (*Anarchy Online* and *Dark Age*

of *Camelot*) has flourished so far, but it's done so by drawing many players from existing games.

So now the industry waits patiently for *Star Wars: Galaxies* and *The Sims Online* on the assumption that they're going to break down the doors to the mainstream and entice a flood of new players. In the meantime, where does that leave *Shadowbane* and *Earth and Beyond*? I've played *E&B* recently (see page 26), and the skew of its space setting should be enough on its own to generate some success.

But what about poor *Shadowbane*? Sure, a few thousand loyal fans are playing the beta (and swamped our "Waiting Is the Hardest Part" poll to the point that the section's stats became misleading). But will a generic fantasy setting really offer enough fresh content to pry away the thousands of subscribers *Shadowbane* needs to lure from the more well-established games? We sent Chuck Osborn to find out, and you can read his thoughts on page 22.

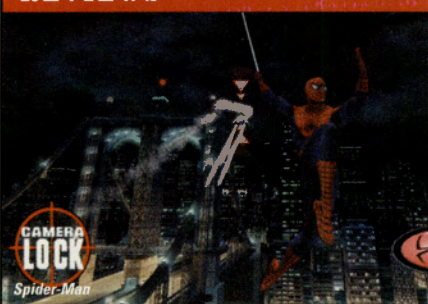
What do those of you who are merely curious, not hardcore, think about *Shadowbane* and other products such as *EVE*? What is it about a new MMORPG that will make you pay the subscription fee? What's the hook? Many developers working on these titles seem to assume that grouping — the social aspect — is the key element to nurture. Yet, at heart, aren't most PC gamers still essentially solo gamers?

Personally, I have more faith in *Asheron's Call 2*. I didn't buy into the Allegiance network of the original *AC*, but many fans did, and it'll be a vital component of *AC2*. What makes this sequel more attractive to me is Turbine CEO Jeff Anderson asserting that the team is trying for "a single-player experience, but in a massively multiplayer world." Now, that makes sense — the best of both worlds — and we'll be updating you soon on *AC2*'s progress.

This column wouldn't be complete without congratulating our quote-contest winner, Jacob Stuart, who spotted last month's line from *Wall Street*. Keep sending your feedback and entries to ednote@pcgamer.com, and prepare yourselves for a fantastic 100th issue of *PC Gamer* next month.

Rob
Rob Smith
Editor-in-Chief

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Did Andy make a mistake when he chose *MS Flight Sim 2002* over *IL-2* for Sim of the Year?

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THE HARD STUFF

78 TheVede wakes up in a cloud of his own stench, only to discover that he somehow managed to review Hercules' latest flat-panel monitor, a set of Altec speakers, and a slick new system.



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JUGGERNAUT from "Unreal Tournament™ 2003" courtesy Digital Extremes, Inc.

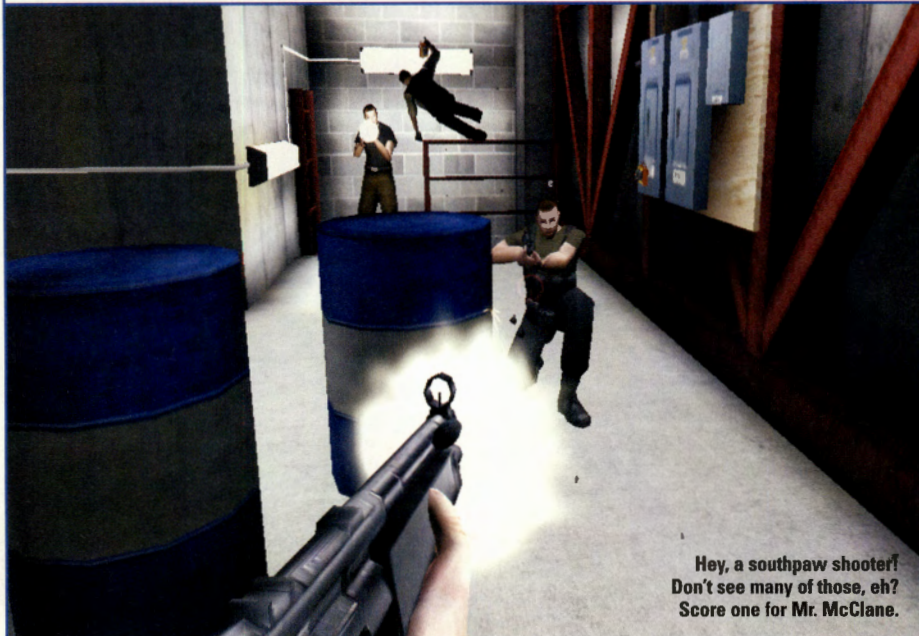
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Show Us the Write Stuff

✦ We want to hear from you! Write to us at **PC Gamer Letters**, Imagine Media, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005, or email us at letters@pcgamer.com.



Hey, a southpaw shooter! Don't see many of those, eh? Score one for Mr. McClane.

✦ FAMOUS LEFTIES

ON THE BACK OF YOUR May 2002 CD sleeve, you asked, "Was John McClane really left-handed in [Die Hard]?" The answer is *yes*; in fact, Bruce "Da-Man" Willis is left-handed in real life. In all three *Die Hard* movies, he shoots with his left hand and wears a watch on his right wrist.

— Jason Hamilton

✦ STAR TREK: THE FINAL FRONTIER

WELL, IT SEEMS THAT GOOD ol' Chuck Osborn has gone and done it again. I was willing to overlook his grievous error when it came to one of the weapons in *American McGee's Alice* ("the vorpal blade is a nod to Dungeons & Dragons" — yeah, right). But this time he's gone too far. In an affront to *Star Trek* fans everywhere, his review of *Bridge Commander* [May 2002 issue] described "a more powerful *Enterprise-E* clone, the *Sovereign*." If

Chuck had bothered to read the 94-page manual that was right there in the box, he would have known that the *Sovereign* was built several years before the *Enterprise* was launched in 2372. While Osborn claims to be a "big-ol' *Star Trek* geek," he doesn't seem to possess even basic knowledge of *Star Trek* lore. Please have Chuck refrain from reviewing any games in the future, PERIOD.

— Andrew Briggs

Would a Vulcan think this question was geeky? They're logical and all, so perhaps not, but this one really does stretch the boundaries...

✦ SIZE MATTERS

I STROLLED INTO THE "BOUTIQUE of electronics" recently and noticed that something was different. Gone were the huge PC game boxes that rival the size of King Salmons! Strangely, they had all been replaced with goldfish-sized boxes! Is this some sort of conspiracy to toy with my emotions, or does the new, smaller package serve a real purpose?

— Josh Smith

We've talked about this packaging switch a couple times in the past, but we're still getting a lot of email from PC gamers who are wondering what's going on. The small boxes are to save shelf space at retail. Those big boxes take up too much space — especially in smaller stores. The end result



If smaller boxes mean more PC games in stores, we like!

✦ HARDWARE HAIKU READERS GET THEIR SAY



IN OUR MAY 2002 issue, TheVede asked you guys to come up with some cool hardware haiku. Little did he know that so many of you were honest-to-goodness poets! We tried to run as many haiku as possible, but we received enough entries to fill an entire magazine! Though they were all terrific, here are some we especially liked. Thanks to everyone who wrote in!

Three in the morning
Girlfriend says come to bed now
Must finish game first!

— Hiveriff

All of this hardware
It's just Vedermania
Rob smells like a poo

— Adam Sandhar

Games now run too slow
Cannot afford GeForce4
Must sell my kidneys

— Chris Hooker

My friend is a dope
He broke my CD-ROM drive
Give me a new one?

— Jack

Vede has a girlfriend
If he says "Bam! It's TheVede"
One more time she'll leave

— Jason White

Overclocking rules
Until you smell the burning
Then it really sucks

— Dan

I read magazines
PC Gamer is the best
It does not suck much

— Steve Zero

TheVede is crazy
He writes dumb hardware haiku
He needs to get help

— Ben Silver

I love Chiaki
I think about her always
Just like fried chicken

— John Doe

Here I sit, forlorn
Too poor to afford a comp
like the "Dream System"

— Joshua Rogers

My cable modem
Makes multiplayer more fun
Up all night again...

— Ginger Exley

Bought video card
Three months ago and it ruled
For about two months

— Rick

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4 OUT OF 4 STARS. — USA TODAY

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hip_! [activision.com](http://www.activision.com) hip_!



The Siege Editor should be available online. Kip. Build us a winner!

of using smaller boxes is more games for sale, more variety of games for sale, and lower packaging costs for software companies. In short, it's a great thing all around.

WE'VE GOT THIS GUY TRAINED

PC GAMER PC GAMER PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer PC Gamer

— Shawn Allen

Shawn also sent us a picture of himself wearing a PC Gamer sock over his "Coconut Monkey," but we decided it would be best to leave that one to your collective imagination...

PREVIEWS AND REVIEWS

HELLO, FELLOW GAMERS! I've been an avid reader of your publication for over three years, and I want to say that you are the best PC gaming magazine on the market. My question to you is, Do the same people that preview games also write the reviews? Or do separate editors handle the previews and reviews?

— Chris Martin

Sometimes the person who writes a preview is also the person who writes the review. If so, that person, of course, must play through the final product and not rely on his or her experiences with any pre-release code he or she might have played in the past.

TEACHER'S GOT GAME

I JUST STARTED SUBSCRIBING to your magazine this year, and I gotta say, it rocks! My eyes have been opened to how cool staying inside can be. Anyway, what I

really want to tell you about is my science teacher, Mr. Comiskey. He's a good teacher, but I never thought he'd ever be the type to play computer games. A couple of days ago, when I was walking out of first period with the new issue of *PC Gamer*, he turned to me and said: "Wow, is that the new edition of *PC Gamer*? I haven't gotten mine yet. Oh, I hope it's in the mail today!" Let me tell you, that made my day. I never realized how much computers could bring people together until now. I mean, this guy is in his mid-40s, and here's me at 14, finding this really great way to bond with my science teacher — who my friends and I have now dubbed "The Coolest Guy Ever." When I grow up, I hope to be just like him.

— Mark Bachiochi

Way to go, Mr. Comiskey! Give Mark an "A" on his next test for us, okay?

REACHED BACK LIKE A PIMP AND SMACKED THE...

YOUR MAY 2002 BACKSPACE was hilarious. *Pimps at Sea*? Not a bad concept, but I think the game needs a good catch phrase to attract buyers. Maybe something like "Pimps at Sea: We always get the booty." Hardy-har-har.

— Edward Kaiser

WHERE THE HELL'S MY SIEGE EDITOR?

EVERY PREVIEW I READ about *Dungeon Siege* talked about how the Siege Editor would be shipped with the retail product. I snatched up a copy of the game the other day and installed it hoping to hack around with the Siege Editor, but nowhere on either CD can I find any mention of an editor!

Did I buy the wrong version? Do I have to shell out yet another \$50 for a new copy of the game to get everything I was promised?

— Kip Bowser

Unfortunately, the Siege Editor didn't make it into any version of the boxed game, Kip. It should be available for free download by the time you read this. Check for it at www.gaspowered.com.

DON'T FORGET "BEE-OOTCH!"

IN YOUR MAGAZINE, YOU often use the term "byotch." You've employed several different versions of the word, including: "byotch," "byatch," and "biatch." Which one is the official PCG spelling?

— Andy "Penguins"

They're all good in their own way. "How's it going, biatch?" is sort of mellow, while "Suck it down, byotch!" is more harsh. "Byatch" is probably the fluffiest of the group, in that you can use it to say, "Gosh, I sure do love you, byatch" without getting smacked (very hard).

SQUEEZING EVERY LAST DROP

IN YOUR APRIL 2002 ISSUE, you got a letter from a guy who converted a friend from consoles to the PC using just an old Pentium 166MHz. I, too, use a P166 and often play games such as *Tropico* and *Vietnam: Black Ops*. I have to sacrifice on graphics settings and speed, but I still make out okay. I just crank down all settings to their lowest, and voilà — I'm playing modern games with a low-end machine that's way below almost every game's minimum system requirements! There's still life in them old computers yet!

— Ryan Bridges



CAN YOU SMELLLLLLLLLLLLLL...

IS THAT THE ROCK GIVING you the "People's Eyebrow" in your recent review of *Bridge Commander* [May 2002 issue, page 65, bottom-right screenshot]? Did you make some sort of stupid rookie move that upset him? He looks pissed! Did you get the smack down laid on your candy ass?!

— Curt Suda

We were impressed, too, by how much *Bridge Commander*'s Lt. Felix Savali resembles *The Rock*. Know your role, Romulans, or this tactical officer's gonna shine up those photons real nice and shove 'em...well, you know.

WHO IS THAT HANDSOME COCONUT?

OKAY, SO THAT MONKEY coconut thing — what is it? I mean, is it your mascot? Is it a paperweight? Is it Rob's girlfriend? It's driving me crazy — I must know!

— J.T.

Truth be told, CM is our mascot AND Rob's girlfriend. (Please don't hurt me, Sandy.)



"My solid-gold peg leg costs more than your entire family, chump!"

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Blood

Violence

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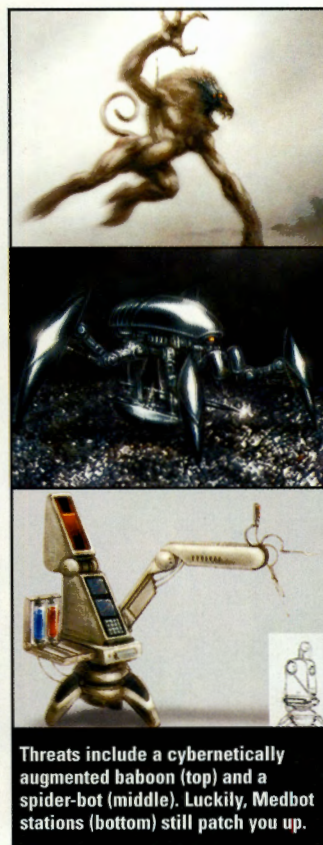
DX2: Invisible War

IN A NUTSHELL

The sequel to our 2000 Game of the Year promises to take immersion to a whole new level



The clone of J.C. Denton will travel all the way to Egypt in search of its genetic father.



Threats include a cybernetically augmented baboon (top) and a spider-bot (middle). Luckily, Medbot stations (bottom) still patch you up.

In many ways, Ion Storm studio director Warren Spector is *Deus Ex*'s harshest critic. "We knew we were doing something cool, but here's the painful truth — we faked a lot of it," he laments. "Luckily, we got away with it. But the reality is that the game still had a lot of smoke and mirrors."

"Smoke and mirrors" like pre-planned routes, forced kills, and non-interactive environments are things that Spector considers a bit of a failure, even if most gamers might disagree. That's why *DX2: Invisible War* will offer even more of what made the original so revolutionary in the first place — freedom.

SIMULATION BEATS EMULATION

SET 15 YEARS AFTER THE END OF *DEUS EX* (though which of the three endings it continues from remains a closely guarded

secret), *DX2* has you again playing as J.C. Denton...sort of. Rather than bring back J.C. and strip him of his experience to start anew in *DX2*, the game has you play as his genetic clone (either male or female) searching for the "real" J.C. Denton, who's mysteriously gone missing. Though the real J.C. is MIA, the rest of *Deus Ex*'s supporting staff will return.

The search for J.C. will take you through six principal environments: Seattle, Cairo, Germany, Antarctica, back to Egypt, and, finally, to a surprise location that will help tie up the saga's loose ends. As in the first game, each of the places you visit will contain a variety of sub-missions incorporating a mix of stealth, action, and strategy as you work for or against competing factions such as the returning Templars and Illuminati, or any of the new orders and

corporations. But, unlike *Deus Ex*'s three-to-six pre-planned routes through each level, the Ion Storm team hopes you'll discover unique paths all on your own.

"Some of the most memorable moments in *Deus Ex* were ones we hadn't planned," reveals Spector (who also served as the game's producer). "You can scale walls we never intended for you to climb [by placing sticky bombs on a wall and then hopping up on them]. In *Deus Ex 2*, we're going much further into simulation than we ever have before. We're not taking any prisoners this time."

Besides powering *DX2* with the newest version of the *Unreal* graphics engine, the team has licensed the Havok physics engine to create a virtual world in which every object will interact with you realistically. Knock over a fluorescent torch, and

E.Y.I.


CATEGORY: First-person RPG
DEVELOPER: Ion Storm
PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive
WWW: ionstorm.com
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 55%
RELEASE DATE: Spring 2003

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: Critically acclaimed first-person RPG *Deus Ex* is receiving an *Unreal*-powered continuation. *DX2*'s realistic physics model will help players create their own solutions to problems.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Unlike the defunct Ion Storm-Dallas, Ion Storm-Austin has an excellent history: its first game, *Deus Ex*, was *PCG*'s 2000 Game of the Year. The studio is also developing *Thief III*.



Graphical sugar! The *Unreal Warfare* engine will allow for advanced lighting and particle effects.



DX2 texture-maps characters through a "normal mapping" process that'll also be used in *Doom III*.



Ion Storm is shooting for a "*Blade Runner* meets *The Matrix*" vibe in *DX2*'s atmosphere.



To run a game this good-looking, you'll need a system with at least a GeForce3 card.



Here's concept art of one of *DX2*'s outdoor environments. Thought it was a screenshot, eh?

it'll bounce to the floor and roll, dynamically altering the lighting of the room and creating new real-time shadows on the wall and floor. (Ion Storm created its own renderer to make these volumetric lighting effects possible.) These lighting effects can also impact gameplay — for example, guards may give away their presence by casting shadows down long hallways while on patrol.

"Not one single shadow in our world is static," boasts Harvey Smith, *DX2*'s project director. "Any light can be made to move."

Since each barrel, vase, and chair you come across will have its own unique in-game weight and mass, figuring out how to use them to your advantage is key. Virtually any object can become a weapon or distraction when thrown, or can alert nearby guards if you bump into it. The hope is that you'll use these objects to find organic solutions to *DX2*'s challenges and not merely follow a preset path to success.

CHOICE AND CONSEQUENCE

WHEN YOU START OUT IN *DX2*, YOU'LL NOTICE a few other changes right off the bat. Not only will you have more augmentation slots available, but you'll also start off with three augmentations of your choosing. And this time they'll come in two varieties — active (meaning it can be turned on and off) and passive.

Inspired by the effort taken to port *Deus Ex* to the PS2, Ion Storm has streamlined *DX2*'s interface so it has fewer configuration screens and so the control scheme features fewer keys than the original game.

"Rather than force players to go through a wacky training mission and then get dumped into the middle of a war zone, we have to ease people into it. Give them limited tools and limited capabilities early to stage the introduction of game elements," explains Spector, who adds that the opening tutorial will become part of the game, letting you take a series of missions for any faction to get you up to speed quickly.

And for those who get impatient for power-ups, *DX2* will feature a black market where a variety of maxed-out augs are available — for a price. For example, the black-market healing aug will still give you health, but its nanobots will need to harvest a nearby corpse before they can help you.

Another black-market augmentation will be Bot Domination, a power-up that'll let you take over any robot or turret within sight. The downside? Your flesh-borne body is left in a trance, vulnerable to attack.

Weapons will be a combination of new and old: sniper rifles, assault rifles, shotguns, pistols, silencers, and batons, to name a few. One of the new weapons will be a railgun that has a short, 10-foot attack but can shoot through walls. Combine a railgun with a vision augmentation that lets you see thermally, and you'll be able to nail enemies

from the next room, *Red Faction*-style. (In fact, all objects will have an ambient temperature. But watch out — a vision aug turned on near an explosion could blind you.)

MAJOR BRAINS

PAUL TOZOUR, *DX2*'s AI PROGRAMMER, HAS been on the job for over a year now, tossing out *Unreal*'s AI for a completely rewritten version made specifically for *DX2* (and eventually, *Thief III*). By the time *DX2* ships, he estimates that he'll have done nothing but work on AI routines for two years.

"We're giving the designers flexibility to mark spaces with 'social context,'" Tozour says, meaning that NPCs will react to you based on the context of where they see you. Walk around a public lobby with your gun holstered, and you'll be ignored. But get caught in a restricted area, and guards will immediately become aggressive. Or, keep ogling a lady guard after she's told you to stop, and you'll quickly learn that sexual harassment can have deadly consequences.

NPCs will even interact with each other. Tozour estimates that *DX2* will ship with around 15,000 audio "barks" (some may have to be dropped for space). These "barks" are responses to in-game events: "Oh my god, that table's on fire!" a civilian might shout upon finding a fiery pyre in his office.

Guards will even randomly converse while waiting for you to kill them, an act that could have a negative impact on guard morale. Says Tozour: "If you kill 19 guys out of a group of 20, that last guy won't be in good shape."

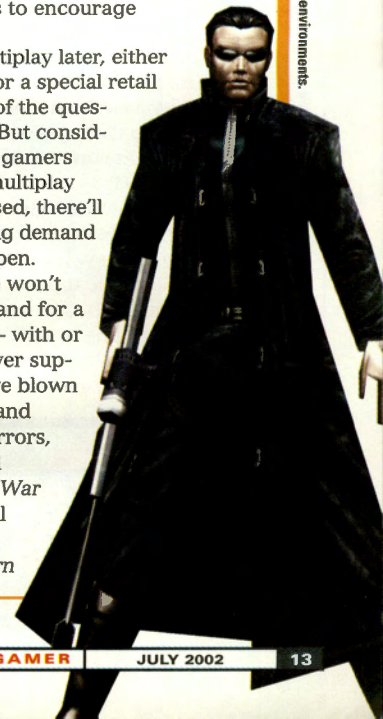
NO FORCED FAILURE

AS WAS THE CASE WITH *DEUS EX*, NEITHER multiplayer support nor a level editor will make *DX2*'s initial release. Ion Storm is content to make a brilliant single-player experience — 30 hours of playtime is the target — complete with four different principal endings to encourage replayability.

Releasing multiplayer later, either through a patch or a special retail edition, isn't out of the question, says Smith. But considering that so few gamers played *Deus Ex* multiplayer after it was released, there'll have to be a strong demand to make that happen.

Not that there won't be plenty of demand for a *Deus Ex* sequel — with or without multiplayer support. Once they've blown away the smoke and broken all the mirrors, Ion Storm should have an *Invisible War* that everyone will be noticing.

— Chuck Osborn



NASCAR Thunder 2003

IN A NUTSHELL
EA finally decides to give some quality NASCAR lovin' to the PC gaming crowd

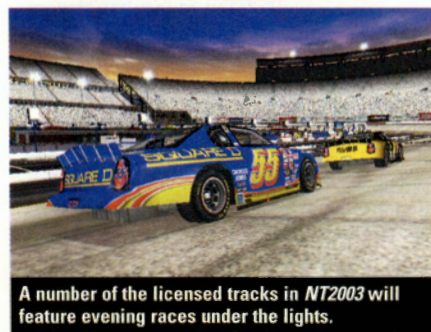
Look out, Papyrus — there's a new good ol' boy in town! After dominating the NASCAR racing-sim market for well over seven years now, the Massachusetts-based developer needs to keep an eye on the rearview mirror, because EA Sports' upcoming *NASCAR Thunder 2003* could prove to be a legitimate challenger.

Just how serious is this latest EA effort? Well, the former producer of Hasbro's *NASCAR Heat* has been hired to head up the project, and the folks at Image Space Inc. — which developed the superb *F1 2001* for EA last year — have been chosen to lay down the bulk of the code. With veterans like these behind the wheel, it's a safe bet that we won't be seeing some lame arcade racer like the abysmal *NASCAR Revolution* that EA tried to foist on us back in 1999. (For shame!)

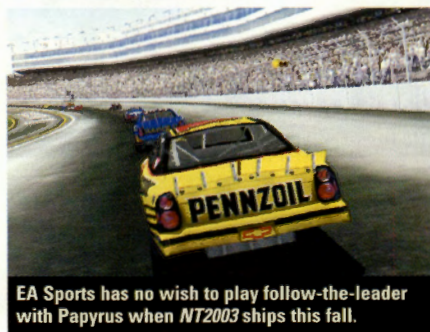
What we should expect, according to Ed Martin, the director of NASCAR production for EA, is a highly sophisticated and fully tweakable NASCAR sim that should challenge Papy's *NASCAR Racing 2002 Season* for the attention of both hardcore and casual fans. Although *NT2003* will be a multi-platform release, the PC version is being developed specifically for the same demanding high-end crowd that's kept Papyrus cruising at the front of the pack for so many years.

One of the ways that EA hopes to appeal to this audience is by releasing an open-source product that the online racing community will be able to modify and update to its heart's content. "The open architecture of *NASCAR Thunder 2003* will give users unprecedented ability to tweak all aspects of the game," says Martin. "The NASCAR sim community is incredibly advanced when it comes to customizing their games, and our goal is to satisfy that community desire like never before."

From what we've seen of *NT2003*, however, it doesn't look like much third-party tweaking will be needed right away. Almost all of the top NASCAR drivers and teams will be featured in the game, as will every one of the 23 tracks currently on the Winston Cup schedule. (Just for fun, EA will also toss in a version of



A number of the licensed tracks in *NT2003* will feature evening races under the lights.



EA Sports has no wish to play follow-the-leader with Papyrus when *NT2003* ships this fall.

the original 1950 Daytona Beach road course.) The mod community rarely likes to take things at face value, though, so don't be surprised to see new car skins and tracks popping up on a regular basis once the game ships.

The big question is whether or not *NT2003* will be able to keep pace with Papyrus' *NASCAR 2002* in the driving-physics department — the only area that truly counts with serious sim fans. Details are sketchy at this point, but what we know is that the game will use a full six-

degrees-of-freedom (6DOF) physics model running at 200Hz (as in ISI's *F1 2001*), and that the sim's sophisticated vertex damage model will purportedly offer the most elaborate collision effects ever seen in a NASCAR PC game. As Martin puts it, "We are definitely going after the high-end simulation audience."

If early indicators are anything to go by, Papyrus may need to roll *NASCAR 5* out of the shop ahead of schedule just to keep from being lapped by *NASCAR Thunder 2003*.

— Andy Mahood

Some of the earliest NASCAR races took place on Daytona's famed hard sand-beach course in the late 1940s.



CATEGORY: Racing sim
DEVELOPER: Image Space Inc.
PUBLISHER: EA Sports
WWW: ea.com
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 60%
RELEASE DATE: September 2002

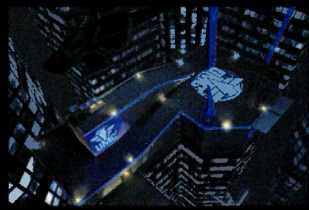
WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: The involvement of Ed Martin (*NASCAR Heat*, *Viper Racing*) and ISI (*F1 2001*), plus EA's commitment to hardcore physics and open-source tweakability, could make *NT2003* a real thoroughbred.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: EA's NASCAR games have dominated the console market for years, but the company's previous PC releases have been critical and commercial flops.

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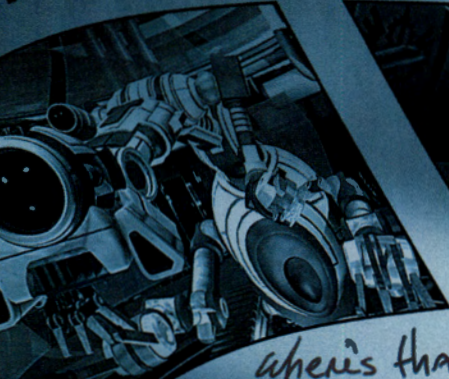
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- Stamp and Coin Club
- Favorite Quote:**
"Everything has its price"



HUMAN

- Debate team
- President of Student Council

Most likely to...
stab you in the back



IMSAEIS

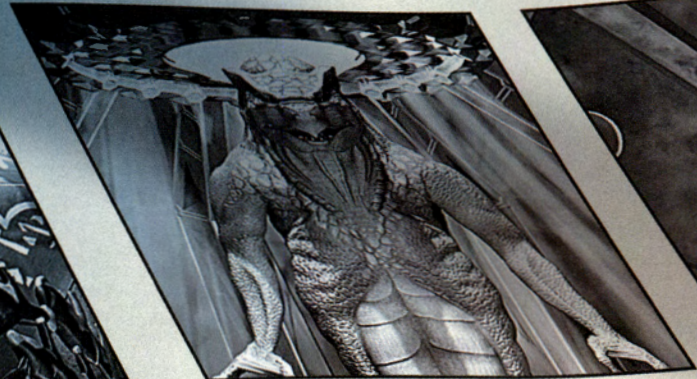
- Editor of Galactic Gazette school paper
- Class Librarian

Favorite Quote:
"Keep your friends close
but your enemies closer"



KLACKON

- Shop Class
- Young Industrialists Club
- Favorite Quote:**
"Production is the key
to victory"



SAKKRA

- Captain of Thunderball team
- School Bully

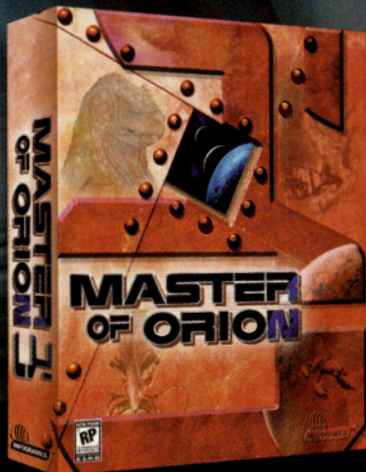
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The Movies

IN A NUTSHELL
All together now — yell “D’oh!” and slap your head. Why didn’t anyone think of this before?


Milla Jovovich (*Fifth Element*, *Resident Evil*) says she'd like to play the title role in the film adaptation of *American McGee's Alice*. Sounds positively hare-raising...

Hordes of sim-people race to the opening night of... *Chubby Rain 2*? But we missed the first one!



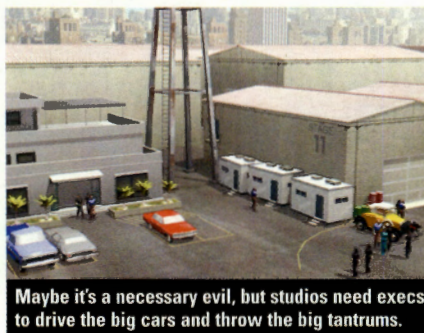
It took just two words: “*The Movies*.” Peter Molyneux — giddy as ever when revealing a new game design — was announcing the name of his latest project. The words swirled around in the air, painting an immediate picture of his latest master plan. It sounded so simple, the concept instantly tangible, and anyone who’s followed Molyneux’s game *M.O.* over the years — controlling people from a powerful position, and having these minions exhibit all kinds of distracting traits that put the “micro” in management — nodded knowingly.

I nodded knowingly. *Of course*: a *Sims*-like experience melded with the mass-market attraction of Hollywood. A match made in gaming heaven.

At a concept level, *The Movies* has similarities to Molyneux’s 1994 hit *Theme Park*. “What they share,” he says, “is the concept of being something to play around with and experiment with.” This sandbox-game format has proved incredibly popular with consumers, catapulting Will Wright’s *The Sims*, Chris Sawyer’s *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, and others to huge profitability. Put that gameplay styling on a

movie-studio lot and open up the creative process of film-making to gamers, and... well, I dread to think what could happen.

The game begins in the 1920s. Playing as a studio head, you start with small budgets, small pictures, and simple decisions about which actors and actresses to groom for stardom. You make a movie by getting the script (you determine the level of violence, romance, and special effects), building the set, hiring all the major players, and then watching the movie being made. According to Molyneux, “you can



Maybe it’s a necessary evil, but studios need execs to drive the big cars and throw the big tantrums.

adjust the amount of violence, eroticism, and such in the film mid-production, and watch the cast respond to your changes.” This ability means you’ll be dealing with star-power temper tantrums, directorial quirks, and the ever-watchful presence of the accountants needing to ensure that you make money.

As more and more options for movie-making emerge over time through the advance of technology, you can be the first to introduce color to movies, or to debut certain special effects. How about remaking your favorite movies, or righting moviedom’s injustices? Who doesn’t want a crack at producing their own version of *Star Wars: Episode I*? To do so, commission or buy a sci-fi script, construct a set, and then set the balances between effects, violence, and romance. The result? As the game’s being developed now, you’ll get to see your film actually being shot on the set, and you’ll get to see a trailer.

How many different trailers you’ll be able to see, and how flexible the scripting is to create unique movies, is still unclear as *The Movies* emerges from Molyneux’s head and into a prototype format. The open-endedness of the options leaves many questions yet unanswered. But the core gameplay direction is clear: you’ll be balancing resources, coercing uncooperative AIs to do your bidding, building an expanding empire in the confines of a studio lot, and then reveling in the glory of the artistic creations on the big screen.

It has the hallmarks of Molyneux creativity written all over it. We’ll be sure to dig deep into the gameplay plans as more information emerges. — Rob Smith



All the classic movie genres will be represented, and you can watch the action unfold in real time.

Peter Molyneux’s first industry gig was making database software for the Commodore 64.

E.Y.I.


CATEGORY: Simulation
DEVELOPER: Lionhead Studios
PUBLISHER: TBD
WWW: lionhead.co.uk
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 20%
RELEASE DATE: Late 2003

WHAT’S SO SPECIAL?: When Game God designer Peter Molyneux has an idea, gamers take notice. These moments of inspiration lead to inspiringly creative game premises, and *The Movies* is no exception.

DEVELOPER’S TRACK RECORD: Molyneux’s résumé is stellar. His last two projects, *Dungeon Keeper* and *Black & White*, were incredibly innovative, though handicapped by weaker gameplay late in the game.



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The Y-Project

IN A NUTSHELL
Kill alien bugs dead in the far-off, Unreal-powered future


Videogame screens or comic-book panel? This in-game shot shows off the highly stylized graphic-novel art direction that you'll see in *The Y-Project's* characters.

Roughly 130 years in the future, humanity will make a fatal mistake. While carrying out a mission to settle a peaceful planet far from Earth, scientists will accidentally create a dangerous mutant insect during a genetic experiment codenamed "The Y-Project." The insect escapes, continues to mutate, and spawns a new race of giant mutant bugs that quickly dominate the planet, forcing the surviving settlers to take refuge inside a domed city.

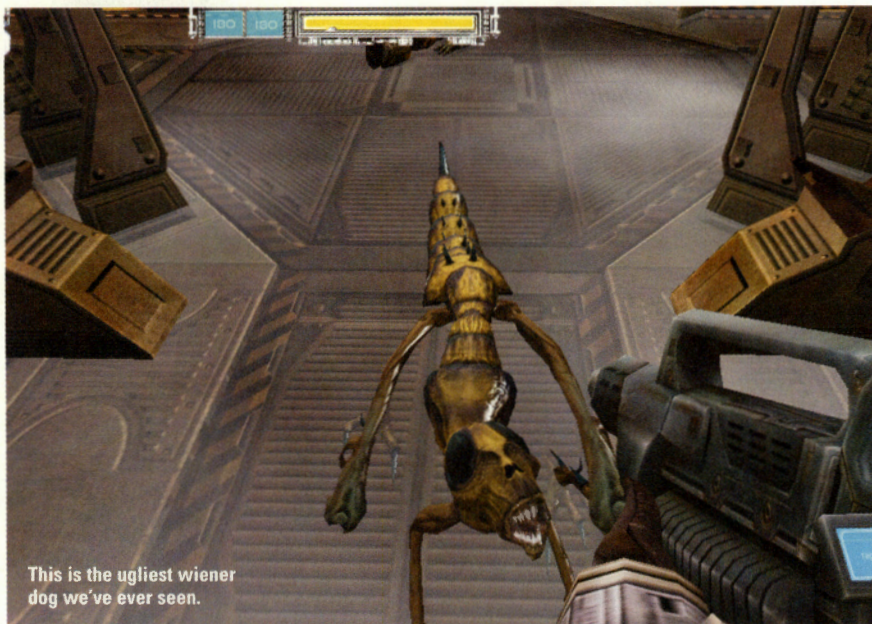
Now, 70 years later, the dome has been breached. You've been sent to rescue the few survivors that are left, wiping out any six-legged freaks that might get in your way.

