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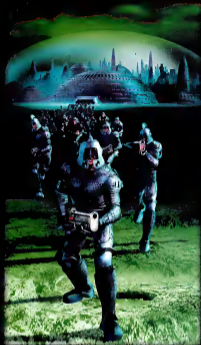
077



WHAT'S YOUR TQUADY DAMAGE?

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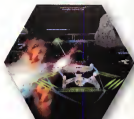


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VARIA
Klingon Heavy Cruiser - Variant:

15

22

22


15


PREV   NEXT



Federation
Heavy Cruiser (H-CU)
4 Photon Torpedoes
2 Phaser 1s
2 Tractors
3 Transporter
See Class 3

 Pledge allegiance in the Klingon Empire, the United Federation of Planets, the Romulan Star Empire, the Hydran Kingdoms, or the Lyran Star Empire.

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Hydran

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DRAKAN

Order of the Flame



"DRAKAN has
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PC Gamer



DRAKAN has
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elegance."
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TRYING TO ANNIHILATE EACH OTHER.

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ACTUAL GAME SCREEN

THE SPECIES -



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CITIZEN KABUTO



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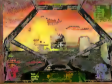
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76

The push to bring multi-player gaming to the masses is on, with **QUAKE III: ARENA**, **TEAM FORTRESS 2**, and **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** hoping to capture the trigger fingers and wallets of John Q. Gamer. After exclusive playtesting of these hellaciously hot titles, we tell you which shooter packs the most deathmatch punch and which will capture the team player flag, and we make our fearless prediction as to how this battle of the titans will wind up.

Blood Feud



COVER STORY

90

Internet Audio for Gamers

Double your pleasure, double your fun: Assail your victims in realtime over the Internet with these cool new headsets. If you're

looking to improve your gaming experience with voice support, our technical gurus will set you straight on which audio solution is best for you.

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Speed Up Your PC for Free!



In a lull between big games? Take some time to tune up your system. From defragging your hard drive to adjusting your swap file and disk cache settings, there are several things Loyd Case recommends for getting more from your system.





Battlezone II

Battlezone II

The sequel to CGW's Action Game of the Year leaves the solar system for more alien-busting, hover-tank warfare. **58**

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Drakan

READ.ME

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- **I-Magic's** WARBIRDS team resigns.
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- **Interview with** COMMAND & CONQUER's "Kane."

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Whether you're a peacenik shooting for the stars or a warlord looking to glid your enemies under the heel of your boot, Terry Cokeman and Johnny Wilson have the info you'll need to put your society on top.



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Advancing the Front Lines...

BATTLE



Battlezone Critical Acclaim:

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of the Year**

**CGW and
PC Games**



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fantastic
gaming
experience."**



93%

**Editor's
Choice
Award**

PC Gamer



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of the Year
Runner-Up**

**Strategy Game
of the Year
Runner-Up**

**Game of the
Year Runner-Up**

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- 1998 Baseball Game of the Year, WarZone.Com
- 1998 Best AI in a Sports game, WarZone.Com
- 1998 Best Hends-On Gameplay in a Sports Game, WarZone.Com
- 1998 Top 10 Sports Games, Sports Gaming Network (only baseball game in Top 10)
- 1998 Top 10 Sports Games, PC Sports Games

"Top-notch arcade play; the best baseball game AI." - PC Gamer

- **TruePlay™ AI** guarantees true-to-life base running, fielding, and managing
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"...all the intricacies of a real game, from line drives to the suicide squeeze and the double switch." - Family PC

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"This game feels like baseball...great gameplay, and super AI.
No other game does these things." - PC Sports Games

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Violence and Gaming

Is Our Hobby Prone to Self-Inflicted Wounds?

I've always believed that there is a healthy, cathartic side to violent games. I've always hoped that they would stave off violence in real life rather than contribute to it. I still believe that, in general, they help rather than hurt. But I have to admit feeling a little shaken by the horrors of late April.

I've been feeling grief for both the victims and the survivors at Columbine High School, that listlessness and numbness that keeps you from being able to concentrate as you should. The grief was exacerbated when I received my subscriber copy of *Computer Gaming World*. I had forgotten that we had shown Max Payne falling down a corridor. It was a subway corridor, and Max is an undercover DEA agent firing at perpetrators, as opposed to innocent students, but the scene looked shockingly familiar. As the subscribers began to receive their copies, many began to suspect that we had cynically created the cover to gain notoriety or shock value from the horrors that the people in Colorado had experienced. Several subscribers admitted being fans of first-person shooters, but felt shocked and disturbed by the image.

If the cover made you feel uncomfortable because it seemed related to the shooting, I apologize. It was simply a bizarre coincidence. We would never have designed a cover based on such a tragedy. These covers were printed and in the mail prior to the shooting in Colorado. Of course, that isn't the real issue.

The real issue is why a national publication would depict a violent act on the cover when, as the analysts have suggested in the wake of the tragedy, computer and video games may be

a large part of the problem. The simple answer is that we don't believe that computer and video games are a large part of the problem. We believe that there is a positive, cathartic effect in simulated violence. Violence in computer games is not intended to encourage the slaughter of unarmed innocents. Computer games are a temporary escape from real life, not tutorials for a tragic end to life. We in no way condone the actions of disturbed minds unable to make such a distinction.

Violence is used in story-telling media to



In film, books, comics, and music, violence is used as graphic hyperbole to raise the stakes and make us pay attention.

reflect those dangerous, heroic situations where someone we care about manages to restore order out of chaos, redress wrong, and give us a sense of hope. In film, books, comics, and music, violence is used as graphic hyperbole to raise the stakes and make us pay attention. Violence tends to work in media because it is something we don't all experience, something far enough out of the ordinary that we can suspend our disbelief.

This does not mean that we whitewash the fact that violent media is a "part" of the problem. Along with thousands of other causes

(parental abdication of responsibility, easy access to weapons, social stigma, lack of unifying moral frameworks, high student-teacher ratio, lack of school security, and so on), violent media can play a role in such tragedies.

Merely because some of us can suspend our disbelief and recognize the unreal nature of computer game violence doesn't mean that everyone is capable of making that distinction between reality and imagination. Young minds and disturbed minds are sometimes not capable of filtering the exaggeration

from the reality. For this reason, *Computer Gaming World* has advocated content labeling (clear, specific, and highly visible on the front of the box) for all games since 1990. We recognize the responsibility of publishers and creators to inform their customers about the contents of their products. We believe this protects freedom of speech and expression in the long run. It also gives parents a chance to monitor what their impressionable children are playing, but does not guarantee that they will do so.

Some readers will rightly point out that the games are rated. Yet, I believe that the current ratings are inadequate. Age-related terms like "Teen" and "Mature" do not inform consumers about what is in the box that makes these games for older kids or adults. Descriptions on the back of the box do little to describe the extent of the violence or adult language. Even with the IASAC rating system's thermometer representing the degrees of violence and language, the descriptions are often printed in minuscule type. Parents need to be able to tell at a glance what is in the products.

Let's change the ratings systems. It's time for everyone in our industry to come together and agree on one universal set of icons and descriptions. Let's help people make informed decisions, and let's take responsibility as an industry rather than having lawmakers and reactive citizens impose restrictions on us.

I'll be waiting with great curiosity, and not a little consternation, as events unfold. *CWJ*

Weak Ratings

The games industry needs to improve the way we rate games. The IASAC system, below, is a better approach because it describes the content in the game—but it's used in less than 5 percent of new games. Most games are rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board), which doesn't offer any content description on the front of

the box. Computer games ratings need to give consumers more information at a glance.

We propose a three-tiered system, perhaps color-coded in green, yellow, and red, which identifies games for a General audience, Parental Guidance, or Restricted. Unfortunately, the Motion Picture Association of America won't allow the games industry to use G, PG, and R ratings, so we'll have to use new letters that identify five categories.

Some may suggest that this system is like the ESRB system (below), but it is not. The ESRB system uses an M for "Mature" which puts a positive spin on content that should be considered "Restricted." Ratings should not imply that the more extreme games are more "grown-up" and "sophisticated" than games designed for everyone.



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JUNE 20, 1972, POUSSIN'S TOMB

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Gabriel and Orice follow a stolen child to this small French village. The riddles and mysteries they will encounter guard the most tightly held secret of all time.

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MARCH 17, 1244. MONTSEGUR

A mysterious treasure is smuggled out of the Cathar fortress of Montsegur. Two days later the remaining "heretics" are slaughtered by the crusaders of Pope Innocent III.

AUGUST 2, 1940. PAS DU LOUP

Adolf Hitler dispatches a small division of soldiers and archaeologists to search for a "treasure of immense wealth" said to be hidden within the valley. The project is soon abandoned.

JUNE 1, 1885. ST. MARY MAGDALENE'S

The ancient village receives a new parish priest, Bérenger Saunière. While renovating the abbey, he makes an unsettling discovery in a hollow column. Soon after, Saunière has wealth enough to refurbish the entire village.

JANUARY 22, 1922. VILLA BETHANIA

After hearing his final confession, a neighboring priest rushes from Saunière's deathbed, refusing to administer last rites. Never sharing what transpired, he was said to have lived the rest of his life in torment.



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Sims Are Dead

But Worry Not, Fearless Readers— It's Just a Product Cycle

You have a great idea for a flight sim, one set to be the most realistic and entertaining air combat experience in years. You've scripted an adventure game with twists that bring readers in as deep as a Stephen King novel, and dialogue rivaling that of John Irving. They're efforts that would get great reviews and make the most jaded gamers happy. The only problem is, you'll never get the funding to make them. The big publishers aren't interested.

At least, that's what discussions with numerous developers at the 1999 Game Developers Conference indicate. Game publishing has turned into a buyer's market, thanks to all the consolidation in the entertainment software market. There are so few companies with the resources to get a product onto today's crowded store shelves that they can dictate strict terms and tight budgets to today's game developers. They want to

produce—for more so than the typical wargame. Add the cost of getting a product to store shelves, and you have games that no many startups can afford to risk supporting.

Good Times, Bad Times

A shift away from sims and adventure games is already evident. EA's Jane's line will be down from three teams to a single internal development group after A-10 WARTHOG ships. Dynamix has shoved the ambitious ACES OF THE PACIFIC 2 in the closet and cancelled X-FIGHTERS, choosing instead to do the more incremental DESERT FIGHTERS title. Activision, bitten by FIGHTER SQUADRON hitting a market already saturated with WWII sims, isn't likely to revisit the genre. And if you heard buzz on the Internet about a huge company developing a hot new sim using a breakaway team from SU-27 FLANKER, stop anticipating. That project has been cancelled.



It's hard to do the flight-sim equivalent of an indie film when they require *Independence Day* budgets.

fund only the games that promise huge returns, or that can be developed on a shoestring and shovelled at the Wal-Mart crowd.

Big Budgets

The "big hit" mindset is why flight sims and adventure games are in danger. With rare exceptions, a successful sim sells about 150,000 copies. That's enough to make a nice little profit, but it's a drop in the bucket when compared to the sales of a game like UNREAL, STARCRASH, or NBA LIVE 99. So when it comes time to fund the next round of projects, the bean counters approve the shooters, real-time strategy, and sports games over the sims and adventures. After all, their job is to make as much money for the company as possible.

Fine, you say, let the big guys do sports and mass-appeal games. Surely some smaller companies will fill the sim niche, right? Look at wargames. Once a genre supported by the major players, it's now backed by smaller companies such as TalonSoft; the developers aren't driving Ferrari's, but they pay the bills while doing something they love.

The problem is that sims and adventure games are among the most expensive games

to produce. Is it time to get depressed and start honing your 3D shooter skills? Nope. The industry has always been cyclical. Every company is sure its shooter or sports title will be the next half-million seller. But for every HALF-LIFE, there are a dozen TRESPASSERS. And as the "mainstreaming" trend widens, the potential for failure of these games will increase, as the shelves fill with "me too" products.

You won't see many flight sims or adventure games in the year 2000. But once dozens of other kinds of products fail, companies will look for new ways to get back on top. They'll dig out some sim designs and adventure stories and we'll be back in business. In the meantime, there'll be plenty of HALF-LIFE and ALPHA CENTAURI knockoffs to play.

You can help. Write the companies (on paper, not via email) and tell them what kinds of games you want. Get your friends to do the same. A few thousand requests for a good Pacific air war sim will get noticed. **CGW**

Denry really wrote this column to get everyone at a sour mood so they'd stop laughing at Jeff Green's insane ramblings. (Chide him at denry_atkin@telcom

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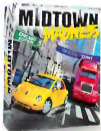
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0-60 (off a skyscraper)? Yes.

Racers, start your mayhem. Grab hold of one of 10 wild vehicles and race through the windy streets of Chicago, where you'll have to deal with tough opponents, alleyways, drawbridges, newspaper racks, tunnels, and the police. Throw in five race modes and over 50 city landmarks, and there are plenty of sights to see. Just don't drive like a tourist.



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- PC Gamer

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- Games.net



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Computer Gaming and Real Violence

The June cover is a very unfortunate coincidence. With the Littleton, Colorado, tragedy very fresh in all of our minds, the image of a ruthless gunman in a black coat in what appears to be a public hallway can only serve to be an unpleasant and painful reminder to many, including myself. The caption, "Playing G.O.D.," only makes it harder to look at. I know what G.O.D. means and you know what it means (Gathering of Developers), but non-game players probably will not, nor will they care. I respect and admire your editorial staff, and enjoy your publication very much. I feel that you show respect for your audience, and demonstrate consistently good editorial judgment.



In the wake of the Littleton, Colorado, tragedy that claimed the lives of 15 people, including the two gunmen, it is eerie that your magazine's cover depicts the upcoming game from G.O.D. with a young-looking character firing off rounds towards the reader. Now I know that neither your magazine nor the G.O.D. developers could've possibly foreseen the tragedy at Littleton, but what I would like to make a point about is the renewed attack on our hobby by those who think the games we play push kids to violence. It is no secret that some of these games are brutal, with shooting, blood, and gore as the order of the day. I am 31 years old, and I admit to being a first-person-shooter addict, but somewhere along the line in my upbringing, my parents taught me the difference between right and wrong. I fear that this is sorely lacking in today's society. We play these games as a matter of escape from reality, to perhaps relieve stress or take on the persona of someone we know we'll never end up being. As parents, friends, and peers, we must continue to remind our children and each other that these, after all, are just games... and not blueprints to test the boundaries of reality.