That's the setup for *The Y-Project*, an ambitious action/adventure from German developer Westka. Throughout five chapters, you'll be wooed by two competing human factions, each with a very different worldview: the scientists, a coalition of eggheads that prefers to analyze problems before acting, and the military, gung-ho jarheads who shoot first and ask questions later.

Every time you meet with a faction leader, he'll attempt to recruit you to his side. You can change allegiances in exchange for unique weaponry and tools, and, if you complete missions for that side, you'll earn special "energy" (experience points) for that faction. Allegiances can be changed as often or as little as you like, but the final battles may be tough if you haven't specialized.

Both sides have the ultimate goal of saving the planet, but they go about it in very different ways. Scientist missions will tend to be puzzle-oriented, whereas military missions favor the brute-force approach. Westka says that every submission will have a minimum of three solutions, adding to the replayability factor.

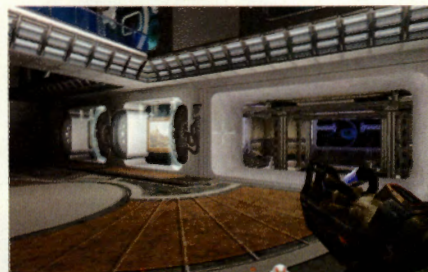
As you'd expect, the two factions hate each other — leaders will badmouth their counterparts, and their ulterior motives may not always jive with their propaganda. You may even find that the insect hordes aren't as evil as you were originally led to believe. *The Y-Project* will have multiple endings depending on the choices you make as you play, so anything's possible.



This is the ugliest wiener dog we've ever seen.



Y-Project will use the *Unreal* engine, and will have new particle effects and a proprietary fog system.



Your ultimate goal will be to kill the mother insect. She's hiding behind that door.

The game will have around 20 different locations, all centered in or around the domed city. You'll visit such disparate settings as discos and churches, and the architecture is supposed to be reminiscent of films like *The Fifth Element* and *Blade Runner*. Overall, *The Y-Project* will have a strong graphic novel look and feel, complete with highly stylized, motion-captured characters (all made possible by a heavily modified version of the newest *Unreal* engine).

Of course, you can't have a preview about "giant bugs" without talking about giant bugs. There'll be 18 different insect

models, ranging from towering *Starship Trooper*-esque warriors to winged attackers to acid-spurting pillbugs. Luckily, you'll be armed with more than a can of *Raid*: of the 16 available weapons, 10 will be upgradeable. One of the cooler ones is the Medusa, a gun that'll turn a creature into a stone statue that you can then smash into a tiny billion pieces.

It's heartening to see that Ion Storm isn't the only developer who isn't afraid to blend gaming genres. Westka doesn't yet have a U.S. publisher for *The Y-Project*, but with a premise this promising, expect an announcement very soon. — *Chuck Osborn*

EX.I.


CATEGORY: Action/adventure
DEVELOPER: Westka
PUBLISHER: TBD
WWW: y-pro.net
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 60%
RELEASE DATE: Q1 2003

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: Using the newest version of the *Unreal* engine, *The Y-Project* is a first-person action game that promises to let you control how the story unfolds. The graphic-novel comic style is cool, too.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Based in Cologne, Germany, Westka was founded in 1993 to make commercial mini-games. *The Y-Project* is its first large-scale mainstream project.

He needs a walk...



Consider yourself
WARNED

Shadowbane

IN A NUTSHELL
You'll come for the online roleplaying, but stay for the PvP and complex economics


Archons like Nandramiel here are featured characters in *Shadowbane's* story. Wolfpack assures us that players can kill them — but that flaming sword does major hurt.

In the old days of massively multiplayer RPGs (you know, three years ago), people were satisfied with nothing more than a sword and a good quest. But times have changed, and the hack-'em-slash-'em level chases of yore are as musty as their dungeons. *Shadowbane* looks to change those dynamics with its ongoing storylines — which are partially shaped by your involvement — a multifaceted economic model, city-building, PvP sieges, and complex guild management. The online community may never be the same again.

Starting out, you'll create your unique character by choosing your sex and then a race from a list of 10: Human, Elf, Dwarf, Half-giant, Shade (half-undead/half-human), Centaur, Aelfborn (half-elf/half-human), Aracoix (hawk-like creatures), Irekei (devilmen), and Minotaur. Next, you'll pick a class — fighter, rogue, healer, mage — and a few unique traits such as “ambidexterity,” “cunning,” and “catlike reflexes.” As you gain experience in the game, you'll get to upgrade your traits, such as boosting Hero Strength to Giant Strength and eventually to Divine Strength.

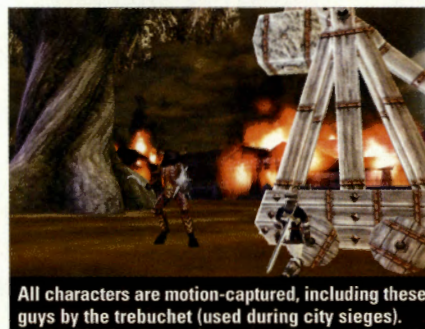
Once done with character creation, you'll spawn into King's Cross, a PvP-free island specially created as a place for newbies to hone their skills. You can stay there up until level 20, but after that you'll be forced out into the dangerous world at large. (Level 20 is also the point at which you can add a sub-class, such as Assassin or Knight, to your character.)

Even if you normally play your MMORPGs solo, you'll want to align yourself with one of *Shadowbane's* many player guilds, if only to have a friendly home city to respawn at when you die, plus protection in the PvP environment. Membership has other privileges, too — protection from rival guilds, better prices for buying and selling items, and the ability to move up the guild's rank ladder.

One of *Shadowbane's* main distinguishing features is that the players themselves will alter the game's physical and political landscape. All cities created after the game's launch will be founded and built by player-created guilds. Even though the only reward will be bragging rights, Wolfpack expects (and hopes) that



An Aracoix fighter surrounded by snarling, bloodthirsty monsters. Unfortunately, a cloak of invisibility spell has been cast so that you can't see them.



All characters are motion-captured, including these guys by the trebuchet (used during city sieges).



We hope that's an enchanted axe, or that gargoyle will be flossing his teeth with Dwarven beard hair.

guild rivalry will lead eventually lead to city sieges between groups, and a compelling gameplay dynamic.

An intricate in-game economy will allow for multiple forms of commerce, such as setting up businesses. Want to own a magic shop? Just buy the blueprints, hire an NPC sage to run it, and stock the store with pre-made items or, if they're magical, hand-crafted creations of your own design. For added protection, contract for healing services from your city's Tree of Life in case of enemy attack. Pay your city taxes on time, and you may make a tidy little profit. And if not, you can

always sell your business to someone else.

Wolfpack has delayed *Shadowbane's* release to the second half of 2002, not only to perfect server stability but also to dramatically improve the game's appearance with high-res detailed terrain and other flourishes. Considering that Wolfpack's original goal was to construct a 2D isometric game similar to *Ultima Online*, *Shadowbane* has obviously come a long way. Whether it's enough to drag devotees from *EverQuest*, *Ultima Online*, and *Asheron's Call* is unclear, but we'll give it some hands-on time in the beta stage and give you a full report. — Chuck Osborn

Runegates will allow players to jump between *Shadowbane's* servers. Because players will be building the cities, each “shard” will be unique and have its own name.


EX!

CATEGORY: MMORPG
DEVELOPER: Wolfpack Studios
PUBLISHER: Ubi Soft
WWW: shadowbane.ubisoft.com/
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 85%
RELEASE DATE: Second Half 2002

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL?: *Shadowbane's* mix of roleplaying and robust social/economic systems could either revolutionize the genre or make it *EverQuest Tycoon*. Fan and developer support are extremely high.

DEVELOPER'S TRACK RECORD: Wolfpack was founded for the sole purpose of making massively multiplayer games. *Shadowbane* is its first project, but team members have worked on *UO*, *EQ*, and *DAOC*.

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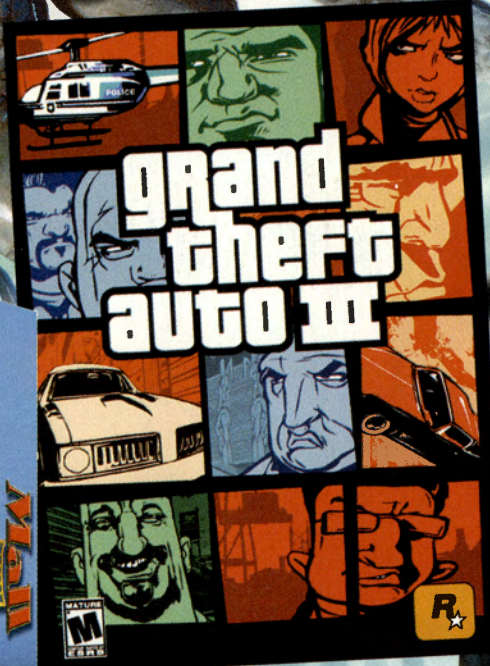
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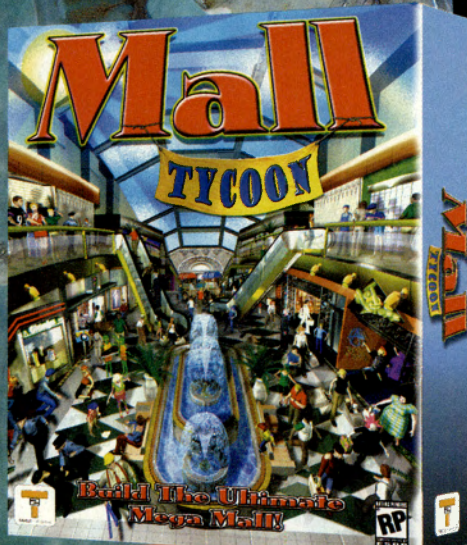
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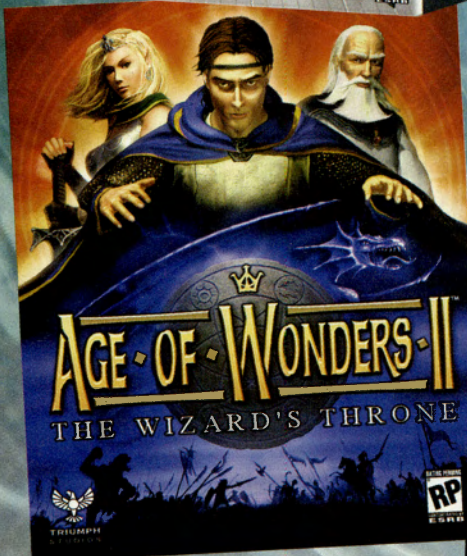
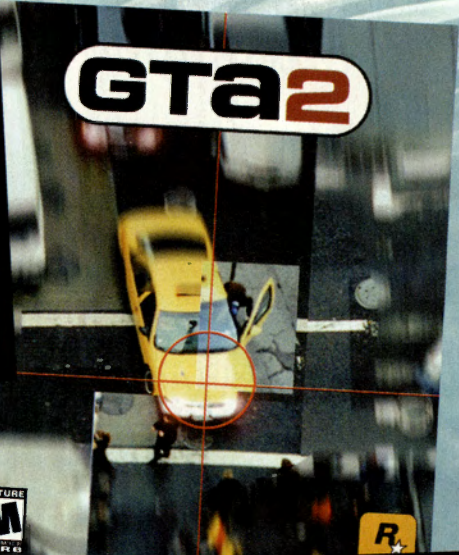


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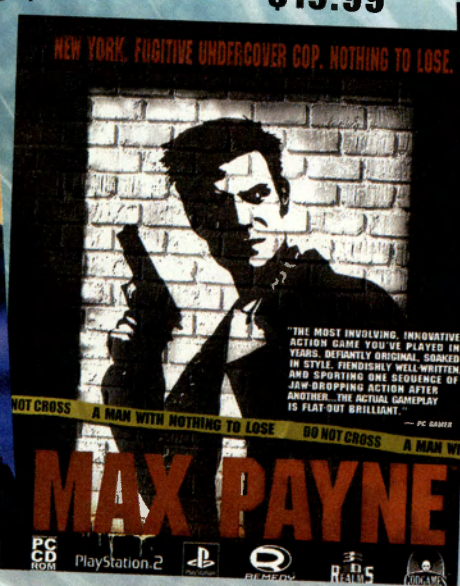
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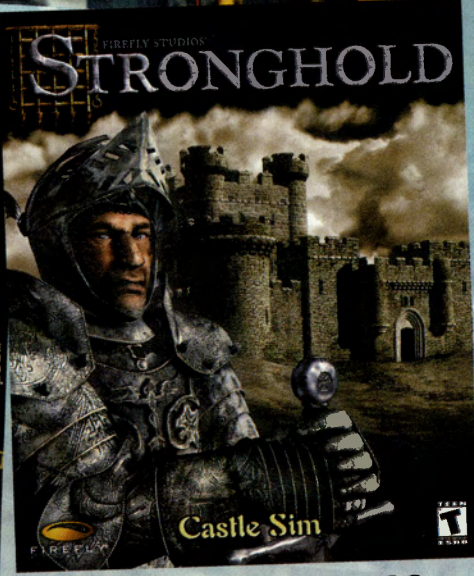
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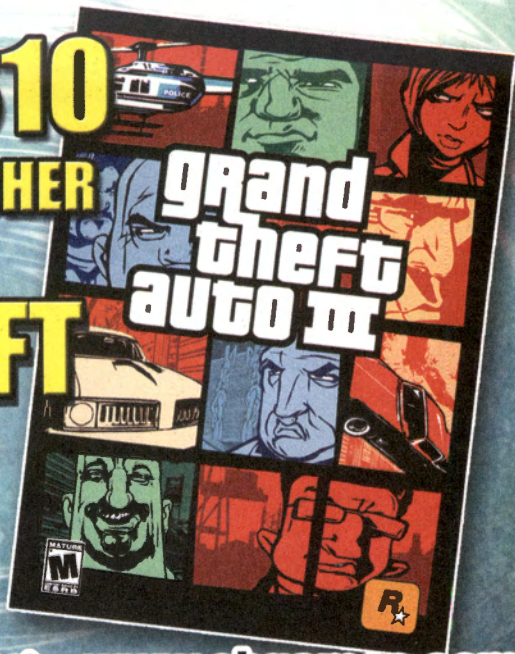
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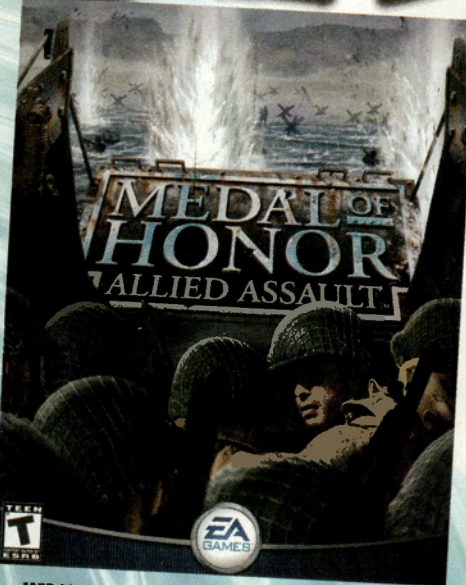
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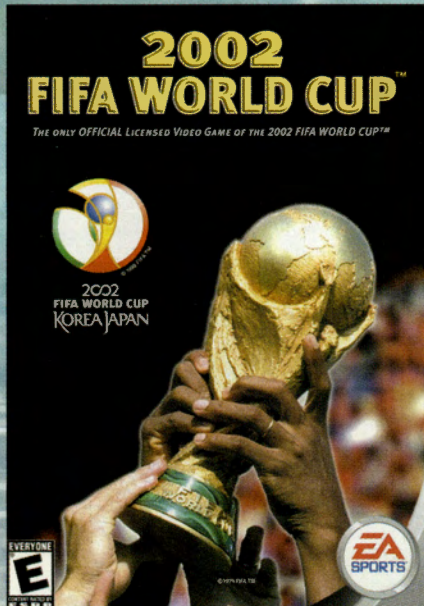
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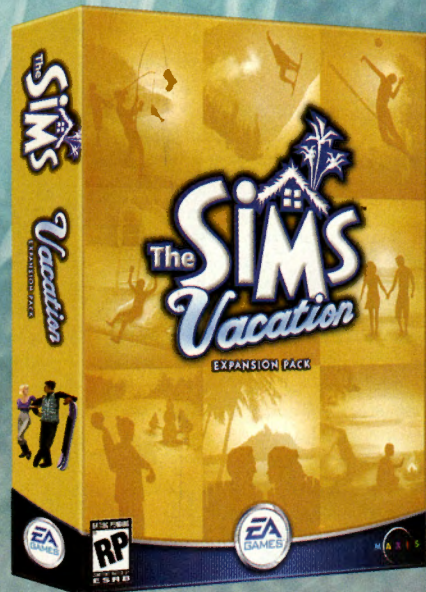
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As some big-name games finally near release, playable late-beta builds land on our desks. Here's where we give hot-off-the-burner first impressions of how these titles are coming along.



Earth and Beyond Online

DEVELOPER Westwood Studios PUBLISHER EA CURRENT RELEASE DATE Late August 2002

BACK IN OUR HOLIDAY 2001 issue I previewed *Earth and Beyond*, and, well, it takes only a few short months for things to change a whole lot. I opened that preview with a quote from Westwood co-founder and father of the *E&B* project Brett Sperry, and he's now officially on sabbatical, and not even credited in the official Westwood biographies of *E&B*'s leadership.

I also mentioned the three races — Jenquai, Terran, and Progen, all human variants. With three classes each (Explorer, Tradesman, and Warrior), the game would have nine possible class/race combinations. Well, at launch, only six of these planned nine will be available (two for each race), with the other three expected "some time after release," says executive producer Chris Alexander.

So what do we have? Well, functionally, *E&B* is working very well. The character-creation process is smooth, with customization to your starting ship more elaborate than you'd expect — a broad color palette and decals are available from the get-go. (All ships are designed by Doug Chiang, whose most recent credits include art direction on *Star Wars: Episode I and II*, plus the next two *Matrix* movies.) The game's interface is clear and friendly, too.

Regardless of your race and class, the starting missions are all pretty much fetch-and-carry rou-

tines for the NPCs in your starting base. Through dialogue trees you get information pertinent to your class, plus an introduction to the NPCs' brazen attitude, which is displayed through their banter.

Sperry had told us that soloing in *E&B* would be possible, "but we hope you don't." His absence hasn't changed that philosophy. While a random mission generator could cough up options that let you complete a task alone, the balance of skills between the tradesmen (dismantling goods to find their raw components), explorers (spotting enemies or friendlies from long distances), and warriors (protecting the other two classes) forces you into collaboration. While playing the game, expect to see sector-wide requests for any of these classes from solo flyers looking for company.

Skill upgrades will differentiate players of the same race/class quite a bit, and the initial absence of several race/class combinations is being made up for by the tight missions and storytelling. Get with a guild, and you'll be exploring vast tracts of space on item-hunts that yield vital weapons or equipment that can have a galaxywide impact. No one's supposing that making these MMORPGs is easy, and in five years a lot of content has been created for *E&B*. Thus far our playtesting has barely scratched below the surface. — Rob Smith



(1) The ships are as big an extension of your online persona as your character, and while flying you can even do emotes such as loops and spins. (2) Dialogue-tree conversations let you get as much or as little background detail as you choose. (3) Roaming space creatures can lay the smack down on your ship. (4) Use your tractor beam to drag vanquished enemies' loot to your cargo hold.

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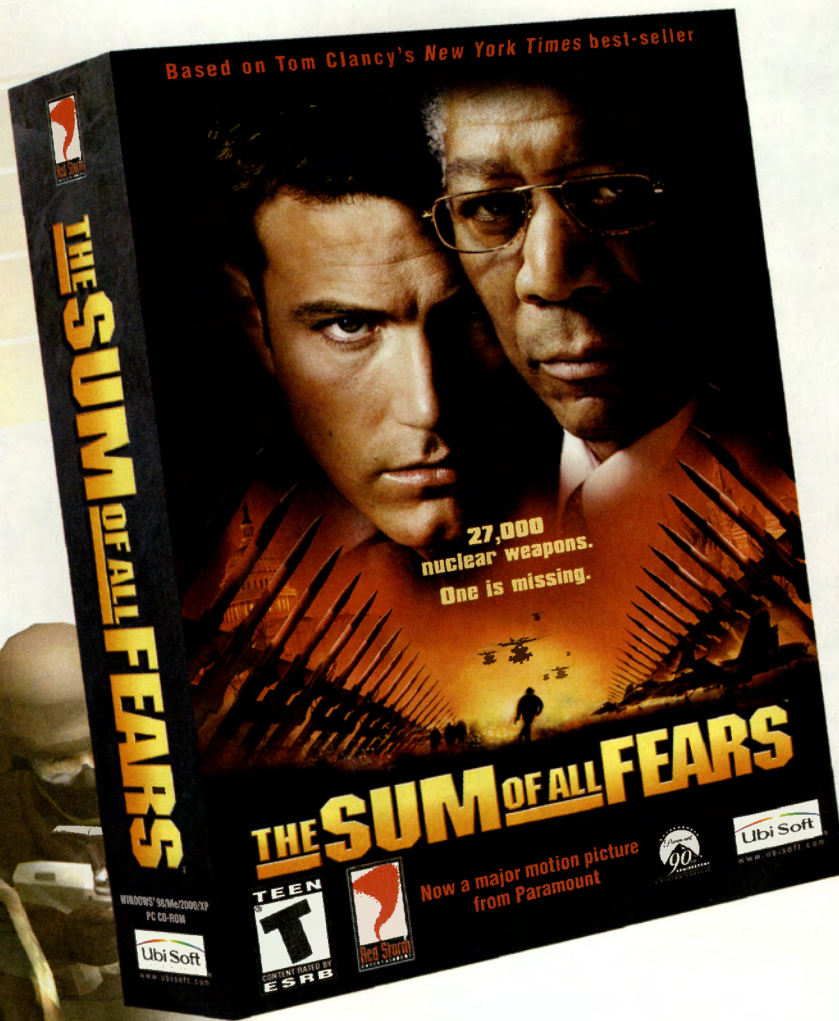
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eyewitness

TRENDS NEWS BEHIND-THE-SCENES REPORTS

Leaping Lizard has designed a clean and extremely functional interface that'll give players of all skill levels the information they need to improve their game.

Waiting for Footpad.

Footpad plays Aven Fisher.
Hanover Fist plays Peek targeting Footpad.
Turn: 9 - Active Player: Hanover Fist.
Hanover Fist plays Island.
Hanover Fist plays *Æther Burst* targeting Aven Windreader, and Aven Flock.

Aven Flock
4/4
Creature — Bird Soldier
Odyssey
Flying
• Aven Flock gets +0/+1 until end of turn.
Just as each added feather steadies the wing, so does the flock grow stronger with each new member.

Magic Gathers Online

As Magic goes online, creator Richard Garfield discusses the plans and pitfalls in making players pay for virtual cards

Arguably the biggest gaming phenomenon of the 1990s wasn't a computer game. Nor was it played on a console. It wasn't even a board game. It was Magic: The Gathering — a collectible card game that has made millions for its creator, Richard Garfield, and the company that publishes the cards, Wizards of the Coast. Some nine years after it first launched (when 10 million cards sold in just the first six weeks), Magic: TG has scooped numerous awards, including a 1994 Top Five Mind Games gong from

egghead organization Mensa. It also has a thriving pro circuit, with prize money totaling some \$3 million for the 2001–2002 season.

On June 24, the true online version of Magic: The Gathering will launch, starting a land grab for the 1,650 cards that will be available. It'll be the conclusion of a plan hatched even before the 1996 release of the MicroProse PC game of Magic: The Gathering.

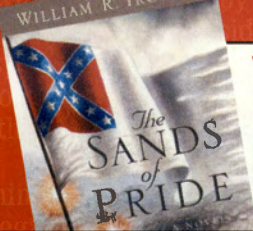
"From our earliest days of trying to do Magic online, we've been trying to get a game that re-created Magic — but online," explains Garfield. Easier said than done, and in his role as creative director on the *Magic Online* project, Garfield and developer Leaping Lizard had to make numerous calls on the minutiae of quality Magic play. Garfield's goal was

for the game to have "as little busywork as possible." This emphasis led to numerous questions, including: Should the default when you attack be what you attacked with last turn? Should it be everything? Should it be nothing? Should it be certain creatures that are coded as default attackers?

These decisions were critical given the likely level of contest. "I wanted to see some of the less common methods of play, such as league play, really promoted online," says Garfield.

With the computer able to enforce rules and organize the play table, isn't there a chance that the deck-building suggestions of the software could remove some of the skill of crafting your own online deck (the collection of cards that you take into a Magic duel)? "Not in any meaningful way," says Garfield. "If your underlying game is worth your faith, then removing grunt work probably enhances the skill rather than reducing it. For example, in real life people often just take existing decks off the net, or copy

FASCINATING FACT At press time, a *Magic Online* beta account, where the seller had collected some 55,000 cards (they're free during testing), was selling on eBay for over \$120. That account will be wiped clean when the game goes live!



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The Colonel's novel about the Civil War in North Carolina has been getting rave reviews, and we've got eight copies to give away, courtesy of publisher Carroll & Graf. As always, you don't need to do much to win. To be eligible for our random drawing, just send an email to eyewitness@pcgamer.com with "I Want Sands" in the subject heading, and include your name and address in the body of the message. Only one entry per person allowed. Contest ends July 31, 2002. See additional rules on page 103.



(Above) As with paper cards, your virtual collection is stored in a binder that you can organize quickly and leaf through at your leisure. (Left) Deep help files explain all the cards and rules.

deck recipes from their friends. If these people begin using some of the organizational and analysis tools we've provided to make some decks from scratch — or to at least modify decks on their own — has the aggregate skill in the game gone up or down?"

At the other end of the scale, the potential is monumental for *Magic Online* to tap into a huge market of new Magic players (or old Magic players that have dropped the hobby through not having an always-willing pool of opponents). In comparison to the slew of massively multiplayer RPGs, *Magic's* short, focused game time is very likely to appeal to an audience wider than that tapped by persistent-world games. "Magic has proven to be a rewarding game to play a little or a lot, [which enhances] the possibility of attracting new online players," believes Garfield.

Certainly, the cost of *Magic Online* is the most controversial element of its rollout. Though the client software will be freely available from a variety of sources, you'll have to pay for the expansion packs and decks, as you do with the paper-card game. Of the 1,650 cards pulled from the 7th Edition set, only 200 will be available in the "Free Trial" room. Ready-to-play decks will be available for \$9.99, and the boosters (expansions of 15 cards

each) will sell for \$3.29, the same as the paper cards. This pricing has turned off even some of the current top Magic pros, who are balking at spending more cash online to re-create the decks that help them win big bucks on the pro circuit.

A \$15 retail boxed version of the game will come with a \$10 certificate for one of the starter decks, which you'll buy through software links that lead directly to the Wizards.com online store. To assuage some of the bad feelings about this cost structure, Wizards has an intriguing option of being able to "cash out" virtual cards for real ones. Just turn in your online version of a card (so you no longer have it available to play in your deck), and you'll be mailed a brand-new paper version. But even Garfield doesn't expect many players to take this option.

How players will react to paying this amount for their virtual collection remains to be seen. Certainly this setup will inhibit many newcomers, though it's expected that a percentage of those who spend time playing in the free room will start to spread their wings and begin paying for the cards that could make them competitive.

Garfield himself has a great interest in exploring new ways to generate revenue from computer games. His involvement in the PC business has been

CONTINUED ON PAGE 103

PC GAMER RELEASE METER



Our list is supplied by Rich LaPorte of www.gonegold.com. Please send release-date information to laporte@gonegold.com.

→ June

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Rayman Arena	Ubi Soft	06/01/02
Worms Blast	Ubi Soft	06/04/02
Legion	Strategy First	06/06/02
Neverwinter Nights	Infogrames	06/12/02
Return to Castle Wolfenstein GOTY	Activision	06/13/02
Hero X	Infogrames	06/14/02
Syberia	Microdis	06/14/02
Hotel Giant	JoWood	06/14/02
Unreal Tournament 2003	Infogrames	06/19/02
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	06/19/02
Survivor Marquesas	Infogrames	06/19/02
Moonbase Commander	Infogrames	06/26/02
Operation Flashpoint: Resistance	Codemasters	06/26/02
Tropico Gold	Take-Two	06/26/02
Warcraft III	Blizzard	06/28/02

→ JULY

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Icewind Dale II	Interplay	07/03/02
Battlefield 1942	EA	07/17/02
Mafia	Take-Two	07/19/02
MechWarrior 4: Clan Mech Pak	Microsoft	07/26/02

→ August

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
V.I.P.	Ubi Soft	08/01/02
G.I. Combat	Strategy First	08/01/02
O.R.B.	Strategy First	08/02/02
Mini Power Boat Racer	Infogrames	08/02/02
Impossible Creatures	Microsoft	08/06/02
Season Ticket Football	Infogrames	08/14/02
The Thing	Sierra	08/14/02
1503 A.D.: The New World	EA	08/15/02
Beam Breakers	Fishtank	08/15/02
Call of Cthulhu	Fishtank	08/15/02
Arx Fatalis	Fishtank	08/15/02
Counter-Strike: Condition Zero	Sierra	08/15/02
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	08/16/02
Operation Tiger Hunt	Infogrames	08/22/02
Grand Prix 4	Infogrames	08/27/02

→ September

TITLE	PUBLISHER	DATE
Industry Giant 2	JoWood	09/03/02
WarBirds III	Simon/Schuster	09/03/02
Farscape	Simon/Schuster	09/03/02
IGI 2: Covert Strike	Codemasters	09/03/02
Medieval: Total War	Activision	09/04/02
Unreal II	Infogrames	09/04/02
Master of Orion 3	MicroProse	09/04/02
Prisoner of War	Codemasters	09/04/02
Age of Mythology	Microsoft	09/04/02
Real War: Rogue Estates	JoWood	09/10/02
Starsky and Hutch	Empire	09/11/02
Hitman 2	Eidos	09/17/02
SWAT: Urban Justice	Sierra	09/18/02
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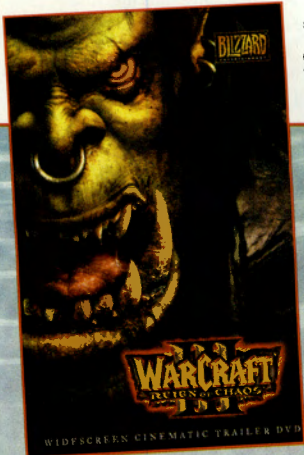
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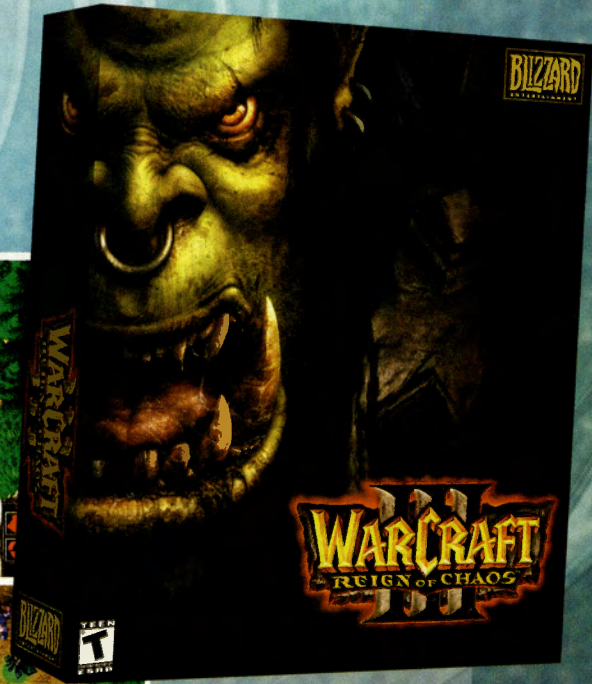
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PC GAMER PLAYLIST



ROB Though it's still fraught with problems, online multiplayer *High Heat 2003* has dominated my game time. Connections are flaky through GameSpy Arcade, and crashes frequent, but if you can finish a game, it's worth it. That's my sports fix in between guiding my eight-man *Dungeon Siege* wrecking crew in single-play.



COREY After hours of cursing, I finally passed *Jedi Knight II*'s pre-Force levels and got to the good stuff: flinging Stormtroopers around, slicing limbs with the lightsaber, and making Spider-Man-style leaps and bounds. All the carnage got me in the mood for some *GTA III*, which looks so much better on the PC!



DAN Billy needed help reviewing *TacOps* multiplayer, so I helped him grease terrorists until I couldn't be bothered anymore. Then I settled in for the jaw-droppingly tasteless *F.D.N.Y. Firefighter*, which may be the most unendurable game I've ever reviewed. I also waxed some Iraqi ass in the awesome *BCT Commander*.



CHUCK Hey, it's good ol' Billy Harms. Return, Billy, return. He's back on staff again. Can you say "staff"? Not that way...that's dirty. Billy has brought a bucket of KFC chicken with him. Mmm...greasy poultry fat! Maybe Billy will play super-hero with me in *Spider-Man* and *Freedom Force*. Why does Billy run away so fast? Run, Billy, run!



BILLY After spending over a year playing *Let's Find a Job* and *Cashing the Unemployment Check*, I was finally able to finagle my way back onto the *PCG* staff. It's weird not being able to watch my stories during the day, but now that I'm knee-deep in the latest computer games, the drama that is *As the World Turns* seems less important.



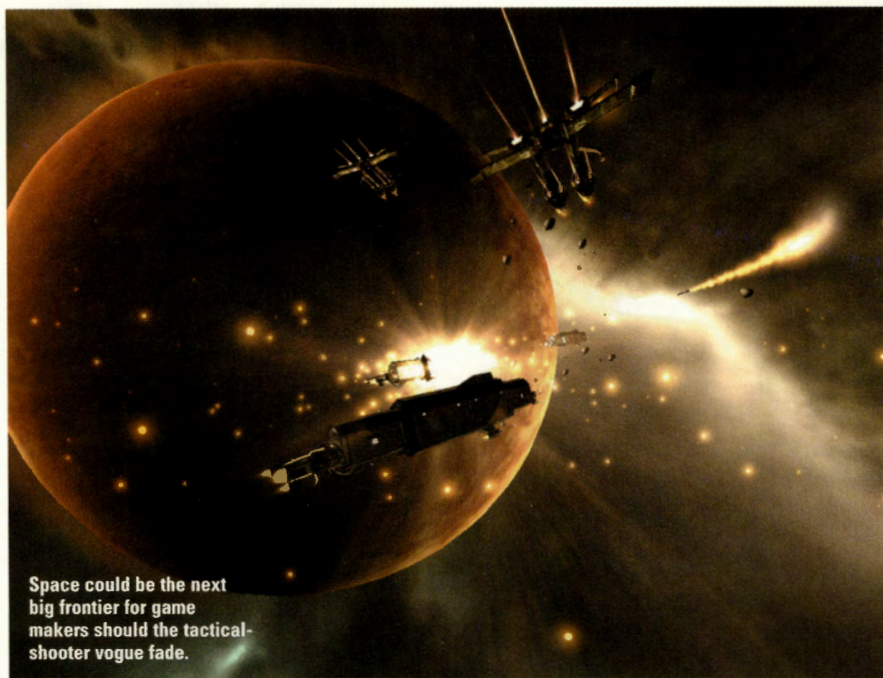
JOE *Links 2001* has made a comeback at the *PC Gamer* offices. The LAN games have been quite competitive — Chiaki shot a 65, I shot a 67. After a recent game we excitedly took our newly found *Links* swings to a real golf course. Final score after 18: Chiaki 114, Joe 120. *Links 2001* went back on the shelf. Our clubs went up for sale on eBay.



CHIAKI Okay, so I have to explain why I wanted to play *Dungeon Siege* after *every-one* told me I would love it. For those who don't know me, let me tell you that if you tell me to do something, I'll never do it. And if you tell me not to do it, I'll do it with twice the zeal. Power to the people! Hee-hee. Oh, by the way, *DS* is my new love.



GREG TheVede has taken responsibility for the *PCG* disc and has had to learn his way around Macromedia Flash as a result. Flash is sort of like a game, except that it's really hard and there are no in-game cinematics (unless you make them yourself). I've been dividing my remaining hours between *Dungeon Siege* and *Anarchy Online*. Word.



Space could be the next big frontier for game makers should the tactical-shooter vogue fade.

Lost in Space

Who says games set among the stars are a dying breed?

After the success of *Wing Commander*, it seemed like everyone wanted a piece of outer space. Games such as *X-Wing*, *Privateer*, and *Descent* racked up impressive sales, but over time the love was lost and outstanding titles like *Descent: FreeSpace* and *Independence War* failed to connect with gamers — and were quickly relegated to the bargain bin. Games set in space seemed lost forever.

Thankfully, the eternal vacuum is once again becoming an appealing setting for game designers. This time around, however, instead of simply offering linear gameplay and mindless action, developers are truly using outer space as a vehicle for a multitude of genres. And the results could mean great fun for gamers.

For developers of massively multiplayer games like CCP Games' *EVE*, the infinite realm of space seems ideal. *EVE* promises over 5,000 systems, 60 ship types, and the ability to create your character from one of four classes. Beyond simply selecting your character type, you'll also pick a profession, and *EVE* will offer several career paths to choose from, including law enforcement and scientist.

Westwood is also aboard the massively multiplayer space-wagon with *Earth and Beyond* (see page 26 for our hands-on preview), which lets you customize and improve your starship against a massive galactic backdrop. "In *Earth and Beyond*, we wanted to create a setting that is completely unique from any other massively multiplayer game's," says Craig Alexander, *E&B*'s executive producer. "Rather

than restricting ourselves to a medieval fantasy world, the development team was able to open up the design to the endless possibilities of a science-fiction space setting."

Even LucasArts is returning to its space-combat roots with an add-on to the upcoming *Star Wars: Galaxies*. The as-yet-unannounced expansion will let you obtain personal starfighters and starships, to be used for both travel and combat. Think *TIE Fighter* but on a truly massive scale.

Then there's *Freelancer*, which was the brainchild of Chris Roberts, the man whose *Wing Commander* series helped popularize outer space as a game setting. Hindered by myriad troubles throughout much of its development, including the departure of Roberts, *Freelancer* finally appears to be pulling together under Microsoft's tutelage. And the results could be spectacular.

Tossing aside the straight-out action that was the hallmark of the *Wing Commander* games, *Freelancer* is an RPG in which your actions impact your reputation, which in turn affects your gaming experience. Because of this emphasis on roleplaying over action, even the combat situations are handled differently than one would expect. Instead of using a joystick to control your ship, you'll pilot it via a mouse and keyboard, and much of the combat is automated: you'll simply move in behind a target, auto-trail it, and blast away.

It remains to be seen whether or not gamers are ready for a new sci-fi renaissance, but at least the incoming titles populating the vast inky blackness of the genre have the hallmarks of quality.

**"Our developers wanted to open up the game's design to the endless possibilities of a science-fiction space setting."
— Craig Alexander, E&B exec. producer**

**SPOTLIGHT
REVIEW:**

USER RATING

Speed	★★★★★
Connectivity	★★★★★
Ease of Use	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Support	★★★★★

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How Games Get Names

What works, what doesn't, and who decides

Month in and month out we talk about games. But have you ever given any thought to the names of the games you play? Do names make a difference in your buying decisions when browsing at your local store?

Whether you think so or not, naming games is a huge, huge deal for publishers, and it's getting harder for them by the minute, what with the legal issues, trademark searches, and pure suckability of many name suggestions. This problem is even evident in the naming of new development companies, and although some teams get the problem sorted out quickly, others suffer through months of indecision.

Take the story of Warren Spector's Ion Storm-Austin studio. In an attempt to distance himself and his company from the Dallas-based disaster that was *Daikatana*, he set out to rename the studio. Some 364 name suggestions later — ranging from the sublime (Intentional Entertainment, Liminal Games) to the ridiculous (Digital Dialectic, Circular Neurologic) through the overt influences of AD&D (18(00) Strength Games, Failed-My-Saving-Throw Games) and 13 variants using the word "monkey" — Ion Storm-Austin was finally renamed... Ion Storm!

According to Spector, after more than a year of suggesting names, the studio submitted 30 for trademark search, and just *one* passed legal: Premeditated Games. Problem was, everyone at the company (except Spector) hated it! "Every time I

mentioned it, I saw their faces droop. There was actual applause when I finally said 'We're sticking with Ion Storm' at a company meeting!" he told us.

Ion Storm's parent company, Eidos, believes it has garnered shelf-life longevity with its simple game-naming conventions.

Gangsters, Hitman, and Commandos have all moved units beyond their sell-by date, it's believed, because of their instantly comprehensible titles.

During development, arguments raged within Eidos about the decidedly cerebral names *Deus Ex* and *Anachronox*, which senior marketing folks now think would have sold way more units had they shipped with more "consumer-friendly" monikers.

The naming problem can be just as confounding when dealing with licensed properties.

Referring to the company's *Elite Force*, Activision Senior Executive Producer Laird Malamed told us: "We usually start with a list of 20 names. Ultimately, we went with *Elite Force* because it referred to the team's specialty and [suggested] the game was action. *Hazard Team* [one of the proposed titles] as a game name gave too many people the connotation of biowaste cleanup."

Developers and marketing folks often disagree on names, but occasionally marketing gets it right. "*Call to Power* was like that," explains Malamed. "As I recall, the team had to grow to like it. When the game came out really strong, everyone was glad we went that way. Usually, even on concept stuff,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 103



The descriptive connotation of names like *Age of Empires* helps them gain consumer attention.



PCG NEWS TICKER

→ Oh, the Payne: the creator of cable network FX's hit police series *The Shield* is bringing undercover-cop-gone-amuck Max Payne to the big screen. Don't worry: the makers plan to hire a professional writer this time.

→ Shaz-patch! Sierra has contracted GarageGames to update its online team shooter *Tribes 2*. (GarageGames is composed primarily of former *Tribes* and *Tribes 2* developers.) Set for a free release this summer, the expansion will offer bug fixes and gameplay/frame-rate tweaks, and add a more powerful editor.

→ Infogrames has announced *Civilization III: Play the World*, an expansion to Sid Meier's award-winning turn-based strategy game. It'll include eight new civilizations, new single- and multiplayer scenarios, and a "turn-less" online mode, among other improvements. Given *Civ III's* doughy male demographic, we're just glad the "topless" online mode got the boot.

→ Whoa! Interplay has announced that it's selling Shiny Entertainment (and its lucrative *Matrix* game license) to Infogrames for \$47 million. Shiny is the developer of *MDK, Sacrifice, and Messiah*, and is developing games based on the *Matrix* sequels. Infogrames is the publisher of *Survivor*. Uh-oh....

→ Timed to coincide with the game's release this June, *Warcraft III* action figures are coming to a game store near you. The initial launch will include six-inch renditions of Orc war chief Thrall (shown), Night Elf Furion Stormrage, and Dwarf king Muradin Bronzebeard.



→ Umm, is this a good idea? Mythic will hold the first *Dark Age of Camelot* player gathering on June 29 in Washington, D.C. (in the real world, not online), so that players can meet face-to-face. Immediately following the event, Mythic will hold the world's largest online-player divorce ceremony.

→ May the source be with you: Raven has released *Jedi Knight II: Jedi Outcast* mod tools, a level editor, and the SDK for all you aspiring mod-making Padawans. Go to www.ravensoft.com for the free download.

→ Totally Games, the developer of *X-Wing, TIE Fighter*, and most recently *Bridge Commander*, is once again partnering with LucasArts on a *World War II*-themed flight-combat game set for release sometime in 2003. Which brings up an interesting question: Who'd win in a fight, Darth Vader or Hitler? Anyone?

→ Won't those Aliens ever learn? Sierra and FOX Interactive have announced an add-on for *Aliens vs. Predator 2* called *Primal Hunt*. Actually a prequel, its nine-mission storyline is set 500 years before *AvP2*, and will include new multiplayer levels, weapons, creatures, and environments. It's in development at Third Law Interactive (of *KISS Psycho Circus* fame) and set for a June 2002 release.

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PC GAMER JO

WE ENDURED HOURS OF BOOT CAMP TO

PRIVATE MUNCH
1334
THE ARMY GAME PROJECT
SET OUT TO PRODUCE A
FIRST-RATE SHOOTER.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.



INS THE U.S. ARMY

GET THE STORY BEHIND THE FIRST REAL ARMY GAME



BY DANIEL MORRIS

PC Gamer got a phone call from some high-ups in the U.S. Army. Top secret, they said. Big news, our eyes only.

And now, we've got the world exclusive on one of the coolest PC gaming stories in years.

The Army — as in the gosh darn freedom-fighting U.S. Army — is going into the games business. We became the first people outside of the military to see *America's Army*, a multimillion-dollar effort to create a "AAA" action game with the full auspices of the world's most powerful armed service.

Leading-edge technology. The awesome *Unreal Warfare* engine licensed from Epic Games. A massive investment in development, online support, and future content — a project funded through 2007. And all of it to be made available to you absolutely free of charge.

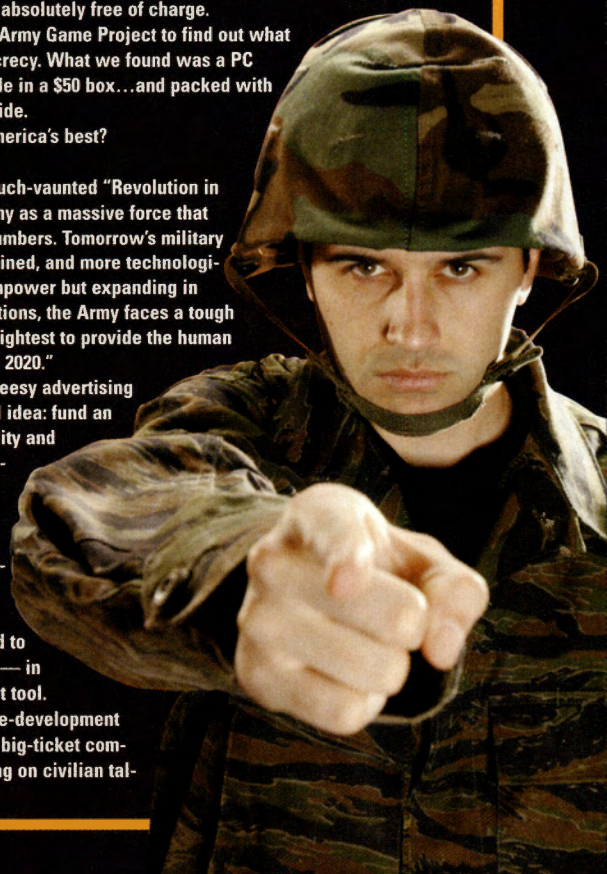
Intrigued? So were we, so we visited the Army Game Project to find out what exactly Uncle Sam has been up to in such secrecy. What we found was a PC shooter that might well rival anything available in a \$50 box...and packed with the authenticity that only the Army could provide.

Are you ready to shoot it out alongside America's best?

THE U.S. ARMY IS WELL underway with its much-vaunted "Revolution in Military Affairs." Gone is the model of the Army as a massive force that wins gigantic conflicts with overwhelming numbers. Tomorrow's military is being built to win by being faster, better-trained, and more technologically proficient than any foe. Shrinking in manpower but expanding in budget, technology, and sheer scope of operations, the Army faces a tough challenge — recruiting America's best and brightest to provide the human assets that will form the brains behind "Force 2020."

Rather than plunk down giant sums for cheesy advertising campaigns, Col. Casey Wardynski had a novel idea: fund an ambitious computer game of commercial quality and make it freely available to the public. The mission was to develop a PC game that could more than hold its own against the industry standards, earning the attention of gamers in the Army's key recruitment demographic of 18- to 25-year-old males. The goal for the game was to realistically model the weapons, tactics, and experiences of the modern Army, and to also build branding awareness of the service — in other words, the ultimate playable recruitment tool.

To make it happen, the Army set up a game-development shop not unlike any of the dozens laboring on big-ticket commercial 3D projects all over the industry. Hiring on civilian tal-





Weapon fire adheres closely to realistic properties, right down to the various muzzle flashes.

➔ BOOT CAMP

NO SIMULATION OF ARMY life would be complete without the renowned rigors of Army Basic Training. The first four missions of *America's Army* subject you to some of the same training that real recruits undergo.

Better yet, the missions are modeled precisely on actual boot-camp facilities, from the obstacle course to the rifle range. If you can't quite hack it, prepare for the Drill Instructor to "encourage" you over the obstacle. It's all designed to give you a feel for the real thing.



↑ Those are live rounds flying above the barbed wire, so you'd better keep your butt low when crawling under!

ent from companies like Maxis and Interplay, and also using the military's own Ph.D. candidates in computer programming, the Army Game Project set out to produce a game that could hang with any on the store shelves.

Guess what? Mission accomplished.

AMERICA'S ARMY

THE RESULT IS CALLED *America's Army*. It will be, along with Epic's *Unreal Tournament 2003*, the first game to deploy the advanced *Unreal Warfare* engine, bringing high-fidelity graphics and physics to the game world. Each of the 16 missions shipping in the 1.0 release (scheduled to go gold on July 1, and to be distributed widely via free CD-ROMs) is based on a real element of modern Army operations. Once you're killed, you'll be out of the action until the next round — another step forward for "realism-flavored" tactical shooters.

"We're keeping it an action game," says Mike Capps, the civilian contractor who

heads up the development on *America's Army*. "We're definitely making a realistic game that emphasizes squad tactics, but we don't want it to appeal only to a hardcore niche."

Initially, the game will be multiplayer-only. Its multiplayer maps will be supported by government-financed servers running 24 hours a day.

You start off by qualifying as a combat rifleman through a four-mission boot camp (see boxout above). Once you're qualified, you can hop on a server and ship out for duty.

Weapons are all painstakingly modeled from the Army's cache of real-world weaponry. You can expect the M16 to jam at a realistic rate (and you can expect the AK-47 to *never* jam — its claim to fame). The M209 grenade launcher fires its projectile in a lifelike arc, with a lifelike kill radius. And the SAW machinegun, while a lethally precise killing instrument when set up on a supported tripod, must be defended by riflemen when deployed in such an exposed manner.

Which leads to the game's next realistic element: the need for proper squad tactics.

"If you leave your SAW gunner alone, he won't last 10 seconds," says Capps. "The thing about Army tactics is, *they work*. So if you fight smart — with a SAW, a grenadier, and two riflemen — you'll be successful."

ALL AUTHENTIC

CAPPS' PLAN IS TO gradually introduce more and more demanding aspects of leadership and specialization. He foresees servers that auto-assign squad leaders based on experience and a "value gauge" that will monitor a player's worthiness as a teammate. Also in his plans is a system of training for specialty qualifications. Once you've been through the Army's sniper school, you would appear on servers with a Sniper badge, making you a high-value addition to a squad.

As with every piece of the game, the focus will be on authenticity. "We have the Airborne school in the game," says Capps, "and you have to qualify before you can do the airborne-assault mission. We showed it to some guys from the 82nd Airborne, and they were recognizing boxes that were sitting around in the training level — our modelers had seen them there, so they'd modeled even the boxes."

The plan is to release new content episodically every few months, with major new campaigns arriving every 18 to 24 months. The new missions will follow real-world headlines "as closely as is appropriate." Capps also hopes to have a single-player campaign ready in the game's second-generation cycle.

While the initial release will stick to multiplayer squad-based shooting, the eventual goal is to introduce elements of the virtual battlefield, including vehicles and advanced weapons systems.

"The engine is very new and it's not quite set up for vehicles yet," explains Capps. "But we



Soldiers on a battlefield communicate through hand signals. For *America's Army*, designers found a chance to both model realistic tactics and encourage players to stick together in small units. By incorporating the Army's genuine hand signals as communication tools, the developers will simultaneously provide realistic tactical tools and a big incentive to stay close enough to your buddies to make use of the signals.





Adopt crouching, prone, and "fast-crawl" postures straight from the Army field manual.

have lots of ideas about how to make them work. Hopefully our next version will incorporate tanks. But we need to be sure that the gunner is in the right place, the loader in the right place — it all has to be authentic."

THE ARMY AS GAME PUBLISHER

LT. COL. GEORGE JUNTIF IS the officer overseeing the Army Game Project. "It was a lucky assignment," he says. "They asked me, 'You play computer games?' I said, 'Damn straight I play computer games.' So they looked over my personnel jacket and decided I was the guy."

Juntiff is the first to acknowledge that there was a bit of a culture clash when the military first took on the formation of a game-development studio.

"I was coming in early in the morning, and there would be no one here," he says with a smile. "Then when they'd roll in, they had long hair and baseball caps, and guys were walking around with no shoes on. It was a bit of a culture shock."

(Capps vouches for the other side of that equation: "The Army is a strange group.")

Housed inside the mechanical engineering building at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., the Army Game Project looks like any other development studio: guys slouching at their workstations, movie posters on the wall, and action figures covering the desks.

But this particular studio is just down the hall from a sonic-instrumentation lab with a big warning sign that reads: "CAUTION: POSSIBLE HEARING LOSS." One can only wonder what gizmos the military is cooking up right by its PC games!

At press time, the Army is planning a huge E3 rollout for *America's Army*, complete with a Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle and roving squads of infantrymen, to properly announce the project to the industry.

"We've got a game that stacks up with the competition, and it'll be free," says Capps. "So the challenge will just be to win people's attention."

Though specific distribution outlets are still being finalized, the Army hopes to make the CD-ROM as accessible to gamers as possible. We'll keep you updated as we get more details. **PCG**



↑ Night vision will be modeled so accurately that greasy thumbprints will mar the goggle lenses.



↑ Build persistent characters and send them to different Army schools around the country.

→ SOLDIERS IN FMV

THE ARMY IS ACTUALLY unveiling two different games this June. *Soldiers* is a full-motion-video (FMV) game scheduled to be released concurrently with *America's Army*. But it has a much different focus than its 3D-action counterpart.

Designed and directed by Maxis veteran John Hiles, *Soldiers* follows a new recruit through his/her induction into the Army. Built around video scenes and using real soldiers as "actors," it challenges you to steer a character through the experience of adjusting to Army life.

Your alter-ego is totally autonomous, so you interface with the game by making adjustments to the character's value system.

"*Soldiers* is based around a powerful story engine," says Hiles. "It's a narrative that will adapt as you grow your character's values."

Your character's interior traits include Energy, Strength, Knowledge, Skill, Popularity, and Financial. You select goals for the character, entering into different Army careers chosen from a wide variety of Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) — combat engineer, signals, intelligence, medical, electrical, and so on.

As you see firsthand what Army life holds for recruits in each MOS, you try to sidestep common pitfalls. Many new soldiers run into financial trouble; others have motivational issues; and others have difficulty conforming to the Army's strict disciplinary code. (*Soldiers* was researched through hundreds of interviews with soldiers who offered insights to Hiles and his team.)

The long-term plan is for *Soldiers* and *America's Army* to be inter-compatible. For example, successfully completing an Intelligence school in the FMV game might allow an "augmented ability" for your character in the 3D game, perhaps letting you converse with locals in certain missions overseas.

For now, though, *Soldiers* is an intriguing experiment in an interactive narrative designed to let you try out a virtual career in the military.

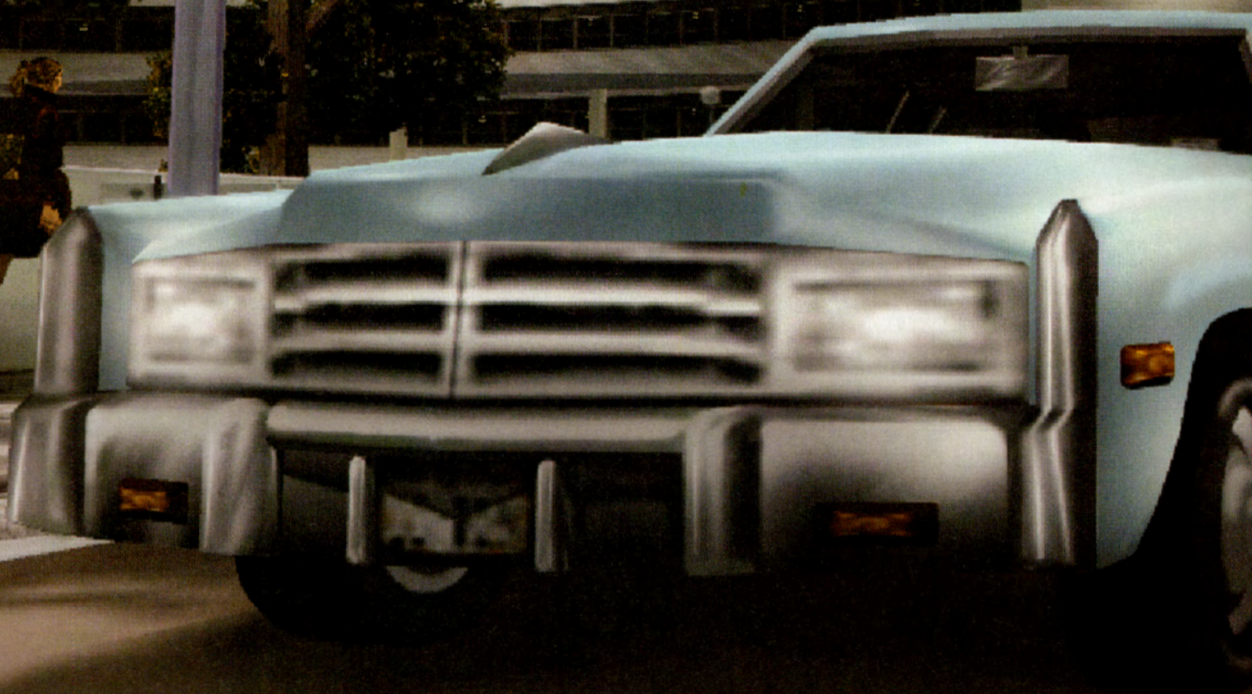


↑ It's not an "obstacle course" anymore: it's a "confidence course" designed to show you how much you're capable of.



↑ The Army means uniformity, so part of your adaptation will involve developing discipline. No Bill Murray shenanigans allowed!

grand theft auto III



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PC IT'S CRIMINAL."

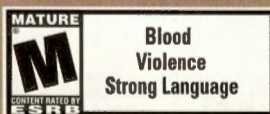
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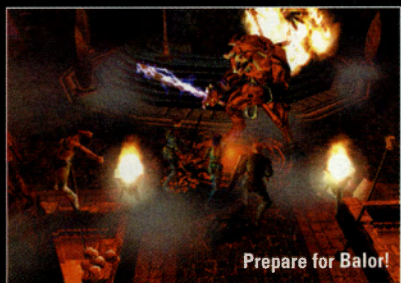
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Neverwinter NIGHTS

HOW TO RUN THE
PERFECT GAME

For fans of classic table-top fantasy game *Dungeons & Dragons*, the massively multiplayer hit *EverQuest* seemed to be the pinnacle of PC-based gaming. Mixing the character classes and stats of traditional RPGs with the ability to socialize with other players, it has drawn legions of table-top gamers online.

Well, listen up, fan boys: you've been worshipping a false idol. Prepare to bow before the one true online D&D deity — *Neverwinter Nights* will invest your soul, raise your spirits, and offer the classic pen-and-paper experience. Now with added particle-effect technicolor!





The power of the DM: drop in characters, influence the experience spontaneously, or just throw in some pyrotechnics for pure wow factor.

While you'll happily schlep a party of characters through *Neverwinter Nights'* epic single-player story, starting out on the plot path with your own carefully created hero(ine), the game's seemingly endless longevity stems from its multiplayer component. Developer BioWare, even just a few weeks from *NWN's* scheduled ship date of early June, still wasn't forthcoming about how many multiplayer modules (individual adventures composed of dungeons, wildernesses, towns, and a variety of NPCs) would appear in the boxed copy. Producer Trent Oster did confirm that a CTF-style map would be included, along with "a few additional special-interest modules."

This vagueness is an inauspicious setup to what's actually shaping up to be the core of *NWN's* attraction. In the few hours I spent using the game's amazing toolset to lay floor plans, connect wilderness areas to dungeons, and populate the locations with monsters and uniquely created treasure, it became evident that the role of the online Dungeon Master will be critical to *NWN's* success.

So what makes a great *NWN* DM? What qualities are needed, and how should prospective DMs go about running their adventures? Here are 22 essential tips for shaping the fine art of DM-ing. Learn them. Love them. Use them.

1 LESSONS FOR THE NEWBIE DM

(COURTESY OF GREG ZESCHUK, BIOWARE JOINT-CEO AND CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

→ Play *Neverwinter Nights* using a number of different characters to learn the rules and how they apply to various characters — and to discover how the game experience changes when you use different classes. Once you know what it's like to play in different roles, you'll be better equipped to manage a session of multiple players.

→ Plan what you're trying to accomplish with the adventure. Is it a hack-and-slash adventure, or is it more story-based?

→ Decide if you're going to take an active part in the story, or if you'll play the role of an unseen observer. More active DM-ing means less scripting is needed; a less active approach means you'll have to put more effort into scripting the adventure.

→ Remember that running a game is about trying to create a fun experience for all the players, including yourself. If the DM is having fun, the players probably are as well (provided the DM isn't a sadist).

→ Learn from the experience and, when it's complete, ask the players what they did and didn't like about the game.

2 PREPARATION IS VITAL

(ACCORDING TO BIOWARE PROJECT MANAGER TRENT OSTER)

→ Know the module inside and out. Know where the important plot points and monsters are, and know what's supposed to happen and when. The easiest way to gain familiarity with a module is to play it and then look at it in the toolset.

→ Try placing waypoints at major plot events and name the waypoints in a logical manner.

→ Do a few dry runs where you practice jumping to plot points and moving around the module.

→ Start with a very soft touch, or the players may be overwhelmed too early. With practice, you'll be better able to alter the flow without jarring the gameplay experience.

→ Sometimes the best way to ensure the game is fun is to stay out of the way and let the players do as they wish.

3 DM-ING NO-NOS

(AS DICTATED BY GREG ZESCHUK)

→ Avoid clichés: don't teleport the party to a jail cell, strip them of their possessions, and have them find their way out.

→ Don't include enemies that can perform a one-shot kill. (That just isn't fun.)

→ Don't incapacitate players for extended periods of time. (That isn't fun either.)



↑ Help out newbies: It's no fun to keep dying, so be ready with Heal spells to give players a chance.



↑ Don't be afraid to adjust encounters on the fly using the difficulty slider. It's all about having fun.



↑ The DM can tweak encounters anywhere in the world while the players are doing their thing.

INSIDE THE DM CLIENT

THE DM CLIENT is a separate element of the whole *NWN* package. It provides specific interface functionality designed to let the DM control the adventure completely, either through direct intervention (taking over NPCs, dropping or removing monsters and obstacles) or through subtle shifts in the plot pacing (jumping to future areas of the game world and adjusting them on the fly to address players' strengths or weaknesses).

Essentially, the DM client consists of six functions:

CHOOSE The Chooser lets you control core elements of the adventure using an icon-driven interface. In the Chooser you can Go To places or people, Move creatures, Toggle the AI, Heal characters or creatures, Take Control of NPCs or monsters, and more.

CREATOR Here you can dump in content on the fly. This content can be pre-created rooms or characters, creatures, items — pretty much anything. The Creator lets you instantly adjust to events in the adventure, and in the hands of a spontaneous DM, it'll be a vital tool for ensuring that players have fun.

TRIGGERS Jumps to the traps and triggers in the adventure such as plot events, so you can change the flow of an adventure quickly.

MANIFEST You, as Dungeon Master, can appear to take control of a situation, lead a clueless party by the hand, or try to enforce order.

PAUSE This feature gives you a chance to get the adventure in order before allowing players to continue.

DIFFICULTY A simple slider will let the DM adjust the difficulty on the fly. If the party is getting whopped, knock the difficulty down a notch or two and the encounters in the adventure will adjust automatically to spawn fewer enemies or make them less powerful. Likewise, cranking up the difficulty can challenge a party that's been easily cutting a swath through your dungeon. This tool is a hugely powerful one for letting the DM keep his adventure running at a reasonable pace.

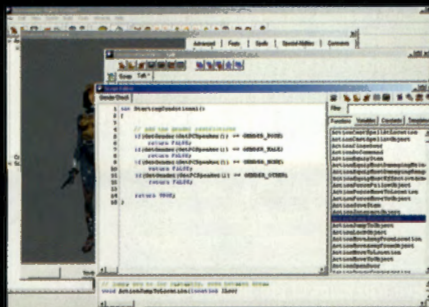
The DM Client also includes the Quickbar function, which is used in the single-player game to give you fast access to health potions, different weapons, or whatever you choose to apply to the quick keys. In the DM Client it's essentially the same, letting you lay down oft-used items or monsters for your players in just one click. The best commands to put in the Quickbar will emerge with experience, and will vary depending on each module's requirements.



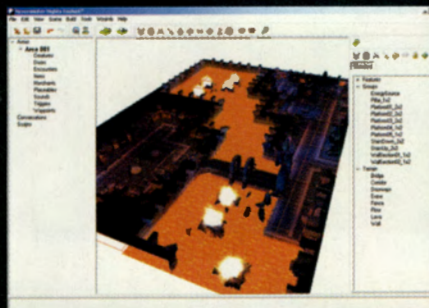
Learn the Chooser icons so you can quickly navigate the functionality of the DM Client for full control of the world. Practice, practice, practice.



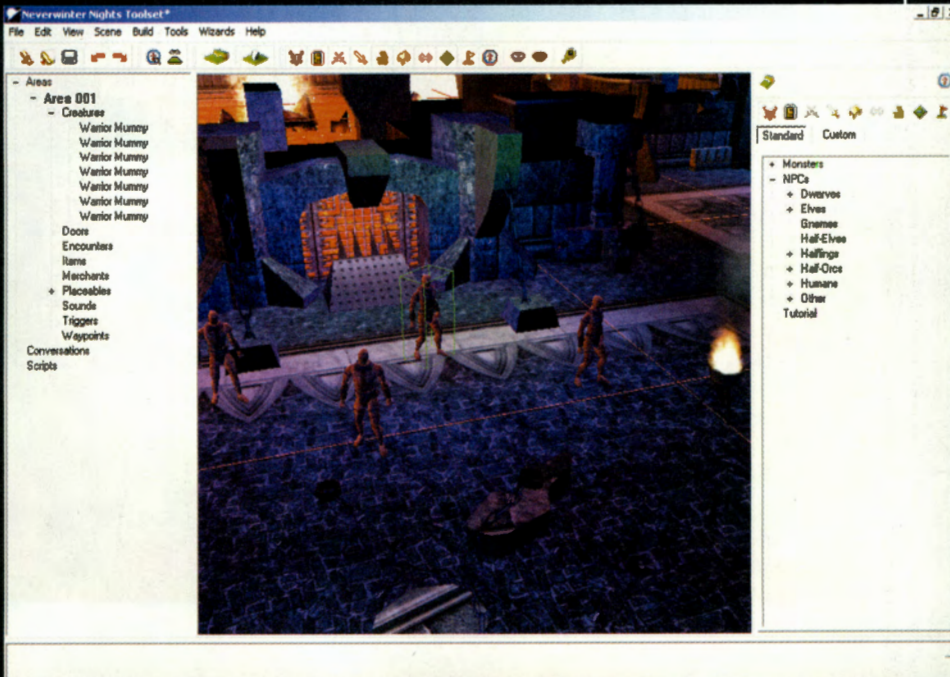
Collapsible menus in the Creator let the DM drop new monsters, items, and objects into the game world to ensure well-balanced encounters.



Building new scripts is fairly easy, but remember to hit the Compile button to activate them.



Creating a room like this will take no more than 10 minutes. Giving it real character takes longer.



Every detail is listed in the Area list, allowing you to pick individual monsters and assign them specific functions or give them set items. Script an event so that killing this mummy will open the blocked door.

HOW TO RUN THE PERFECT GAME

YOUR CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP, STICK-IT-ON-YOUR-MONITOR CHECKLIST OF THE MOST VITAL RULES OF BEING A GOOD DM

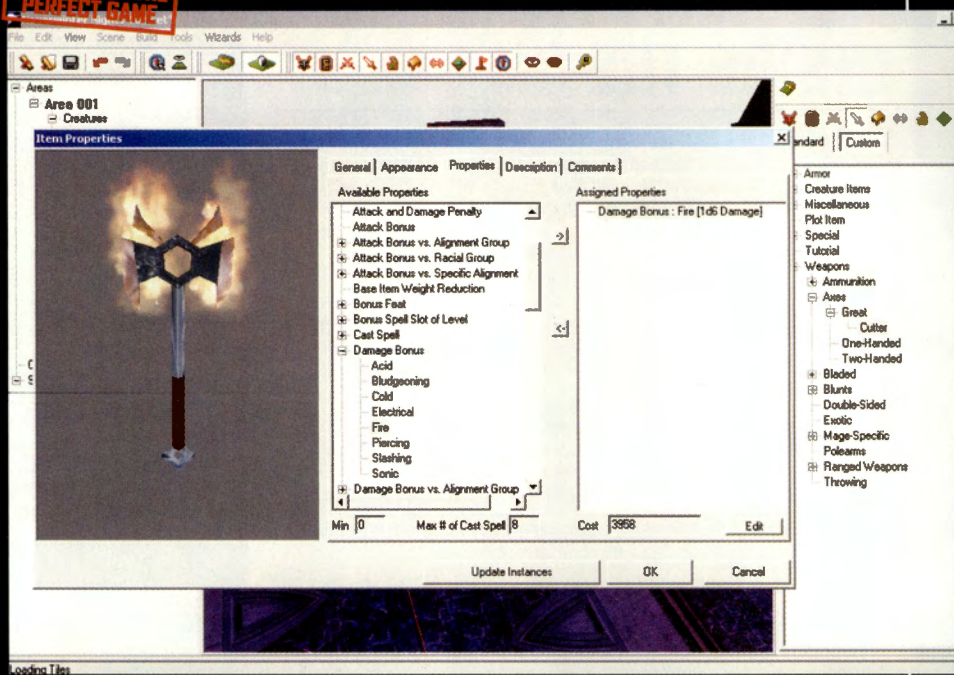
1 Let the game do what it does. *NWN* is a grinder when it comes to arbitrating the D&D rules. Interfere only if you want something special to happen.

2 Don't jump around like crazy possessing all the creatures in the game. It's possible to break plots if you possess a character at the wrong moment. If you want to possess a creature, it's best to pick a less important character that can be disposed of later without ruining the story.

3 Use the slider and consider using your Kill ability when players are overmatched. If you do this properly, players may believe they've struck the killing blow.

4 Always think in terms of "enhancing" the experience. What touches can be added quickly, easily, and *transparently*?

5 Aid the party in tough spots. Keep a friendly creature or two in the Quickbar that you can spawn in, possess, and then use to help out the party. Use "take control" on the creature, not "take control full powers." That way the character will take damage and will be constrained to his/her real abilities instead of attacking with the unlikely power level of a 20th-level monk. If the character dies in the attack, it may have done enough to turn the tide of battle without interrupting the plot. If the character is going to survive, dump it and use the Kill ability to ensure he/she doesn't make it. Remember, the players are supposed to be the heroes, not some character who just ran onscreen.



↑ The creative DM will want unique items. Aside from adjusting how a weapon looks, you can also assign special effects such as flames or lightning, and imbue it with distinct in-game abilities.

→ Don't force too many unexpected events and plot twists on players.

→ Don't have unfairly balanced encounters in which players constantly become overwhelmed, and/or receive rewards that aren't commensurate with the dangers they faced.

4 HANDLING UNRULY PLAYERS

(AS DECREED BY GREG ZESCHUK)

→ The DM and the person running a server will have the ability to boot players from the game and the server. This ban can either be temporary or permanent. Use it wisely.