Rick Perry
Via the Internet

I have been reading your magazine for several years now, and it is with a very heavy heart that I ask you to cancel my subscription. The latest issue of your magazine offended me and my family greatly. My seven-year-old son asked me: "What does this mean... 'Playing G.O.D.'?... Why are you reading a magazine that

While I know that magazine preparation times are long, and this issue went to press many weeks, if not months, before the events of last week, it may be time for the gaming industry as a whole to look pretty hard in the mirror of public opinion and, at the very least, leave these types of images to the inside of products (be they magazines or box art; many of the ads, over which you have no control, are as unpleasant). In no way do I condemn you, other magazines, game developers and publishers, or the gaming public. The games did not cause this tragedy, any more than the guns killed those people. Twisted minds did. If the gaming industry wants to avoid increased scrutiny, regulation, and censorship, however, a little self-restraint may be in order. The time, in my opinion, is now.

Brian Fitzpatrick
Via the Internet

makes fun of God?" Also, when I flipped through the pages of this issue, it amazed me how graphic the violent images have gotten. I wonder if the boys in

Colorado read your magazine and played the horrible games that the computer industry is now publishing. It amazed me when one of your reviewers a couple of issues back said that he was giving a game a lower rating because it was not graphic enough in its portrayal of violence (not enough gilet factor I believe was the way he put it). A few pages into your latest issue, an ad read... "Why not kill your friends for \$50,000? You can always buy new ones." It is this type of insensitivity that will lead many kids to copy the acts of the ones in Colorado. I hope that someone in your industry will help do something to address the violence issue before more kids suffer the same fate as those in Littleton.

John Dyer
Via the Internet

We received many letters about our June cover in light of the tragedy in Colorado. Needless to say, we were shocked and horrified. Like the rest of the world, by those events, and sincerely apologize to anyone who perceived a resemblance between our cover and that tragedy. For what it's worth, readers should know that the image depicts a federal agent, firing a gun in a New York City subway. The cover was created and sent to our printer weeks before the events in Littleton, and it was mailed to subscribers on April 19—one day before

the shooting. Despite that, we apologize to anyone who was offended by the image. Please see Johnny Wilson's editorial this month for more on the issue of violence in computer gaming.

HEROES III Missing Page Debate

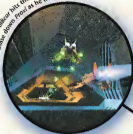
I just got the June issue of CGW. After digesting the latest from Lloyd Case, I headed for the Strategy/Wargames review section and found a page missing. The HEROES OF NIGHT & MAGIC III review starts on page 170, according to the index, but page 170 has an ad for GameSpot on it... It would be fair to say that this is a collector's edition of your magazine.

Gregory Wells
Via the Internet



Yes! It was the special Collector's Edition, worth lots and lots of money! Tell your friends. Actually, this was a mistake made by the people who print our magazine. You can imagine how thrilled we were. In any event, the full review appears in this issue. We apologize for the inconvenience, and we can assure you that kind of mistake of happen again never will.

Koolhaas hits the afterburner to chase down Proud as he tries to escape.



Multiplayer Tip #1

Don't deplete your afterburners cruising around. You'll need them when someone locks on a homer, or when you're trying to catch that guy in front of you. Keep it at 50% or more for that burst when you REALLY need it.

With his Gunboys positioned and ready to attack, Sol Fire hurls Moristo into his deadly trap.



Big Red receives a warm welcome to the world of D3 anarchy.

While Sorainen burns, Bomo switches to Gauss to finish him off. Napalm, the gift that keeps on giving.



A favorite camper-hunting spot. Stick one catches one off-guessed with a homer.



Multiplayer Tip #2

Use napalm to herd players into traps. Players have a tendency to back off from napalm bursts (with good reason). Herd them into a wall or corner and launch a frag missile into the wall next to them. The result is quick death for your opponent.

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On July 29, 1999 gamers from around the world will converge at Caesars Palace™ to sweat it out for \$50,000 cash (the largest tournament cash prize in gaming history). Intimidated by the competition? Join the LAN Fest where you will meet the developers of the game and witness the largest Descent™ 3 party ever. Mark your spot in history. Register now!

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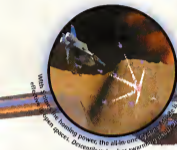
DESCENT 3

\$50,000 CHAMPIONSHIP

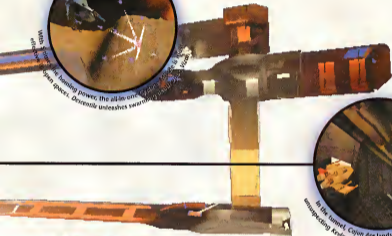
BACK IN 1995, DESCENT SET THE STANDARD FOR MULTIPLAYER GAMING. IT WAS THE FIRST GAME OF ITS KIND TO ALLOW MORE THAN 4 PLAYERS TO BATTLE ONLINE IN 360° 3D DEATHMATCHES. CONTINUING THE TRADITION, DESCENT 3'S MULTIPLAYER ACTION TAKES THE EXPERIENCE TO A NEW LEVEL. FOR THE LAUNCH OF DESCENT 3, WE ARE LOOKING FOR THE WORLD'S BEST DESCENT PILOT. WITH A GRAND PRIZE OF \$50,000 CASH AND THE ULTIMATE GAMING PC FROM GATEWAY™.

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With Vauz, the homing power, the all-in-one Vauz is a true threat in open space. Deceivable unlesshes swarming battles.



In the tunnel, Cojon Ace lands a frag beading an unsuspecting Kerol. Not even full shields can save him now.



Multiplayer Tip #3

Use Vauz as much as possible in outdoor battles so you can keep a good distance from your opponent. Use Nagalm indoors whenever possible and use super lasers against opponents in small tunnels since the lasers are harder to avoid.



SO WHAT IF YOU
KILL YOUR FRIENDS

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YOU CAN BUY SOME NEW ONES.



SoftwareForPCs.com

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Backed Up With Excitement

I just can't wait any longer for the *Flusher Gaming Seal!* I saw the ad in your April issue and seconds later I was purchasing that baby via the Internet. Now I'm waiting for it to arrive. It'll be my throne. Something disrupts my rest, though. I've been wondering... what if... you know... when the *Flusher* is full of... you know... or... what happens if when you jump into the water in *QUAKE 2*? Is there any septic valve or something? Please ask Mr. Lloyd Case for an answer to this technical question. We all know he's the hardware guru—he'll be the right guy for it. Thank you.

Zhek

Via the Internet

Lloyd Case replies: We just learned of some exciting new accessories for the Flusher! Check these out:

DirectIV—Now you don't need to eat, either. Just have the IV refilled periodically and you can keep gaming forever. Contains all the nutrients needed, plus the added boost of a steady dose of caffeine.

Flusher Eyeball Myster!—Do your eyes get tired or dry from looking at the computer all day? The *Flusher Eyeball Myster (FLEM)* will periodically spray your eyes with a neutral saline solution.

Smarty Pants of the Month

I just read the "Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" section of the June 99 issue, where you said that the *Star Wars Episode I* release was a great "way to end the millennium." Technically, the millennium is not ending this year. The modern calendar begins with the year 1 A.D. There's no year 0 A.D. Hence the next millennium starts with the year 2001, not 2000. So technically, we still have one more year of the present millennium to go. I have way too much time on my hands. Bye me.

Hans Gunawan

Actually, Hans, we just that mistake in our purpose, as a science lesson to our readers. Congratulations on finding it. For your efforts you win a free subscription beginning at the turn of the millennium. Way to go, smart guy.

Jeff Green or Stock Reports: Which Is More Boring?

The flame letter that Jeff Green received in your June issue was totally absurd. I want to read about company stock performance about as much as I want to play the new *DEER* in the

HEADLIGHTS HUNTER or **BABY HARP SEAL**. *HUNTER* games are sure to come to a Wal-Mart near you soon. Jeff deserves a big raise and a cable modem for his efforts.

Jim Fox
 Via the Internet

Jeff Green responds: *Hi Dad!* Thanks for writing in.

Every month there is something that drives me to get to the end of each wonderful issue of *CGW*, and that is the very last page! That page contains the words of the Socrates of games. Ron, if you think this page is boring, that is because you don't "get it." If you want stock quotes use your Internet access. There would be no good in posting stock quotes in a magazine written well ahead of time. The words that Jeff speaks come from the heart of a gamer wise beyond his time. Greenpeak is informative, intellectual, and cracks me up every month! ... *CGW* saves the best for last.

Give me my Greenpeak!

Chris Skans
 Via the Internet

Jeff responds: *Hi Mom!* Thanks for writing in.

I would first like to respond to Ron Pierce's letter in the June issue. The back page is one of the most interesting and fun pages to read in the entire magazine, and it's a damn good magazine. I often find

myself turning first, not to the table of contents to see what the features are, not to the reviews page to see what games are being reviewed, and not to the gamer's edge section to find out the way past my latest roadblock, but to your editorial. Your article never fails to bring a smile and a chuckle to me. Ron, however, is wrong or just doesn't get the point. Your articles do have a point and a great point at that. They're about being proud to be a gamer, and loving being a gamer. ... I can always relate to what you say. Keep up with the amazing work and that wonderful sense of humor. Thank you for making me proud to be a gamer.

Vern Ritter


Via the Internet

Jeff responds: *Hi Grandma!* Thanks for writing.

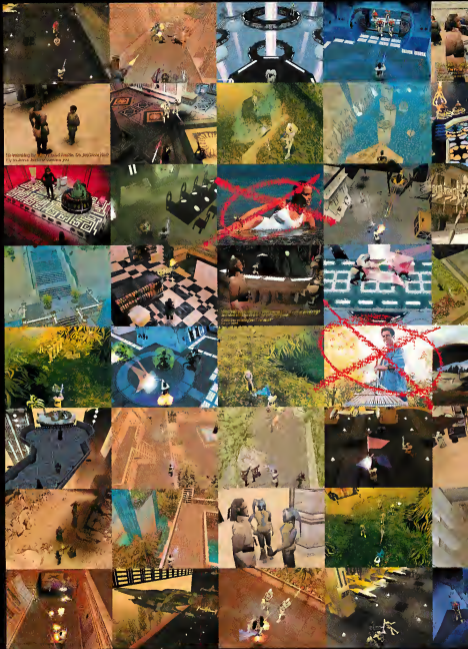
Dep't. of Corrections

Gene Simmons does not own the rights to produce a *Max Payne* movie, as we reported in our June preview of *MAX PAYNE*. It's still up for grabs if you want it, Mr. Woo.

STARCRASH: INSURRECTION, one of the authorized *STARCRASH* expansion packs, is made by Atachi New Media Corp. of Toronto, Canada.

A Jedi Knight, likely Yoda, is shown in profile, wearing a dark, hooded robe. He holds a glowing green lightsaber in his right hand, which illuminates his face and the surrounding area. The background is dark and out of focus.

A Jedi Knight must remain focused.
Mastery of the Force requires
that all unnecessary activities be
purged from daily life.



En attendant de voir les autres images, on peut dire que le jeu est très amusant et que les graphismes sont très bons.

Le personnage principal est un héros qui se bat contre les forces du mal.





Prepare to immerse yourself in the epic adventure that is *The Phantom Menace*. As the central character, you will journey to all the stunning locations of Episode I, where you are destined to play a decisive role in every key event. All-consuming? Yes. But then, there's no such thing as a part-time Jedi.



www.lucasarts.com/products/phantommenace

www.starwars.com

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3D accelerator hardware required for PC version.



ON THE CG-ROM

Dragons, Robots, and X-Wings

DRAKAN: She's beautiful and dangerous, and she's got some serious moves. What sets her apart from other third-person action heroes is that her soul mate is a 20-foot-long, fire-breathing dragon.

There's a gigantic world full of stunning scenery for you to explore with this dynamic duo, but it won't be a dragon-walk in the park. There are plenty of monsters afoot—and in the air—and they're hell bent on cutting your adventure short. You'll have to complete various side quests and use your head to get through this level. So fasten your eyeballs, keep your brain in the full upright position, and get ready for the next step forward in action/adventure gaming.



DRAKAN

GENRE: Action/adventure

EXECUTABLE: \drakan

Explore the first level of this exciting third-person adventure by dragon and on foot.



Video Clips

Battlezone II
(named: mairaw) in the root directory
Starfleet Command

Toolbox

Half-Life:
Team Fortress Classic

Additional July CD Titles

MECHWARRIOR 3

GENRE: Action/space sim

EXECUTABLE: \mech3

Choose from four different mechs, and let loose in some instant action missions.



KINGPIN

GENRE: Action

EXECUTABLE: \kingpin

Try out the first level of this controversial first-person shooter with an attitude.



X-WING ALLIANCE

GENRE: Action

EXECUTABLE: \xwing

Fly a cousin of the Millennium Falcon in a sample mission.



STARSIEGE

GENRE: Action/space sim

EXECUTABLE: \starsiege

Get your feet wet with a couple of single-player missions from the human campaign.



ROLLER COASTER TYCOON

GENRE: Strategy

EXECUTABLE: \vcrt

Take over the management of one of four different amusement parks.



RE-VOLT

GENRE: RC Racing

EXECUTABLE: \revcgw

Race one of three remote-control cars on the streets and sidewalks of the suburbs.



MAGIC & MAYHEM

GENRE: Real-time strategy

EXECUTABLE: \umagic

Try a single-player level or limited multi-player games in this light-hearted RTS.



APACHE HAVOC

GENRE: Helicopter sim

EXECUTABLE: \hapachehavoc

Fly either the U.S. Apache or the Soviet Havoc in a battle over Cuba.



BEAT DOWN

GENRE: Strategy

EXECUTABLE: \vibeandown

Command your own street gang in a ghetto turf war.







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EMPIRES²**
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Knights.

Castles.

Joan of Arc.

Oh my.

www.microsoft.com/games/age2



Microsoft

SCOOP!!!