→ First discuss the server code of conduct with the offending player. The DM should take the position that unruly players will be educated on the proper play etiquette for their server, and if that doesn't work, the DM can enact more severe punishments (such as lightning bolts, fireballs, or similar acts of DM-ship). One grief player shouldn't spoil the experience for everyone else.



↑ Try tweaking a powerful-looking monster to be weak so players feel mighty when slaying it.

5 WHAT TO KEEP IN MIND WHILE YOU'RE PLANNING AND PLAYING

(AS POSTULATED BY RAY MUZYKA, BOWARE JOINT-CEO AND CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

→ Have a solid goal in mind at the outset of the adventure, and a plan of how to get there.

→ Identify when players aren't progressing through a module and take steps to ensure that they know where they have to go next (through possessing creatures and taking over their dialogue, for example).

→ You don't need to worry about memorizing or knowing all of the various tables or rules, as a pen-and-paper DM would — the computer takes care of those sorts of issues for you.

→ Understand the locations and motivations of major NPCs in the module so they can have their dialogue "supplemented" as necessary.

→ Have a number of pre-built items and creatures available in the Quickbar to drop into the world in advance of the PC party.



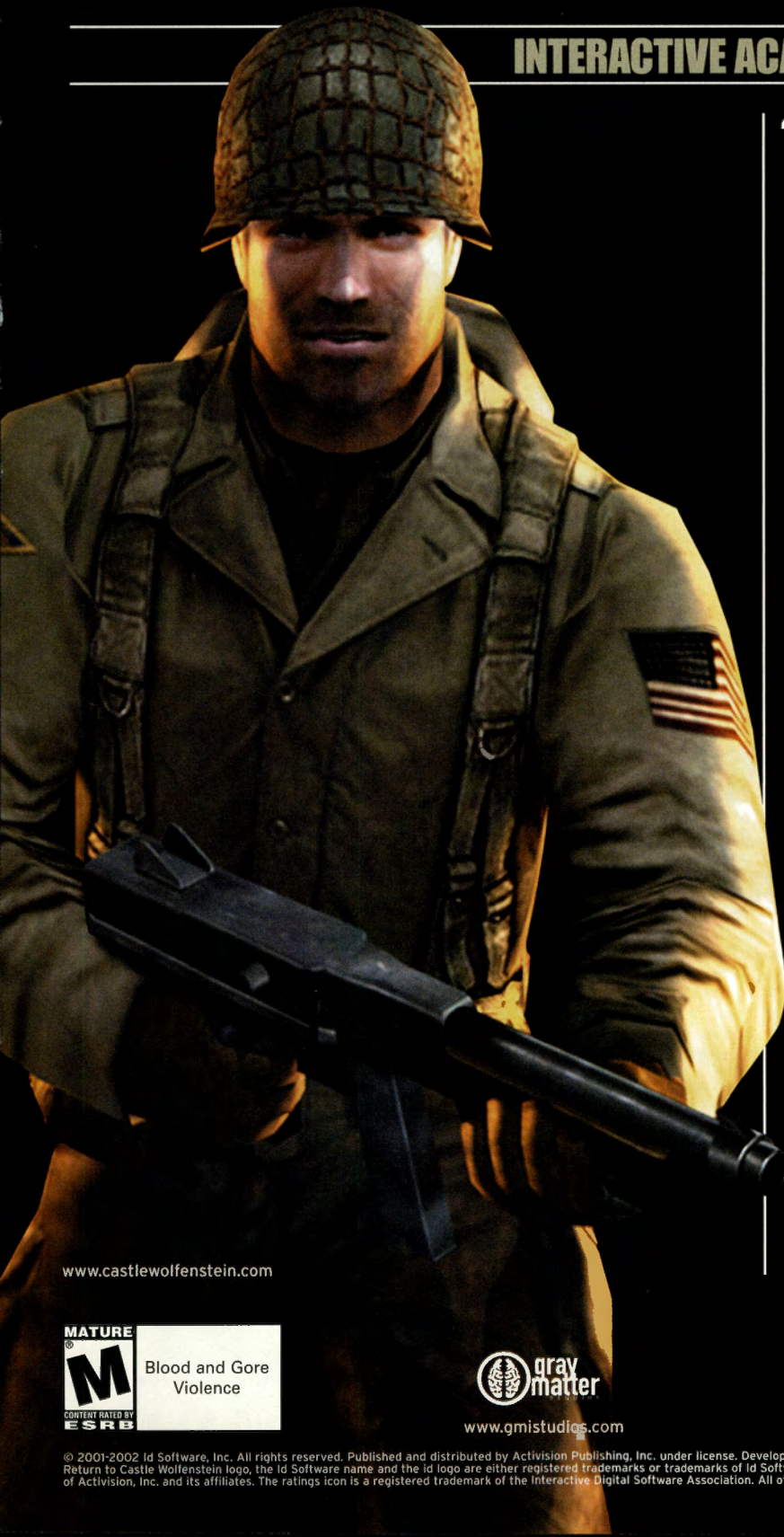
↑ When all's said and done, it's about getting that +5 sword of beastie slaying. Oh, the joy.

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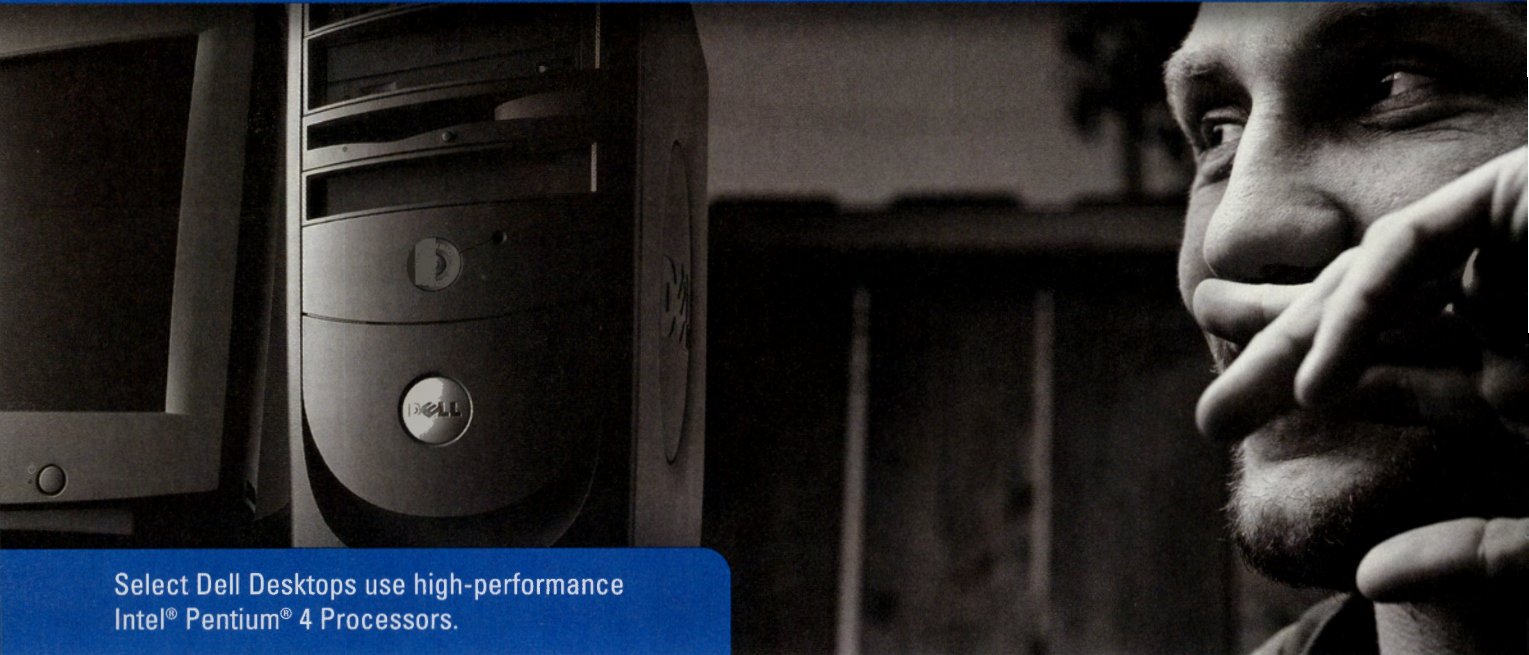
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VALUE

Billy Harms Rescued from Iceberg!

Overwhelming hatred of executive editor Dan Morris keeps him alive

In a stunning turn of events, the ice-encased body of Billy Harms was recently discovered floating in the waters of the North Atlantic. The *PC Gamer* staffer had been missing since 1999, when he and his former partner, Daniel Morris, were ambushed outside the Brisbane, Calif., headquarters of Imagine Media. (Longtime readers will remember the tragic news, broken in our December 1999 issue.) Harms took a railgun shot to the chest while Morris lay passed out in the parking lot, twitching occasionally in a pool of his own filth.

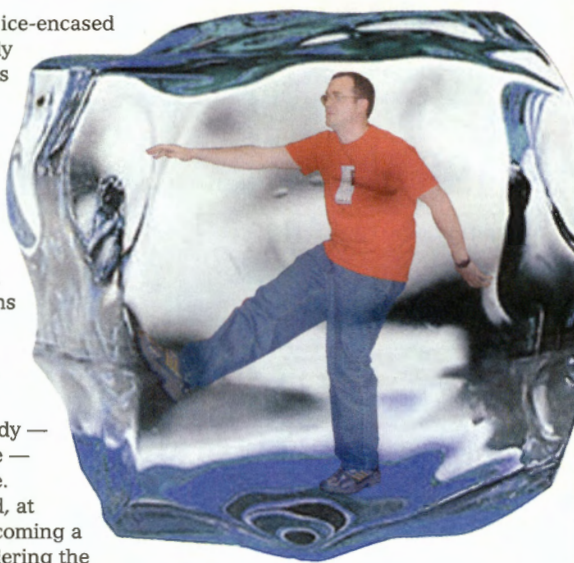
The whereabouts of Harms' body — which never arrived at the morgue — had been a subject of much debate. Some held to the belief that he had, at long last, realized his dream of becoming a flesh-eating zombie and was wandering the earth devouring those unfortunate enough to cross his path. Others held to the notion that he had been resuscitated by a secret dot-com cabal and was, in fact, riding through the streets of San Francisco aboard the famed Internet Money Truck. In the end, neither explanation was correct.

On Jan. 18, 2002, the trawler *Abigail* came across a large chunk of ice, and preserved within was Harms' body. After bringing Billy aboard, the crew of the *Abigail* radioed the United States Coast Guard, which immediately dispatched a fleet of rescue vehicles. After the body of America's Greatest Treasure was brought ashore, the nation's top doctors set about to rebuild him.

Because the cold severely damaged Harms' internal organs, he was injected with a top-secret super-soldier serum that immediately transformed him into a one-man wrecking crew of unbridled ferocity. His recovery will take some time, but there's no doubt that Super Harms will find those who shot him and crack their heads open like ripe melons. Unfortunately, many questions remain unanswered.

"I really don't know what happened," Super Harms said from his hospital bed at San Francisco's Horse and Cow Hospital. "The last thing I remember is Morris covering behind me, begging for his mommy. After that it all went dark."

Now that he's been given a second chance at life (and at braving the treacherous offices of PCG, in the role of senior editor), Super Harms isn't taking anything for granted. "From now on," he says, "every time I step outside, I'm using Morris as a human shield."



PC GAMER RECOMMENDS

Bust out your wallet, free up some time: these recent games are still worth checking out.

WARLORDS BATTLECRY II JUNE 2002



Down-and-dirty RTS chaos makes *WBII* our current favorite in a crowded genre. Hit your opponent hard with a trove of medieval mayhem.

90%

RALLY TROPHY APRIL 2002



Rallying may not be a big sport in America, but it should be. This cross-country racer has it all, and it's the best game version of the sport yet.

89%

JEDI KNIGHT DECEMBER 1997



Been playing *Jedi Knight II* but never tried the original? This awesome FPS is still widely available for \$10, and is also included in the *JKII Collector's Ed.*

94%

HOW WE RATE THE GAMES: THE BREAKDOWN

90%

100%–90%
EDITORS' CHOICE

It's not easy to get here, and games in this range come with our unqualified recommendation.



80%

89%–80%
EXCELLENT

These are excellent games. Anything that scores in this range is well worth your purchase, and is likely a great example of its genre.

70%

79%–70%
GOOD

These are pretty good games that we'd recommend to fans of the particular genre, though it's a safe bet you can find better options.

60%

69%–60%
ABOVE AVERAGE

Reasonable, above-average games. They might be worth buying, but they probably have a few significant flaws that limit their appeal.

50%

59%–50%
MERELY OKAY

Very ordinary games. They're not completely worthless, but you can definitely find numerous better places to spend your gaming dollar.

40%

49%–40%
TOLERABLE

Poor quality. Only a few slightly redeeming features keep these games from descending into the utter abyss of the next category.

30%

39%–0%
DON'T BOTHER

Just terrible. And the lower you go, the more worthless you get. Avoid these titles like the plague, and don't say we didn't warn you!

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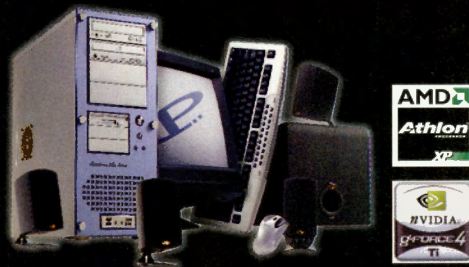


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Grand Theft Auto III



PC graphics deliver the ultimate version of the PS2's breakout hit



clubbed and/or shot to death by the irreverent carjacker on several occasions.)

Once in a vehicle, you have free rein of the city streets. As traffic flows and pedestrians amble the sidewalks, you can either obey functioning traffic lights or zip merrily through the city. Certain activities, like maliciously running people over, will draw the attention of the police, who will swarm you and haul you off to jail, whereupon you lose any weapons (bat, pistol, shotgun, grenade, Uzi, sniper rifle, and eventually RPG) and some of your cash.

Dealing with the law is a game-long concern. Depending on the severity of your behavior, the alert could be low-level (an inquisitive squad car or two) or truly seismic (National Guard intervention, complete with attack helicopters).

Each vehicle has its own handling characteristics, and there are way too many of them to even begin to touch on. Sleek European sports cars, clunky stationwagons, vans, pickups, limos, construction trucks — every type of vehicle on four

When you're in this situation, with the police on three-star alert, run fast and hide! I never found out how bad you had to be to have a six-star police pursuit.

Grand Theft Auto III is a game that couldn't help but be a blockbuster. Released last year for the PlayStation 2, it sold 6 million copies worldwide and stirred controversy over its violence. But the only controversy should have been explaining why it took the industry so long to design such a brilliantly free-form game.

And now it's been visually revamped for the PC (though the core game is identical, down to the limited save slots and lack of in-mission saves and multiplayer). On your PC monitor, GTA III looks twice as good as it ever did on a TV screen, running smoothly at 1600x1200 on a PIII 667 with a GeForce3 card.

What else is the same? Only one of the most innovative and inspired game designs in years, irrespective of platform.

GTA III is a crime epic putting you in the lead-footed shoes of an ambitious, amoral carjacker clawing his way to the top of the criminal underworld. If it can be stolen, destroyed, beaten, shotgunned,

blown up, sniped, run over, or hit with a rocket launcher, you can be sure that you'll get around to doing it by game's end.

Missions are set up through a ton of comic book cut-scenes in which you encounter dozens of shady characters — pimps, dealers, Mafiosi, gang-bangers, and high-rollers — who employ you to carry out a cavalcade of dodgy deals on their behalf.

You play mainly from a third-person chase view, walking and running around until you find a car you want or need, at which point you can usually yank out the driver and make off with the new wheels. (Though not always without a fight — I was

wheels is in this game. And each offers new strategies for dealing with missions. Need to ram an armored car off the road? Pilfer a nice big sturdy truck to do the job. A courier sprint, on the other hand, will necessitate your scoring a fast and maneuverable ride.

A REVOLUTION OF INVENTION

THE STORY KICKS OFF WITH A BRUTAL ATTACK on a police prisoner-transfer convoy. You're one of the lucky beneficiaries of the breakout. Back at large, you heist yourself a set of wheels and follow an ex-con's tip about where to get work from a low-level capo in the Leone crime family.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Action
ESRB RATING M
DEVELOPER Rockstar Games
PUBLISHER Take-Two
REQUIRED PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 700MB HD, 16MB 3D card
WE RECOMMEND P4 1.5GHz or Athlon 1800+, 256MB RAM, GeForce3
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1



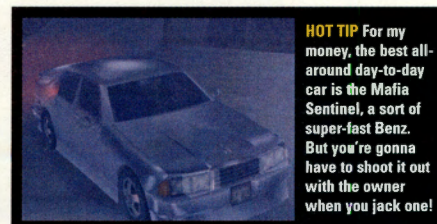
Molotov cocktails are handy for quickly eliminating large numbers of evil Mafiosi.



Each of the three Liberty City "islands" has an ammo shop where you can stock up on hardware.



This goon hopped pathetically (and hilariously) after ending up on the receiving end of a perfectly aimed sniper shot.



HOT TIP For my money, the best all-around day-to-day car is the Mafia Sentinel, a sort of super-fast Benz. But you're gonna have to shoot it out with the owner when you jack one!

City, you'll come to visualize the place as a functioning town of very different boroughs. You'll have developed your favorite short-cuts, and you'll know the fastest route from the tony terraces of Hepburn Heights to the squalor and crime of the Red Light District. Speaking of free-form, you can switch between radio stations as you drive, moving from pop to rap to techno to AM talk. (My fave is KJAH Jah Radio: "Knowledge is king, mon.") In a tweak specific to the PC, you can use your own library of MP3s to provide a custom soundtrack. For me, there's nothing like sprinting through Liberty City with H2O's cover of Ice Cube's "It Was A Good Day" blaring from your speakers.

Another PC-specific change is the removal of many of the arbitrary barriers that blocked off certain routes through the PS2 version. You can also add customized skins to the main character, allowing you to terrorize the city with your own mug facing forward.

Some of the best bits of *GTA III* are the incidental cacophonies of the big city, observed peripherally as you drive from place to place. Turn a corner in Chinatown, and you may find yourself in the middle of a shootout between Mafia gunmen and Chinese Triad toughs. Pick your way around stalled cars blocking busy traffic. Or just admire the chalk outlines left on the sidewalk — remnants of your past victims.

As you become intimately familiar with your stomping grounds, you'll make the acquaintance of a colorful succession of employers. Some are referred to you by happy patrons, who kick you upstairs to more challenging and higher-paying work for *their* bosses. Others seek you out as your reputation grows. And others are found just by accident — for example, try picking up any ringing payphones for the random odd job.

Don't be surprised to hear some well-known voices coming from the mouths of your employers. Joe Pantoliano and Michael



It's all about the attitude. *GTA III* is chock-full of tiny moves and subtle dialogue that add style.



See a ramp? Hit it at high speed to nab Insane Stunt bonuses — here, by landing on those rails.

In Liberty City, the opportunities are endless for a young man with no fear and no morals. The game pays constant homage to the movie *Scarface*, with your character doing for carjacking what Tony Montana did for coke. From your first mission as a lowly hooker chauffeur, you'll be learning the ins and outs of the city, making useful contacts at the chop-shop and gun store, and gradually earning the trust of the hoods who employ you.

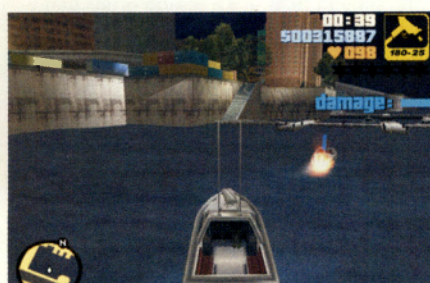
The genius of *GTA III* is the free-form playground of its cities, with missions waiting to be tapped in every neighborhood. After a dozen or so missions around Liberty

SONGS TO JACK CARS TO...



OHHHH YEAH...My personal playlist for crime-wave MP3 listening pleasure:

- "The Payback" by James Brown
- "High Plains Drifter" by Beastie Boys
- "The Mighty Stephen Hawking" by MC Hawking
- "No Diggity" by Blackstreet
- "Family Business" by Fugees
- "Burn Hollywood Burn" by Public Enemy
- "Wasted" by Black Flag
- "Full Clip" by Gang Starr
- "Bails of Cocaine" by Reverend Horton Heat
- "Hard Knock Life" by Jay-Z
- "Second Round KO" by Canibus
- "Things Done Changed" by Notorious B.I.G.
- "Cash Still Rules" by Wu-Tang Clan



It's not all about cars. Jacking a police boat is required on one mission through the waterways.



You are hereby charged with vehicular manslaughter (and here's \$10,000 for a mission well done).

Rapaport provide the voices of two of your early contacts, and Michael Madsen, Kyle MacLachlan, and Debi Mazar show up as well. Far from being annoying "celeb cameos," these crime-film character actors lend the game...well, the air of a crime film stuffed with your favorite character actors.

I became a believer in *GTA III*'s truly revolutionary inventiveness after figuring out how to assassinate "Chunky" Lee Chong at his noodle shop. Chong is located in an alley inaccessible to cars, and he's guarded by a cadre of armed thugs. I was maliciously gunned down during every attempt to run up and carry out the hit.

Then I noticed that Chong ran for his car every time I attacked. And a thought occurred to me: in a previous mission, I'd been assigned to snatch a car from a lunging mob boss, drive it to a bomb shop, and then return the sabotaged car to its parking space at the restaurant. The mobster had returned to his car only to blow himself sky-high.

So...why not?

I loaded up the Chong mission again and this time quietly stole his car. Drove it across town to the bomb shop. Returned it to its spot. Charged down the alley guns a-blasting, but as soon as Chong broke into his run, I fled to safety. Chong wasn't so lucky — he ducked into his car and tried to drive off as usual, but this time found himself in the center of a fireball.

It was an exultant moment — one of the most rewarding bits of gaming I've ever experienced. And from then on, every mission that followed was informed by the tools and tricks I'd absorbed from previous ones. (How many solutions are there to different missions? Well, remember when I said that Chong's alleyway was inaccessible by car? It actually *is* accessible, provided you're smart enough to figure out that an improvised ramp can be rigged to allow your car to vault the concrete rail that blocks the alley.)

It's almost pointless to start listing missions: there are *so* many, and so many ways in which to complete them. (There are around 100 missions in all, if you follow every lead.)

ODD JOBS



IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE all crime all the time. Steal a taxi and you can earn cash by ferrying folks around the city. Nab an ambulance, fire engine, or police car and engage in some life-saving missions. Different vehicles open doors to different occupational side-roads. Try 'em out!



The citizens of Liberty City can engage in their own carnage without your help. Watch for crazy driving, urban shootouts, and good ol' American mayhem — all rendered in astounding detail on the PC.



Well-acted cut-scenes (far left) give you different missions, such as this hit on a Mafia boss (left). You can avoid this firefight by using a sniper rifle to pick off your target from a distance.

While some are more interesting than others, there's hardly a dog in the whole batch. Steer a don through an ambush at the wheel of a slow, cumbersome limousine. Win a street race against three souped-up sports cars. Hijack an armored car. You'll eventually make your way through three different islands, each presenting you with new environs to conquer.

One of the very best things about this game is its almost total lack of any visible interface. There are no menus to open and close, no stats to track, virtually nothing to get in the way of cinematic storytelling. All you've got to worry about is your health meter, your cash, and the level of law-enforcement heat. It's a lesson other game designers should take to heart. Transparent interface = immediate accessibility, and PC games in particular stand to benefit greatly from the success of this experiment.

My only complaint about *GTA III* is the one vestigial headache of its console pedigree — a lack of helpful features that a keyboard might otherwise have enabled. The main thing missing is an overhead map of the whole city that updates itself as you make new contacts: as is, you get a partial map of the city that shows your immediate vicinity. A larger map would make the

game so much less frustrating, since you wouldn't have to rely on memory in the heat of a chase (and then unlearn everything when you unlock a new city).

Another quick word on system specs: it can be a hog. Though the aforementioned PIII 667 test system ran the game at high-res without a hitch, its GeForce3 card was critical. (*GTA III* ran great on a P4 2.2GHz!) Since the game demands the latest video- and sound-card drivers, expect a few compatibility issues in the first days of release.

But it's hard to imagine a PC gamer who won't immediately take to *GTA III*. It empowers you as a player in ways few games even try to do. And it's quite simply a whole lot of fun.

— Daniel Morris

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Totally free-form environment and mission structures; PC-optimized graphics and gameplay tweaks; intense fun with tons of cool.

LOWS: No PC-specific help features; limited saves.

BOTTOM LINE: A revolutionary game design serving up a badass crime saga.

PC GAMER 92%
EDITORS' CHOICE

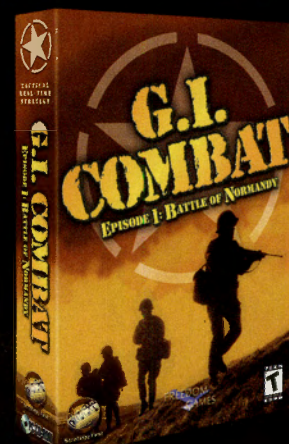
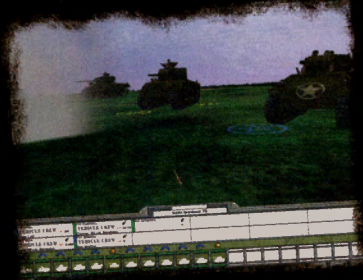
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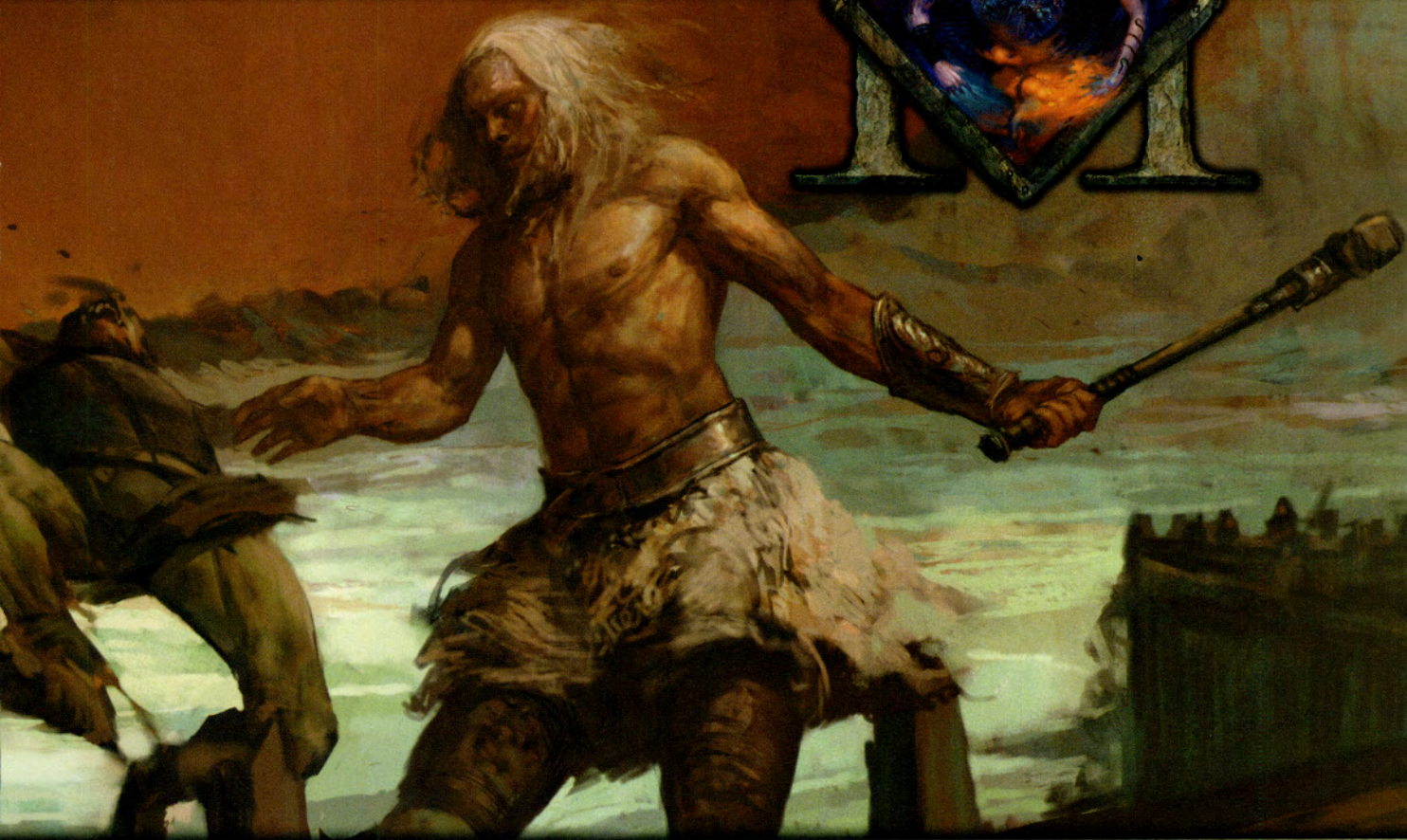
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Might and Magic IX

The last battle? The final quest? Let's hope not, or this series died a fool's death.

Good, bad, and ugly. The *good* is that the *Might and Magic* franchise has finally moved away from its long-in-the-tooth, sprite-based roots and reached the now expected and demanded world of 3D gaming. The *bad* is that the same tired gameplay formula has come along for the ride. And the just plain *ugly* is that the 3D graphics all look positively amateurish.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Roleplaying

ESRB RATING T

DEVELOPER New World Computing

PUBLISHER 3DO

REQUIRED PII 400, 64MB RAM, 1GB HD, 16MB 3D video card

WE RECOMMEND Another game. *Morrowind*, anyone?

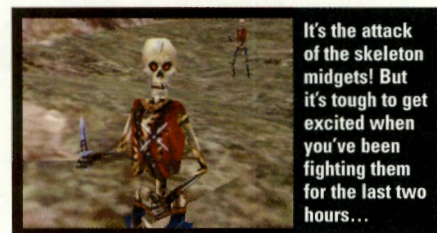
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

You're dumped into this fantasy RPG without knowing who you are. A shipwreck leaves you stranded on the Isle of Ashes, where a friendly transient is kind enough to let you know that you're the savior of the troubled land of Chendian.

But this premise leads to an experience that seems threadbare. You're given just four races from which to choose your party — Elf, Human, Dwarf, and Half-Orc — and an equally paltry number of faces and voice options. There are only two pictures (one per gender) to represent each character. A tiny number of spell and skill options are available initially, and it takes far too long — well into the double digits of gaming hours — to develop your characters' "might" or "magic" capabilities. It took me 15 hours to move from "initiate" to the path for Crusader.

Might and Magic IX's world may now be fully 3D (thanks to the LithTech engine), but it manages to feel remarkably empty. You'll find yourself continually feeling déjà vu thanks to the lack of variety in the appearance of NPCs, monsters, and architectural design. In each quest area, you'll do battle with the same two or three monster types, and NPCs look the same from town to town. That's a real tragedy given that the expansive game world sets you up for a filling, and fulfilling, experience.

The character and monster models themselves are extremely crude by today's standards. And all the structures have a similar "cubist" design, with endless repetition of familiar textures and item place-



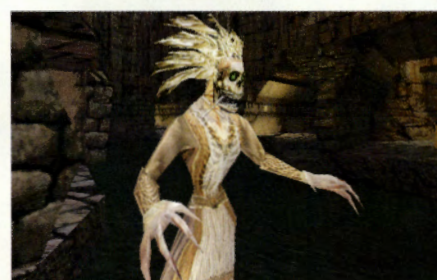
It's the attack of the skeleton midgets! But it's tough to get excited when you've been fighting them for the last two hours...



Combat lacks visual panache, but the ability to switch from turn-based to real-time play on the fly is handy.



Upon entering a town mid-day, you'd expect to see a lot of hustle and bustle. Not in this game.



You can play in any resolution...as long as it's 800x600. Unsupported tweaks raise it, but are iffy.

ments. Everything blends together, giving you the sensation of treading water as you explore.

Add a list of other smaller grievances to this mish-mash of irritants, and it's tough to recommend this game to all but the stoutest *Might and Magic* buffs. These hardcore fans will have to get past the fact that blood spray appears with both hits and misses, and characters continually get stuck while trying to move past items and obstacles. And — it came as no surprise — you'll have the occasional unexplained fatal crashes to the desktop.

With the recent layoffs at New World Computing, it seems that No. 9 might be the end of the road for the *Might and Magic* series. Or perhaps a new crew will imbue the venerable series with more

vigor in a 10th installment. It'd be a shame to see a series that started out with such an explosive debut — and that deserves a lot of credit for the growth and popularity of the genre — go out with such a sad little sigh. — Steve Klett

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Huge game world with lots to do, places to go, and people to see.

LOWS: Extreme lack of detail and vibrancy hinders every aspect of the game; extremely slow start.

BOTTOM LINE: Only *M&M* vets will find enough to like to justify the cost of admission.

PC GAMER 51%
MERELY OKAY

F.D.N.Y. Firefighter

CATEGORY Action ESRB E DEVELOPER Mekada PUBLISHER Activision REQUIRED PIII 266, 32MB RAM, 300MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 450 MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1



Take a break from first-person view to play Aim Your Hose.

The box art for *F.D.N.Y. Firefighter: American Hero* is a painting of a fireman heroically posed in front of the American flag, aiming a waterhose with defiant determination. That's right — in a title aimed squarely at the mid-western Wal-Mart audience, Activision Value Publishing has released the "Official Licensed PC

Interactive Game" of New York's Bravest. Advertising "multiple red hot levels," this game is far from a solemn tribute to the 343 New York firemen lost at the World Trade Center. In fact, it's safe to say that at least a few of those 343 brave souls will be back to angrily haunt the people who thought it would be a good idea to squeeze out a crummy quickie game in their honor, pinning a "portion of the proceeds" to the NY Fire Safety Fund.

The game itself is a joke. It has seven levels, each featuring a different burning object. You run around in a crude first-person 3D environment, putting out pools of flame with a variety of extinguishers and hoses. Nothing's more complex than figuring out how to attach a nozzle to a hose, or remembering to chop down stuck doors with your axe.

Graphics? Poor. Physics? You can throw concrete blocks laterally through the air in a perfectly straight line. Annoyance level? The firefighter characters include "Blade Jackson," "Savior McDunnin," and my favorite, "Hotrod Stein."

I solved this game in slightly over an hour, making it a low-value proposition even at \$20. To paraphrase a great New Yorker, Mr. Woody Allen: If the firemen killed on 9/11 could see what was being done in their name, they would never stop throwing up. — Daniel Morris



We hereby declare: Most Tasteless Box Art Ever!

PC GAMER 6%
DON'T BOTHER

Carnivores Cityscape

CATEGORY Action ESRB T DEVELOPER Sunstorm PUBLISHER Infogrames REQUIRED PIII 400, 64MB RAM, 450HD, 16MB 3D card WE RECOMMEND PIII 600, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

(Note: The dinosaurs that appear in *Carnivores Cityscape* wish to express their outrage over the tasteless release of *F.D.N.Y. Firefighter*.)

As if the first three *Carnivores* games weren't the cause of enough suffering, along comes *Carnivores Cityscape*, which tries to offer a more traditional first-person take. (The operative word is *tries*.) You get two campaigns, unique mission objectives, and even a multiplayer component. But sadly, like the previous *Carnivores* games, *Cityscape* is just a Festival of Crap.

The setup: A spaceship carrying dinosaurs crashes on a populated planet.



When you see this through your scope, run!

The dinosaurs get free and chaos ensues. *Cityscape* has 20 missions total, and you can play all of the missions as a human or as a dinosaur. Completing each mission requires that you meet objectives, such as reaching a location or freeing some poor soul.

It's a good idea in principle, and munching people as a dinosaur is moderately amusing, but the level designs are horrid. Enemies are always in the same place, so once you memorize their location, you can blow right past them. And even if you don't remember where they are, the brainless AI won't present much of a challenge — enemies exhibit one behavior, the blind charge.