Half-Life: Opposing Force

Experience
HALF-LIFE
Through the
Eyes of the
"Evil Empire"

HALF-LIFE not only garnered a batch of awards last year but also delivered a message that scientists can kick marine butt when forced to. But it did have the military guys doing some cool tricks—like rappelling from skylights—that the scientist protagonist, Gordon Freeman, couldn't do. Now, thanks to Gearbox Software, you'll be able to experience the game from the other side of the battle—as a marine—in the upcoming HALF-LIFE expansion pack, **OPPOSING FORCE**.

Fresh from the cancellation of **PRAX WAR**, the Gearbox team was ready to handle another military-theme game, and HALF-LIFE developers Valve Software gave them their blessing to do the expansion pack. Since the expansion game's time frame is the same as that of the original HALF-LIFE, Gearbox's Randy Pitchford (lead designer) has been meeting with key Valve personnel like Marc Laidlaw (writer) and Harry Teasley (design and mod guru) to make sure that **OPPOSING FORCE** fits in with the original game.

The expansion will bring in seven new weapons and a whole new race of aliens taking part in the invasion of Xen. Gordon Freeman's trusty crowbar has been replaced by a pipe wrench capable of shattering the large, unbreakable crates from the previous game. Also, much like the original game's snarks, there will be another alien-turned-weapon: those pesky barnacles that waited up in the ceiling to pull you or your friend up into their mouths with their tentacles. Now you can carry one around and use it as a biological grappling hook on both people and walls. As for new enemies, you will discover another race of aliens, dubbed Race X, who become involved in the whole Xen/Border Worlds conflict.

The design team is adding such new features as two-way radios for marines; they're also allowing marines to cut down doors that are in their way and letting players rappel down from heights. While the Gearbox crew isn't promising new multiplayer modes, they've tapped their contacts in the 3D industry and come up with choice designers to prepare some multiplayer maps. A HALF-LIFE death-match level made by levelord? We can't confirm, but it's not a stretch.

We'll take a closer look at the title at the E3 show, but we're already plenty excited about playing HALF-LIFE's bad guy. — *Therry Nguyen*



There will be a host of new NPCs, such as this environment-friendly scientist, and more security guards.



CGW Updates 3D GameGauge

For a long time, 3D graphics performance testing was a black art in this industry. There were no established testing procedures that could accurately measure 3D performance with actual games and yield reliable data. In 1997 CGW introduced 3D GameGauge, a collection of Direct3D and OpenGL games to be used for application-based testing. 3D GameGauge measures the frame-rates a graphics card generates in six different 3D games and reports a number for each one; we used the total number to compare one card's performance against another. You've seen 3D GameGauge numbers reported in CGW whenever we review 3D cards and systems, and we've received a lot of reader mail prating 3D GameGauge and offering some great ideas for improving it. Well, a long time just got better.

So it is with much pomp and circumstance that we're proud to announce 3D GameGauge 2.0, the 1999 version of 3D

GameGauge. It has some pretty cool stuff, including an increased test resolution of 1024x768x16 and a much better genre spread, including shooters, sports, flight and space sims, and driving titles. New games in 3D GameGauge 2.0 include Valve's HALF-LIFE, Interplay's DESCENT 3, JANE'S WWI FIGHTERS, POWERSUDE, Epic Games' UNREAL, EA Sports' MADDEN 99, and Rage's

EXPENDABLE. And because many readers requested it, this year's final 3D GameGauge score will be an average of the

games' frame-rates rather than a sum. That way, the final score looks more like a typical frame-rate you'd see in a game, and makes more sense.

Look for 3D GameGauge 2.0 to make its print debut next month in our 3D card roundup featuring new hardware from nVidia, Matrox, 53, and 3dfx. And as if that's not enough, look for even more information about 3D GameGauge at its new online home at www.3dgamegauge.com.
— Dave Salvatore



5, 10, and 15

Years Ago in CGW

What We Were Writing About While You Were in Diapers

15 Years Ago

Johnny Wilson reviewed the surprisingly fun **PREZIDENT BLECT** in our August issue (there was no July issue that year). Try as he might, he couldn't stop the Gipper from rolling over the demos and landing a second term of office. "It wasn't a great deal of fun to run Mondale against Reagan under historical conditions," Wilson wrote. Apparently Jesse Jackson didn't fare so well either. Fifteen years later, we were rooting around for an update that would allow us to run Johnny Wilson against Dan Quayle in 2000.



10 Years Ago

Dur July 1989 issue featured an ad for a game called **OMNICRON CONSPIRACY**, which painted a pretty picture: "You'll be

tempted with cheap booze, wild sex and mind-altering drugs. You'll be chased across six planets by crazed religious cultists, vicious droid assassins and horny

women. You'll have the time of your life." Promises, promises. That's what they told us when we moved to San Francisco, too.

5 Years Ago

Back in '94, before **QUAKE** was even a twinkle in his eye, we had started to see the light and were practicing to "be Romero's bitch." He didn't have a "Testosterona" yet like his boss, plim-daddy Carmack, but we were blowing smoke up his rear end anyway for being a top-notch level designer and "Deathmatch Diety." When he actually starts making games again, we promise to stop making fun of him...as long as they don't suck.



News Blurbs

Recent Developments in the Computer Gaming World

Violent Computer Games Under Attack

Computer gaming is under attack once again as lawmakers, psychologists, and others debate the relationship between violent games and real acts of violence among teens. In April, the parents of three slain Kentucky teenagers filed a \$130 million lawsuit against a group of game companies and other media outlets, blaming the influence of media violence for inspiring the December 1, 1987, incident in Paducah, Kentucky, in which a 14-year-old boy brought six guns to his high school and opened fire. The boy's computer, seized by police, contained a number of games, such as **DOOM** and **QUAKE**. Named in the suit were Activision, Activision, Apogee, Atari, Capcom, Eidos, GT Interactive, id, Interplay, Midway, Nintendo, Sega, Sony, and Squaresoft.

As we went to press, the horrific massacre at Columbine High School in Colorado prompted Pennsylvania state senator Jack Wagner to introduce legislation making it an offense to sell or rent violent video games

(as determined by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board) to minors under age 18. Similar proposed legislation is also on the table in Arkansas, Washington, and Minnesota. Computer Gaming World hopes to cover both the news and viewpoints surrounding this deeply complex story in upcoming issues.

WARBIRDS Developers Fly the Coop

On Friday, April 23, a resignation was tendered by the entire Grapevine, Texas-based I-Magic Online development group. A team member told CGW that although slated to relocate to Interactive Magic's North Carolina headquarters, they decided instead to stay in Texas to form their own game design company, Playnet. A source close to I-Magic told us that the parting is amicable, and that the Grapevine group was working with I-Magic and former MPG-Net staffers to ease the transition of development to the North Carolina offices. Still,

ONLY A SELECT FEW IN THE GALAXY
HAVE FLOWN THE *MILLENNIUM FALCON*.



AND UNLESS YOU REACH THE FINAL BATTLE, IT WILL STAY THAT WAY.



A rival family imposes peril on the future of your livelihood. The evil Empire's presence is looming. Your only hope for survival is to join the Rebel Alliance™ in epic Star Wars conflicts. As full-scale galactic battles begin, you will be called upon to command Rebel starfighters, including X-wings and other new spacecraft. You and up to seven other Rebel

players will clash with Imperial fighters in spectacular 3D missions. Finally, if you're worthy, you will find yourself in the cockpit of the legendary *Millennium Falcon*, flying against the massive Imperial fleet in the climactic Battle of Endor. Ultimately, it will be your agility, resolve and combat skills in these maneuvers that will determine your destiny. Not to mention, the fate of the entire galaxy.



Send notices to: egw@pipeline.com

A-10 Warbird Jane's EA	Q3 '99
Age of Empires II: The Age of Miracles	Q3 '99
Amber Eyes Elite	Q3 '99
Asin & Miles Expressive Motion Inferno Inc.	Q4 '99
Baldur's Gate: Enhanced Edition Sierra F/X	Q4 '99
Ballistics 2 Ashford	Q1 '99
Baseball Anticipation	Q3 '99
Championship '99 Baseball	Q1 '99
Civil War Generals 2 TopWare/Strat	Q3 '99
Clan Wars Adventures Midway	Q3 '99
Command & Conquer: Rise of the Red Tails/Maxwell	Q3 '99
Database for Henry: Elite	Q3 '99
Dart 6 Gold 2 Ashford	Q3 '99
Duke 3: Duke's Palace Quest SWN 2 Sierra	Q3 '99
Dynasty Warriors 2	Q3 '99
Edible El Escorial	Q4 '99
Egyptian Empire Hit/Media Interactive	Q3 '99
Evolutionary Revolution	Q3 '99
Flash Point Interactive High	Q3 '99
Fight Unlimited III EA	Q2 '99
FLY 6.0 G.O.	Q3 '99
Galaxy Flight 3 Sierra Studios	Q3 '99
Gladius Interplay	Q3 '99
Heavy Metal F.A.K.K. 2 G.O.	Q4 '99
Hitman and Dangerous Terrain/Take 2	Q3 '99
High Heat Baseball 2000 200	Q3 '99
Indiana Jones: Infernal Machine LucasArts	Q3 '99
Intolerance '92 Ashford	Q3 '99
Jane's F/A-10 Jane's EA	Q4 '99
Kingpin Interplay	Q3 '99
League Gamma Microsoft	Q4 '99
Medias 2000 EA Sports	Q3 '99
Midnight Overkill Neovision	Q3 '99
Nice Guyz G.O.	Q3 '99
Northlander II MicroFree	Q3 '99
Outlaw Soccer Interplay	Q3 '99
Metal Pathway Psygnosis	Q3 '99
MO Army Empire	Q3 '99
Myth Collector 3 Sierra Stud.	Q3 '99
NASCAR Racing II Sierra Sports	Q3 '99
Need for Speed: High Stakes EA	Q3 '99
Nordicus G.O.	Q4 '99
Outlaw Soccer	Q3 '99
Outcast Infogrames	Q3 '99
Power Soccer 2000 EA	Q3 '99
Flamewar: Tournament Interplay	Q3 '99
Tales of Attack: RPG Simulations	Q3 '99
Prince of Persia 3D Real Orb	Q3 '99
Quake III Arena 3D Real Orb	TA
Ra*Tribe Acclaim	Q3 '99
Supreme Core Novotell	Q3 '99
Settlers III: Quest of the Amazonas Blue Byte	Q3 '99
Steven Spielberg II Interactive High	Q3 '99
Championship Baseball	Q4 '99
F-16 Stealth 3 EA	Q3 '99
Soldier of Fortune Ravens/Activision	Q3 '99
StarCraft Digital Art/Microsoft	Q4 '99
Star Trek: Klingon Academy Interplay	Q3 '99
Star Trek: New Worlds Interplay	Q3 '99
Star Trek: SL/Next Gen... Quidvid/Interplay	Q3 '99
Terminator 4 Binary Workshop	Q3 '99
Tekken Neovision	Q4 '99
Town Defenders II Video/Sierra	Q4 '99
Total Annihilation: Kingdoms Creative	Q3 '99
Warfare Assaulters Origin EA	Q4 '99
Demigod: The Massachusetts Activision	Q4 '99
Warhammer 40K: Rise of the Blood Ravens/SSI	Q3 '99
Warlords: Polytech 330 EA/Real Orb	Q3 '99
Warlord: ASG Games	Q4 '99
Wheel of Time GT/Legend	Q3 '99
WWE: WWF Wrestling Peak	Q4 '99
Wings of Destiny Psygnosis	Q3 '99

News Blurbs (continued)


this means significant updates of WARBRDS and DAWN OF AGES are unlikely for a while, while new developments come up to speed on the code. A group at I-Magic had been working with the

WARBRDS code for a now-shelved retail game, so the outlook for WARBRDS fans isn't as dark as it would be if new programmers had to start from scratch. In addition, I-Magic is reportedly in talks with Playnet about future products.

April's resignations follow the earlier departure of WARBRDS creators Dale Addink and Doug Balmas, reportedly over creative differences with I-Magic's "Wild Bill" Stealey — Denny Altlin

Microsoft Buys Access Software

One of the last major independents gaming companies is independent no longer. In April, Microsoft acquired Access Software, the Salt Lake City-based makers of the long-running, award-winning LINKS golf series and Tex Murphy adventure games. The move was welcomed by Access, who will now have Microsoft's publishing and

The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly

THE GOOD

- **BASEBALL FEVER** Everything else may sack these days, so thank goodness for baseball. And thank goodness for 3DO's HIGH HEAT 2000, the best PC baseball game in years.
- **GOOD CYBERPUNK** With The Matrix and eXistenZ, Hollywood finally does justice to cyberpunk and to computer gaming. (Tree doesn't count.)


THE BAD

- **eBAY** We love eBay. That's why we hate it. The online auction service is such an amazing repository of great stuff, that the CGW editors are wasting too much of their time and paychecks when they should be playing games instead. Wake it go away.
- **POKEMON FEVER** Forgive us if we don't jump on the bandwagon for the latest money-sucking gimmick destined to reside at the bottom of kids' closets everywhere, right next to the Tickle Me Elmos, Furbles, and Scratch-It-Seif Johnny Wilsons.


THE UGLY

- **NO MO' JOE** Joe Valino: doofus fascist, bubble lover. The man who popularized the phrase "cut it" at the CGW office. A lurking weasel is deathwatching. Formerly a real cool dude. Now he works for someone else.
- Good luck, Joe. You bastard!


Web Sites of the Month

Instead of surfing the Web this month, we'd like to suggest a different form of activity. Turn off your computer. Go outside. Breathe the fresh air. Exercise. Hey—don't go away! We were just kidding! The sun's bad for you, exercise is over-rated, and you're much safer in your room.

Here are some of the Web sites that caught the CGW editors' eyes this month. Be sure, too, to check out

www.gamespot.com for the best gaming news, reviews, and previews.

Dave's Pick

<http://www.loosecan.com/siagaloo/kirk.html>
The Captain James K. Kirk Singalong Site. As the site says: "If you have never had the opportunity to hear Mr. Shatner sing, well, now you do. That is if you call it singing."

Denny's Pick

www.woodooextreme.com
Despite the 3D+centric name, Woodoo Extreme is actually a top-notch source of information on all things 3D. We like the movement article, but their fascination with Ron Jeremy is a bit disturbing.

George's Pick

www.mp3spy.com
Streaming audio that doesn't sound like AM radio.

Jeff's Pick

www.planethalf.com/community/walter/
"Walter's World," the surreal, ridiculous musings of one Walter Bennett, "a biochemist at the Black Mesa Research Facility," is a continuing minor masterpiece of a HALF-LIFE column by someone with way too much time on his hands.

Johnny's Pick

www.trainorders.com
This site is a must for rail fans and tycoons who can't get enough of RRT II: THE SECOND CENTURY.

Robert's Pick

www.highheatbaseball.com
An unofficial fan site, this site has good discussion boards, downloadable tune files, and other info for HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2000.

Tom's Pick

www.games4mac.com/

CGW Gets Jiggy With COMMAND & CONQUER'S Kane



1. Name, rank, and serial number, and tell us about your theatrical background.

I'm Joseph Kucan, the Producing Director of Dramatic Assets at Westwood Studios. I direct all of the dramatic assets for Westwood product, including voice-over, film and video, texture models, and motion capture. I've been an actor since childhood. I spent four years on the staff of directors for IceFire Performance Group, a touring theatre company, and 10 years as the educational director for the Rainbow Company, a repertory theatre company here in Vegas. I also spent a lot of years freelancing as a stage combat director, having trained to obtain proficiency in a number of period weapons and styles. When women ask me what I do for a living, I tell them I'm a rodeo clown.

2. Has being Kane been a fun experience for you?

Oh, you know, indoor work, no heavy lifting. Actually, it's pretty cool. The fans are the best—enthusiastic and loyal. And us video game characters make up a pretty exclusive club—Duke Nukem and I go out drinking every once in a while, and I've been dating Lara Croft for a couple of months.

3. Gotta ask about the hair: Tiberian poisoning? No, NDD barbers. You tell them "a little off the top" and this is what you get. But that's NDD—always with the overkill.

4. Who's tougher? Kane or the Las Vegas casino bouncers?

Kane, but only because he has more tanks. Caesar's Palace is putting in an obelisk next month, but somehow they've programmed it to work only on Californians.

5. You were the lead in Westwood's MONOPOLY. Why didn't you play Rich Uncle Pennybags? Three reasons: (1) The top hat would hide my beautiful balditude. (2) I wouldn't get to carry a gun. (3) Kane gets more chicks.

6. When can we expect a Kane action figure? Just as soon as our testers finish painting the goatees on all those leftover Jean-Luc Picard dolls. —Mark Asher

News Blurbs (continued)

distribution muscle to move their titles. According to Access president and CEO Bruce Carver, the company will retain its Salt Lake City headquarters and development teams to "keep the magic, and keep in touch with our loyal users, especially for LINKS." Founded in 1982, Access goes way back with Microsoft, having produced many of the MICROSOFT GOLF titles using LINKS code. Microsoft Games Group general manager Ed Fries said that the current plan is to retain the Access and LINKS names, and to keep MICROSOFT GOLF around at a low (\$19.99) price point for more casual golf fans. And Tex Murphy? "He's in a holding pattern for now," according to Carver.

Infogrames Buys Accolade

Also in the acquisitions department, French game publisher Infogrames Entertainment announced this April their purchase of San Jose-based Accolade, the company behind the HARDBALL and TEST DRIVE franchises as well as the upcoming, highly anticipated SLAVE ZERO. Like Havas Interactive, another French gaming company, Infogrames is serious about expanding its base in the United States, so the appeal of Accolade is obvious. Accolade, meanwhile, is in desperate need of a bit with SLAVE ZERO, as its most high-profile franchises have fallen on hard times in the last couple of years, following a series of mediocre releases.



For all of your gaming news, delivered with up-to-the-minute speed and accuracy, check in daily to www.gamespot.com.

Tchotchke *lives!* *Keep along, from Yiddish: a cheap, shabby trinket*
—*American Heritage College Dictionary, Third Edition*

It's a fish. It's a pen. Ladies and gentlemen... the fish pen.

Yes, the fish pen, submitted by Sierra Sports to play their new TROPHY Bass 3D, is definitive proof that a tchotchke doesn't have to necessarily be big, or flimsy, or even remotely cool, to win CGW's prestigious Tchotchke of the Month award. The fish pen receives the honor not just because the idea that a gaming editor might actually want to write with this is a remarkably odd one, even for gaming marketing wackos; but also because it quite poignantly symbolizes what has become of the sporting giant that Sierra once was. From FRONT PAGE SPORTS to the fish pen: like the 1999 Chicago Bulls, this is one hard fall. Oh well, at least we have the bull riding game to look forward to.

Site dedicated to partitioning game publishers to offer Mac versions of popular titles like GRIM FANDANGO and BALDRIC'S GATE.

Gadgets for Gamers by Denny Atkin

MPMan F20 Eyer Labs' MPMan doesn't have the slick controls of Diamond's Rio, but it does have a nice bass boost feature as well as a slick leather belt clip. Now that there's competition on the MP3 player front, we'll likely see lower prices. These pager-sized digital music players are addictive, and there are thousands of legitimate songs available on the Web, or you can create your own MP3 files from your CD collection.

MPMan F20, \$199.95 (under \$150 street price), www.eyerlabs.com

Coolness Factor: 4 — Digital tunes wherever you go.

Geek Factor: 1 — Most people won't even notice it.

EARTHMATE It may look like a cigarette case for scuba divers, but DeLorme's Earthmate is actually a compact Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver. Attach it to your PC's serial port or (with an adapter) to your Palm Pilot and you'll never be lost again. Load up the included Street Atlas USA 6.0 and the system will even give you spoken directions as you drive. Earthmate, \$199.95, www.delorme.com

Coolness Factor: 4 — Never get lost again.

Geek Factor: 4 — It's bright yellow, and hard to spousterly normalize if you're not a Xbox/boater, or polo.



Tchotchke of the Month





EVERY MOVE IS PATTERNED AFTER REAL
HUMAN BEINGS...



EXCEPT THE RETURNING-FROM-THE-DEAD PART.

INTRODUCING LOCKE – an ancient warrior whose moves are so lifelike, it's hard to believe he's been dead for 10,000 years. Resurrected for the noble purpose of saving the daughter of a warlord, Locke goes about his business in an anything but noble fashion –hacking, slashing and otherwise mutilating a field of enemies that don't go down easy. Which is precisely why Locke has such an intricate fighting system that features real-time attacks, combinations, and fatalities

as well as stealth mode for slitting throats, projectile weapons to kill from afar, and 30 magic spells. Of course, if 25 types of enemies aren't enough for you, try the multi-player mode that invites up to 4 people in deathmatch and dungeon fare. Revenant is a living, breathing, and often horrifying world filled with caves, dungeons, ruins and many more customizable levels to explore. But no matter where you go with Locke, we think you'll agree: Life is better the second time around!

CINEMATIX



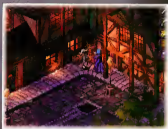
Enter the Revenant World at
www.eidosinteractive.com

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REVENANT

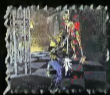
One lifetime isn't enough.



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DESTROYING YOUR ENEMIES ISN'T ENOUGH...



"The elaborate architecture within these 3D environments is some of the best Next Generation has seen on the PlayStation."

-Next Generation

As Razeel, stalk the shadows of Nosgoth hunting your vampire brethren. Impale them with spears. Incinerate them with torches. Drown them in water. No matter how you destroy them, you must feed on their souls to sustain your quest - the ruin of your creator, Kain.



Morph onto the spectral plane and confront unique enemies and gameplay challenges

- Shift real-time between the material and spectral planes
- Dark gothic story

"...the completely revamped sequel to Legacy of Kain promises high immersion factor."

-Spin



A promotional image for the video game Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver. It features the character Kain, a vampire with blue skin and a black hood, holding a severed, bloody demon by its neck. The demon has a grotesque, multi-eyed face and is dripping with red blood. The background is a dark, misty forest.

...YOU MUST

DEVOUR THEIR SOULS

LEGACY OF KAIN
SOUL REAVER

CRYSTAL
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www.cryadhd.com

EIDOS
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Go to F272 @ www.computergaming.com/intolink

LET FREEDOM REIGN

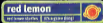
Follow in the footsteps of Scottish hero, William Wallace, as you unite clans, overcome the might of the English army and guarantee freedom for all future generations of Scots.

Based on the award-winning motion picture starring Mel Gibson, Braveheart combines a free-flow, real-time strategy engine with an expansive global management system.

In this historically accurate epic, there are no consolation prizes in the battle for freedom.

- ◆ Allows individual control of on-screen warriors going far beyond the traditional limits of unit management.
- ◆ Historically accurate 3D battlefields, using satellite data to 50 square meters, tests tactical and strategic skills.
- ◆ Seamlessly combines real-time gameplay within a turn-based, build an empire world.
- ◆ Choose among 16 historically accurate clans in your battle to restore freedom to Scotland.
- ◆ Multiplayer scenarios for up to 8 players on LAN or internet in both co-op or competitive modes.

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BRAVEHEART

Go get a taste of clan war at www.eidosinteractive.com



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Go For The Gold!

Lara's adventures aren't over yet. Join her in a continuation of **Tomb Raider II** in the **Golden Mask** levels. Explore abandoned mine shafts in Alaska and **discover** a strange and hidden world of adventure. **Many more secrets** await you as Lara uncovers the **secret** of the Golden Mask.

- 4 Never Before Seen Levels
- New Enemies
- Strange New Worlds
- Win REAL GOLD!

Find out how you can win REAL GOLD in the Tomb Raider II Gold contest and get a sneak peek of the game by downloading one of the new levels at www.tombraider.com

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LARA CROFT

II GOLD

Includes the original
Tomb Raider plus
4 NEW levels plus
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Everybody Must Get Zoned

Battlezone II

Sequel to Cult Hit Has Big Shoes to Fill

by Tom Price

There's a quote by some quasi-famous rock critic about the Velvet Underground that goes something like, "Not that many people heard them, but everyone who did went out and started a band of their own." I won't suggest that everyone who has ever played **BATTLEZONE** is going to go out and start developing games, but you never know. The point is, the fact that something isn't hugely popular doesn't mean it sucks (and being the winner of CGW's 1998 Action Game of the Year award is definitely somewhere north of sucks).

Adding to the unique action/strategy gameplay of the original in nearly every way, the exclusive pre-alpha build of **BATTLEZONE II** (BZ2) that CGW editors have been playing over the last couple of weeks not only doesn't suck, it may even be our first wild card candidate for 1999 Action Game of the Year. The gameplay is deeper, the vehicles sexier, the worlds more exotic, the AI more I, the graphics more beautiful than in the original.

E.T. Go Home

The story for BZ2 picks up a few years after the end of **BATTLEZONE**. The "real" cold war is over and the NSA and CCA have settled their differences and are now united as the ISDF (Inter-Stellar Defense Force), dedicated to bravely going where no battle tank has gone before. Opposing the Earth's quest for bio-metal and plans for planetary expansion are the Soon, a mysterious alien race. Symbolically beginning at an ISDF outpost on Pluto, the action quickly moves (thanks to the neighbor-

hood wormhole) to the exotic worlds of a distant solar system.

One of these worlds, Myer, is populated with fire red and orange trees, bubbling opalescent pools of goo, and lumbering plucked-chicken-saurus. The creatures actually have an effect on gameplay, playing on pilots on foot. According to Pandemic, this was done as a balancing move to counteract the power a pilot on foot has with a sniper rifle. Too many people were just hailing out of their tanks and sniping enemy craft from afar. Now you'll have to worry about getting devoured out in the open.

BATTLEZONE's interface was one of the elements that made that game great, and BZ2 uses essentially the same command system, but with some small yet significant changes. The developers decided that what was really missing in the command interface was the ability to easily control groups of friendly vehicles. Support craft are now automatically hot-keyed as individuals and groups. This makes it quicker and easier to issue commands to your ships in the field, which in turn should make it much

easier to manage your resources when you're in the middle of a firefight.

Baby, You Can Drive My Tank

Among the cooler aspects of **BATTLEZONE** were the vehicles. The Grizzly tank, the scout, and other various hover-vehicles offered a cool combination of futuristic technology and cold-war design. Well, the Grizzly's back, (this year's model anyway), and it's joined by over 30 new vehicles sporting brand-new physics engines that are built to travel over land, air, and sea. Before you get too excited at the prospect of piloting aircraft, understand that the two craft capable of flight, the bomber and the armored personnel carrier, aren't player-controlled. Instead, they swoop in when ordered to deliver either footsoldiers or a load of bombs to a target area. The troops you deploy will be able to carry 25 different weapons, including mortars and bazookas.

Ground vehicles are divided into three categories: hovering, tracked, and biped. Tracked vehicles are new to **BATTLEZONE**, and most of



Battlezone II

GENRE: *action/strategy*
RELEASE DATE: Q3 '99
DEVELOPER: Pandemic Studios
PUBLISHER: Activision



HERE KITTY KITTY This fella looks friendly, but it's best to keep a couple of inches of armor plating between the two of you.

the silly vehicles are in that category. Those vehicles won't be able to cross water or other obstacles that a hover-tank would glide right over, although the increased ability of the construction bots allows you to build bridges to overcome water obstacles. Your old favorites like the recycler will be back, along with other helper vehicles that will resupply you in the field.

Walkers will have limitations similar to those of tracked vehicles. They'll utilize skeletal animations and "process" animation (where movement is defined not by a human programmer but through mathematical operations that adhere closely to the physics model).

This time around, water will be playing a big role, so naturally there will be vehicles that travel exclusively underwater. A scout sub is modeled on the build we saw, and it looked really cool.

The vehicles controlled by the alien force, the Scions, look more well, alien, and they are based on a development tree entirely different from that of the ISDF. Most of them will be able to transform into a different ship, with different weapons, physics, and other characteristics. For instance, a Scion tank will be able to morph into a scout.

War Is Beautiful

BZ2 is utilizing a brand-new graphics engine, and in the build we saw it looked absolutely amazing. Explosions are virtual flower blossoms of fire, streaking debris and billowing smoke. I guarantee that the first time a Scion tank erupts in front of you you'll be oohing and



IT'S BEAUTIFUL, MAN Explosions show off the power of the new graphics engine nicely.