The best thing about *Cityscape* is its graphics, and even those are a mixed bag. The game uses the Serious Engine, and some nice effects, like reflective surfaces, are sprinkled throughout the levels. But the loading times are excessively long, and



Because of the horrible AI, the enemies come filing in nice and neat-like.

clipping and collision problems constantly hinder your progress.

A multiplayer component — co-op and deathmatch — is included, but it's nothing more than sour frosting spread atop a rotten egg of a game. — Barney the Gigantosaurus

PC GAMER 20%
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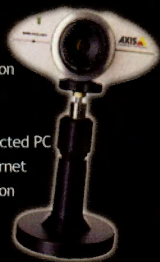
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Army Men: RTS

Green plastic soldiers against tan plastic soldiers in a fight to the blah!

Have any toys ever undergone as much abuse as green army men? Soaked in airplane glue and set ablaze, placed in death's way on a slot-car track, propped up as target dummies for unmonitored boys with BB guns...the terror never seems to end for these steadfast plastic soldiers.

And now it's total war.

You've got to give 3DO credit for trying to inject a little creative juice into this overstuffed franchise. But for *Army Men: RTS*, the initially exciting novelty of seeing those plastic men go to war starts to wear thin in short order.

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Real-time strategy
ESRB RATING T
DEVELOPER Pandemic Studios
PUBLISHER 3DO
REQUIRED P233, 64MB RAM, 50MB HD
WE RECOMMEND PIII 450, 96MB RAM, 32MB video card
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8

Army Men: RTS takes its cue from *Apocalypse Now*, with a Colonel Blintz going rogue and defecting to the evil Tan army. Controlling a team led by the generically named "Sarge," you do all the stuff you'd expect to do in any real-time strategy game: collect resources (plastic from discarded toys, energy from batteries, and so on), build a base, crank out units, and kick ass. All, of course, as you head for a final showdown with Blintz.

Because these are teeny plastic soldiers, battles are fought around and throughout a house: in the front yard, the basement, the living room, the attic, and so forth, with all the usual clutter you'd expect in a suburban yuppie residence.

At the start of each mission you usually have a few special characters to control, each with boosted powers and all-too-obvious names: "Scorch" wields a flamethrower, "Hoover" sucks up mines, "Bullseye" is a sharpshooter...well, you get the idea. You'd think it would be imperative to protect these supercharged units, but nope — any that die are conveniently resurrected for the next battle.

Pandemic Studios, which managed to make the sequel to the brilliant *Battlezone* a tepid rehash, takes the concept of toy wars and runs about two inches with it before hitting a brick wall of apathy. Though *Army Men: RTS'* tech tree is stunted and short, it



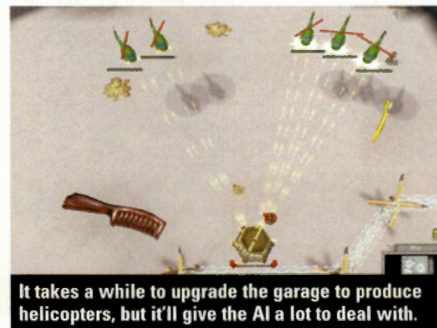
Blow up pigs, and you can use the plastic to build soldiers and vehicles! Homer Simpson was right: these are "wonderful, magical" beasts.



Selecting all units of a single type is tricky when firefights become full-blown battles — especially since the manual doesn't tell you it's possible. To do it, press the Ctrl key while clicking on a single unit.



There's Vikki, fighting elbow-to-elbow with Sarge. She shows up after about a dozen missions.



It takes a while to upgrade the garage to produce helicopters, but it'll give the AI a lot to deal with.

still takes an eternity to make any truly powerful units — which is okay when playing the campaign game because the AI enemy is sluggish and stupid.

Achieving goals during each mission will unlock secret "Great Battles," but oddly enough, you aren't told those conditions before the fight begins — and not many players want to refight a 30- or 40-minute scenario just to access what is essentially a wide-open skirmish against the computer. Oh, and speaking of skirmishes, there aren't any. The only way to fight against computer players is if another player hooks up with you.

The AI for friendly units can be maddening. Sometimes units will hoof it to take on an overpowering foe, while other times they stand idly by as a building is destroyed before their plastic eyes. Since there's no option to create formations,

maneuvering tanks and even ground troops can be extremely frustrating as you helplessly watch them wobble and weave in a feeble attempt to get into firing range.

RPG addicts may manage to eke out some entertainment from this old-school nostalgia trip. Just make sure you buy it at a budget price.

— Stephen Poole

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Practically no learning curve; low system requirements; smooth multiplayer mode.

LOWS: Poor AI; no formation control; enervating tech tree; no skirmish mode.

BOTTOM LINE: It's a serviceable RTS. With plastic army men. Other than that...

PC GAMER
MERELY OKAY

57%

THIS GAME HAS TEETH



One thing you've got to give *Pandemic* credit for is tossing plenty of sweet details into this miniature game world. Check out the chompers resting in the glass by the bathroom sink!

Blood Omen 2

CATEGORY Action/adventure ESRB M DEVELOPER Crystal Dynamics PUBLISHER Eidos REQUIRED PIII 450, 128MB RAM, 16MB 3D card WE RECOMMEND PIII 800, 256MB RAM, 32MB 3D card MAX. PLAYERS 1

If the concept of ripping people to shreds and sucking their blood out through their chests fills you with glee, then *Blood Omen 2* is definitely the game for you [and you should seek professional help — Ed].

Be warned, however, that the gameplay never deviates much from the formula described above, and you're looking in the wrong place if you're after a little more meat on your gaming bone.

Already available for the Xbox and PS2, *Blood Omen 2* finds the vampire Kain waking from a deep slumber. The game's 11 chapters chronicle Kain's path to vengeance — a path littered with the bloodless husks of many, many innocent victims. Other than the blood-slurpings,

the gameplay is very standard action/adventure fare, with the requisite puzzles, box-pushing, and lever-flipping.

The shoddy AI fails to add any intriguing strategy or challenge. Guards only attack one at a time, and they'll watch passively as you turn civilians into your latest snack. The combat system is overly simplistic and consists of little more than nondescript slashes and blocks. And because the controls aren't very responsive,

even with a gamepad, you'll find slicing and dicing a bit tougher than it should be.

What elevates *Blood Omen 2* above the heap is its grisly portrayal of a world in which vampires roam the streets. Civilians plead for their lives, the animated killing moves are brilliant, and the Dark Powers (mayhem-enabling skills that you acquire throughout the game) really sell you on the fact that you're playing one bad mofo. My favorite power is Mist, which makes you invisible. Nothing's more enjoyable



Serviceable graphics, but low-res textures and goofy models abound.

than sneaking up on some poor sap and then gutting him unexpectedly.

So if you're looking for nothing more than a vampiric tale of killing and consuming folks, *Blood Omen 2* should be right up your dark, haunted alley. Just be sure to check your brain at the door. — William Harms



Turn into mist and watch the innards fly!

PC GAMER **71%**
GOOD

Casino Mogul

CATEGORY Tycoon ESRB T DEVELOPER Cat Daddy Games PUBLISHER DreamCatcher REQUIRED PII 350, 64MB RAM, 350MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 500, 128MB RAM MAX. PLAYERS 1

Wise folks say you should "make an effort, not excuses." Frankly, the developers at Cat Daddy Games didn't make an effort.

Despite a promising premise, the latest disappointment from the makers of *Full Strength Strongman Competition* is too flawed to be much fun. You're given an empty lot and a standardized sandbox-style interface, with the goal of crafting a Vegas-style casino. The building options are plentiful, but once you've designed your casino, the game becomes an unending routine of watching punters come and go. There are only so many ways you can arrange poker tables and slot machines.

The casino is viewed from either a 2D-angled perspective or an in-close 3D-modeled world. In the zoomed-in view, patrons will indicate how they feel about your casino through compliments and complaints, and you'll also find the occasional elderly retiree suffer a heart attack. None of it is terribly exciting, however, and trust me when I say that character models haven't



Stylized graphics or crappy modeling? You decide.



Even a casino should be ashamed of that carpet.

been this blocky since the dreadful *Wild West* game.

A challenge mode requires you to attract a certain quota of customers, cash, or ratings while competing against up to four computer-controlled competitors, and another challenge type entails fixing up dilapidated casinos. Also, you start with only a small amount of cash, so you'll need a sound plan to hire trained dealers, entertainers, janitors, mechanics, and even medics to staff your enterprise.

Fundamentally, there's just not enough depth. You can raise the prices of certain games, but you don't have to worry about competing casinos or cheaters. None of it gives any real feel of actually running a genuine casino, let alone a gambling empire. This one's a bad bet. — Norman Chan

PC GAMER **42%**
TOLERABLE

Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project

The review with everything, including used prophylactics and Martha Stewart. Read on.

He seemingly came out of nowhere. A lone gunman with a penchant for guns, girls, and gore burst onto the PC scene in 1991 — but after a three-game rocket ride to success, the bonds of glory addiction began to squeeze too tight. Now, with a future game in development limbo and his celebrity fading fast, Duke Nukem has shocked his detractors by stag-

ing a surprise comeback in *Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project*.

This is *Behind the Game: The Duke Nukem Story*.

For a young psycho named Duke Nukem, it all began in the PC's hallowed two-dimensional days. Starring in

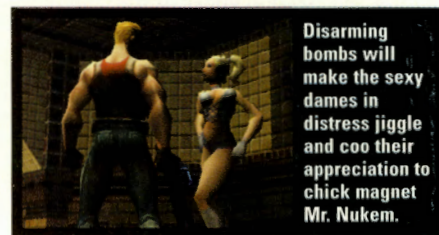
the low-budget *Duke Nukem* and *Duke Nukem 2* from Apogee, Duke whiled away the hours running left and right, hopping on platforms, and killing alien scum dead with a spring in his step and a rocket launcher grasped firmly in his fist.

When the Big Time called, Duke answered with willful abandon. First-person shooter *Duke Nukem 3D* was a smash hit, and a sequel, *Duke Nukem Forever*, was given the green light. But then... nothing. The radioactive green flame of Duke's career threatened to extinguish... maybe forever.

Now, Duke has returned to where it all began — running, jumping, and womanizing. In the 3D platform side-scroller *Manhattan Project*, Duke has dusted off his old catchphrases, added to his repertoire with the same irrepressible verve, and hopped once more into his "platform" shoes.

Unfortunately, a slap of paint and an extra dimension can't hide the threadbare plot and archaic gameplay mechanics lurking beneath the surface. Though the embrace of an old friend is comforting, Duke's triumphant comeback has the world-weariness of a modern-day Hall & Oates concert — out of touch and a missed opportunity. We can't go for that. No can do.

Manhattan Project starts with the best of intentions: the evil Mech Morphix has infested New York with mutated beasties,



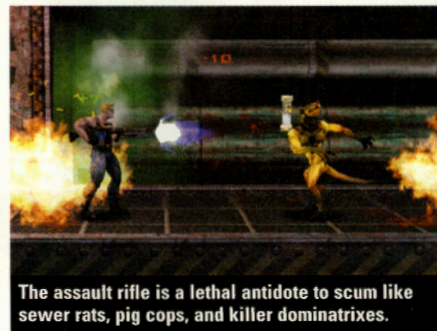
Disarming bombs will make the sexy dames in distress jiggle and coo their appreciation to chick magnet Mr. Nukem.



One of Duke's mission-ending boss battles. Remember: If it flashes, shoot it.



Taking Chinatown by storm, Duke avoids street obstacles by scaling buildings.



The assault rifle is a lethal antidote to scum like sewer rats, pig cops, and killer dominatrixes.

baiting Duke into hunting Morphix down and disarming bombs attached to the city's most buxom hoochies. With the motto "I go where I please, and I please where I go," Duke races left and right, collecting key cards and killing anything that stands between him and Morphix.

But what starts with a tremendous bang ends with a whimper. Nostalgia and quips aren't quite enough to carry *Manhattan Project* to its conclusion: the sameness of the game's eight missions (each has three parts) leads to monotony, monotony leads to boredom, and boredom leads to playing other games.

Yet even while dangling from the precipice of despair, Duke still manages to pull himself up. Secrets pepper each level like strippers' tears on a long, shiny metal pole. Topical jabs are tossed out with the consistency of used prophylactics at a fleabag hotel. ("You're going down like Enron" is a nice one.) Best of all, Duke's arsenal of pipe bombs, assault rifles, and

pulse cannons turns pig cops into chunks of splattered meat. As Martha Stewart might say, it's a good thing.

Duke Nukem's explosive resurrection comes at a (good) price — \$24.99, to be exact. After rapidly descending into an abyss of power-up addiction, gaming's legendary star has made his way back to the big time. Back to his gaming roots, the man who likes to kick ass and chew bubble gum is still all out of bubble gum. — *Chuck Osborn*

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Impressive 3D graphics; tons of secrets; wanton violence; the wit and wisdom of Duke Nukem.

LOWS: Not enough variety; dumb AI; virtually no plot; becomes tedious after a while.

BOTTOM LINE: Offers razor-thin depth, but its low price makes it a good value for the Duke-deprived.

PC GAMER **75%**
GOOD

BCT Commander

CATEGORY Real-time strategy ESRB Not rated DEVELOPER Shrapnel Games PUBLISHER ProSIM REQUIRED P133, 16MB RAM, 30MB HD WE RECOMMEND PII, 64MB RAM, modem MAXIMUM PLAYERS 2

Our May 2002 cover game, *Command & Conquer: Generals*, is only the latest real-time strategy game to move toward real-world contemporary settings and units. Already in the market is a quiet little RTS whose gameplay couldn't be any more authentic if artillery shells were falling around your head.

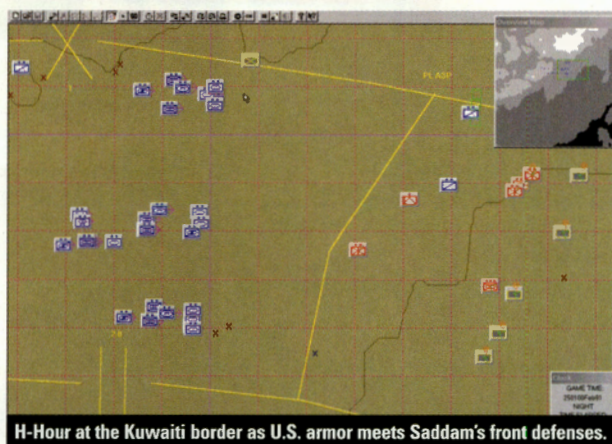
BCT Commander is the next step in the evolution of *Brigade Combat Team*, a terrific wargame from Army artilleryman Capt. Patrick Proctor. It steps ahead significantly in visual appeal and interface clarity. And while still a very complex game — well beyond the grasp of a C&C-only RTS player — *BCT Commander* is the very best balance between ultra-realism and accessible playability.

Based on current Army maneuvers, *BCT Commander* allows you to command and control either a U.S. or "Opposing Force" brigade formation, composed of tanks, armored personnel carriers, scout vehicles, supply units, artillery batteries, engineer units, and even fighter-bombers from off-map airbases. The excellent 120-page manual is a veritable education in modern combined-arms theory, and the deep menu-driven command interface turns all of that knowledge into a thrilling wargame.

Played from top-down contour maps, *BCT Commander* moves in real time but can be paused anytime to issue orders. That's a good thing, because a very partial list of commands includes sending out recon units, conducting phased artillery barrages of various types of ordnance, laying smoke to cover an advance, sending engineers to either set up or punch through minefields and obstacles, and calling in airstrikes.

In short, if it happens on the field of modern mechanized warfare, you'll have access to it here.

Scenarios include Desert Storm, a fictional North Korean war, a Soviet-era tank battle for Kiev, and several missions at the Fort Irwin National Training Center. These latter missions are a blast, since they're closely modeled on actual U.S. Army brigade-level training missions. With real-world terrain maps modeling the Army's



H-Hour at the Kuwaiti border as U.S. armor meets Saddam's front defenses.

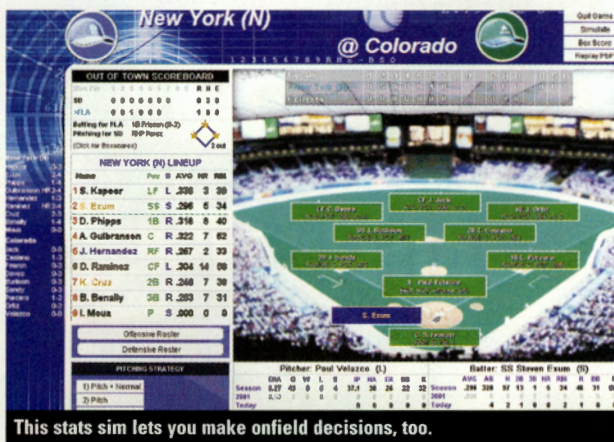
playground east of Death Valley, you're literally getting the closest simulation of Army tactical instruction commercially available.

I can't recommend this game highly enough to serious wargamers. Pick it up at www.shrapnelgames.com. — Daniel Morris

PC GAMER 88%
EXCELLENT

Season Ticket Baseball 2003

CATEGORY Management sim ESRB E DEVELOPER Out of the Park PUBLISHER Infogrames REQUIRED P300, 32MB RAM, 95MB HD WE RECOMMEND 64MB RAM MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1



This stats sim lets you make onfield decisions, too.

baseball sim, but it has one huge problem — it's not a Major League Baseball sim. Because Infogrames didn't get the MLB license or a Players Association license, all of the teams and (more distressingly) players are fictitious. Now, some folks may be happy to rule over a league of made-up players, but it drives me insane. The only remedy is to edit all 650-odd players yourself, or wait for some enterprising user to do so and download his roster.

That enormous headache aside, *STB 2003* shines with its sense of real-job immersion. When you make trade offers or when players demand higher salaries, it happens via email — a superb touch. Contract negotiations are deep and involving, with agents mucking things up in an annoyingly realistic way.

Good baseball stat games are more prevalent than you probably imagine — *Baseball Mogul* and *Diamond Mind Baseball* (since incorporated into 3DO's *High Heat* series) are two of the better-known. Infogrames' snazzy new *Season Ticket Baseball 2003*, built on the well-regarded *Out of the Park Baseball* engine, is definitely a great

STB 2003 also boasts more onfield, during-game features than the competition. You can make substitutions and switches, call for suicide squeezes and double-switches, and even argue the umpire's calls.

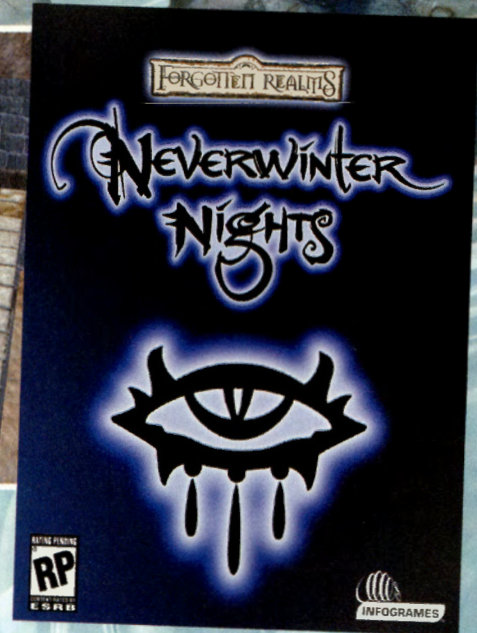
In other ways, it's not a fully polished diamond. The player scouting reports don't have much variety — you'll feel like you're constantly reading about the exact same guy. And I had trouble developing fan interest — whether I won or tanked, the crowd sizes didn't seem to budge much beyond the number keyed in by the city's original interest level. This situation made revenue-stream management much less interesting.

On the whole, I still prefer my trusty *Baseball Mogul* disc, but *Season Ticket Baseball 2003* has some sweet, unique features, and is by far the most visually appealing game in this genre. — Daniel Morris

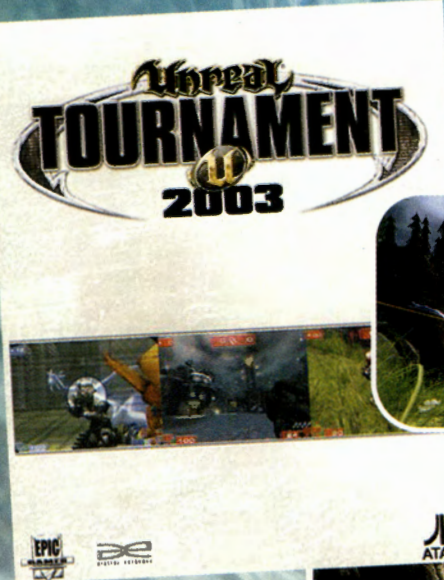
PC GAMER 76%
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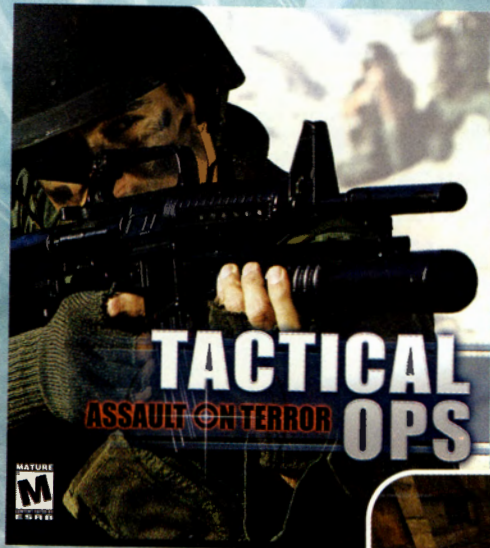


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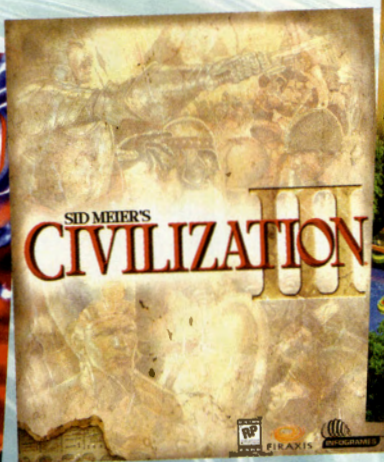
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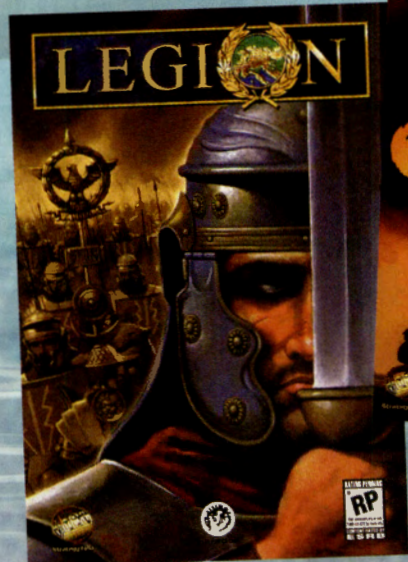
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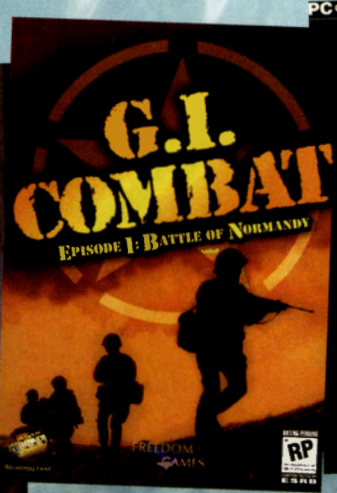
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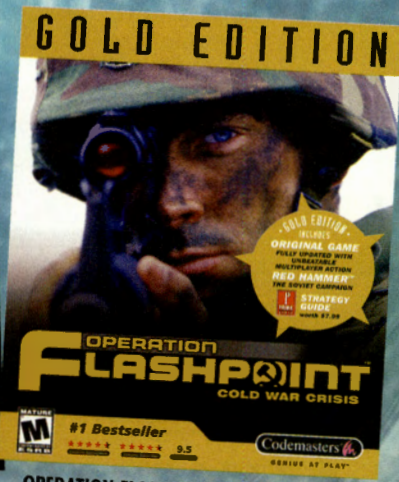
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Spider-Man

With great power comes great responsibility, and not-so-great camera control



Lock on boss villains like the Vulture to make aerial combat easier. And check out that dazzling cityscape!

You've seen the movie, worn the Underoos, eaten the breakfast cereal, and even have a poster of Kirsten Dunst as Mary Jane Watson hanging in your bedroom. Of course you're going to play the *Spider-Man* movie game. The question is, will you enjoy it?

The answer is a resounding, if somewhat qualified, yes. Not to be wishy-washy

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Action/Adventure
ESRB RATING E
DEVELOPER LTI Gray Matter
PUBLISHER Activision
REQUIRED PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 1GB HD, 3D card with T&L support
WE RECOMMEND P4 1GHz, 256MB RAM
MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

about it, but if you liked last year's arcade-friendly *Spider-Man* game for the PC, you'll positively "zzip!" over this one.

The two games are nearly identical game-play-wise, but the movie game has received a big-budget upgrade: gorgeous cinematic visuals, aerial combat sequences, a targeting camera, a web-load of new combos, and celebrity voiceovers (Tobey Maguire as Spider-Man, Willem Dafoe as the Green Goblin, and over-the-top thespian Bruce Campbell as the tutorial's snide narrator).

If anything, the improvements are so profound that it's devastating to see *Spider-Man*'s remaining faults hamstringing the action. You see, there's a super-villain far more evil in this game than the pumpkin bomb-throwing Green Goblin, and it's the camera.

In short, *Spider-Man* needs a zoom-out function. Imagine if you'd watched the movie

and saw nothing but Tobey Maguire for two straight hours. Bad guys could be shooting at him from offscreen but all you ever saw was the Tobe. Wouldn't that be frustrating? The ability to zoom out to get a better view of Spidey's surroundings would've been a huge boon to gameplay, especially during stealth missions and melee combat.

Anticipating this complaint, the developers have included a target-lock mode that follows your target anywhere on camera. Tailor-made for boss battles, perhaps, but this function is nearly useless against multiple attacking enemies.

And since I'm venting, here are my other gripes: no saving during missions; awkward control when wall-crawling; and a few annoying audio and graphics bugs (one blacks out your screen, usually in the tutorials).

So why does this game warrant such a high score? Because the rest of it rocks.

Need an example? The moment I forgave *Spider-Man* and all of its transgressions came during my first aerial battle with the Green Goblin, the climax of which takes place over New York's lush Central Park. No blanket of fog covers the city as it did in the last game: there's a living, breathing world down there with moving traffic, awestruck pedestrians, and real-world geography. It hit me: visually, this game (like Spider-Man himself) is *amazing!*

The phenomenal aerial combat alone is worth *Spider-Man*'s modest \$30 price. Web-swinging through the city, you'll launch

"A TANGLED WEB WE WEAVE"



Spider-Man and Mary Jane share a short but poignant moment before he suddenly remembers that his Uncle Ben was murdered only a few days before. Bring on the angst and celibacy!



Broken structure needs a quick fix? Use webbing to patch it up before it crushes pedestrians.



Help Scorpion defeat these robo-spiders to track down the evil green genius that made them.

web-projectiles, punches, and cannonball kicks at enemies, and if you get the timing just right, you can even land on a villain's shoulders and beat him senseless in mid-air.

Besides straight-out action, you'll find plenty of stealth, puzzles, and tutorial mini-games to prime your interest. Tons of secret areas and power-ups await, including unlockable costumes and skins (play through the game as Mary Jane if you want), and there's even a secondary game that — if you beat the game on Hero difficulty — lets you replay as the son of the first Green Goblin (in Goblin garb and with his powers) intent on clearing the family's name. The Shocker, Scorpion, and the Vulture make cameo appearances as well.

Spider-Man is one of those rare movie-to-game translations that mostly gets it right. My advice to Spidey fans? Swing on by your friendly neighborhood software store and pick it up. — Chuck Osborn

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Sumptuous 3D graphics and flawless animations; great aerial combat; superb voiceovers.

LOWS: Limited camera control; no in-mission saves; some awkward control issues.

BOTTOM LINE: Bitten by the *Spider-Man* bug? This game is the cure.

PC GAMER 80%
EXCELLENT

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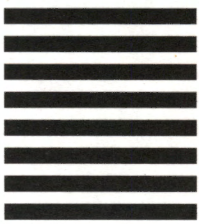
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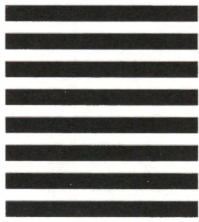
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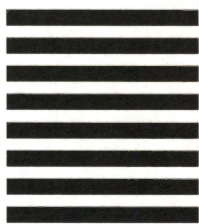
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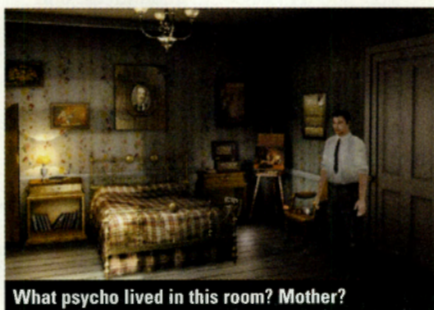
PC GAMER

Hitchcock: The Final Cut

CATEGORY Adventure ESRB M DEVELOPER Arxel Tribe PUBLISHER Ubi Soft REQUIRED PII 333, 64MB RAM, 300MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 600, 128MB RAM MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

Hitchcock fans looking for an interactive thriller worthy of his name will undoubtedly be disappointed with *The Final Cut*. While it's an ambitious and lengthy adventure, the game is spoiled by an overly confusing story, many ambiguous puzzles, and a flawed interface.

You play as Joseph Shamley, a psychic PI hired to investigate the mysterious disappearance of an entire film crew. Allegedly, the cast was working on a movie funded by millionaire Robert Marvin-Jones, a man obsessed with the films of Alfred Hitchcock. From the moment a body is found stuffed into a potato sack on the set, the story takes countless twists and turns before devolving into an unnecessarily convoluted tale.



What psycho lived in this room? Mother?

Same goes for the puzzles. Some brainteasers are logical and believable — such as talking to characters and playing videotapes for clues, or using a knife to cut rope — but others make no sense whatsoever. How does arranging face make-up in a particular order or baking an apple crumble pie relate to crime-solving? They don't. All they do is annoy.

On the Hitchcock Scale of Brilliance, *Cut's* visuals are more *The Birds* than *Vertigo*. The 3D characters and 2D backgrounds are attractive, but the "cinematic" camera angles shift often enough that they become irritating. Moreover, the game's interface is an awkward combination of the keyboard (for movement) and mouse (for picking up or manipulating items), and would have worked better if it used one or the other instead of making you constantly switch between the two.

All these missed opportunities are a shame, really, because *Cut* has the makings of a compelling mystery. While this original



Some creepy moments, yes, but a Hitchcockian masterpiece it is not.

story is inspired by Hitchcock's works — and the game boasts similar music and atmosphere, and even 20-odd minutes of footage from such classics as *Psycho* and *Frenzy* — don't expect the legendary auteur's level of intrigue or suspense while traipsing through this muddled adventure. — Marc Saltzman

PC GAMER 48%
TOLERABLE

Diggles: The Myth of Fenris

CATEGORY RTS ESRB T DEVELOPER Innocis PUBLISHER Strategy First REQUIRED PII 350, 128MB RAM, 32MB video card WE RECOMMEND PIII 500, 256MB RAM, 64MB video card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

Who better to find your deity's runaway watchdog than a motley gang of dwarves?

That's the bizarre premise behind *Diggles*, a very weird real-strategy game that challenges you to nurture a race of little gnomes so that they can successfully dig deep down into the Earth's crust to find the disobedient hellhound Fenris.

Much of the gameplay involves teaching the Diggles to make food, tools, weapons, machines, buildings, and more Diggles —

all necessary for accomplishing the mainly subterranean objectives spread throughout four worlds. Along with managing their busy work schedule, you need to give your vocal dwarves some R&R, so they make use of dozens of leisure activities.

You must keep an eye on every aspect of the Diggles' ever-changing "needs" meter, such as mood, hunger, health and rest. A good balance of work and play is required to keep them happy, productive, and in the mood to create offspring.



Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to...collect mushrooms and stones.



These underground caverns house heaps of Diggles.

While rendered in 3D, the game is played mainly from a flat side-view (think *Worms*). The Diggles are cute, with exaggerated facial features and humorous animations, but their dialogue can become aggravating (and out of sync) at times, especially during cut-scenes.

The main problem with *Diggles* is that all this micro-management takes a long time to execute — and that's a real hindrance for the fast-command requirements of an RTS. And I'm not sure what's up with the steep system requirements, which result in choppy movement even on a fast PC. Several bugs also caused the game to crash or freeze up — and they likely won't be fixed, given that Innocis folded soon after *Diggles* shipped.

So what you're left with is a micro-management game about dwarves! It's distinctly weird, unmistakably European, and not worth the money. — Marc Saltzman

PC GAMER 53%
MERELY OKAY

MegaRace 3

CATEGORY Racing ESRB E DEVELOPER Criterion Games PUBLISHER DreamCatcher REQUIRED PII 400, 64MB RAM, 450MB HD WE RECOMMEND PIII 600, 128MB RAM, 16MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 8



The cutscenes featuring presenter Lance Boyle (shown here in *MegaRace 2*) are the best thing in *MR3*. Lance raves about you dying a horrible death and enjoys seeing you fail.



The tracks are generally well-designed and provide a good challenge.

In the future, high-speed, locked-and-loaded vehicles race around in an effort to save the world from crazed mutants. That's the basic setup of *MegaRace 3*, a painfully average combat racing game that has some good ideas and many, many problems. The game offers four single-player modes — Practice, Arcade, Catastrophe,

and Career — and the action is spread across eight environments and over 20 circuits. Catastrophe is *MegaRace 3*'s best gameplay mode: each track offers a specific challenge, such as destroying a giant insect intent on smashing up our lovely planet, or simply surviving a track packed with implements of death. On the flip side is Arcade, which is nothing more than an I've-done-that-before racing

mode that gets boring pretty quick. Each of the 12 playable vehicles offers three "transformer" variations — you can morph between attack, defense, and speed — and it's a great idea gone awry. Instead of actually impacting the way your vehicle handles or acts, the different modes simply let you shoot, turn on your shields, or use

turbo, respectively. In speed mode, for example, your vehicle should've been easier to handle and traded shields for acceleration, and defense should've traded speed for armor. Neither of these happens.

The graphics powering *MegaRace 3* are fairly decent, with a good splash of color and lighting, and the tracks are imaginative and well-designed. The controls are responsive, though my key bindings kept resetting. Other issues included persistent clipping problems that left me stuck in the environment a couple of times, and the little matter of my vehicle occasionally blowing up for no good reason — particularly annoying since more than once it caused me to lose a race.

This sequel has some good ideas, and with a bit more polish, it might have been a contender. As it stands, though, it can't run with the genre's big dogs. — William Harms

PC GAMER 53%
MERELY OKAY

Golf Resort Tycoon II

CATEGORY Simulation ESRB E DEVELOPER Cat Daddy Games PUBLISHER Activision REQUIRED PII 233, 64MB RAM, 3D card WE RECOMMEND PIII 700, 256MB RAM, 16MB 3D card MAXIMUM PLAYERS 1

Another day, another tycoon game. This time it's *Golf Resort Tycoon II*, which gives you the chance to design, build, and run your very own golf resort. Like most other tycoon games, however, *GRT II* suffers from a case of getsboringquick-itis. You have 13 challenges to overcome, ranging from building a certain number of holes and attracting a pre-determined number of golfers to earning a set amount of money. To be successful you must set prices that'll turn a nice profit, and keep your course in trim shape by hiring groundskeepers and gopher exterminators. Regrettably, *GRT II* lacks any real depth, and the gameplay will soon have

you napping. You can't take out loans, and since it takes forever to make money (even on the highest speed setting), nearly every game involves an hourlong lull during which you have to let the game run and run so you can generate cash.