SOMEBODY CALL THE JAWA'S LAWYER New vehicle physics, such as the recycler's tracked movement, will impact strategy when units have to contend with new environmental elements such as water.

oohing like Citrus the slack-jawed yokel at his first Sea World 4th of July fireworks show. The new graphics engine also helps make the worlds themselves more fully realized and beautiful. Basic terrain is similar to that of the first game, but with the new flora and fauna, the worlds are much more alive than the desolate moons that served as the backdrop for BATTLEZONE.

Significant improvements are being made to the multiplayer game, focusing on the death-match and real-time-strategy modes and enhanced teamplay (which should feature some TEAM FORTRESS-style play, with defense, attack, and commander character classes).

They are also working on some anti-cheat measures to prevent online players from flooding their own ranks with, say, mortar bikes, to give themselves an advantage.

Developers at Pandemic have put a lot more effort into making the AI more human. Aside from enhancing the realism of single-player gameplay, the new AI will make it much more difficult to distinguish between human and bot opponents in multiplayer. Formerly, some online games were able to tell whether hover-tanks in their sights were driven by human opponents or AI wingmen simply by looking for

tanks that strafe or that occasionally run away—a dead giveaway that your nervousness is driving and is therefore your primary target. Now, all computer-driven craft will try to behave more like live gamers.

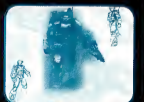
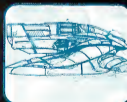
In a move that is sure to please hardcore fans of the title, a map editor will be included in BATTLEZONE II. You'll be allowed to edit terrain, change textures, and add buildings and wildlife. The Pandemic team is making a smart move in giving

gamers more developing power; the more user mods created, the longer a game gets played—and the greater the chance for people to discover it.

Pandemic, wisely, followed the adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" in developing this sequel. BATTLEZONE was a sublime title that developed a small yet fervent following of serious gamers. Those fans can be hard to please, but the significant improvements that appear to be in store for BATTLEZONE II suggest that those people won't be disappointed. And if there is any justice in the world, BATTLEZONE II will attract new fans and be the hit that BZ1 should have been. **CGW**

SKETCHY DETAILS

These concept sketches show how much attention was paid to improving the unit design.



Anne McCaffrey had the right idea when she decided to write books about riding dragons as opposed to merely slaying them. Dragons have traditionally been presented in fantasy works as powerful enemies that you had to kill. But most people I know would rather have control over a dragon than vanquish it. Now **DRAKAN: ORDER OF THE FLAME**, the first game from Surreal Software, gives gamers a chance to experience the rush of riding and controlling a dragon.

DRAKAN began life at Surreal as a technology demo of an underwater scuba diving game. Then, perhaps as a result of playing too much **DUNGEON KEEPER**, the developers came up with the idea of a game in which you could be a flying dragon. Their underwater-game engine seemed perfect for it.

But an engine, however sexy, does not by itself make for a compelling game. So **DRAKAN** spins a story in which you play Rynn, a beautiful warrior girl who ends up on a fantastic and dangerous quest to find her destiny and her family. One evening, Rynn and her little brother, Dylan, are walking home to their village when suddenly they are ambushed by a group of fierce, growling Warlocks. Drawing swords, Rynn and Dylan slay a few Warlocks, only to have the match end when the few remaining beasts charge and knock Rynn to the ground, leaving her for dead.

When Rynn awakens, her brother is nowhere to be found. Returning to her village, she discovers it has been attacked and the villagers have been carried off. A dying village elder tells Rynn of a book that can summon Arokh, the last surviving dragon of the Order. Eventually, Rynn and Arokh go through a bonding ritual to become dragon and rider, and they set off on a quest to discover the fate

The six distinct environments that make up the worlds of **DRAKAN** are stunningly beautiful. Large amounts of detail in the picturesque landscapes make them extremely realistic. The lovely night skies bleed effortlessly with the ambient sounds of the forest: chirping crickets, the cries of birds, running water. Everything works together to convey a magical fairy-tale experience.

After bonding with Arokh, Rynn follows the trail of her brother's captors, journeying through a series of winding canyons to discover the Grimstone mines where the villagers have been taken. Emerging on the other side of the mountains, she encounters a lost tropical sea and journeys among its mysterious islands. Eventually she comes to the legendary city of Alwerren, built within the lava tubes of an ancient volcano. Each level seems to provide around two to three hours of play, and more if you really explore them. As you move further into the game the landscapes become wilder and more fantastical. When you move from one to another there is a short pause as the new level loads, but then the action picks right back up. The feeling that you have been pulled into this magical world is never disturbed by static loading screens, even the in-game engine manages to seamlessly convey all the storyline cut-scenes.

According to lead programmer Stewart Denman, one of the most interesting aspects of developing the game was the creation of the integrated ground and aerial combat system. Every attempt was made to make it easy to learn but also to allow its depth to be revealed as play progresses. There is a bond between Rynn and Arokh, and this symbiotic relationship is reinforced by the game's controls.

Playing **DRAKAN** should make action gamers feel right at home. There is a mouse-look feature that is a welcome carry-over, as demonstrated by **HERETIC II**, from the first-person genre. Hard-core **QUAKE** players know that effective use of mouse look is critical for success in combat. **DRAKAN** is DirectInput-friendly and the game offers a great deal of flexibility in configuring controls.

Killing With Dragons, Not Killing Dragons

Playing Rynn is lots of fun—she's not so much an acrobat, but she's quite the fighter. Not that she can't jump (she can), but **DRAKAN**'s style of gameplay is more oriented toward combat and, when the situation does not favor fighting, the use of stealth. Rynn prefers to travel and fight on dragon-back. She doesn't gain new abilities based on experience; rather, she advances by getting better weapons. There are various magical weapons hidden within **DRAKAN**'s worlds. Some of them are quite nifty, and each has a special effect.

It's a Matter of Scale in Psygnosis' Gorgeous Dragon Sim

Drakan: Order of the Flame

by Kenneth Johnson



FASHION SENSE While Rynn is probably as top-heavy as Lara Croft, at least she has the sense to wear pants and some protective armor.

Drakan

GENRE: Action

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '99

DEVELOPER: Psygnosis

PUBLISHER: Surreal Software

of the other villagers and find Dylan. Along the way, Rynn will have to rediscover the lost Order of the Flame and, through her special bond with Arokh, effect its rebirth.

Flying High

The 3D engine, which delivers a high degree of performance, was designed especially to accommodate scaling. This means you can be hovering high over a forest of tiny trees and then plunge down to swoop in among the branches, and as you get closer, more and more detail is revealed. The world geometry is stored in bytes, which can be modified and shaped. When rendered together, multiple layers appear seamless, and the design also emphasizes model sharing. Each object in the world—a tree, for instance—can have its own data, sounds, and textures, yet the mesh geometry is reused throughout the game.



COUNTRY BUMPKIN This country-dwelling giant that Ryn is sneaking up to may look pretty big now, but he's nothing compared to his city-dwelling cousin, the War Giant.

like a sword wreathed in flames that ignores the creature it hits for added bum damage. The names, from John the Monster's Axe to Stewart's Hammer, add a lot of flavor as well.

Aerial combat is a blast—literally. Arokh has a variety of breath spells beyond basic fire breathing, including ice and poison gas. The flight model is designed to seem natural and to minimize disorientation. The dragon is a more stable firing platform when he is hovering than when moving, but circle strafing seems very effective against flying monsters like other dragons and giant insects. Arokh is susceptible to environmental effects; occasionally he'll be blown around by updrafts, for example. **DRAKAN** supports multiplayer death-match action for up to eight players over a LAN or the Internet.

The monsters can cooperate with each other in combat. If a lone Wartok sights Ryn he may go and get other Wartoks and come back with them. Wartoks can also exhibit degrees of alarm. For example, a Wartok may think he sees something moving in the shadows, and, not being sure if it is a threat, may choose to investigate before raising the alarm. There is a creature even bigger than

Arokh called the War Giant; one step, and squish. The War Giant will pick up and throw anything it can get its hands on, including you. Ryn must sneak past this creature. The AI fires a beam of sight from the eyes of the giant, and he can spot Ryn if she moves into his line-of-sight.

DRAKAN delivers fast action, a wordously deep storyline, and some of the most immersive and beautiful 3D environments yet to appear in a game. With a few exceptions, most adventure or action games that use a third-person perspective have been disappointing for one reason or another. Either gameplay is clichéd or camera control is awkward; often there are nightmare levels of repetitive platform jumping. **DRAKAN**, which at the time of this writing is just about to begin beta testing, could well change all that. We can't wait to see if this is the game that breathes new life into the third-person genre, upping the ante for what we'll come to expect from such games in the future. **CGW**



CG-ROM

Play the exclusive **Drakan** demo for yourself on this month's CD!



I WANNA FLY AWAY Arokh is just one of the six main environments you'll fly through in **DRAKAN**.

Can Empire's Korean War Sim Challenge FALCON 4.0?

MiG Alley

by Denny Atkin

It was the pinnacle of the dogfight. The Korean War was the last of the pre-missile aerial conflicts, where getting a kill required the talent to get behind your enemy and stay there long enough to pump his airplane full of deadly lead. Unlike previous conflicts, much of the fighting involved jets on both sides, with chases at times pushing the sound barrier. Despite the unique and exciting nature of the conflict, however, it's rarely been waded in computer games. Now Empire and FLYING CORPS developer Rowan Software are giving the Korean conflict the attention it deserves with **MiG ALLEY**, a sim that looks set to challenge **FALCON 4.0** in depth and **CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT** in excitement.

Aces Over the Yalu

Covering the entire course of the Korean War, **MiG ALLEY** lets you fly for either side. On the United States side, you'll be able to take the controls of the F-51D Mustang, F-80 Shooting Star, F-84 Thunderjet, and the F-86A, F-86E, and F-86F Sabres. Other Allied aircraft, such as P-51 Panthers, A-1 Skyraiders, B-29 Superfortresses, and Gloster Meteors, will also make appearances, but they aren't player-flyable. If you choose to fly for the forces of Communism, you'll be able to support your comrades flying the MiG-15 and the improved MiG-15bis.

The sim's flight models have a good feel; accelerated stalls, spins, and energy bleed are well recreated, for example. But what's particularly impressive is the subtlety of the modeling. Early jet engines were slow at spooling up to power, a characteristic that killed more than a few experienced pilots. That's modeled here, as are aircraft-specific characteristics such as the MiG-15's deadly double-spin spin. For even deeper "feel," **MiG ALLEY** supports force-feedback joysticks.

The early alpha version didn't yet have simplified flight models, but in the final release you'll be able to tune individual aspects of the model to best suit your flying prowess and experience. For example, if you're a beginner you'll be able to not only disable departures from controlled flight but also activate an autothrottle feature that will help you stay behind your target. Other options



ROCKET MAN Although outdated as a fighter, the F-80 is an effective ground-attack aircraft.



FULL OUT Two F-80s pull up after bombing a North Korean ground formation.

include flame-outs, wind effects, spins, airframe stress, external store drag and weight, torque/propstreaming, and spool-up time.

The sim features virtual, 3D cockpit, rather than fixed bitmaps, that are rplete with detail. Canopy reflections (which, although they've been appropriated by other sims, first appeared in an early **MiG ALLEY** screen shot) are particularly impressive, and they help you stay oriented when using pedcock view. A full complement of scrolling and snap views helps maintain situational awareness. You'll be able to adjust target size to make up for the limited detail of the computer screen if you so choose, and toggle realistically restricted views, peripheral vision cues, and automatic pedcocking.

Sightseeing

Aircraft models are sharp, with detailed textures, moving control surfaces, and intricately modeled landing gear and speed brakes. Damage textures will indicate bullet hits on your jet and the enemy.

The graphics engine has seen a complete rewrite since **FLYING CORPS**. With rolling hills and a wide variety of textures, it loses the "photo on a tablet" feel of the earlier sim. Details abound, including roadways, bridges, buildings, and nicely textured runways. Terrain is based on actual aerial photography from the era as well as on later satellite imagery.

In addition to a wide variety of aerial targets, you'll find a ground war going on as well. Tanks and other vehicles are there now, and the developers promise that you'll be able to see individual soldiers scattering across the battlefield. Although special effects were still preliminary in the version I flew, Rowan promises impressive effects in the final version, including rocket smoke, traces, and napalm explosions.

One very welcome feature that I was unable to test in the alpha version was a flight recorder, which will let you replay your combat missions. Particularly intriguing is a gun camera option, which will activate the camera when you press the trigger and leave it on

MiG Alley

GENRE: Simulation • RELEASE DATE: Q3 '93 • DEVELOPER: Rowan • PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive

SELECT

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SNEAK PREVIEWS

long enough for weapons (air and ground) to hit home.

Battle Hardened

MIG ALLEY will feature instant-action combat, as well as single missions that will help you earn your wings. The real meat, though, comes in the dynamic campaign. You can play out the entire war as a campaign, or choose one of five sections of the war, such as the Chinese Intervention or the Spring Offensive.

The Campaign Planner window is extremely powerful, yet quite accessible. The interface sports a docked row of buttons at the top of the screen and a scalable map of Korea below. Pop-up windows let you adjust mission parameters and view detailed information on weather, base status, mission frags, and other campaign-related matters.

How much control you choose to take over the campaign is purely up to you. You can take on the role of a single pilot and just fly individual missions generated by the campaign engine, or you can micromanage strikes by up to 96 aircraft per mission session. Most players will probably go for a happy medium, adjusting the waypoints and target objectives of their own flight and related support flights.

The Directives window gives you some influence over the campaign without forcing you to manage the details of every flight. Here you can divide up your fighters and strike aircraft among air superiority, chase, supply, airfield, rail, road, and army interdiction missions, and the computer will generate the individual missions. The missions may actually consist of a number of

flights. For instance, a sortie to take out a bridge may have B-26 bombers tasked with taking out the bridge, F-80 Shooting Stars taking out AAA sites, and F-84 Thunderjets providing air cover.