As in *Sid Meier's SimGolf*, you can play golf on your courses, but the poor physics and ball control make it a monumental waste of time. The golfing mode is a zoomed-in view of the course, and you play from a third-person perspective. The graphics, which are decent enough from the overhead isometric view, just don't work very well from this angle.

As is traditional for low-end tycoon games, you have a host of other problems to overcome to get at the slight nuggets of joy. The workers' AI is laughable (they all flock to the same hole unless you micro-manage them), the collision detection in



To keep your course in tip-top shape, water it and kill the gophers.



The golfing mode: great idea, lame execution.

the golfing mode stinks, and the course-editing tools are extremely superficial.

With the excellent *SimGolf* on the market, there's no reason to buy *GRT II* unless you absolutely must have a golf tycoon game and you have only \$20 to spend. — William Harms

PC GAMER 58%
MERELY OKAY

Tactical Ops: Assault on Terror

Another "amateur" mod makes the leap to the Big Leagues

Already one of the most popular mods for *Unreal Tournament*, *Tactical Ops* has now been released as a stand-alone retail product (meaning you don't need *UT* to play it). Though we loved *TacOps* as a mod and applaud the fact that the folks at Kamehan will benefit financially from their creation, *TacOps*' problems prevent us from whole-

heartedly recommending it, especially when you can still download the mod version (which will always be compatible with the retail version) for free.

Taking its gameplay nearly whole-cloth from *Counter-Strike*, *TacOps* is a tactical first-person action

game in which players are divided into two teams — terrorists and special forces — tasked with completing specific objectives, from planting bombs to rescuing hostages. You earn money based upon your performance, and as you gain cash you can buy better weapons, armor, and other implements of death and mayhem.

By and large, the gameplay is a lot of fun. The gunfights are brutal and the weapons have a semi-realistic flavor, forcing you to compensate for recoil and monitor how many rounds are in your clip. That said, the *Counter-Strike* model of gameplay is getting really long in the tooth, especially when compared to the likes of *Day of Defeat* and *Global Operations*. Far too often, *TacOps* has a been-there-done-that feeling that really reduces its long-term appeal.

The 33 levels are set in locations ranging from an oil rig to the Namib Desert. Though some of the maps (like Drought and Verdon) are well-done, too many are overly complicated. The flow of the action isn't as smooth as it should be, and while I love the presence of multiple paths to/from the objectives, this variation often just leads to wild-goose chases. And the fact that it's possible to get lost in some of the levels means that they needed more fine-tuning.

Since it was built on the *UT* tech, *TacOps* benefits from that game's graphical

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY Action

ESRB RATING M

DEVELOPER Kamehan Studios

PUBLISHER MicroProse

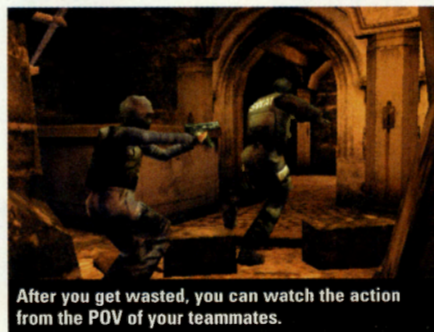
REQUIRED P200, 64MB RAM, 120MB HD, 8MB 3D card

WE RECOMMEND PIII 900, 256MB RAM, 650MB HD, 64MB 3D card, high-speed Internet connection

MAXIMUM PLAYERS 16



That scum shoulda known better than to mess with Billy "Creamy Smooth" Harms.



After you get wasted, you can watch the action from the POV of your teammates.



The highly detailed textures look fantastic, as do the character models. Bleed, fool, bleed!

muscle. The textures, models, and other visual doo-dads are packed with detail and look absolutely spectacular. The smoke effects are well-done, and if you're wounded, you leave behind a trail of blood that the enemy can follow. The network code is rock-solid and lag is rarely a problem, even when you're playing on a server with upward of 20 people.

On the other hand, the bots in both the single- and multiplayer games suck a ton of ass. They'll walk in circles for no apparent reason, and they'll run right past enemy troops without firing a shot. What really blew my mind, though, was that the bots would often stand in one place and refuse to move. In more than one instance, bots on both teams simply stood around until the match clock ran out. What the hell?

As a free mod, *TacOps* is a great extension to *Unreal Tournament*. But as a retail

product, it needs more polish — beyond the problems listed above, it'll occasionally crash to the desktop, and has an extremely annoying bug that sometimes kills you when you start lobbing grenades. Until those issues are resolved, stick with the free version of the game and fulfill your terrorist-killing needs that way. — William Harms

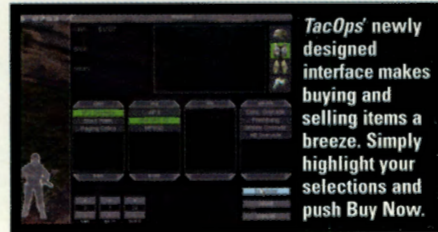
FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great graphics; solid Net code; new interface is well-designed.

LOWS: Bots stink; inconsistent map design; buggy; mod version is available for free online.

BOTTOM LINE: As a free mod, *TacOps* rocks, but as a retail product it falls short.

PC GAMER 62%
ABOVE AVERAGE



The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind



Well worth the wait and the money — even for fans who'll need to buy a powerful new machine

High hopes can come crashing down hard — which is why I was prepared to be disappointed by *Morrowind*. Besides the obvious technical hurdles that come with the game's exceedingly ambitious 3D world, I was half-convinced that there was simply no way the gameplay could be as free-form as promised.

Boy, was I worried for nothing.

With more than 40 hours invested exploring *Morrowind*, I'm pleased to report that my fears have dissolved, and I'm happily absorbed by one of the most immersive first-person RPGs I've ever experienced.

Morrowind is perhaps the most technologically cutting-edge first-person RPG ever,

and naturally it pushes the limits of current hardware, and still keeps pushing. My Windows XP 1.1GHz Athlon system with 256MB RAM and a 64MB GeForce2 card was able to run the game adequately (10fps to 20fps on average), but I did have to turn down some visual and audio settings. Expect to encounter some fairly significant issues, such as occasional fatal crashes, and if



Dwarven ruins are ripe with cool stuff to plunder. Just make sure you're strong enough to fight for it.



Sometimes it's best to let your pals do the fighting, and step in only when needed (and to pick up loot).

you've got a sound card that isn't completely DirectX 8.1-compatible (like mine), you may experience some in-game audio anomalies. (Thankfully, following the tips in the game's readme file solved my sound problems.)

You start as a newly freed slave in the province of Vvardenfell, where the entire game is set. You're unsure of your own past and oblivious to the reasons why the Emperor has released you. At the very outset you're interviewed by imperial guards, and your answers to their questions shape the character you play in the game. Without giving more away, let's just say that the character-generation system brilliantly sets the tone for the level of immersion you can expect from the rest of the adventure.

From there you're pushed to begin following the game's main quest, which paints you as the principal savior in uniting a land torn by political infighting and years of racial hostilities. (Robert Jordan would be proud of the complexities here.) However, right at the start — and throughout the rest of the game — you can choose the pace at which you pursue this core objective. *Morrowind* offers plenty of sub-quests to track down and complete. There are Mage, Fighter, and Thief guilds to join, among others. You can be a champion of good, the vilest of thieves, or something or someone in-between. It really is up to you how you play the game, and ultimately what you get out of it.

Don't let the fact that *Morrowind* is set in one province or that it ships on a single CD fool you into thinking it's a short ride — there is so much to discover and see that I'd conservatively estimate 100 hours of exploring.

You play the game largely by yourself — you have no other party members to micro-manage. On occasion, you'll meet NPCs that will join up for a time. This grouping not only relieves management tedium, but also adds to the immersion. You play just one character, so you really begin to identify with that persona and care what happens to him/her/it.

Really, though, it's the lushly detailed 3D worlds that set a new standard for this kind of RPG. There are day/night cycles, booming thunderstorms, blinding sandstorms, an almost obscene array of flora and fauna (while you can't stop to actually *smell* the flowers, you can pick them), and a commendable level of architectural

VITAL STATS

CATEGORY	Roleplaying
ESRB RATING	T
DEVELOPER	Bethesda Softworks
PUBLISHER	Bethesda Softworks
REQUIRED	PIII 500, 128MB RAM, 256MB RAM, 1GB HD, 32MB D3D card
WE RECOMMEND	P4 1.5GHz/Athlon 1800+, 256MB RAM, 64MB GeForce3 card
MAXIMUM PLAYERS	16

You'll want help dealing with these guys. At the very least, don't engage in melee alone if you're below level 9 or 10.

MORROWIND INGREDIENTS

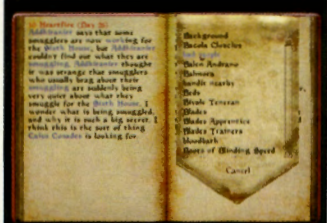
- 3,244 NPCs
- 6 Standard-size novels' worth of text
- 300-PLUS Dungeons
- 316,042 Hand-placed objects
- 480 BILLION Total number of different characters you can play
- 500-PLUS Basic spells
- 150 BILLION Additional spells you can create



Clipping problems, begone!



All that armor but no weapon? Heh heh.



The journal logs conversations clearly.



The landscape is dotted with tombs, but be warned: the inhabitants don't like being disturbed.

variety. After a few hours, *Morrowind* begins to feel like a living, breathing world.

A few factors did detract slightly from the immersion, however. NPCs don't react to the passage of time — you can go into any guild, store, house, and so on at any time of day and you'll find the same people there. I would have liked to see stores locked up at dusk, forcing you to look to black markets for goods if you couldn't wait.

And I would have preferred more autonomy with the NPCs. It'd be fun to see them go about their own business, rather than know you can always find "Gary" down at the "Corner Bar," for example.

Finally, the AI pathfinding is pretty poor. Monsters often get hopelessly confused by an object, such as a rock, directly in their path, repeatedly bumping into it instead of merely sidestepping it. This problem isn't a huge deal, but it can kick your ass when you have an NPC tagging along: in my case, a companion (whose company was crucial to

completing a certain quest) kept walking into a pool of lava and killing herself.

That said, the NPCs do react to your actions and *remember* what you do, which is pretty awesome. For instance, I stole a gem from a trader's bedroom early in the game, and several weeks later, returned to that same trader and sold it to him, forgetting where

completion via the journal interface. There are so many things to do, it does become difficult tracking your progress.

Finally, combat may be too integral a part of the game for players interested mainly in exploration and character development. Throughout the game, nearly every creature, and lots of NPCs, will attack you on sight



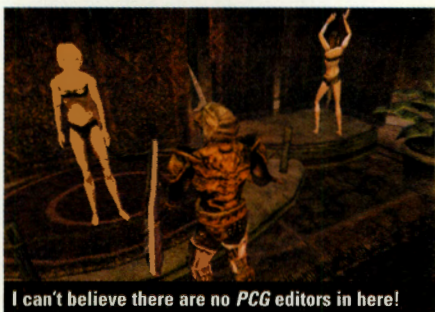
System specs for *The Elder Scrolls: Daggerfall* included a 486DX2/66, 8MB RAM, 256-color VGA, a VLB or PCI bus, and 50MB HD. (PCG rating: 90%, December 1996 issue)

I'd pilfered it from. He recognized the jewel as his, and understandably, all hell broke loose. It was a startling, but pleasant, surprise.

Weirdly, the game is missing a few basic tools that most of us RPGers have come to expect. There's no simple way to annotate the game maps, for example. Nor is there any simple way to sort quests by level of

with no provocation. Thankfully, the combat itself never became a headache for me.

On the whole, my complaints don't even come close to eclipsing *Morrowind's* core goodness. It's revolutionary in its detail and in its free-form nature. I'll still be playing it months — if not years — from now, that's for sure. — Steve Klett



I can't believe there are no PCG editors in here!



When you see cool gear, you simply must have it.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Incredibly detailed, and beautiful, game world. Tons of things to do and ways to play.

LOWS: Some technical issues; no map annotation; quest-sorting can be tedious; a bit too much combat.

BOTTOM LINE: *Morrowind* is the new standard upon which all first-person RPGs will be based.

PC GAMER 90%
EDITORS' CHOICE

hardstuff

THE ULTIMATE MONTHLY GUIDE TO GAMING GEAR

MR. FRICKIN' ARNOLD GOSHDARNIT SCHWARZENEGGER



YOU GUYS know me. I'm a flabby bastard. Not in shape at all. Haven't been for at least as long as I've worked here at *PC Gamer*. I've got manboobs larger than anything the Olsen twins are packing, and that's a fact. (I've looked.) It's hard work sitting on your butt, eating cake and

ice cream all day long, playing *Diablo II* until your fingers grow weary and your jaw starts to ache from all of the teeth-gnashing you do as you kick and click a trail of virtual ass from here to cyberhell and back.

Funny how motivation can creep up on a fella, though, isn't it? Last week I didn't give a care that I could rest soda cans on my love handles or slap my Adam's apple with my own hanging neck skin, but this week I'm Mr. Frickin' Arnold Goshdarnit Schwarzenegger. (And the ladies are starting to take notice.)

Yesterday morning I swam for five minutes, curled two five-pound dumbbells three times each, then did four girl pushups before my knees buckled and I started spitting up blood. Today I'm so sore that I can barely straighten my arms out far enough to lift my quivering gut out over the lip of my hernia girle. Just you watch, though: in another five months I'll be right back in that gym giving it my all, looking all hot and ripped for the sexy womens [sic]. Yup, they just can't get enough of TheVede... Oh fudge. Can one of you reach down and grab my wet Speedo off the floor? Thanks. Now where was I?

Greg Vederman,
Senior Editor

PRODUCT TYPE



Every hardware review now includes a chart that lets you know if a product is meant to be used with an Entry-level, Mid-range, or Dream-class computer, or if the product itself falls into one of these three categories.

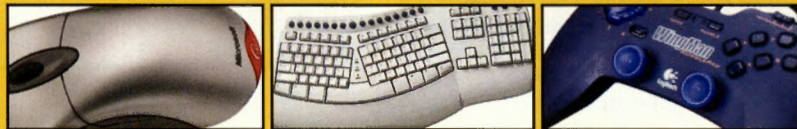
hstrinity

Building a new PC can be a thrilling experience, but picking the wrong parts by mistake can end the joyride in a hurry. Luckily, we're here to help you select the best parts for the job. The prices listed below (obtained almost entirely from www.pricewatch.com) are the lowest we could find as we went to press. (Note: Prices do not include shipping costs.)

■ ENTRY-LEVEL SYSTEM	ROUGHLY \$999	■ MID-RANGE SYSTEM	ROUGHLY \$1,800
CASE		CASE	
300-watt ATX form factor	\$50	300-watt ATX form factor	\$50
PROCESSOR		PROCESSOR	
AMD Duron 1GHz	\$35	AMD Athlon XP 1700+	\$83
MOTHERBOARD		MOTHERBOARD	
Asus A7V-133	\$99	Asus A7V266-E (revision 1.07)	\$60
MEMORY		MEMORY	
256MB PC-133 SDRAM	\$30	256MB PC-2100 DDR SDRAM	\$43
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE		CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE	
Creative Labs PC-DVD Ovation 16x with software DVD decoding	\$77	Creative Labs PC-DVD Ovation 16x with software DVD decoding	\$77
FLOPPY DRIVE		FLOPPY DRIVE	
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	\$8	Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	\$8
HARD DRIVE		HARD DRIVE	
40GB Maxtor 7,200rpm	\$75	80GB Maxtor 7,200rpm ATA/133	\$125
SOUND CARD		SOUND CARD	
Creative Labs Audigy (white box)	\$59	Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy MP3+	\$85
MODEM		MODEM	
3COM #2976 56K v.90 Hardware Modem	\$45	3COM #2976 56K v.90 Hardware Modem	\$49
MONITOR		MONITOR	
17-inch Optique Q71	\$140	19-inch NEC FE950+	\$292
VIDEO CARD		VIDEO CARD	
GeForce4 MX440 64MB DDR	\$85	NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4200	\$199
JOYSTICK		JOYSTICK	
Microsoft SideWinder Joystick	\$25	Microsoft SideWinder Precision 2	\$45
GAMEPAD		GAMEPAD	
Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23	Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
SPEAKERS		SPEAKERS	
Logitech Z-340 — 2.1	\$39	Logitech Z-540 — 4.1	\$60
KEYBOARD		KEYBOARD	
Addtronics	\$15	Addtronics	\$15
MOUSE		MOUSE	
Logitech or Microsoft USB	\$39	Logitech or Microsoft USB	\$39
TOTAL	\$844	TOTAL	\$1,253

■ DREAM SYSTEM

ROUGHLY \$3,000 AND ABOVE



CASE		SOUND CARD	
400-watt ATX form factor	\$100	Creative Labs SB Live! Audigy Platinum 5.1	\$160
PROCESSOR		MODEM	
Intel 2.4GHz P4	\$526	3COM #2976 56K v.90 Hardware Modem	\$49
MOTHERBOARD		MONITOR	
Intel D850MV	\$127	22-inch ViewSonic P220f	\$647
MEMORY		VIDEO CARD	
Twin sticks of 256MB PC-800 RDRAM	\$135	NVIDIA GeForce4 Ti 4600	\$330
CD-ROM/DVD-ROM DRIVE		JOYSTICK	
Pioneer 16x DVD-ROM	\$60	Saitek X45 Flight Control System (USB)	\$79
DVD DECODER		GAMEPAD	
RealMagic Hollywood Plus PCI card	\$50	Logitech WingMan Rumblepad	\$23
BURNER		SPEAKERS	
Plextor 40x12x40 CD-RW	\$130	Klipsch ProMedia 5.1	\$399
FLOPPY DRIVE		KEYBOARD	
Samsung 3.5-inch 1.44MB	\$8	Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	\$40
HARD DRIVE		MOUSE	
160GB Maxtor ATA/133	\$200	IntelliMouse Explorer 3.0	\$50
		TOTAL	\$3,113

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Computer Buyer's Guide Best Buy
Smart Computing Smart Choice

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Plextor 40X12X40 BURN-Proof™ CD-ReWritable Drive
NVIDIA® GeForce4™ Ti 4600 w/128MB Video Card
SoundBlaster Audigy X-Gamer 5.1 Sound Card & Mic
Klipsch ProMedia 5.1 THX-Certified 500W Subwoofer/Speakers
3Com 905 10/100 Network Card & U.S. Robotics 56K Modem
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■ VELOCITY MICRO, WWW.VELOCITYMICRO.COM, 800-303-7866 ■ PRICE \$2,495

ENTRY
MID
DREAM

Gamer's Edge PX 2100a



THIS NEW COMPUTER'S GOT A PRETTY FACE AND THE GUTS TO BACK IT UP

Originally a builder of custom PCs designed to run CAD software for the kitchen- and bath-design industry (exciting, huh?), Velocity Micro shifted gears in 1998 when the founding members of the company realized that there was a lot more to life than tile and porcelain. With the doors to the entire computing world finally open to them, the outfit set about building PCs for all occasions — including gaming.

With such a long history of building highly customized rigs, it probably shouldn't have come as a shock that the Gamer's Edge PX 2100a performs well, but we were pleasantly surprised nonetheless — after all, gamers can be hard to please, and pedigree alone can get you only so far.

The first thing that struck us about Velocity Micro's system is that it uses a case design we'd never seen before. This "Platinum XP" is particularly attractive tower, and it's got some rather ingenious functionality, too. The most obvious is the temperature gauge right on the front of the system. While it reports only Celsius, it's still a handy tool. Better still, if the system is getting a little too hot for your tastes

(you know, because you're doing something evil and wrong like overclocking), one click of the thermometer's "turbo" button will increase the speed of the case's internal fans dramatically (and audibly).

As an extra bonus, on the bottom-right-hand side of the Platinum XP are three additional inputs: two USB ports plus an IEEE 1394 port (aka Firewire) for all of your high-speed-peripheral needs.

After getting in and tinkering with this computer (a very well-constructed and organized system, we might add), we did come across one fairly sizable drawback to the Platinum, which rears its "ugly" head when certain hardware is installed. If you buy a product that includes (or is) an internal breakout box (think: Sound Blaster Audigy Platinum), it's really going to spoil the clean, shiny aesthetic of this tower's 5.25-inch designer bays. To its credit, Velocity Micro clearly warns you of this fact on its

SYSTEM SPECS	
System	
Processor	AMD Athlon XP 2100+
Motherboard	Asus A7V266-E
Memory	512MB OCZ PC-3000 with copper heat spreaders (2x256)
Storage	
Primary Hard Drive	120GB Western Digital 7,200rpm
Secondary Hard Drive	Same (240GB total storage space)
RAID Controller	Promise ATA/100 (on motherboard)
DVD-ROM Drive	Pioneer 16x
CD-RW Drive	Plextor 40x/12x/40x
Expansion	
5.25-inch bays	4 (2 free)
3.5-inch bays	4 (1 free)
AGP Slot	Yes (1)
PCI Slots	5 (full)
RAM Slots	3 (1 free)
Audio	
Sound Card	Sound Blaster Audigy Gamer
Video	
Primary Display Adapter	Visiontek GeForce4 Ti 4600+
Other	
Keyboard	Logitech Cordless Freedom Optical
Mouse	Logitech Wireless Optical Scroll Mouse
Network Card	Yes
Modem	USR 56K
Recovery CD	Yes
Firewire	Yes (1 port)
Warranty	Three years parts and labor, first-year express service, 30-day satisfaction guarantee



website, and also makes alternative system cases available to you should you so desire.

Check the specs above and you'll see that this Gamer's Edge is overflowing with the newest and fastest tech around. Dual 120GB

parts-and-labor warranty, as well as lifetime web and email support. In addition, every Gamer's Edge comes with your choice of Windows plat-



THE THERMOMETER ON THE FRONT OF THE GAMER'S EDGE LETS YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE PUSHING YOUR SYSTEM A LITTLE TOO HARD. HIT THE "TURBO" BUTTON TO SPEED UP THOSE INTERNAL FANS!

hard drives? Athlon XP 2100+? GeForce4 Ti? Oh my! How fast does that really make this system? Well, those of you who are always asking us if there's really a difference between different computer builders will be interested to learn that the Falcon Northwest Mach V we reviewed last month — a machine with the same CPU, video card, and quantity of RAM — is as much as 9 percent faster than the Gamer's Edge at low resolutions. At resolutions you'll actually use (i.e., 1024x768 and above), the gap lessens dramatically, and at 1600x1200, there's literally no performance difference at all between the two systems. So there you have it!

Velocity Micro can build you a system with either AMD or Intel CPUs, and offers a great deal of further customization options, to boot. Each computer comes with a very good three-year

form, a three-ring notebook that includes all of the manuals and drivers for the hardware in your computer, and a system-restore CD that will return your hard drive to like-new condition in the event that you need to reformat.

FINAL VERDICT

HIGHS: Great-looking computer; top-of-the-line components; competitively priced.

LOWS: Wireless keyboard/mouse should be avoided at all costs; somewhat slower than the latest Mach V.

BOTTOM LINE: Add Velocity Micro to our short list of highly recommended premier system builders.

PC GAMER 90%
EDITORS' CHOICE

BENCHMARKS

■ **3DMARK2001**
(Tests run at 1024x768 in 32-bit color with triple frame buffer, 24-bit Z-buffer, compressed textures, hardware T&L enabled, and V-sync disabled)
3DMarks: 10,277
Game 1: Car Chase
High Detail: 53.5 fps
Game 2: Dragothic
High Detail: 105.4 fps
Game 3: Lobby
High Detail: 61.0 fps
Game 4: Nature: 55.9 fps
Fill Rate: 2,496.3 MegaTexels per second
Vertex Shader: 100.2
Pixel Shader: 137.1
Advanced Pixel Shader: 103.3

■ **QUAKE III**
(Tests run in full, 32-bit color with trilinear filtering, max-res textures, compressed textures, and V-sync disabled. Second number is with 2x AA; third number is with Quincunx AA; fourth number is with 4x AA.)
640x480
192.8 fps, 192.5 fps
800x600
193.3 fps, 190.1 fps
1024x768
189.3 fps, 175.6 fps,
177.5 fps, 118.2 fps
1280x1024
168.2 fps, 134.2 fps
1600x1200
136.9 fps, 75.6 fps

■ **MDK 2**
(Tests run in 32-bit color with trilinear filtering, max-res textures, T&L enabled, and V-sync disabled)
640x480: 195.5 fps
800x600: 196.0 fps
1024x768: 196.2 fps
1280x1024: 191.6 fps
1600x1200: 156.6 fps

COMPANY ALTEC LANSING, WWW.ALTECLANSING.COM, 800-ALTEC-88 ■ PRICE \$99 (M.S.R.P.)

ENTRY

MID

DREAM

XA3021 2.1 Speakers

CONSOLE SPEAKERS THAT AREN'T BAD FOR YOUR PC

It's sad, but a lot of people don't spend any time thinking about the speakers they buy for their PC. Mostly, they just want 'em cheap. Altec Lansing's new XA3021 2.1 speakers fit the bill in that regard, but they also sound good for the price and are exceptionally versatile.

Technically speaking, the XA3021s aren't even PC speakers. They're primarily designed to plug into your TV and improve upon the chinsy built-in speakers that reside in even the highest-end boob tubes. As a result, you'll actually need to buy a mini-stereo-to-mini-stereo cable (which should run you about three bucks) if you want to hook the speakers up to your computer at all, since one doesn't come packaged with the system.

So why the hell am I reviewing these darn things? Well, because money's money, and having a good set of speakers that you can move between your PC and your TV whenever the mood strikes is a novel gosh darn idea!

The look of Altec's new speakers is decidedly "hip" and sort of "retro," and they're meant to appeal to a gamer's sense of style, although, come on — we're gamers! What in the hell do we know about style or aesthetic beauty? Anyway, the system packs 40 watts (RMS) of

total power, and while that may not seem like much relative to a set of 400-watt Klipsch speakers, you'll be surprised at the volume and bass response you'll get from these little guys. When hooked up to a TV, I might add, they sound a heck of a lot better than the speakers Panasonic built into my \$1,500 HDTV!

Arguably the coolest part of this little setup is the wired remote that plugs directly into the bomb-shaped subwoofer unit (take that, you nasty Taliban music haters!). This pod has an on/off button, a volume knob, three EQ settings, and two — count 'em, two! — headphone jacks for those times when you *and* your buddy want to rock out without disturbing the rest of the household.

Here's the caveat: several companies (including Altec Lansing) make 2.1 PC speakers that cost roughly half the price of this "multi-function" set. You won't be able to plug those other speakers into your TV, but if all you want is PC speakers, said units may prove to be a better option for you. Bear that in mind when shopping, dear friends.



PC GAMER GOOD 75%

COMPANY HERCULES, WWW.HERCULES.COM, 877-484-5536 ■ PRICE \$499 (M.S.R.P.)

ENTRY

MID

DREAM

Prophetview 720

A FLAT-PANEL DISPLAY FOR GAMES?

I've got a long history of vehemently disliking flat-panel monitors for gaming. Even the really good ones don't refresh quite fast enough to keep pace with quick-moving games without blurring ever-so-slightly — and we're talking about \$799-and-up displays here, people. My question has always been, Why in the wild, wild world of sports would anyone spend even \$499 for a 15-inch flat-panel display when they could buy a very capable 19-inch CRT? The answer dawned on me slowly after traveling to several TFT-laden computer shows and conventions over the past year: CRTs are frickin' heavy! If you move your system around a lot to LAN parties, for example, a nice inexpensive TFT ain't such a bad thing to have!



The folks at Hercules were way ahead of me. The new Prophetview 720 is perfect for gamers on the move. At 15 inches, you might think the 720 is a bit too small at first glance, but really, because it's perfectly flat, you'll almost certainly think that you're looking at a 17-inch CRT.

Given the \$499 price, I wasn't expecting any frills, and I didn't get any. Don't bother looking for a digital, DVI input — the Prophetview 720 is strictly analog, and it plugs into the back of your video card the same way any other monitor would.

TFTs, unlike CRTs, have one "native" resolution that they operate at optimally. In this case, it's 1024x768. In Windows XP, that setup limits your

resolution choices to a slightly blurry 800x600 or an exceptionally sharp 1024x768. Games that run in 640x480 will work fine, but resolutions above 1024x768 aren't supported. I'd cry foul over this relatively low native rez if it weren't for the fact that 1024x768 is a perfectly acceptable resolution to work with or to game at — especially if the Prophetview isn't your primary monitor. And hell, even if it is — because, say, you need to save desk space (at a mere 22mm, this TFT gives new meaning to the word "flat") — you'll be very pleased with how sharp text looks and how easy-on-the-eyes web surfing can be.

As inexpensive as \$499 is for an active-matrix flat-panel display, 500 bucks is 500 bucks. So make sure you give the Prophetview a good test drive before you buy, and remember, if you *aren't* going to move your monitor around a lot, and space *isn't* a concern, this money will buy one heck of a nice big CRT.

PC GAMER GOOD 72%

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U.S. Robotics V.90 56K Modem
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Koolmaxx™ Video Cooling System
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-PC Gamer, 2002

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DEAR GREG

THE 10 TECH QUESTIONS I GET ASKED MOST

1 Which video card should I buy?

NVIDIA makes all of the best consumer-level 3D chips on the market right now. This company's got the edge from the low-end to the high-end, and everything else in-between.

Here's NVIDIA's current line, and what you should expect to pay if you shop online (prices don't include shipping charges):

ENTRY-LEVEL (good for today's games, not so hot for tomorrow's games):

- GEFORCE4 MX 420 — \$75
- GEFORCE4 MX 440 — \$99
- GEFORCE4 MX 460 — \$130

HARDCORE (great for today's games AND tomorrow's games)

- GEFORCE4 TI 4200 — \$170
- GEFORCE4 TI 4400 — \$230
- GEFORCE4 TI 4600 — \$315



2 Which sound card should I buy?

Creative Labs makes the very best sound cards. A few other manufacturers make compelling cards, but game developers almost always build their games with Creative cards in mind from the start, so expect robust support.

Creative's newest sound-card line is called Audigy, and it comes in several flavors. Here's what you should expect to pay if you shop online (prices don't include shipping charges):

- AUDIGY GAMER (comes with two full games: *Giants* and *Deus Ex*) — \$75
- AUDIGY MP3+ (comes with MP3 software) — \$75
- AUDIGY PLATINUM (comes with internal breakout box and remote) — \$155
- AUDIGY PLATINUM eX (comes with eXternal breakout box and remote) — \$200

3 Which motherboard should I purchase?

INTEL P4-BASED COMPUTER: buy a motherboard that uses one of the following chipsets: D850GB, 850MD, 850MV, D845WNL, D845WVN,

D845HVL, or D845HV. (For details on each, head to www.intel.com/products/browse/motherbd.htm.)

AMD ATHLON XP-BASED COMPUTER: buy a motherboard that uses VIA's KT266A or KT333 chipsets. (For a full list of AMD-recommended motherboards, head to www.amd.com.)

4 How much RAM do I need?

Any system you're playing new games on should have at least 256MB RAM. If you're running Windows XP or Win 2000, consider going up to 512MB RAM to smooth out any remaining rough edges performance-wise.

5 How do I know when it's time to upgrade my machine?

It's time to upgrade when you're no longer happy with your system's performance — not because your buddy tells you that his computer is "way faster." Jumping from a 1GHz CPU to a 2GHz CPU if you've already got a GeForce4 Ti 4600 isn't going to net you the performance gain you're hoping for. Neither will popping a Ti 4600 into a 333MHz PII. Upgrade wisely.

6 How can I find out what hardware is in my computer?

SiSoftware's "Sandra" is a small utility program that gives you in-depth information about the overwhelming majority of parts in your PC. Download it for free at www.sisoftware.demon.co.uk/sandra/.

7 How difficult is it to build my own computer, and what tools do I need?

It's not too hard. The first couple you build will be a little scary, but it's definitely not rocket science. Stay grounded by touching the metal frame of your computer case with one hand while you work. Also, avoid working on your carpet if possible. Follow the instructions that come with your hardware and you'll be fine. The only tools you should need are a Philips-head screwdriver and your wits.

8 How can I best troubleshoot my computer?

Don't rush! Make one change at a time until your problem is solved. If your system isn't booting, for example, don't pull out your CPU, AGP and PCI cards, and RAM all at the same



time! Slow and steady until you've singled out the problem.

9 How can I benchmark my own system?

I use *Quake III*, 3DMark2001 SE, and MDK 2 to benchmark video cards and systems. You can download a free version of 3DMark2001 from www.madonion.com. I run the default test with one change — I enable triple buffer, which won't affect the score much on most systems. Benchmarking with MDK 2 is straightforward, but to get your frames-per-second in *Quake III*, you need to type `timedemo1` from the console (hit the "~" key to bring up the window) before you start one of the game's prerecorded demos (I use `demo1`). Once the demo loop has completed, enter the console again to see your score.



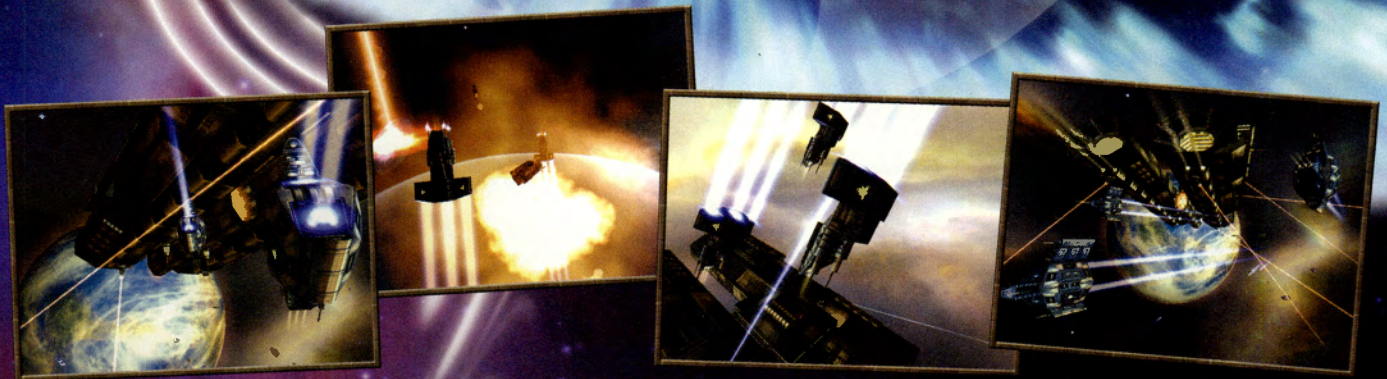
10 What are your thoughts on overclocking?

A few years ago, when people were struggling just to keep their games running at 24 fps, overclocking made a lot of sense to me. These days, however, people seem to want to overclock anything and everything just because they can — which I think is a bad idea. You don't *need* to overclock your new GeForce4 Ti 4600 or your new Athlon XP 2100+ — to me, the performance gains aren't worth the risk of instability.



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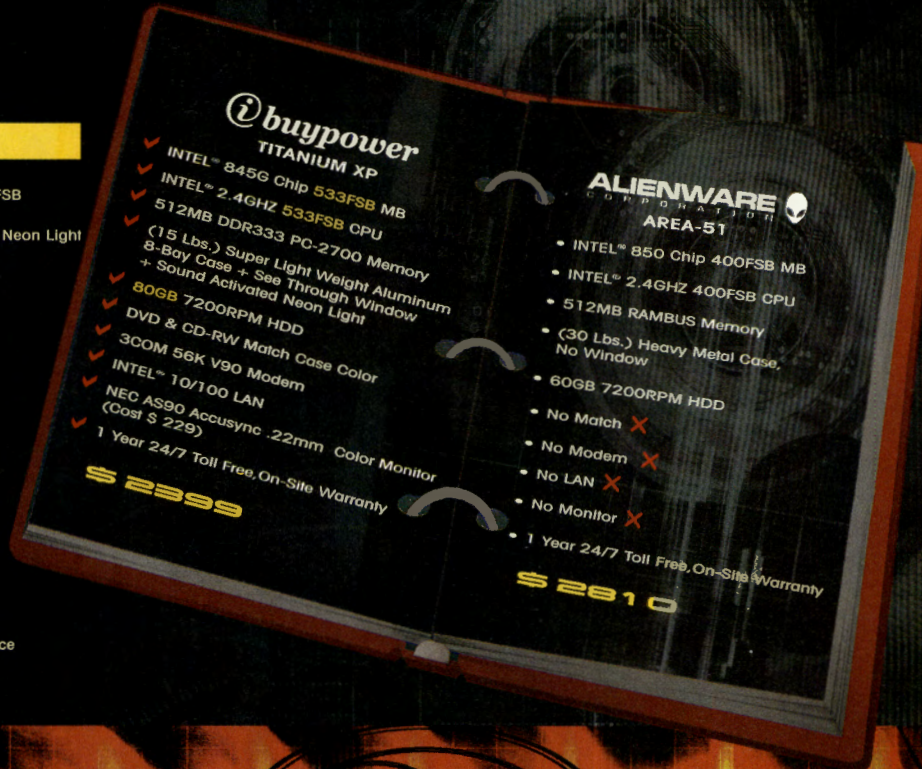
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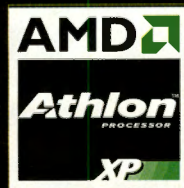
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The Odd Mods

Played-out game lost its zing? Kick it up a notch with a bizarre mod.

All good games must come to an end. It's a fact of life, like death, taxes, and weepy chick-flicks on Lifetime. But until that dark day comes, I vow to wring every last byte of perverse pleasure out of 'em. Thankfully, there are some sick puppies out there in mod-land. Here are the odd mods that make the baby Jesus cry.

HALF-QUAKE: Though the name suggests otherwise, this single-player mod for *Half-Life* has absolutely nothing to do with *Quake*. It puts you right where you belong, though: trapped inside a criminal institution for the mentally disturbed. Escaping means facing an impossibly difficult onslaught of monsters and diabolical traps right out of the nightmares of sadists. As the read.me file says, "If you can't stand it any longer, cry." Get it off this month's disc or download it from [ftp://www.detonation.org/pub/hquake.zip](http://www.detonation.org/pub/hquake.zip).

SUPERHEROES: This mod began with *Superheroes* for *Quake* and is now in its third iteration for *Quake III* from the folks at Team Spoon. In addition to *Quake III*'s classic weapons, you can select three "superpowers" before you begin each match. Some merely ape *Quake*'s power-ups (super-speed, invulnerability), but others are more mutant-friendly (psionic blasts, bionic claw). Get it off this month's disc or download it from www.planetquake.com/super3/.

And if you're a hardcore comics fan, check out the *Superman* mod for *Unreal Tournament*. It's totally unauthorized, but it lets you fly around maps as an errant Kryptonian-with-an-attitude blasting foes with heat vision. Get it from www.zencoder.com.

MATTEL JET FIGHTERS II: Action figure-sized, you're set inside a house that should look familiar to anyone with rugrats (or 30-



Ronald McDonald goes to hell? Nah, it's just Acid Arena.

year-old "collectors") in this *Unreal Tournament* mod laden with toy jets. Battle in hallway dogfights or peek in the closet for a ride on a toy that would look an awful lot like a TIE Fighter if calling it that wasn't copyright infringement. Get your copy at www.zencoder.com.

NUDE PAYNE: Hey gals and 1-in-10 guys, there's finally a nude skin just for you! While most of us have been chasing after Lara's taut, glistening thong muffins [huh? — Ed.] for years now, you've been left out. Well, fair's fair, so I give you *Nude Payne*, a patch for *Max Payne* that lets you replay the game looking just like your dad after a bender: wearing your mom's open bathrobe and "going commando" ...if you know what I mean. [Oh, we hope you don't. — Ed.] Unfortunately, this mod's former home, www.maxpaynecenter.com, recently shut its doors, so finding it may require some diligence.

PEACES LIKE US: Until *Half-Life 2* comes along, *Peaces Like Us* (be nice — the author's Japanese) is around to continue the *Half-Life* saga. The scientists have made friends with the Xen aliens and they now work in harmony. Gordon Freeman is once again called upon to save alien and scientist alike when the military invades at the crux of a new experiment. What the hell do they want? Find out on our disc or download this mod from www2d.biglobe.ne.jp/~ks_wca/.

TETRIS FOR uWINDOWS: That's right: now you can use the raw power of the *UT* engine to play archaic puzzle games. Don't know why, don't know how, don't ask, don't tell...this stupid little mod plays a mean game of *Tetris* in your *UT* interface. Get it at www.planetunreal.com/mutation/tetris/.

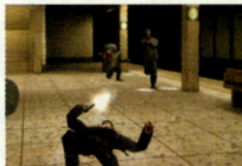
ACID ARENA: AA is the single weirdest mod to ever nearly strip me of my sight. The Killing Box is normally a drug-free zone, but I'm still having flashbacks from this freaky trip for *Quake III*. There's no way I can describe it...just play and see for yourself. Get v. 1.0 from this month's disc or download v. 2.0 (which should be available now) from <http://acidarenaweb.free.fr>.

Know about a mod odder than these? Hook me up! Drop an email with details to killingbox@pcgamer.com.



MOD OF THE MONTH

Okay, okay — I'm sorry about that *Nude Payne* thing. To apologize, we've put the newest version of the *True Matrix Mod* for *Max Payne*, version 1.5, on this month's disc. (You can also get it from www.maxpayneheadquarters.com.) Forgive me now?



MY GAMES OF THE MONTH: 1. FREEDOM FORCE, 2. JEDI KNIGHT II, 3. DUKE NUKEM: MANHATTAN PROJECT, 4. NUDE PAYNE (JUST KIDDING), 5. ANARCHY ONLINE

alternate lives

Steve Klett



RPG Past vs. RPG Future

Can an old-style quest compete with a newbie's floor-'em factor?

After a 10-hour-long marathon of *Dungeon Siege* — easily one of the most heavily hyped “role-playing” games in recent memory — a peculiar thing happened: I found myself itching to return to another new RPG. One that received zero hype, and whose graphics are on par with the NES of yore.

That RPG is one to which I devoted too little attention last month: *Geneforge*. The game's developer, Spiderweb Software (creator of the *Exile* series, and also

Avernum), is a throwback to the early days of PC gaming, when dozens of “two guys in a garage” outfits churned out passionate shareware titles that were low on special effects but high on charm, inventiveness, and depth.

Officially a “one guy and two women” outfit, Spiderweb's been in business since 1994, and *Geneforge* (www.spiderwebsoftware.com/geneforge/index.html; \$25 for full version) is its 14th title. The game casts

I told you this game was old-school. But *Geneforge's* humble face gives way to a deceptively enjoyable role-playing game.

you as a Shaper — a powerful magician with the ability to generate life and use it to suit your needs (read: create an army of monsters to do your bidding). Alone on a mysterious island, you gradually learn more about your powers, and glom on to an evil overlord's plot to steal your skills and use them for world domination.

Okay, so the plot's not so unique, but the gameplay element of monster-creation is cleverly employed, and the story is remarkably open-ended. You don't have to thwart the evildoer's plans; you *could* help him. *Geneforge's* skill/experience system, inventory, and narrative style are all classic RPG fare, and they're solid enough that I soon forgot about the game's technical shortcomings and became lost in its world.

This experience flies in direct contrast to my time with *Dungeon Siege*, whose technological virtuosity seduced me but whose gameplay leaves me wanting more depth — a sensation similar to what I felt with *Diablo II*. Once the engine's wow-factor wore off, *Siege* had surprisingly little beneath the surface for me to sink my teeth into.

For me, the almost-simultaneous release of these two starkly different RPGs has served up two valuable lessons. One is to remember that when it comes to RPGs, the focus must always be on the core element of *gameplay* — something I think all of us in the gaming press forget from time to time. Second, and more importantly, we need to seek out (or at least not ignore) the “little” guy asking us to check out his “little” game, because it might just be *bigger* than we think.

Let me know your impressions at alternatelives@pcgamer.com.



Dungeon Siege is a great choice for new players interested in embarking on a role-playing career, but it left this veteran player wanting more complexity.



desktop general

In the Trenches of World War I (At Long Last!)

THE “GREAT WAR” OF 1914–1918 has inspired some classic aerial-combat games (*Red Baron*, *Wings of Glory*) and a few outstanding naval sims (*Raider Operations*, *Action Stations*), but virtually nothing about the gigantic land campaigns.

While such awe-inspiring [and sickening — Ed.] bloodbaths as Verdun and the Somme make for fascinating reading, they simply don't “game out” very well because they all followed the same static formula: titanic artillery bombardments followed by massive frontal assaults that traded a few square miles of worthless lunar wasteland for the lives of many thousands of hapless infantry. There was no room for dashing maneuvers or brilliant tactics — just grinding, murderous attrition, which pretty much takes away any “fun” for the wargamer.

But veteran game designer Frank Hunter (*The American Civil War* and the ongoing *Campaigns of La Grande Armée*) thinks he's devised a concept for a Great War game that's dynamic, fast-moving, and intellectually stimulating, while remaining faithful to the historical realities of the period.

Hunter credits great historian John Keegan's semi-revisionist account of the subject (in his monumental

William Trotter



book *The First World War*) for igniting his interest in designing a playable game about an “un-gameable” conflict: “I decided that while a huge stalemate *did* develop, it didn't *have* to, nor did it have to last four years,” he says.

In *Trench!*, each player can improve his chances by increasing his command skills through experience, by “forcing” R&D projects, or by pulling off diplomatic moves.

“No player will be able to just sit in his trenches until 1918 and then magically deploy storm-trooper units,” explains Hunter.

Trench! plays out in turns representing a month or a season, and the maneuver elements are corps-sized, giving the game a grand strategic scale. A lot can happen, back and forth, during each turn, and each player gains or loses momentum by how shrewdly he maximizes the potential of the cards he plays from the options the computer gives him.

That's right: *cards*. As Hunter describes it, this charmingly retro system keeps any side from doing everything at once. “The cards represent major components for waging war: massive bombardments, strategic movements, sudden withdrawals, new weapons, intelligence, and so on,” he says.

Trench!'s graphics are simple but elegant, and if the design gels as planned, the game should be fast-paced and intense. To track its development, go to www.adanacommandsystems.com.

— desktopgeneral@pcgamer.com



The Good Get Better

Months after release, a thrice-patched *IL-2 Sturmovik* rules the skies



The 1.04 patch for *IL-2* tosses in some new flyable planes, including this experimental Soviet BI-1 jet fighter.

Soon after it was released last November, Ubi Soft's historical combat flight simulator *IL-2 Sturmovik* quickly established itself as the new standard-bearer for World War II prop sims. Even long-standing *European Air War* and *Jane's WWII Fighters* stalwarts had to concede that Oleg Maddox's aerial magnum opus of the Russian Front had reset the bar for combat flight sims so absurdly high that it was quite fruitless to dispute the game's aerial supremacy.

The success of *IL-2* has as much to do with the open-door policy of its creator as it does with the sim's exceptional design. Oleg and his Moscow-based development crew didn't just rely on their own well-honed instincts before they set about foisting a new WWII combat sim on an unsuspecting PC gaming public. Long before the sim ever saw shrinkwrap, Oleg and his 1C:Maddox team paid regular visits to key online message boards and forums to outline their new product's key features, and to answer questions and solicit feedback from the enthusiasts that frequent these sites.

The end result was a visionary new aerial-combat title that the sim community could embrace as its very own. This simple open dialogue that Maddox initiated with his core demographic had turned *IL-2* into one of the most anticipated combat flight sims in PC history.

Released only a month apart last year, *IL-2 Sturmovik* and *MS Flight Simulator 2002* both offered detailed and complex representations of their chosen aeronautic subjects. Although the latter wound up getting my vote for *PC Gamer's* Simulation of the Year on the strength of its revolutionary graphics engine and core gameplay features, *IL-2* was snapping at its tail rudder the whole way, and was really only a dynamic campaign away from pulling ahead.

Fast-forward to spring 2002, and the underlying character of each sim is beginning to emerge. Due to the inherent complexity of both products, some minor design flaws were all but inevitable upon their initial release. However, while Maddox has chosen to quash as many of the bugs in *IL-2* as possible with an aggressive series of patches (again, developed with direct sim-

community input), Microsoft recently issued a statement saying that it would not be providing any sort of patching process for the bugs found in *FS2002*, choosing instead to concentrate all of its resources on the next chapter in the franchise.

As I sit here gleefully pounding German armor into scrap metal in my rock-solid "version 1.04" *IL-2* fighter-bomber, I gotta ask: Is it too late to change my vote?

— simcolumn@pcgamer.com

FLYING • BUILDING • MILITARY SIMS • COMMUNITY NEWS



Building on the strength of its remarkable two-way user/developer relationship, *IL-2* just keeps getting better and better.

Cossacks: Art of War



extended play

The Art of (More, Better, Bloodier) War

THE GERMANS ARE A PRECISE, exacting race of obsessive engineer types. As such, they like their PC games to be as micro-managerial as possible. Over in their country, widget-making sims make the cover of PC gaming magazines.

Cossacks was a gigantic success in Europe, coming from German powerhouse CDV. With dozens of features and a slew of addictive complexities, *Cossacks* enjoyed limited sales in the U.S. but earned respectable marks from American reviewers and made a big impact on hardcore (which is to say, German-like) stateside strategy buffs.

Enough so that an expansion was warranted. *Cossacks: The Art of War* adds even more features and complexities to the brew of diplomacy, resource management, and real-time combat. Taking control of a country in Napoleon-era Europe, you forge alliances, raise armies, and then fling hundreds of units into the charnel-house of the musket-and-cannon age of warfare.

New in the expansion: a "peace-time mode" that enables you to operate under truces with AI-controlled nations. Along with the new room for army-building that this change brings, you can also enable pre-selected armies of varying sizes (to begin with a huge army at start, if you wish). Furthermore, you can now start the game with towers and blockhouses, to help you defend against an early enemy rush.

There's also the usual mix of bigger, better, and more. Five new campaigns provide 30 new missions, with forays into Austria, Prussia, Poland, Saxony, and the desert of Algeria. Along with the new terrain type, the maps are *much* larger (some are 16 times the size of the originals!). Denmark and Bavaria are new nations you can control, along with six new ship types for naval naughtiness.

Best of all, though, is the ability to pause the action and still issue command orders. Real-time play is great, but a game with this many options is begging for a pause-time order feature, and here it is. This tweak alone should draw many new players.

Another really cool addition is a global rating system. Online victories can be uploaded to central record servers, earning you titles (captain, field marshal, and so on, all the way up to king) and decorative crests.

When a game sells half a million copies globally, you know there's something appealing about it. American gamers may initially recoil at the thought of a dense Napoleonic real-time epic, but *Art of War* offers accessible new features and a terrific chance to jump in and pick up a fine strategy game.

— extendedplay@pcgamer.com



Daniel Morris

WHEN IN ROME...



JULIUS CAESAR (100 – 44BC)

Used bribes, gladiator contests, and banquets to further his political leadership of Rome. Shattered the Helvetian invasion in a crushing defeat in 58BC. Quelled Gallic resistance, conquering Gaul and adding it to the Roman Empire in 50BC. Murdered in 44BC by a band of senatorial conspirators for political gains.

JULIUS OCTAVIUS AKA: 'AUGUSTUS' (63BC – AD14)

Marched on Rome and forced the senate to accept him as consul at the age of 20. Defeated Marc Antony in the battle of Atium and added Egypt to the Roman Empire in 30BC. Described as one of the most skilled and talented rulers of Rome.

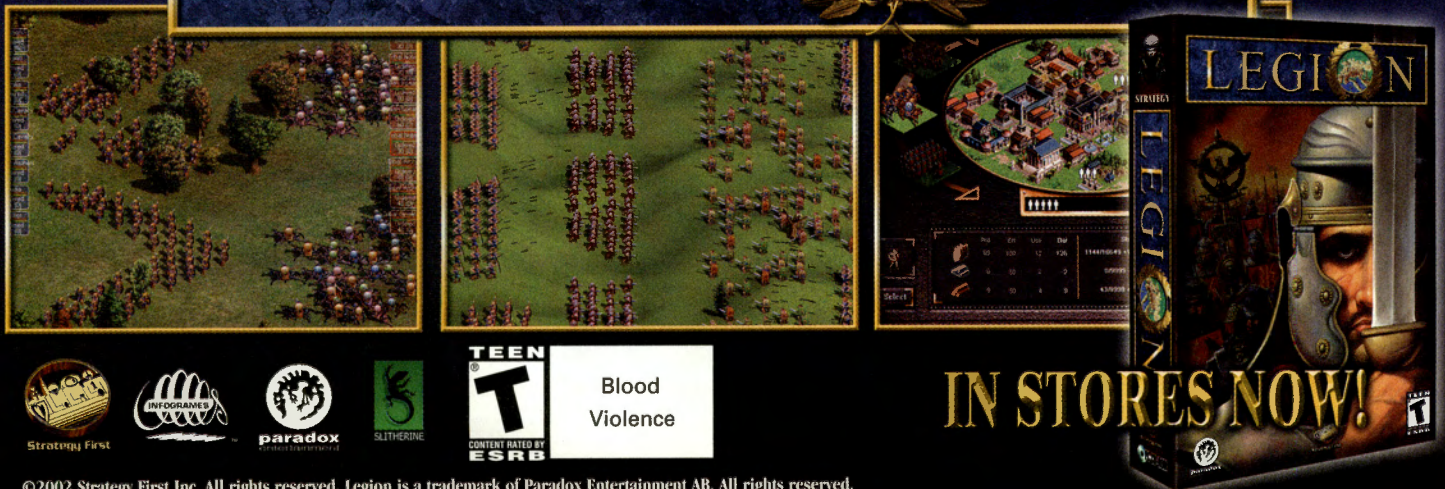


HARVEY JONES AKA: "TACO_GRANDE" (AD1984-)

Amassed a huge army and conquered Southern Italy from his bedroom at 3:00AM. Signed a diplomatic treaty with the Volscians over a slice of pepperoni and a cola. Built Rome in a day not including bathroom breaks. Social life (what's left of it) put on hold until the conquest of Britain is complete

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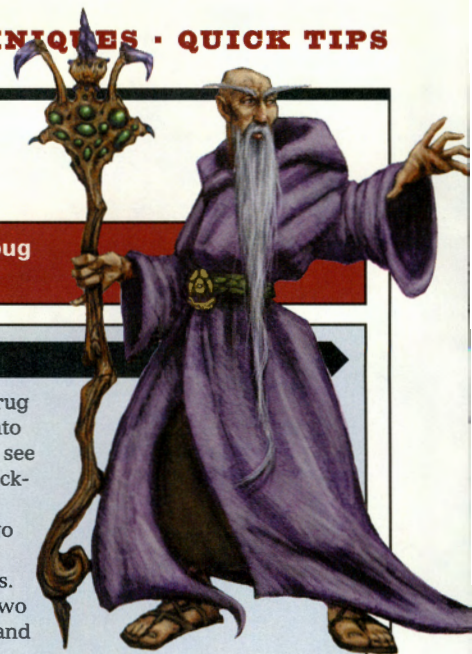


Dungeon Siege

➔ Thanks to Sybex, publisher of the official *Dungeon Siege* strategy guide (by Doug Radcliffe), we have five super-cool *Siege* secrets for you. Read on!

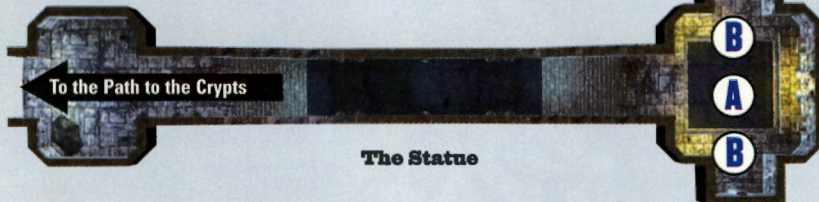


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1 SECRET AREA: THE STATUE

IN CHAPTER 1 (STONEBRIDGE), just beyond the Krug camp, you'll spot a side road that leads deeper into the eastern forest. Walk down the road until you see a statue in the distance. Activate the statue by clicking on it, just as you would an enemy. A secret underground passage opens next to the statue; go down and follow the passage to the dead end, defeating any enemies that impede your progress. At the dead end, activate the second statue (A); two Skeletons appear, one on either side (B). Attack and kill them, then grab the gold and loot scattered around the room. Return to the forest road and resume your course toward the Crypts. (On a side note, you may encounter bright Pixies floating in the forest near the statue. Walk near them to receive a mana boost.)

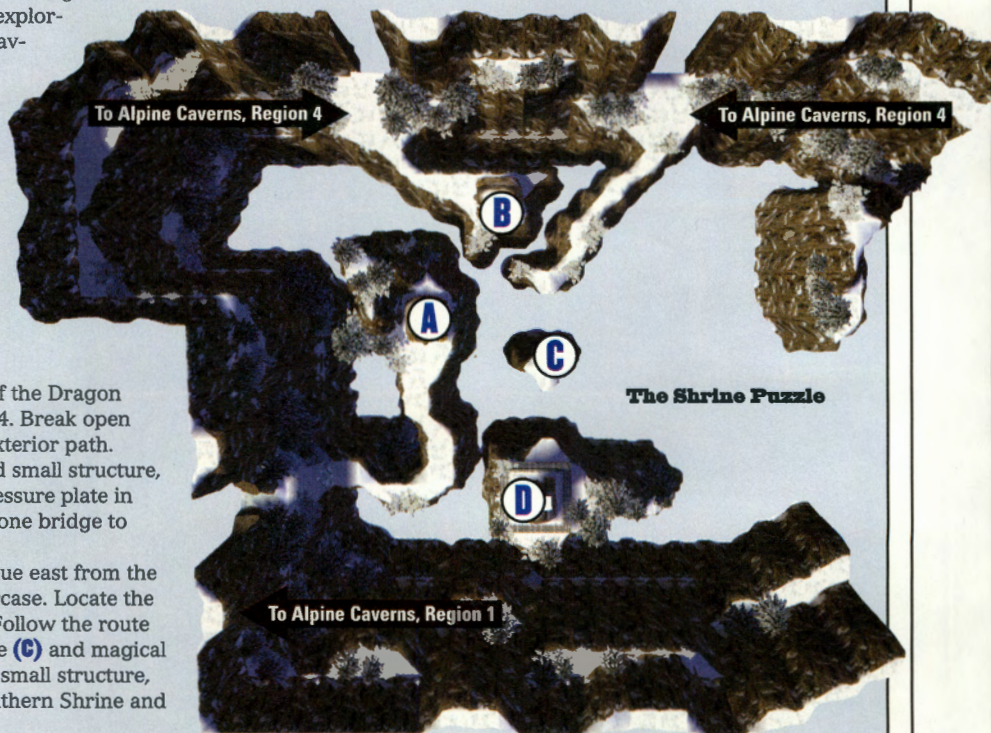


2 THE SHRINE PUZZLE

IN CHAPTER 3 (THE SEARCH FOR MERIK), solving the Alpine Caverns' Shrine Puzzle requires exploring several side routes throughout the caverns. Locate the first side route in the Alpine Caverns, Region 2, just north-east of the Braak's Chest. Follow this route east until you're outside the caverns and battle the small force of Ice Warriors and Ice Archers that guards the route. Follow the path until you reach a small structure, the Western Shrine (A). Step on the pressure plate in the shrine's center, which will cause a spire in the middle of this exterior area to shoot up out of the ground and into place.

Locate the second side route south of the Dragon Skeleton in the Alpine Caverns, Region 4. Break open the secret wall and move out onto the exterior path. Follow the path until you reach a second small structure, the Northern Shrine (B). Step on the pressure plate in the shrine's center to cause a magical stone bridge to snap into place piece by piece.

Return inside the caverns and continue east from the Dragon Skeleton and down a small staircase. Locate the third side route south of this staircase. Follow the route back outside and across the central spire (C) and magical stone bridge, where you'll reach a third small structure, the Southern Shrine (D). Search the Southern Shrine and claim the three valuable chests inside.



3 THE PUZZLE DUNGEON

IN CHAPTER 4, as you continue west across the cavern floor, look carefully for a small, narrow path intersecting toward the north. Take this path toward a small side dungeon. Several groups of Trog guard the dungeon entrance; defeat them, then descend the staircase into the dungeon.

This puzzle dungeon features a series of floor pressure plates that must be

activated to lower staircases and open doors into the next area. Complete the following steps to solve the puzzle dungeon and reach its reward, a unique chest.

1 The first room contains two pressure plates (**A**). Activate both pressure plates to lower a secret staircase into the next room, where you'll encounter Trog Warriors and Trog Knights.

2 Descend the staircase into the second room, which contains Trog Warriors and Trog Knights, as well as two pressure plates (**B**). Activate both plates to open a secret chamber.

3 Enter the secret chamber and discover another pressure plate (**C**). Activate the pressure plate to lower a staircase into the next room.

4 Two pressure plates (**D**) in this room must be activated (using characters or dropped items) to open a secret chamber along the eastern wall. Battle and defeat the room's Trog Warriors and Trog Knights.

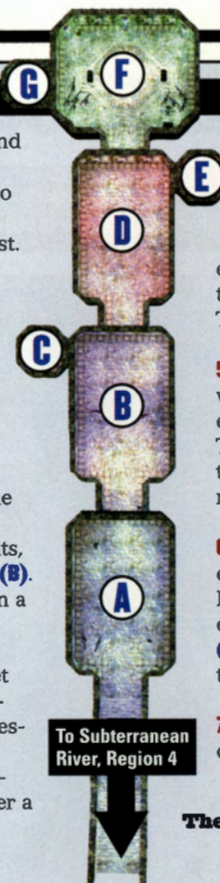
5 Enter the small room (**E**), which houses several containers and another pressure plate. Trigger the pressure plate to lower a staircase into the next area.

6 The next chamber holds several Trog Warrior and Trog Knight guards, many containers, and another pressure plate (**F**). Activate the pressure plate to open a secret room.

7 The dungeon's final room (**G**) contains a unique chest.



Subterranean River, Region 4



The Puzzle Dungeon

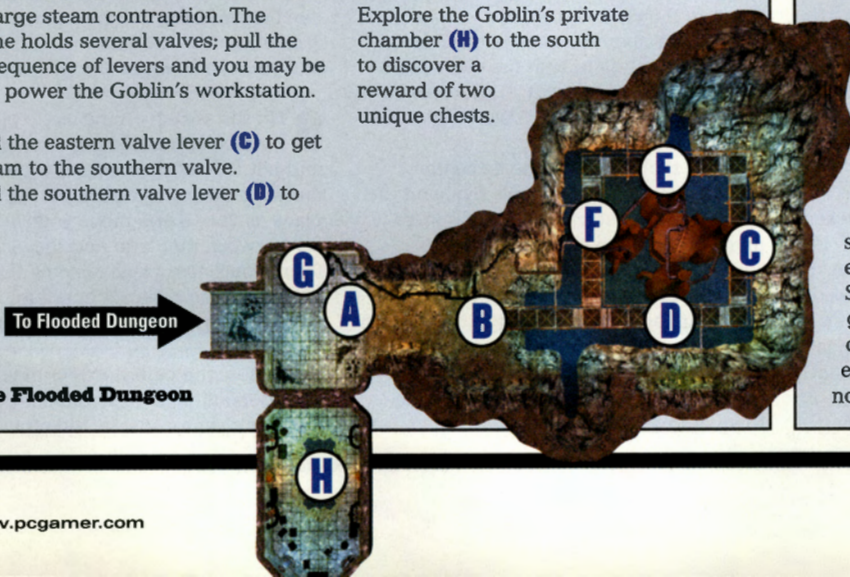
4 THE FLOODED DUNGEON SECRET ROOM

IN CHAPTER 5, explore the nondescript room east of the remains of Thayne's customers and defeat the Unguis, Water Lungers, and Pickers inside. You'll discover a crumbling wall along the eastern side of the room. Destroy the wall to expose a secret passageway. Enter the room and discover that an enterprising Goblin (**A**) set up here for a while, but he seems to have passed away. The lever next to his workbench is inactive — unless, of course, you can power up the mechanism. Walk along the catwalk (**B**) to the east and enter a cavern housing a large steam contraption. The machine holds several valves; pull the right sequence of levers and you may be able to power the Goblin's workstation.

- Pull the eastern valve lever (**C**) to get steam to the southern valve.
- Pull the southern valve lever (**D**) to

- get steam to the northern valve.
- Pull the northern valve lever (**E**) to get steam to the western valve.
- Pull the western valve lever (**F**) to get steam to the Goblin's workstation.

Exit the cavern to the west and return to the Goblin's workstation. If you completed the valve sequence, the workstation will have power. Pull the lever (**G**) and another switch will rise out of the floor. Activate the second switch and a portion of the southern wall will lower to the floor. Explore the Goblin's private chamber (**H**) to the south to discover a reward of two unique chests.



The Flooded Dungeon

5 THE HEDGE MAZE

IN CHAPTER 7, explore the path south of the drawbridge into Castle Ehb to discover a beautiful, and quite rewarding, side area known as the Hedge Maze. This enchanting maze adjacent to the castle grounds has also been overrun with undead creatures. Follow the path to the maze entrance in its northeastern corner. You'll discover many packs of Krug Dog Skeletons patrolling the maze. Move slowly through the maze and combat one pack at a time before moving to the next group. Don't hesitate to pause and rest to replenish your health and mana reserves. Locate a gazebo in a western alcove controlled by a gang of Skeleton Mercenaries. Defeat the mercenaries and claim the two unique chests as your reward. Continue through the Hedge Maze, moving to the southeastern corner, where you'll encounter another gang of Skeleton Mercenaries. Slay this group and claim another unique chest near the fountain. After exploring the maze, turn back north toward Castle Ehb.

Dungeon Siege Multiplay

→ This RPG masterpiece holds endless secrets and surprises. And thanks to developer Gas Powered Games, we've got the locations of some of the trickier ones — plus some expert tips. Enjoy!



3 Once you exit the town, the game will say that you've entered the Quillrabe Canyons. Follow the river to the north until you hit that zone wall. Now head east, hugging the north zone wall. After a few screens, you'll come to a signpost pointing to Crystwind and Quillrabe, as well as a Legionnaire Guard.

4 Next to the guard is an elevator platform switch. Hit it to bring down the platform, and ride the platform up. At the top, hug the north wall again and go west. You'll pass a sign pointing to town and then immediately see another elevator. Ride this platform up.

5 Now head northwest a screen or two, and you'll come across some mobs, including a Green Drake. Directly behind him is a wall. If you have the *Trial of Gallus* book in your inventory, part of the wall will slide away and reveal a new area. Step through.

→ FINDING THE SECRET CHICKEN LEVEL

After you beat the eight-townstones quest in the multiplayer game — done by collecting the eight stones and placing them on the Hiroth circle — the gate to another dungeon will open. In the very first room, the *Trial of Gallus* book is on the ground. It says the following:

*"Climb to the sky on the sunbaked mesa
Give to the moon with the treble stones
Place down the eye of the crystal temple
Gift of the steel from a virgin hand
The final piece within your grasp
A leap of faith convenes his trial."*

This riddle leads to the Secret Chicken Level on the multiplayer map.

You need to get three items to enter the Secret Chicken Level. First, you need a friend willing to host a game. Start up a newbie character in the single-player game, and immediately save. Import that character into multiplay and have him join your friend's game. Get the starting

noob knife that your level 0 character is equipped with.

Next, you need to play a game on the Kingdom of Ehb map. Start in Jeriah's Trading Post. In the cave of the Crystal Caverns is a hidden shrine mini-dungeon. It consists of many rooms in which you have to drop something on pressure plates to hold them down and open doors. At the end is a chest that contains the item Fury's Eye. Take it.

The last item you need is the *Trial of Gallus* book. Again, beat the eight-townstones quest in multiplay to pick this book up off the ground in the Majin dungeon.

1 Now that you have the three items (the newbie knife, Fury's Eye, and the *Trial of Gallus*), start/join a multiplayer game on the map "Utraean Peninsula." Choose the town of Quillrabe to start in.

2 Climb all the way down to the bottom of the village, by the weapons shop. You should be heading east. At the bottom, you should see the exit out of the town, and a river.

6 The game will say that you have entered the Forgotten Mesa. There are no mobs here, so just head straight north. You'll have to use three elevator platforms before you get to the top.

7 At the top you'll see three large gray pressure plates on the ground before a circle teleporter. On the first plate, drop the Fury's Eye. On the next plate, drop the newbie knife. On the third plate, drop the *Trial of Gallus*. The items will turn to dust, and you can now use the teleporter circle.

8 Hit the switch on the circle platform. It'll rise up until it stops seemingly in mid-air. However, you'll see a piece of mesa land off to one side, on the same plane as you. If you move your mouse cursor between that land and the circle platform, your cursor will become the sword (which means action is possible). Walk across the invisible bridge to the land area.

9 Follow the path north until you come upon a little marble building with another elevator inside. Ride that down.

CHEATER'S CORNER



Dungeon Siege

To use the cheats, press Enter to open the dialogue window, type any of the codes below, and then hit Enter again. If a cheat worked, you'll get a message indicating its effect. Note: To nullify most codes, type 'em with a minus sign instead of a plus sign (e.g., once you've typed **+zool**, typing **-zool** will make you vulnerable again).

+zool Makes your party invincible.

+checksinthemail Gives you 9,999,999 Gold.

+drdeath Maxes out your attributes, skills, damage, and armor, letting you do max. damage.

+potionaholic Gives you three Super Mana Potions (2,500 MPs each) and three Super Health Potions (2,000 HPs each).

+faertehtbadgar Gives you a full suit of Badger-enchanted equipment.

+chunky When killed, enemies blow apart into meaty chunks.

+superchunky When killed, enemies blow apart into *more* meaty chunks (cumulative command).

+minjooky Makes character twice as small.

+maxjooky Makes character twice as large (as in the screenshot above).

+shootall Causes area-effect spells to auto-fire. (Doesn't work too well.)

+mouse Adds the mouse cursor.

+rings Enables green character-selection rings in the user interface.

+movie Records a 30-second gameplay movie.

+loefervision Removes fog of war.

+sniper Gives incredible range for all weapons of all skills. (Bows get 100-meter range.)

+resizelabels Larger characters labels.

+sixdemonbag Get six demon-casting spells.

+xrayvision Removes textures, so you see the game in wiremesh (as in the screenshot below).



It took us almost 10 minutes to beat Colonel Norick, but when you do, you get the awesome...



...Chicken Gun! This savage may scoff at its hen-bullets, but believe us — they're lethal.

Head up the path a little bit more and you'll finally come to the secret Chicken Level dungeon!

10 The secret level is a few rooms with oversized chickens inside, as well as a Chris Taylor mini-chicken boss. (Each chicken is named after a person who worked on the game.) After you beat all of them, a wooden door by the boss chicken will become magically unsealed. Enter here to face the last boss of the multiplayer map, Colonel Norick.

NOTE: With two players on Regular and Easy level, the chickens have 7,000 HP, Chris Taylor has 12,000 HP, and Norick has 35,000 HP. With four players on Veteran and Normal level, the chickens have about 17,000 HP, Chris Taylor has around 26,000 HP, and Norick has roughly 76,000 HP.)