On to the Parallel

Multiplayer fans will be happy to know that in addition to playing deathmatch and team melee missions you'll also be able to fly cooperatively and antagonistically in single missions and in the campaign. You'll even have the option of customizing the nose art of your plane in multiplayer missions.

Looking at the alpha version, it's easy to see how this title has been delayed—its campaign looks nearly as ambitious as FALCON 4.0's. Empire says the sim will be ready for release in July, but from the completion level at press time that seems a little optimistic. Still, it appears MIG ALLEY will be well worth the wait. **CGW**



INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION Cockpits feature authentic, detailed 3D instrument panels.



PRIME DIRECTIVE You can control the general tone of the campaign—rather than having to micromanage missions—by setting target directives for combat flights.



ON TARGET The dynamic campaign engine will generate missions for you, but you can modify any aspect of a mission or create new ones from scratch.

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A large, golden anchor is the central focus, with a globe of the Earth inside its ring. The globe is depicted with various historical and geographical elements: a red cross on a white sail, a pagoda, a lighthouse, and the Statue of Liberty. The anchor is set against a background of a blue sky with white clouds and a blue ocean with white waves. The text is overlaid on the upper part of the anchor.

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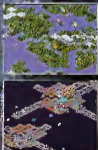
CIVILIZATION II TEST OF TIME



In stores August 1999

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Your Chance to Kick Rommel's Nazi Butt out of North Africa

by Denny Atkin

Sand chokid the engines, rendering expensive machines of war useless hunks of metal. Soldiers fought in the desolate expanses of desert, hundreds of miles from supplies of ammo and water. North Africa during WWII was an unrelenting, inhospitable battlefield. Now Dynamix is giving you the opportunity to battle over this theater in **DESERT FIGHTERS**.

It certainly doesn't sound glamorous, but the North African "Battle of Supplies" lends itself to a very strategic campaign, one where the sim's designers can cause individual pilots' actions to have a realistic effect on the progress of the war. In most circumstances a single mission having dramatic effects on the outcome of a campaign is pretty unrealistic, unless you happen to shoot down Yamamoto or Goering. But taking out a supply convoy or shooting down a couple of loaded transport planes can cripple a force that's pushing its lines through the deep desert, cutting off vital fuel, ammo, parts, and reborn.

DESERT FIGHTERS features a dynamic campaign that tracks the progress of the war based on this supply-line theory. The types of missions generated and units encountered are based on the current supply levels on each side. Wipe out a series of enemy convoys and you'll likely face reduced opposition. But if your own supply lines start to get stretched out, expect to see fewer aircraft fielded on your own side.

You can enter the campaign at four points in the war. Depending on which you choose, you'll fly 50 to 200 missions. When you're ready to fly, you'll be presented with an assortment of available campaign missions. Some types include sweep, offensive, and defensive patrols, combat air patrol, scramble, and close support. You'll be tasked with escorting light and heavy bomber raids, recon craft, mine-laying planes, and close-support aircraft. At times, you'll be tasked with interdicting supplies, communications, or infrastructure targets. There's no mission editing here—the sim puts you in the role of a pilot without planning responsibilities.

Look for a variety of ground targets, including rail and vehicle bridges, mechanized columns, warehouse convoys, tanks, railroad stations and marshalling yards, radar sites, infantry, and seaplane launches. And while most of the existing WWII sims feature missions in which the only enemies you encounter are associated with your mission, here you'll be able to look forward to plenty of random encounters. While

flying, you may run into enemy fighters engaged with allied bombers, friendly aircraft attacking ground targets, or even vulnerable enemy subs resupplying on the surface next to a tender ship. Of course, if you're learning the sim and not ready to commit to a 50-

mission tour, you can fly single missions as well. These are generated by the campaign engine (you'll be able to adjust many settings, such as the types of missions and planes in the sim, as in the ACES games), so you'll find lots of replayability here.

Coordinated Attacks

DESERT FIGHTERS is slated to feature a robust set of multiplayer options. Melee and Team Melee games give players points for shooting down other players and destroying ground targets. Ring of the Hill is basically a game of tag. The "king" can score points for shooting down other aircraft. Other players become king (there will be one king for every eight flies) by shooting down the current king.

In the Courier game, one player on one team is given the task of being the courier, and will be told to fly to a specific airfield to land. After landing, the pilot can rearm and refuel, and then he'll be given a new target to fly to. Each successful landing scores points for your team. Nobody else, friend or enemy, knows who the courier is, so he can choose to tell his buddies and save them by escort or get reamed and let the others distract the enemy.

Finally, there's War, which is similar to Team Melee but adds territory capture, target paradivno, and aircraft repair to the equation. Airfields and strategic

Desert Fighters

Desert Fighters

GENRE: Simulation
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '99
DEVELOPER: Dynamix
PUBLISHER: Sierra



HUN AT 100 A Bf-109 skims the dunes. The sand texture gives a great sense of speed at low altitudes.



JERRY DOWN A Messerschmitt puffs smoke as it heads toward a crash landing. Dynamix is promising dramatic damage effects.

mission, facing the same enemies, and get scored on their performance.

Putting It All Together

The attention to detail throughout the sim was evident even in the early alpha version I took for a spin.

landmarks will have antitank and anti-aircraft guns around them. Columns of tanks will head towards those targets, and if all the anti-tank guns have been knocked out around a target, it's captured.

These multiplayer modes will all support up to 64 players via the Internet. If RED BARON 3D is any indication, performance should be pretty smooth even with that heavy a load. Dynamix developers also addressed those times when you have buddies over and you want to fly competitively, but you have only a single computer. In Hotseat Swap mode, you'll fly a mission and then receive a score. Then your friends can fly the exact same

Flight modes will be adjustable, with the most realistic modes featuring stalls, spins, differing roll rates at various altitudes and airspeeds, and even compressibility buffeting. Characteristics of specific planes, such as the P-51's Dutch Roll problems, will also be modeled. Damage will affect how your plane handles. A damaged wing will have more drag than an undamaged one; damaged controls will reduce your control authority.



Just Plane Cool

Aviation history buffs rejoice: **DESERT AIRCRESS** is going to give you an opportunity to fly some rarely simulated aircraft. Along with such staples as multiple models of the Bessie, Spittin', P-10, and Messerschmitt 109 (complete with the big tropical air filters on their noses), you'll be able to fly the Italian Macchi MC 200, MC 202, and MC 208, as well as the Stuka and Savoia-Marchetti SM.91. And Mustang fans will be given their first chance to fly the Allison-powered P-51A, as well as the A-36 Apache dive-bomber variant of the Mustang. The team also hopes to have time to slip in flyable versions of the Bristol Beaufighter, FW-190, and P-39.

Among the computer-controlled aircraft will be the Douglas A-20 Boston/Havoc, the Bristol Blenheim, the B-24 Liberator, Junkers Ju-52 and Ju-88, and the Savoia-Marchetti SM-79. The team also hopes to work in planes such as the Westland Lysander, Fiesler Storch, Reggiane Re-2001, and PBY Catalina.



Ray:

Fearless warrior. Powerful, chiseled, god-like physique. Experienced forester. Strikes fear into the heart of the most hardened villain. Sleeps with one eye open. Brooding. Mysterious. Intense. Intimidating. Known to many as Ray the Beholder. Wit and intelligence charm townspeople and defeat enemies. Willing to give life in the fight against the dragon. Raw animal magnetism makes him quite popular with the wenches.



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HURRICANE PUNCH A breakdown of the Hawker Hurricane; expect aircraft to lose parts and major structures as they're damaged.



INSTANT GRATIFICATION Along with the dynamic campaign, the sim will also generate missions of various types on the fly.

FRAME JOB The 105's cockpit and construction in 3D Studio; all the planes will have full virtual cockpits.

Although the AI was still in flight school in the version I looked at, it has noteworthy aspirations. Computer pilots will look at the tactical situation and use boom-and-zoom or turning tactics, as appropriate. You should see planes executing real maneuvers, such as high yo-yos, while attacking targets. SKI, experience, and fatigue will figure into AI pilot performance.

Visually were already impressive in the early version, with sand texture giving a good sense of speed at low altitude. Expect to see some impressive damage effects, but perhaps not to the "Hollywood" extent of WW2 FIGHTERS. Although the graphic engine is based on that of STARGAZE: TRIBES, the amount of fogging has been significantly reduced, and you should have no problems viewing the horizon at a distance. Both 3dfx Glide and OpenGL will be supported. There should be plenty of aural stimulation, with lots of detail in the sound effects department. Expect different sounds, for instance, depending on what kind of shell is hitting your plane, and whether it's hitting solid metal or stressed skin.

With a solid foundation from its predecessors and an admirable attention to detail, DESERT FIGHTERS looks promising. The unique fleet of aircraft alone has us anxious to join up. **EW**



Philip:

Devoted monk.
 Servant of the light.
 Walks through the valley of death
 with a broadsword.
 Charismatic faith healer whose personal charm
 yields enormous power.
 Sought out for his wisdom and loving kindness.
 Held in reverence by all who cross his path.
 Dogmatic about saving souls from the
 dragon and the devil.
 Greatest triumph: releasing an entire
 village from an evil spell.
 Once slayed 30 lizardmen. And it was good.
 Vow of celibacy tested daily due to the effect his
 otherworldly sex appeal has on the womenfolk.



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The word "OUTCAST" in a stylized, glowing green font, with a green arc above it. The arc contains a small globe of the Earth.**OUTCAST**

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All of a sudden, hybrid games are the Next Big Thing, as publishers try to break out of the genre niches for which they've become famous (or infamous). In this case, Interactive Magic's FLASH POINT seems designed to reach the fast-growing action-strategy market.

The premise is that World War III has become a reality in the aftermath of nuclear attacks by both sides; in the war, the planet has been reduced to a wasteland, except for a series of islands named Abel, Cain, and Eden. Now, the two sides have agreed to fight a nice, traditional war on these islands, and whoever wins the battle wins the primo living space.

You'll be fighting in one of two dynamic campaigns in which the mission types vary based on your performance rather than follow a pre-scripted plan. You might begin with a simple reconnaissance mission; once it is complex, your orders will be updated. In some missions you hold a piece of land; in others you storm in and capture a fuel dump or vital road junction. Since the missions take place all over an island, there's a time-compression option for traveling, in case you don't want to sit down in a jeep and go through the entire ride in real-time.

You start off as a lowly grunt taking orders. As you progress in rank, your power increases in a couple of ways. One is that you'll be able to pilot or drive some of the merry vehicles employed by the side you're fighting for. I didn't get to see a real flight model when I sampled the A-10 in the alpha build, but when it's added it should be a bonus feature for anyone who plays both sims and action-strategy games.

The most important factor in rank is that as the campaign progresses you'll have the opportunity to command other squadmates. The interface for squad command is quite straightforward. Just click on the icons representing the soldiers you want to command, then select a command from the

dropdown menu, and finally click on either a target or a destination.

FLASH POINT looks like a unique game that will pull off the "foot soldier who can hop into vehicles and drive" trick as well as add something new to the action-strategy genre overall. As one editor put it, FLASH POINT seems a little like "Saving Private Ryan: The Game." Let's hope that it gets the development care it needs to justify that lofty comparison. **GGW**

Flash Point

WWII—Up Close and Personal by Thierry Nguyen



Flash Point

GENRE: Action/Strategy

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '99

DEVELOPER: Interactive Magic


PUBLISHER: Bohemia Interactive

WAGNER'S FAVORITE RIDE When you reach the appropriate rank, you can pilot the game's various vehicles.



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QUAKE III ARENA • TEAM FORTRESS 2 • UNREAL TOURNAMENT

BLOOD FE

by CGW Action Editor,
Robert Coffey

It's a No-Holds-Barred Deathmatch, With Three Bloodthirsty Contenders Trapped in the Ring. We Played the Hottest Upcoming Multiplayer Shooters to See Who's Got the Stones to Survive the Carnage.

DEATH

Quake III: Arena

Genre: Shooter • Release Date: Q3 '99
Developer: id Software • Publisher: Activision

77

Team Fortress 2

Genre: Shooter • Release Date: Q4 '99
Developer: Valve • Publisher: Sierra Studios

78

Unreal Tournament

Genre: Shooter • Release Date: Q3 '99
Developer: Epic Games • Publisher: GIG Interactive

85

Quake III: Arena

Can the Once and Future King of DeathMatch Hold Its Throne of Blood?

QUAKE games, the undisputed masters of the first-person shooter and the DeathMatch, have always stood hip-deep in the gory offal of their competitors. Repeatedly setting the standard for brutally enthralling action, the demented geniuses of id Software have spawned a rabid community of gamers who revel in the virtual fragging of both friends and strangers across LANs and the Internet. But in the wake of new stars like Valve's HALF-LIFE and id's own surprising decision to focus gameplay strictly on the multiplayer side of the equation, **QUAKE III: ARENA (Q3A)** is the first id release to beg the question, "Will it be worth it?"

The short answer? You bet your ass.

The Big Picture

"After the multiplayer experience in **QUAKE III**, nobody will need to play any other multiplayer game. We have created the most perfect DeathMatch game." From anyone other than Tim Willits, lead level designer for Q3A, it would be easy to dismiss such a strong statement as little more than careless braggadocio, but given id's track record, such a statement practically borders on prophecy.

While forgoing the traditional, story-driven single-player game may seem an incredibly risky move, let's face facts: The plots of the **QUAKE** games weren't going to win any Pulitzer prizes. In fact, as challenging as the single-player component was, many gamers played the games solely against other people, eschewing the solo experience entirely. Recognizing that group carnage was what it does best, id has simply narrowed its focus to make the definitive DeathMatch game.

Part of that focus is on facilitating connectivity. According to Todd Hollenhead, id's CEO, when Q3A ships, gamers should be able to connect to an Internet game "in no more than three clicks" with the ability to log on to a Quakeworld server through their browser. This will let id use banner information for game updates and will allow gamers to bookmark their favorite servers.