You'll find items aplenty here. Every chicken that you slaughter has the chance of dropping Uniques, Rares, and Magical Items, as well as large piles of gold and high-level magic spells. Chickens will almost always drop at least one of each

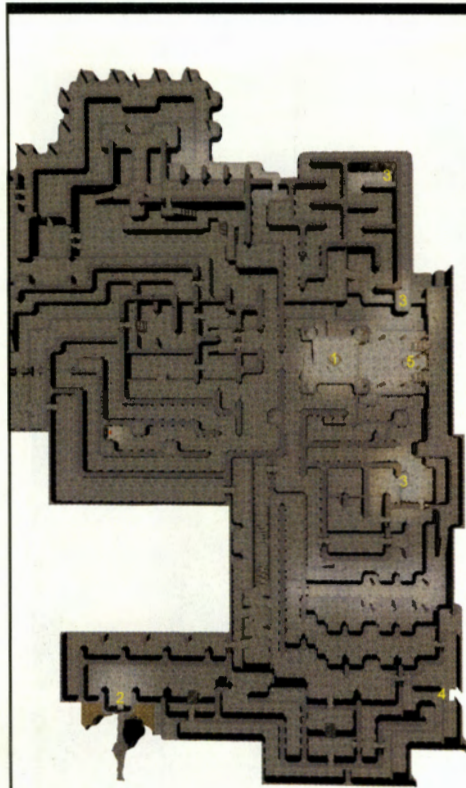
type of equipment (yellow, purple, and blue). The Chris Taylor chicken drops great items with the best magical properties and enhancements. Colonel Norick drops the Chicken Gun, the ultimate long-range weapon. Its stats are as follows:



Chicken Gun
Faster Attack Speed
Two-Handed Weapon
Damage: 200-350
Range: 10 Meters
25 STR & DEX
Requirement

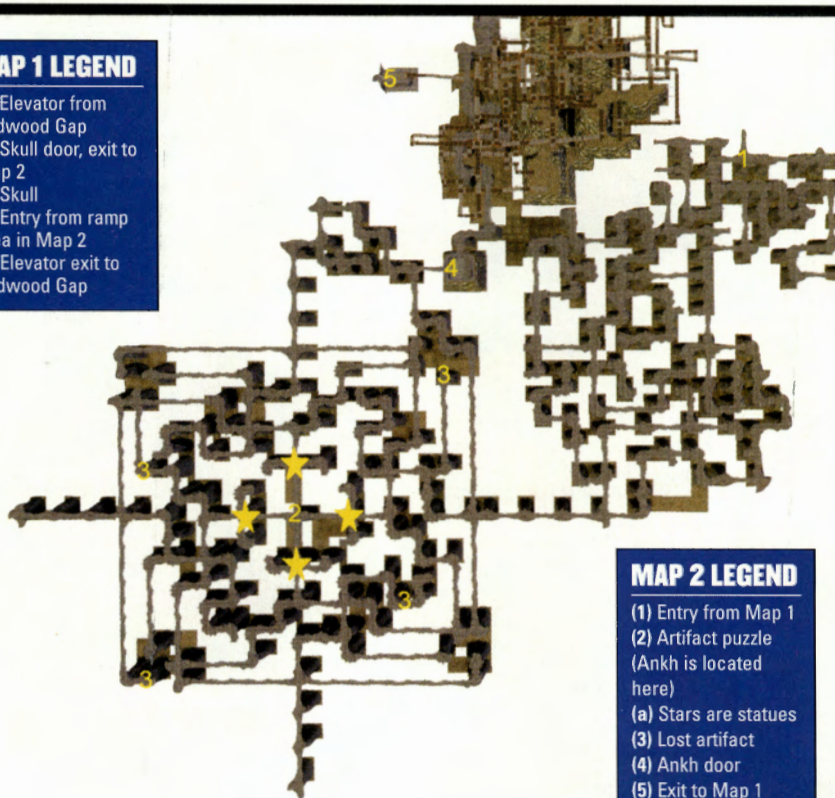
Since you lost all three items upon opening the chicken dungeon, it's best to undertake this level on Elite difficulty. Doing so ensures that the dead-chicken drops will be of the absolute highest quality. The elite lewt equipment's stat-requirement levels are around 60 to 70, so you can still wear them on your high-level normal characters.

If you plan to raid the chickens often, you should probably take the time to dupe the three items needed onto a mule-type character that you can load up anytime.



MAP 1 LEGEND

- (1) Elevator from Redwood Gap
- (2) Skull door, exit to Map 2
- (3) Skull
- (4) Entry from ramp area in Map 2
- (5) Elevator exit to Redwood Gap



MAP 2 LEGEND

- (1) Entry from Map 1
- (2) Artifact puzzle (Ankh is located here)
- (a) Stars are statues
- (3) Lost artifact
- (4) Ankh door
- (5) Exit to Map 1

→ FINDING THE PIT OF DESPAIR

- 1** Enter the Utraean Peninsula and head to the swamp town of Lang.
- 2** Head south from the town of Lang to Redwood Gap.
- 3** Just before the river gorge in the forest, take a left at the wandering merchant Rhod Emell.
- 4** Descend to the base of the pit and ride the elevator down to the subterranean Pit of Despair.
- 5** Pick up the three skulls at the locations indicated by the numbers 3 on Map 1 (shown above left).
- 6** Open Skull door at 2. ("Three conquered foes will in turn conquer me.")
- 7** Proceed through the door into Map 2 (shown above right).
- 8** Pick up the four lost artifacts at the locations indicated by the numbers 3 on Map 2 (shown above right).
- 9** Take the artifacts to the statues located at the stars.
- 10** Activating each statue will open a pathway to the center spire, where an ankh floats.

11 Go to the Ankh door located at the number 4 on Map 2. ("Return that which is lost to the four who bind me, and one will point the way.")

12 Proceed through door into the ramp section.

13 Exit ramp area through door into Map 1.

14 Follow the maze to reward chests and an elevator back to the surface.

→ TAKE (CTRL) OF YOUR GAME

The Ctrl key can be used in numerous ways to make tedious tasks a breeze. For example:

■ **Weapon Configuration:** The usefulness of this ability cannot be stressed enough. Want all your characters to take on melee duties, except you also want one of your casters to heal? Simple! Individually select all the melee slots, and then on your caster, select the heal spell. Now press Ctrl + 1. Now, every time you hit the 1 key, your party will go to this configuration. Need two of those melees to switch to ranged, and your other caster to heal as well? Just set it up and hit Ctrl + 2. Voilà! Now hit the 2 key to make it happen! You can set up to 10 configurations this way by using the 0-9 keys.

■ **Buying, Selling, Trading, and Dropping:**

There's no need to click-and-drag every item you want to sell, buy, or trade from one inventory to another. Just Ctrl-click on the item in the first inventory (or store) and it'll jump straight to the other one (space permitting, of course).

■ **Queue Commands:** You can use the Ctrl key to set a series of commands. Set movement waypoints or queue up attacks. Just hold down Ctrl and click-click-click! **POG**



GAMERS' GREATEST TIPS

■ Cast buffs while standing on the mana shrine (shown above). Also, remember that both life and mana shrines can double as resurrection shrines in multiplayer games.

■ Right-click to attack creatures and you'll ensure that ranged units attack properly — and that you're actually clicking on a creature properly, instead of mistakenly trying to attack the ground next to it.



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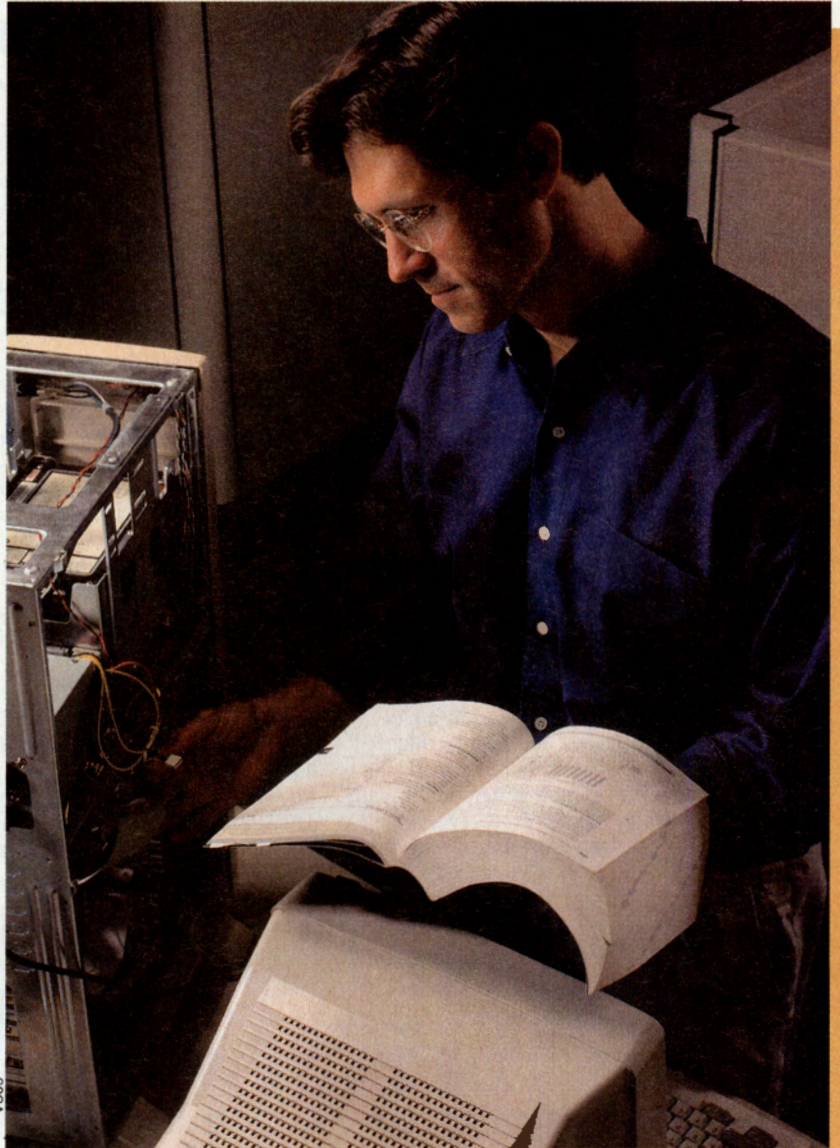
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Grand Theft Auto III

→ Liberty City is teeming with possibilities for an adventurous spirit. Here are the 10 coolest secrets you can find, including two awesome cheat codes.

1 DODO FLYING TECHNIQUES

→ LOCATIONS

First, you must find a Dodo. Go to the airport in Shoreside Vale. You'll find Dodos in three locations here. The first is just past the toll booth at the entrance: continue your path on the road, take the first right, enter the third hangar on the right, and it's in the middle of the hangar. The second is on the same path as the first, past the hangar. Continue on until you see an airplane on your left; just after it, turn left and you'll find the Dodo. The third is on the road that's parallel to the runway. Follow it until you see two hangars on the left. The second hangar contains a Dodo.

→ FLYING

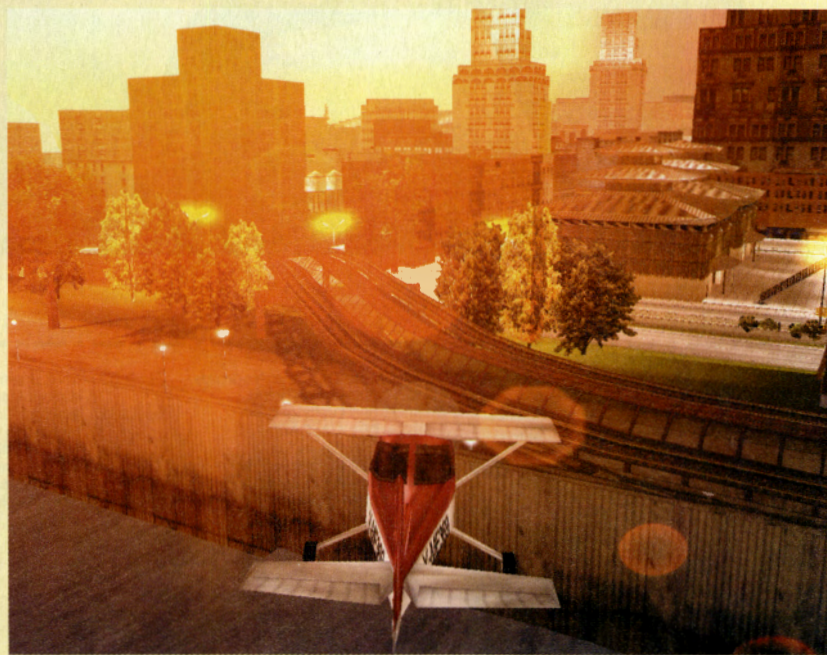
First, get on the runway, start moving, and then hold the down key. When you see sparks emerge from the bottom, let go of the down key and don't press up. Now, select a side view and keep tapping down to keep the Dodo level. This should cause you to rise from the ground and, more importantly, be level. You must continuously press the acceleration key to maintain altitude. If you lose altitude, don't worry — you'll most likely catch a draft, causing you to rise again. Also, if your Dodo shim-

mers, it's because of the wind: tap left and right to regain stability.

When you want to turn the Dodo, keep a few things in mind. First, you can't turn it quickly — holding left or right in one direction will cause you to spin out. Rather, you need to give yourself a lot of time to turn slowly, which you can do by tapping a lot in one direction. If you tap too much, simply tap in the opposite direction to regain stability. When you wish to gain altitude, hold up for two seconds, and then immediately press down to level off. This tactic is great when you want to avoid a building or tower. Be warned: if you try holding up for too long, you'll stall and lose quite a bit of altitude. A safer way to gain altitude is to fly around the coast of the islands, where you'll catch updrafts and avoid obstacles. As you do so, you'll gradually get higher. Just press down to level off.

→ LANDING

First, let go of the gas and stabilize your craft, so it's not shaking. Hold up so the nose is about 45 degrees to the ground. (Tap to maintain this angle.) The Dodo's rear wheels will eventually touch ground; push back to stop. You've landed!



2 FLY THE TANK

First, obtain the tank by entering the Tank code (type `giveusatank` during gameplay). Now enter the Flying Car code (type `chittychittybb` during gameplay). Find an open stretch of road (preferably, the airport runway), and turn the turret backward. Immediately begin to fire while pressing the down key. When the tank starts to swerve, let go of the down key and the tank will begin to take flight. Taking off and controlling it is similar to with the Dodo.

3 SECRET GARAGE OF CARS

A garage has a list of cars on its side. Enter the garage with a listed car, and it'll be crossed off. You can now return to this garage and grab any car. To get here from Wichita Gardens, head straight out to the street. Grab a car and go to the right. Go through the parking lot over the ramp. Go up the winding hill. At the stoplight, go right. When you hit the tunnel, go left. At the next stoplight, go right up the hill and then left over the dam. Once you get to the street, turn left. At the first corner, you'll find the entrance to the garage area on the right.

4 STORE MORE CARS IN GARAGE

This trick is possible on Staunton Island and Shoreside Vale. First, use one car to prevent the door from shutting, which means the car must be sticking out of the garage. Now pack in as many cars as you can; try stacking them to optimize space. This will require some patience and tricky maneuvering on your part. If you're diligent, though, this trick will be well worth the headache!



5 WORKING GIRL

Besides giving you a good time, spending a little time with a prostitute will revive and refresh you. So whenever you're low on health, find a car and stop near a hooker (they're dressed in pink and brown outfits, and yep, that's polygonal cleavage popping out). She will approach, speak, and then jump in. Now drive to a dark alley, or go in between some trees; actually, the best spot is your hideout. The two of you will have a good time and your health will be replenished. You will lose a little money for every second you spend with her, but not that much. If you'd rather not waste the bones, simply beat her up and steal back your earnings. Also note that you should use a decent-looking car to pick up a prostitute: they tend to ignore vans, cop cars, taxis, and so on. Finally, if you pick up a hooker in a convertible and drive to a secluded area, you'll immediately obtain 125 health points and save dinero! Excellent!



6 SECURICAR GARAGE

There is a separate garage beside the import/export building in Portland. When you enter the docks, you'll see three cars, including a Kuruma. Directly to the rear of the Kuruma are some blue garages that are numbered. Drive a Securicar into the second garage (which is unnumbered) to get \$50,000. Unfortunately, for each subsequent delivery you make, you'll receive \$5,000 less.

7 BULLETPROOF CARS



→ SECURICAR

You get the Securicar (shown above) in Portland during the Van Heist mission. Ram the car until the driver exits, and take it back to the garage in Staunton. Use the flying-car trick and hop the gap over the bridge. Park it in the garage and make it explode so that you fail the mission. Make sure that when you do cause it to explode, you don't inadvertently knock it out of the garage. Leave the garage after you fail and return.

→ CHEETAH

You'll find this car (shown below left) at Portland in the Turismo mission. First, get yourself two tanks with the tank cheat (type **giveusatank** during gameplay). Park them on the road just outside of your hideout on the far side of the entrance from the intersection just down the street. Start the mission; head to the starting line and park in the glowing blue space, which starts the race immediately. Rush back to your hideout and wait. After a little time passes, the cheetahs will come roaring down the street. They'll smash



into your tanks, and one will likely fall into your hideout. Once all three Cheetahs have hit your tanks, drive into the hideout and make the Cheetah explode. Use your tank to push the destroyed Cheetah into your garage. Once you have any large part of the Cheetah inside your garage, don't get out of the tank (pull away), or let it out of your sights. If you do, the Cheetah will disappear. You'll now get a message indicating that you cannot fit more than one car in the garage. Now, get out of your car and check the garage: you'll have a brand-new Cheetah!

→ BOBCAT

You obtain the Bobcat (shown below right) on Staunton Island during the "Evidence Dash" mission. First, find yourself a very large truck (a Tank or Barracks OL will work). Find the Bobcat and ram it until it flips onto its top. Now push it all the way back to the garage and use the same method as with the aforementioned bulletproof cars. Be careful, though: if the Bobcat goes off-screen for too long, it disappears.





8 SPECIAL MISSIONS

→ AMBULANCE MISSIONS

Just pick up passengers and drop them off at the hospital. Be careful when driving, though. After you save 50 patients, you'll find an Adrenaline pill at your hideout. Note that the injured can enter your ambulance only from the right side. If you complete Level 12, you can obtain Infinite Run!

→ FIRE-TRUCK MISSIONS

Get a fire truck and begin the mission. You simply need to find fires and extinguish them in a certain amount of time. Press fire to spray water on the various cars. However, be careful not to exit the truck, which will end the mission. If you manage to put out all 60 fires in all three areas, you can obtain the flamethrower from your hideout. There are three fire-truck locations — one for each section of the city:

Portland: Take your first left coming south from the porter tunnel.

Staunton Island: On the east highway opposite the shoreline of Shoreside Vale.

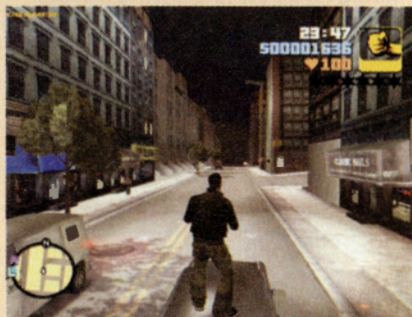
Shoreside Vale: Take the street that goes toward the airport. You'll see the truck on the left, opposite the airport parking lot.

→ VEHICLE-CRANE MISSIONS

This mission will be tedious, but its rewards make it well worth the effort. Eventually, the game tells you that you can use the crane to grab emergency vehicles for cash. Each time you get a vehicle, take it to the Portland docks and park it under the magnet. You'll receive \$1,500 for each vehicle you take there; if you get all seven, you'll get \$200,000, plus pick-ups for each car. Also, you can return to the crane anytime and get any of these vehicles for use. The seven vehicles needed are Police Car, Enforcer, Fire Truck, Ambulance, Rhino, FBI Car, and Barracks OL.

9 CAR SURFING

Either jump on top of a car stopped at a red light, or stand in the middle of the street, wait for a car to stop, and then jump on top of it. You shouldn't have too much trouble staying on top, although at times you'll certainly slide off. Once on top, open fire and let the car take you all over the city. If you want the car to speed up, let off a few rounds on the car you're riding. Just for fun, try experimenting on a variety of cars, like police and gang cars.



10 GET ALL 100 PACKAGES



→ PORTLAND

- 1 Head north and go on to Harwood, to the end of the path.
- 2 Jump off the tracks to get onto the roof of Head Radio Station.
- 3 Go to St. Mark's and get on top of the Amco Gas Station via the street walls.
- 4 Go inside the Easy Credit Autos of St. Mark's.
- 5 In Salvatore's Mansion.
- 6 Go to Portland beach just under Salvatore's Mansion Balcony.
- 7 Behind the building in Hepburn Heights Towers.
- 8 Near the phone in El Burro parking lot.
- 9 In between two trees in Hepburn Heights.
- 10 One block south of the Amco is a small parking lot. Use the driveway to reach the area.
- 11 Climb the rubble and potholes near some buildings in St. Mark's.
- 12 Head to the park in St. Mark's. It's near the back wall.
- 13 Go to Luigi's Sex Club 7 and head to the roof. Go one roof west.
- 14 In same area as the previous package.
- 15 Go up some stairs in an alley opposite Joey's Sex Club.
- 16 In the middle level of the Chinatown subway are some bathrooms.
- 17 Inside the Rush construction in the red-light district.
- 18 Head to the alley in St. Mark's.
- 19 It's in the Tramp tunnel in St. Mark's, near 8-Ball's.
- 20 Jump from the train tracks to reach the roof of the Supa Save in Portland.
- 21 Go to the back alley of Hong Hung in Chinatown.
- 22 Use the stairs to get to the roof of Chinatown.
- 23 Head to the back alley of the Roast Peking Duck.
- 24 Enter the gates of Bitch 'N' Dog Food factory in Trenton.
- 25 Reach the roof of the Liberty Pharmaceutical company in Trenton.
- 26 Head to the Portland docks. Get to the roof by using the stairs of the Colombian ship. Jump to the awning on the next building. Get on the roof.
- 27 In a yard in Trenton. Use the ramp to get here.

- 28** Go behind the fence in front of Joey's Garage.
- 29** Go behind the cement fence facing the mill at Callahan Point.
- 30** Head to the roof of the Sawmill in Trenton. Get up to it by the dirt ramp.
- 31** Go behind the Turtle Head Fish Company. You must have the Fish Van or Garbage Truck to enter.
- 32** Go to the end of the paved pier in Atlantic Quays.
- 33** To the south of Portland is an island you need to reach. You must have the boat to get here.

→ STAUNTON ISLAND

- 34** Go to the Army Surplus Store. It's between the garage and the sea wall.
- 35** Head to the Coliseum. It's behind the rock sign.
- 36** This one is on top of the hospital.
- 37** Go to the entrance of the Stadium.
- 38** Go to the east side of the University.
- 39** Go to the construction site and go to the second-level room inside the building.
- 40** Use the steel beams to get to the top of the small bridge.
- 41** Enter the Colombian garage.
- 42** Enter the construction site.
- 43** Go to 8-Ball's area. There is a garage next to a carpark containing a package.
- 44** Head to the second floor of the carpark.
- 45** Go to the alley by BJ's Deli & Grocery.
- 46** Jump off the winding bridge to the rooftop.
- 47** Under the road tunnel near a ramp.
- 48** Go to the basketball court.
- 49** Go to the center of the median on the drawbridge.
- 50** Go beneath the bridge in the park.
- 51** Go to the end of the south dock.
- 52** Head to the alley next to Callahan Bridge in Newport.
- 53** Go to the top of the stairs at the museum.
- 54** Jump from the pier that's south of Callahan Bridge.
- 55** Go behind the Police Station to the back parking lot.
- 56** Go to the street leading up to the police station.
- 57** Go behind the church.

- 58** End of an alley that's oddly shaped.
- 59** Head to the underground parking lot of Amco.
- 60** Head back to the Amco rooftop.
- 61** Go up the stairs of the glass building in Bedford Point.
- 62** There is a doorway facing an intersection, to the west of number 61.
- 63** Go to the rooftop in the projects.
- 64** Look behind the rocks on the pavement near the pier.
- 65** Go to the projects and behind a building to the south of number 62.
- 66** Head to the underground car park.
- 67** Go to the top of the walkway, which is to the south of number 65.
- 68** Behind the Star Statue.
- 69** Head to the rooftop of the Casino.

→ SHORESIDE VALE

- 70** Head to the west part of the dam.
- 71** Go to the east part of the dam.
- 72** Go to Tower 1 of the dam.
- 73** Go to the helipad in the lower dam.
- 74** Go to the corner of the dam behind the boulder.
- 75** Behind the house furthest west.
- 76** Go to the porch of the house that's the thirdmost west.
- 77** Go to the porch east of the house in number 76.
- 78** Go to the swimming pool in the Colombian mansion.
- 79** Go to the picnic tables to find this one.
- 80** Fall to the roof of the Fudge Factory from the cement walls.
- 81** Look inside the overpass of Cedar Grove.
- 82** Go to the rooftop of the police station.
- 83** Go to Pike Creek behind the building with oil drums.
- 84** Look behind the billboard near the hideout.
- 85** Go to the entrance of the apartments.
- 86** Look in between these apartments.
- 87** Look on top of the blue container that lies east of the hospital.
- 88** Now go and look behind the hospital.
- 89** Go to the roof of the large building with a strange awning. Jump to its roof from the opposite building.
- 90** Go to Pike Creek and look between the garage and wall in Turtle Head Storage.
- 91** Look under the wooden bridge at the Gardens.
- 92** Go to area across airport parking lot.
- 93** Under the wing of a plane in a hangar.
- 94** Look on the ground near the dome at the airport.
- 95** Look under a plane at the airport.
- 96** Go to the front of the airport and look between it and the billboards.
- 97** Go to the bottom level of the subway.
- 98** Go to the helipad of the airport.
- 99** Head to the airport runway near the water.
- 100** Head to the end of the runway.

CHEATER'S CORNER



Spider-Man

Before starting a game, enter the Specials menu and type one or more of the following codes:

- ARACHNID** or **IMIARMAS** Master code.
- ORGANICWEBBING** Unlimited webbing.
- KOALA** All fighting controls.
- IMIARMAS** Level select.
- ROMITAS** Level skip.
- HEADEXPLODY** Bonus training levels.
- GIRLNEXTDOOR** Play as Mary Jane.
- HERMANSCHULTZ** Play as The Shocker.
- SERUM** Play as a scientist.
- REALHERO** Play as a police officer.
- CAPTAINSTACEY** Play as a helicopter pilot.
- KNUCKLES** Play as thug model 1.
- STICKYRICE** Play as thug model 2.
- THUGSRUS** Play as thug model 3.
- DODGETHIS** Do *Matrix*-style attacks.
- FREAKOUT** Play as *Matrix* Spider-Man.
- SPIDERBYTE** Small Spider-Man.
- GOESTOYOURHEAD** Gives Spider-Man a big head and big feet.
- JOELSPANUTS** Gives enemies big heads.
- UNDERTHEMASK** First-person view.
- CHILLOUT** Super-coolant.

NOTE: To play through the game as the Green Goblin without actually finishing the game, just use the **ARACHNID** code to skip to the game-ending cinematic. Then, at the main menu, enter the Secret Store and turn on the Green Goblin. Now start a new game or warp to any level, and you'll play as the Goblin!

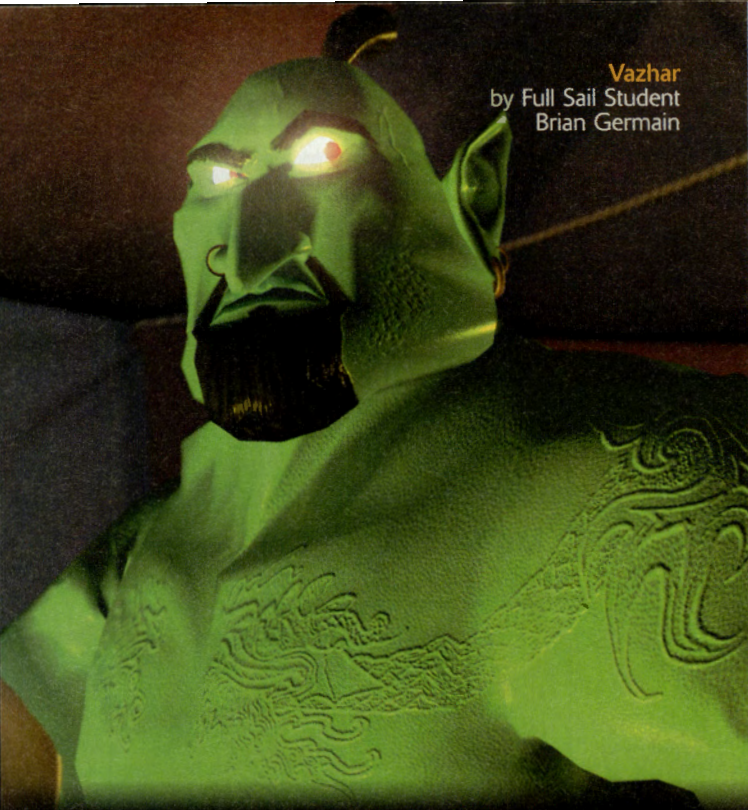
Morrowind

During the game, press ~ to lower the console, and then type **Player->[cheat]**, where "[cheat]" is one of the codes below (e.g., type **Player->TGM** for god mode). Press Enter to activate the code.

- TGM** Toggles god mode on/off.
- SetWaterWalking 1** Walk on water. (Replace the 1 with a 0 to disable.)
- SetWaterBreathing 1** Breathe underwater. (Replace the 1 with a 0 to disable.)
- Additem "Gold_100" x** Gives you "x" amount of gold (e.g., type **Additem "Gold_100" 1000** to get 1,000 gold).
- SetFatigue x** Sets your maximal (and current) fatigue to "x" value.
- SetMagicka x** Sets your maximal (and current) magic to "x" value.
- SetHealth x** Sets your maximal (and current) health to "x" value.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 103





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Magic cards' fantastic art will be faithfully re-created for the online cards.



Magic Gathers Online

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

hindered by the trials of Hasbro, the company that bought WotC for around \$325 million in 1999. "So far, all my commercial computer projects have collapsed at some point during the process — often because some company bought some other company, and that in some indirect way [led] to the dissolution of my project," he told us. But Garfield also attributes the demise of some of these projects to his own decisions, "which tend to have very different revenue models, and to generally resist fitting into existing game boxes."

Despite the millions of Magic players worldwide — and the millions more who are unable to get as involved as they might like — *Magic Online's* huge potential really could be hamstrung by the investment needed to be a real player in the community. Expect the free trial rooms to be packed with eager participants in the early days, but the question remains whether those people will be convinced to plunk down significant sums to play with the big boys.

A gamble? Very much so, both for WotC and the players paying their way into the big leagues. The whole experience had better be worth it.

POG

How Games Get Names

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

the developers come up with pretty good names. It's the senior executive producers who crank out the crap."

For Ubi Soft's *Rainbow Six* series, the publisher is following a theme to ensure customer recognition. *Rainbow Six*, *Rogue Spear*, *Raven Shield* — the "R" and "S" format will continue in future iterations. Brand manager Sean McCann confessed some good fortune in how the names turned out: "The definition of a 'Rogue Spear' as a nuclear weapon in the hands of a suspected terrorist was thought up later on. It was lucky that it fit into the vein of the 'Broken Arrow' sort of codename."

So maybe it's not always an exact science, but companies spend countless hours and thousands of dollars to get names just right. "A name is key to everything about a title," Malamed believes. "*Age of Empires* and *Empire Earth* are examples of good names — they have very descriptive names. I think *Battlezone* is an example of a bad name. [Because it lacked] context, people didn't know what to expect."

Whatever the case, as Ubi Soft Group Brand Manager Helene Juguet puts it, "The naming process hurts."

POG

CHEATER'S CORNER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 101

Bridge Commander

To use the *Bridge Commander* cheats, right-click on the game's desktop shortcut and select Properties. In the Target field, add `-TestMode` to the end of the existing text, outside the quotes (giving you a new string like `"C:\Program Files\Activision\Bridge Commander\stbc.exe" -TestMode`). Now, during gameplay, switch to the tactical (external) view and enter the following cheats:

Shift + K: Kill target.
Shift + R: Repair target.
Shift + G: God mode.

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Last Words

What's the buzz? Who's saying what about whom? The gaming industry is full of words — some crazy, some comical, and a very few inspired. Here's what's being said around the globe about our business, culled from fan-dominated message boards, game boxes, books, and the mouths of babes, boys, and bozos. Enjoy the wit and wisdom of our industry!



HE'S JUST BITTER BECAUSE WE OWNED HIS ASS

"Dearest PC, we have been through a lot together... However, I no longer need you for games."

— Official Xbox Magazine *EIC* (and former PC Gamer whipping boy) Mike Salmon in his Dear John letter to the other consoles, May 2002 OXM

WWF + FIFA = WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?

"dramatic single-player storylines"
— Box blurb for 2002 FIFA World Cup

YOU TALK THE TALK, BUT CAN YOU WALK THE WALK?

"See you guys sometime next March. I'm shooting for 350 pounds and extreme ass-artery thrombosis."
— *Ctthoqqa* on *Morrowind* going gold, from www.voodooextreme.com

MOST TERRIBLE SELL FOR MOST OBVIOUS GAMEPLAY EXPECTATIONS

"Engage in mission-based gameplay with specific objectives for each level."
— Box blurb for *Carnivores Cityscape*

ION STORM — CEREBRAL GAMER'S PARADISE

"Not knowing if you're near the beginning, middle, or end [of a game] is the enemy of drama."
— DX2 lead designer Harvey Smith, on the importance of manageable game lengths

EINSTEIN'S FOURTH THEOREM

"FATTY + MMORPG = DEATH"
— *Scrote*, from www.voodooextreme.com

BEST DIRECTIONS FOR INSPIRING SOCIOPATHS

"In pursuit of power or just for the thrill of the kill, Kain's lust for blood is inspiring."
— Box blurb for *Blood Omen 2*

GUESS NO ONE COULD BE BOTHERED TO SHOW HIM HALF-LIFE OR SYSTEM SHOCK 2

"...no conveyance of ideas, expression, or anything else that could possibly amount to speech. The court finds that videogames have more in common with board games and sports than they do with motion pictures."
— Senior U.S. District Judge Stephen Limbaugh on whether or not videogames are protected by the First Amendment

IT'S A DISGRACE IT MADE IT THIS FAR

"The decision is clearly in conflict with virtually every other federal court decision on this and related issues," group President Doug Lowenstein said in a statement. "We're confident that our position will be sustained on appeal."
— IDSA response to Limbaugh's ruling

GIVE THE FANS WHAT THEY WANT

"I hope they add more units that don't suck crap."
— *Kevin99* on plans for *Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds* — Clone Campaigns, from www.voodooextreme.com

YOU GO, GIRLFRIEND!

"We make M-rated games. If Wal-Mart doesn't want to carry [DX2]...oh well."
— ION Storm studio director Warren Spector, on his commitment to making games for adults

WHAT WOULD SENATOR LIEBERMAN SAY?

"A political supporter of the shaven-headed, raspy-voiced governor has designed a videogame that may feature a virtual Ventura wielding a sword to cut state legislators off at the knees."
— Details about a proposed Jesse Ventura videogame



NEXT MONTH AUGUST 2002 — SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S ISSUE



Don't miss this. We celebrate 100 glorious issues of *PC Gamer* in dramatic style, bringing you fascinating insight into the evolution of our industry since we debuted in May 1994. What were the biggest stories? The highest-rated games? The biggest disasters? We'll even fess up to the games we touted that never got released. Plus, the 10 startling stories we could never print...until now!

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What is life, but a series of problems and resolutions? Without conflict, life would get rather dull, yeah? Allow me to explain. Several weeks ago, my car broke down on the way to work. I feared the worst — a huge repair bill. I took the car to my local service center and paid \$95 for them to look at the car, only to learn that the repair *might* be covered under warranty. So I was forced to have my car towed to my dealer for them to take a look, knowing full well that if the repair *wasn't* covered under warranty, it would cost a fortune. Even though I had been told that I'd be without my car for several days (without a rental), the dealer managed to have my car ready for me the very next day — and the repair WAS covered under warranty! I was in heaven. But would I have been so happy had my car never broken down?



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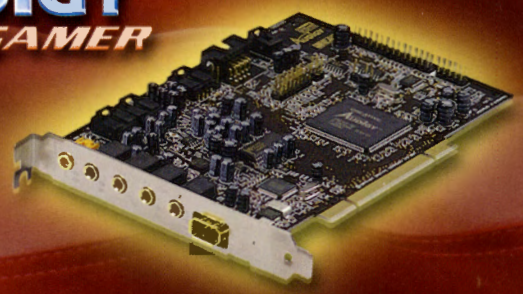
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