Once connectivity is dealt with, the challenge is to keep frustration, specifically game-soaring lag time, at bay. By id's own admission, Q3A will use pretty much all the bandwidth of a 56k modem while utilizing a completely new networking structure to milk bandwidth for all it's worth. The good news is that the look of the game won't suffer at the expense of speed. Kenneth Scott and Paul Steed have created character models that are the epitome of the brutish nightmarish gamers have come to expect of id. Each of the



PURPLE HAZE With all the new graphical bells and whistles, *QUAKE III: ARENA* will be the best-looking id game yet. Even better, gamers will be able to customize some weapon effects, like the purple trail of this rail gun, to give their death-dealing a personal touch.

Quake III: Arena (continued)

13 models has an 800-, 500-, and 300-polygon version, letting the game save bandwidth by swapping in lower-polygon models when figures are at a distance. And hard-core 3D graphics aficionados will be happy to know id has opted for a three-point animation scheme that may not be as flashy as the trendy skeletal animation of other games but blesses players with the most efficient vertex deformation for online play.

Finally, id plans for Q3A to standardize the rules for DeathMatch and other games used for tournament play. It's a pretty crafty goal on their part: By becoming the definitive authority on the rules of play, they set Q3A up as the definitive mode of play.

The Single-Player Experience

The primary goal of Q3A's single-player game is to lessen the intimidation factor of online DeathMatching for newcomers (while the game will ship with Capture the Flag and perhaps some other mods, they won't be available in single-player mode). To that end, the

Team Fortress 2

Valve Goes to War in the Follow-Up to HALF-LIFE

"Someone's going to do it right. Someone's going to get it right. And when they do, it's going to be huge," Gabe Newell, managing director of Valve, is certain that rampant online multiplayer gaming is about to sweep not only the gaming community but the nation as well. With the prices on Internet-ready PCs dropping faster than Ally

McBeal's weight, Newell and the rest of Valve believe the time is ripe for a multiplayer game to enjoy a level of popularity commensurate with that of television.

TEAM FORTRESS 2, Valve's first release following the ground-breaking HALF-LIFE, could just be that game.

The Big Picture

The chief goal of TF2 is to get players to run with, to work with, and to rely on their teammates. By providing the uniquely compelling social experience that true teamwork inspires, and by designing a game that will allow even casual players to succeed, the people at Valve are hoping to launch TF2 to the top of the multi-player heap.

Getting gamers immediately into the action is paramount, and to that end TF2 sports a WWII feel instantly recognizable to anyone who's ever seen a war movie. A large part of that comes courtesy of maps that really play up the feel of small European towns and villages, with cobblestone streets, narrow roads, snaking alleyways, and a plethora of prime sniping spots. Gamers will choose from a variety of unique classes, including field medics, rocket infantrymen, snipers, spies, and remote commanders who aren't even on the battlefield, to wage war together against teams of other warriors.

TF2's gritty and realistic models utilize Intel's Multi-Resolution Mesh (MRM) technology to create the most lifelike avatars we've seen. These MRMs dynamically scale back a model's polygon count at distances with no discernible loss of quality. By scaling a 1,500 poly model to as little as 400, MRM gives the artists the opportunity to create highly detailed models—complete with swinging gun straps and true 3D gear—without putting a drag on frame rate. The MRMs will also allow gamers with less-robust machines to run the

game has scalable skill levels to ensure that even the clumsiest keyboard player will be able to succeed. But what's truly revolutionary is the way the game handles the escalating challenges of its 40 or so levels.

While the bots that solo fraggers will face will increase in difficulty they are not locked in at a preset difficulty level and will actually adjust dynamically to your skills. Beat a level and the bots on the next one will be tougher. Get stuck long enough on one map and the bots will very gradually dull their skills until they reach a point where you can beat them, while still being challenged.

Incentive to finish the game comes in

the form of rankings and awards that might be carried over to players' online stats. And while there are no bosses per se, the single-player game will include six or seven bots with voices and definite characters that will taunt you mercilessly—yet another motivator for players to finish the game.



GUERRILLAS IN THE MIST Volumetric fog will give some maps a tense, claustrophobic feel as gamers are concealed from each other until they're at point-blank range.



OPEN WIDE How organic can true curved surfaces make a level appear? How about this doorway with its giant lolling tongue leading to the fanged maw within?

Battling the Bots

"The goal is to piss you off." Such is the lofty aspiration of bot programmer John Cash. "The trick," he says, "is to do it without cheating."

Designing opponents to behave like unpredictable humans is incredibly challenging, so the temptation for cheating is understandable. But Cash is adamant that his bots not cheat. To that end, he's zeroing in on creating bots so human that they don't have to cheat.

In order to create believable adversaries, Cash is moving away from the überplayer style of other games' bots—bots that never miss, always know where you are, can suddenly increase their speed, and so forth—to programming bot tendencies across a wide range of attributes that affect their behavior. Bots will be rated in aiming skill, map knowledge, long/short-range preference, reaction time, weapon preference, desire for armor, health level priorities, aggression, hearing, and more. At any given moment in a game, the bots will analyze their situation and then decide upon an action according to their attributes.

Since the ratings are all soft numbers, the bots will enjoy distinct playing styles while still maintaining a degree of unpredictability. This allows you to adjust to a bot's particular combat style while still requiring you to watch out for unusual behavior. For example, a bot who generally runs scared when injured may suddenly decide to take some extra damage when it thinks it has a shot at finishing you off.

The soft ratings also let the game create bots that are challenging in a variety of ways. Easy bots can be bots that never miss but won't react until you're on top of them, or bots who can always find you but never hit you. The rating system gives Q3A one other advantage: the ability to customize bots for practicing against certain skill sets. It's still undecided whether this will require editing a text file or implementation through a menu system, but it is definitely leaning toward allowing gamers to create a digital version of that jerk at the office who always beats you.

Cash is abandoning the programming tendency to plot bot movement across a series of waypoints—a method that both increases predictability and creates other problems, such as bots that can't handle platforms. Instead, Cash's bots analyze

game in a dynamically lower resolution to maintain a high frame-rate for them as well. The model believability even extends to syncing the movement of their mouths with the words of players' voices.

And voice support is a huge part of TF2's design. While real-time voice obviously allows for more detailed communication between players, it also is a vital part of the social experience that Valve hopes to create. However, voice won't be just a big sloppy open channel; instead, it will follow a command hierarchy, with only commanders permitted to broadcast teamwide messages. Squad members will normally be able to talk only to each other but they'll also be able to broadcast to the entire team with their commander's permission.

HALF-LIFE 2

After the incredible experience of HALF-LIFE, gamers are understandably hungry for a sequel. While Valve isn't a... yet much right now, we have it on good authority that a small team of about five has already started preliminary work on what may be the most hotly anticipated sequel since WARCRUFT II. While the scripted events and story interaction were integral parts of HALF-LIFE's success, we're told that these were little more than trial balloons for the ambitious game elements HALF-LIFE 2 will use to startle, scare, and entice gamers. We can't wait.

Quake III: Arena (continued)

the map and build data structures that allow them to "think" of a map's rooms and how to get between them; thus bots are able to find paths rather than simply follow them.

When we squared off against the bots, we were impressed. Even in their early state, the bots were tricky using cover and flanking to give one of our best players a real run for the money, even though they were having a few problems dealing with doors and buttons. But with more attention from Cash and additional input from John Carmack to improve the bot tactics, Q3A's bots should be among the best yet.

Wielding the Weapons

In keeping with Q3A's focus on refining gameplay, there's nothing all that revolutionary happening on the weaponry front. The DOOM chainsaw is back, perfect for those up-close-and-personal humiliation frags, while a machine gun will serve as your default weapon after a respawn. The firing rates and attendant kickback of the grenade and rocket launchers have been increased, while the reload on the railgun is now a little slower. A slightly changed QUAKE-style lighting gun makes an appearance, the hyperblaster has been revamped as a plasma gun with explosive charges, and the BFG is back and nasty as ever. The most tantalizing possibility centers around the potential inclusion of a flamethrower. We can only hope that this baby makes it in.

One option we expect gamers to embrace is the ability to customize the color of their railgun and (possibly) rocket trails. While this won't give gamers the opportunity to express themselves as

fully as HALF-LIFE's tags the option of immediately letting your victims know who's reducing their skill to goopy pulp can only be a good thing.

The Playing Field

With every new game engine, it has delivered even more impressive levels, and Q3A will be no exception. In fact, with the game's single-minded multiplayer focus, the level designers seem to have really cut loose in creating their maps. Sure, they're all dressed up with specular lighting, volumetric fog, and more polygons, but it's the actual design of the arenas that will wow gamers.

Freed from the event-driven, linear constraints of standard single-player level design, id is pulling out the stops with levels that run the gamut, including towering multileveled structures, wide-open arenas, and levels with different physics. Circular and repetitive in nature, the maps encourage the kind of frantic running and constant conflict that make for intense DeathMatches.

Lava pools and bottomless pits present environmental hazards, but the acceleration ramps and bouncing pads have the greatest impact on gameplay as gamers launch themselves across chasms and over enemies.

In addition to armor, armor and health power-ups, levels will hold haste and invisibility power-ups, medkits that can be carried for later use, and, of course, the quad damage power-up. Use of these power-ups will be broadcast to all players via an in-game "announcement" to help catch up the tension and action. But if you're the type of player prone to making out your armor and health, be warned: Once either of these attributes exceeds 100, it starts ticking back down immediately. Keeping players from becoming virtually invulnerable makes everyone a ready target and keeps the action moving.

So How Does It Play?

Dizzily fast, widely brutal, and just flat-out gorgeous, QUAKE III: ARENA is a better game in a beta state than many games sitting on store shelves. The game plays at a scorching speed more akin to QUAKE than QUAKE II, and the wildly imaginative level design only enhances the sense of mayhem.



FEEL THE POWER
Translucent energy webs will distinguish players who've grabbed power-ups like invulnerability or the quad damage.

Among the levels we played, two were real standouts. One was a cramped one-on-one arena, choked with a toxic green fog. While the drifting haze definitely enhanced the visual appeal of the map, it also created a claustrophobic feeling of dread and uncertainty, since you didn't know where your adversary was until he was right in front of you—or until a railgun stream ripped through the murky air. A ledge above the fog held the quad damage, and I'd grimace every time I heard the booming announcement that my opponent had just grabbed it, knowing that he was out there, hidden in the



HOUSES OF THE UNHOLY Q3A maps run the gamut, from wide-open, rocket-friendly arenas to more closed-in quarters with lots of hallways and staggered levels.

Team Fortress 2 (continued)

Valve's aim here is to avoid cluttering bandwidth with a cacophony of voices and to prevent the game from turning into a 900-number with guns.

And if the TF2 developers have any bottom line in mind, it's the game's social experience. Over the next several months the designers will be observing TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC closely, seeing what works, what doesn't work, and how the rules change according to the number of players. One observation has already led to a significant addition to TF2—after watching more-experienced players literally stand over the shoulders of newbies and offer advice, Valve added the Coach role. Coaches will be heard only by a specific player in the game and will appear as a glowing ball on that player's screen, allowing the Coach



mist, hunting me, and probably logging around a rocket launcher to boot.

But it was a larger level designed for four to eight players that really showed off the promise of this game. It featured a large platform suspended in space, with a multi-faced bouncing pad at its center. On each side of this square platform was another floating surface, far away and far above it. Each of these peripheral platforms had acceleration pads that would fling you just far enough to reach the center again. Never have I experienced such swirling, exhilarating action in a shooter, rocketing through the air at neck-snapping speeds, colliding violently with other players hurtling the other way, or tumbling through space, trying to get a bead on the guy firing at me from below as I plummeted wildly toward his platform. It's a perfect example of the kind of brain-squeezing, pulse-pounding level design that hard-core games live for.

So is Tim Willits right? Has he created "the most perfect DeathMatch game?" Judging from our hands-on play-testing, Mr. Willits may just be on to something. **CGW**

Feel the Love

Here at CGW a death-match is just not as enjoyable without the empty boasts of meachad Dave Salvator or the helpless, girlish squeals of chronically ragged warname editor Terry Coleman. But how do you recreate that-making in a single-player game mimicking the multiplayer experience? To that end both QUAKE III: ARENA and UTREKAL TOURNAMENT are implementing audio to both reward and ridicule players. Q3A will provide specific play-by-play of the action with a throaty "Impressive!" congratulating a great shot or a cruel "Denied!" to note less happy accomplishments. UT has a similar mechanism, announcing players (and bots) as being on a "savage" or a "killing spree" after racking up a series of kills. But it goes beyond Q3A with bots that moan, "I slaughtered that guy!" "Is that your liver over there?" and other unpleasantities after cutting you in half. UT's couple of dozen taunts will be available to human players as well, with just a couple of mouse clicks allowing gamers to belittle both friends and bots.

to offer a continuous stream of direction and even lead the active player through the map.

The Single-Player Experience

While it won't provide a single-player game per se, TF2 will feature boot camp-style training missions for every character class, introducing more complicated game elements gradually. For example, a training mission for a spy might require the player to disguise himself, infiltrate an enemy base, then shoot a specific enemy in the back using the spy's

silenced pistol. Interface issues will be explained as well, eventually even teaching players how to bind macros to hot-keys.

For gamers hungry for more practice or who lack modems, TF2 can be played with bots. For most maps, players can practice taking-orders from an AI commander or, alternatively, lead a squad of bots to victory.

Battling the Bots

Steve Bond, the AI guru behind the vicious enemies in HALF-LIFE, will be working on bot AI for TF2.



HEAD CASE TEAM
FORTRESS 2's MRM technology lets them reduce character polygons on the fly to maintain high frame-rates. The shot above shows a highly detailed, 1,500-poly model, while the shot at right shows a 400-poly model that will be used at long range, though it looks as good as the best models in other games. In the final shot you can see the character in the game environment and how the high detail complements the game's gritty, realistic feel.



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DIRECTOR'S CUT

Team Fortress 2 (continued)

Basically, the AI will be based on a learning design, in which the artificial combatants learn from their mistakes and successes. For instance, an engineer bot will build sentry guns and then track the amount of time until each is destroyed, how many kills it achieved, where the enemy is, and so forth. After building sentry guns in a variety of locations, the bot will pick the best location for its defenses almost every time.

This learning AI is interesting because it will be incorporated into every player's individual game as well, charting their success and offering suggestions onscreen to improve their play. As players improve, the ghost bot will offer fewer and fewer pointers.

Teams will be able to practice against teams of bots, and bots can be used to round out teams short on members. Should a new player log on, one of the bots will drop out to make room; conversely, players who drop out of games will be replaceable by bots.

Wielding the Weapons

Unlike other games, TF2 designs around roles, not weapons. This means that while there are various types of weapons, players will be limited to those tied to their class. The idea is that by



MEAN STREETS House-to-house fighting in war-torn villages means potentially fatal confrontations can be just around the corner.

ensuring everyone has something they do well along with some significant weaknesses, they'll motivate players to work together, again underscoring the social nature of the game. Heavy infantry will wield enormous charginos that are deadly at long range, while the light infantry's submachine gun will be devastating in close quarters. Weapons and abilities that run counter to team play (such as the TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC medic's infect ability) are being scrubbed from the TF2 game design.

While the weapons are intended to

Unreal Tournament

Can the World's Prettiest Shooter Frag With the Big Boys?

Y

es, UNREAL was jaw-droppingly gorgeous. But the only eye-candy that die-hard deathmatch devotees care about is the sight of an opponent's blood greasing the floor. With its poor network performance and a multiplayer experience that never quite satisfied, UNREAL death-matching was skewered by critics. Gamers simply stuck with the solo game, UNREAL's multi-player failing to capture their hearts and trigger fingers even on those rare occasions when they could get an online game to run more than five minutes. Saddled with such a lackluster legacy, you've got to hand it to Epic Games' developers for taking on the challenge of making the UNREAL line a contender in the multiplayer world.

The Big Picture

UNREAL TOURNAMENT hopes to blow away gamers' lingering reservations with fast, thunderous gameplay—a style of play lacking in the original. The game can be played at a default speed that is fairly swift, but the truly ambitious will have the option to play at a much faster “hardcore” setting as well as the dizzyingly fast “turbo” rate. In addition to upgrading the speed, players can adjust settings to increase the effectiveness and damage capability of bots in practice matches.

The violence quotient has been ratcheted up as well, with every successful hit accompanied by copious sprays of blood. Slain enemies go limp, then delicately spin and flutter to the floor, but we suspect that gamers will be more entranced by the special death animations, which are like nothing else in gaming. Score a killing blow to an opponent's head and you might rip 20 pounds of needless flesh from your victim, leaving a twitching, neck-bleeding corpse that will linger on its lifeless legs before crumbling to the ground. Unload a flask cannon in an enemy's midsection and you could be treated to the happy sight of your foe torn into two gut-spewing pieces. A wide variety of death rattles and tortured cries further enhance the blood-splattered experience.

The Single-Player Experience

While UNREAL TOURNAMENT forgoes the traditional, story-based single-player game, it does have a sort of



POP TOP Zoom and boom, baby. The sniping rifle is one of UT's nastiest weapons, with a scalable zoom that lets you zero in on your target before blowing his head clean off.

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Team Fortress 2

(continued)

metic re-if-world arms in order to create intuitive

play, they aren't lay-the-letter recreations—this would yield baroques that would kill practically everyone on the map.

Still, the weapon modeling is more realistic than that found in a game like UNREAL.

TOURNAMENT: Baroques shoot out dangerous backflashes, and every gun has an optimum firing rate and distance.

Finally, in another teamwork-boosting feature, squad leaders will exert an effect on their squad members within a certain area: Squads will enjoy an improved firing rate and accuracy when they stick close to their leaders.

The Playing Field

The 20 odd goal-oriented maps to be included in TF2 are worlds beyond anything in TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC. While the enhanced level of detail and volumetric smoke add all the eye candy gamers could want, it's the goals and play structure that will make these some of the most insanely addictive battlefields ever.

Yes, TF2 will support Capture the Flag play, but it's in the other map types that lead designer Robin Walker thinks the game will shine the most. In Hunted, one gamer is the highly vulnerable Leader; trying to run to safety



HUNKERED DOWN Bunkers such as this will reward players in two ways: They'll protect them (specially snipers who must kneel and not move when firing), and they'll provide a stable platform on which heavy-weapons units can rest their massive guns for maximum effectiveness. Storming the bunkers, obviously, won't be so easy.

while a squad of bodyguards protects him from a team of assassins. A variation of this game takes place in a Middle Eastern palace where both teams struggle to kidnap the Leader.

The liberal use of vehicles such as tanks and attack jets adds texture to the battlegrounds, but gamers won't be able to actually operate them. Instead, some maps will allow commanders to call for these support troops.

A few of the new maps almost make you feel like you're also responsible for a real-time strategy game. In Conquest, opposing armies fight over resources such as oil drums, converting retrieved resources into items to support the war effort. Commanders have to choose what they need to win. Should they build armor facilities to generate heavy infantry, or a factory to produce markers for air strikes? Should they build defen-

It's Not the Bullet That Kills You, It's the Hole

While each of these games is at its heart a first-person shooter, different play philosophies are reflected in their assortments of weapons. **CSA's** *more-up-close-and-personal* feel is perhaps best indicated by the reintroduction of the chainsaw, allowing gamers to *rip* their victims and watch them dance on a spinning blade of flesh-chewing metal. Straightforward and brutal, **CSA's** railguns, super shotguns, and machine guns are all about shredding meat and moving on.

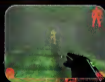
The biggest challenge UT faced was overcoming the *unimpressive weaponry* in UNREAL. To that end, the game designers teased out a fair number of the weapons in favor of new guns that pack some serious punch. *Weapon noises* are much louder than in UNREAL, and *weapon effects* have been beefed up as well. The UT lore doesn't fall far from the UNREAL tree, however: The signature eye candy of the original title is present, especially in the whiz-bang alternative-fire attacks of the weapons.

TEAM FORTRESS 2's stated goal of recreating the look and feel of an epic war movie has led the designers to arm the game's characters with immediately recognizable, instantly understandable firearms. By removing any doubt about the weapons' abilities, the designers at Valve hope to *diminish the learning curve* so that gamers will be able to dive right into the action. Actually, deciding on TF2's arsenal has more to do with play balancing than anything else—each class's limited weapon set has particular strengths and weaknesses, requiring gamers to take on different roles and strongly encouraging teamwork.

UT: Without exception, every UT weapon (each with an alternate attack) is bigger, badder, and louder.

It starts with the default weapon, the impact hammer. A portable jackhammer on steroids, the impact hammer is as vicious a melee weapon as you'll ever find, pounding a victim's head to jelly with one shot. The ultimate weapon in the game is the Redeemer, a devastating, kill-'em-all missile launcher that can be guided around corners, through corridors, and up stairs in its alternate mode.

Weapons carried over from UNREAL have been beefed up as well. The Ratojack is back as the even more sinister, blade-splitting Ripper (firing explosive



PEEKABOO No, it's not a dipping problem. Some of UT's levels feature hidden rooms, perfect for sniping and ambushes—not that this shielded minigun-bearing killer needs the help.

blades in its alternate-fire

mode), and the Eightball reappears as a more straightforward Rocket Launcher.

Aside from the arsenal, UT sports other handy items. A shield belt sheathing the bearer in a shimmering golden matrix effectively doubles your armor rating. An invisibility power-up lets you move around unseen—until you fire your weapon and spent casings, muzzle flash,

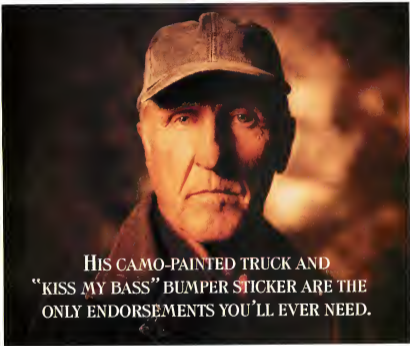
Unreal Tournament

(continued)

MORTAL KOMBAT with-guns premise. Players are participants in a sweeping Grand Tournament in which only one survivor will be crowned Grandmaster. Play will include standard deathmatches with either a time or frag limit as well as three team games: Capture the Flag; Domination, in which teams compete to hold positions on the map, accruing points the longer they hold them; and Assault, in which your team first assaults an objective and then must hold and defend it. Each game will have a series of about 10 increasingly difficult levels. Once each ladder has been beaten, gamers will compete in a super-challenge deathmatch to earn the title Unreal Grandmaster as well as the privilege of using a special character mesh that will then be unlocked—perfect for a nice little intimidation edge in online play.

Wielding the Weapons

Among the criticized aspects of UNREAL were the plinky weapons, some of which sounded as if they were shooting dimes, not devastating rounds. No one's going to be able to say that about



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Team Fortress 2 (continued)

sive walls, or a satellite tracking system to monitor the enemy?

But the best part promises to be the campaigns. Made up of a series of three to four maps that can be played through in about an hour, campaigns put teams on opposite sides of an epic, ongoing conflict. For example, the Invasion campaign begins with an Omaha Beach scenario, as an invading team struggles to reach a safety zone behind enemy lines. The defenders gain points the longer they keep the offensive team from the safety zone; the invaders score by getting men to the safety zone and destroying bunkers along the way. In the following map, the invaders work their way across a countryside, destroying bridges, railroads, and power lines that the defending force tries to protect. In the final map, the sides are switched; the invaders have seized a small, European-style village and are protecting a vital bridge. The new defenders are given a minute to position themselves in the twisting streets and small buildings of the town before the liberators arrive. With no single chokepoints, the two sides will engage in brutal, WWII-style house-to-house warfare before the inevitable showdown at the bridge.

Finally, a wargame for action fans.

So How Does It Play?

God, we wish we could tell you. Despite our pathetic pleading, Valve didn't have a playable version of TF2 available during our visit. But countless hours spent on TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC have us drooling over TF2. The experience of playing the hunted, with a swarm of angry red sniper lasers swirling about the Leader's head, is unbelievably intense, and the heady triumph of a team victory is somehow significantly more rewarding than a straightforward deathmatch.

With months of play-testing and balancing ahead of it, TF2 can only be even better. **GGW**

Unreal Tournament (continued)

and direction of fire give away their position. The sound dampener is an aural cloaking device that allows you to move silently.

The coolest of all the special items is the translocator, a personal teleportation unit that is a default item in both flag games. The translocator is a two-part device, one a marker, the other a trigger. Drop the marker wherever you want, then use the trigger later to instantly teleport to the marker. While the translocator has obvious value as a virtual escape hatch for a firefight gone bad, its greatest value is in games like Domination—simply tag a Domination point and use it to recapture the objective immediately after it's taken by an opponent. The translocator can also be used to instantly reach towering precipices. When fired into the unsuspecting hands of an enemy, it can deliver a nifty teletag as well.

The Playing Field

It shouldn't be a surprise that the levels in UT are uniformly gorgeous. Dazzling light effects and complex architecture retain the surreal UNREAL flavor while serving up lots of wide-open areas perfect for frenzied free-for-alls and providing plenty of sniping positions. The locations of the maps are wonderfully diverse: towering castles floating in space, mining facilities, and one Assault map that takes place on a moving, high-speed train. But the hands-down, undisputed coolest map is one of the zero-gravity levels that takes place inside and on top of a Millennium Falcon-type spaceship hurtling through space.



The Final Word

So who will the **final winners** be when these games ship later this year? We give the edge to **QUAKE III: ARENA**, and **TEAM FORTRESS 2**, with TF2 likely to have broader appeal. The die-hard **QUAKE** community makes Q3A's success a no-brainer, and by focusing on just one style of game and doing it as well as it can be done, Q3A seems poised to corner the deathmatch market. That same singularity of focus could work slightly against it, though, as it will offer gamers a fairly limited playing experience. TF2's cooperative play, robust voice support, and game design that allows gamers who generally don't excel at shooters to succeed (not to mention the game's association with Valve and HALF-LIFE) should give it a very broad appeal. Epic is doing a ton of things right with **UNREAL TOURNAMENT**, and the game's catch-all philosophy is commendable, but it's going to be awfully hard to topple the **QUAKE** dynasty or to compete with the gamer-lovedest Valve currently enjoys. Without the gritty feel or play balance of TF2, its team games may likely be perceived as little more than glorified deathmatches. With an earlier launch than its competitors, **UT** will have to hope it captures enough gamers early to make the other games seem irrelevant.

Online Gaming Gets Personal With Voice-Over Internet


"Check your six! Check your six!"

You hear the voice of your wingman screaming at you in the headset. You yank the stick just in time to see a stream of tracers cascade past your cockpit. You check your speed, pull the stick up, and do a high yo-yo, which puts you right on the tail of the Me-109 that tried to perforate your Spitfire. The eight .303 Brownings make short work of the enemy plane.

This may have sounded like any AI wingman speaking to you, but it was in fact another human. That's the kind of difference voice communication software can make.

Now Hear This

by Loyd Case and Dave Salvator



ABOUT THE MODEL
R2-D2 can be seen in the movie *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. His previous work includes *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Return of the Jedi*, and *Fire Hydrant Number 2 in My Life as a Dog*.
PHOTOS BY MICHAEL FALCNER

Playing games over the Internet has put a premium on typing skill—people who type faster can more quickly communicate with human opponents or teammates. But with the upcoming generation of voice communication software, typing skill becomes superfluous, and a whole new social element is layered on top of multiplayer gaming.

During testing, we wound up on a TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC (HALF-LIFE) server where we found ourselves out-gunned by our anonymous opponents on the Canalzone2 map. Yet we managed to hold our own pretty well—because we could work as a team, and talk to each other.

None of the packages reviewed here work perfectly, but even with their flaws, the increase in efficiency of teamwork was astonishing. We took a look at two shipping voice-comm packages—Shadowfactor's BattleCom and ThrustMaster's Talk n' Play—and Roger Wilco, which was still in beta.

Of the two shipping products, BattleCom worked much better for gaming. It's a sophisticated voice-comm package that's also well suited for conferencing. ThrustMaster's Talk n' Play seems more exclusively geared for conferencing. Roger Wilco looks—er, sounds—very promising. But as with any product that requires bandwidth over the Net, your mileage will vary.

Shadowfactor BattleCom

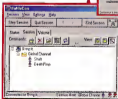
★★★★★

PROS: Compression settings can be easily tweaked, voice quality good
CONS: Breaks up in some games, strong compression can be in confusing
REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 100MHz w/beer
Price: \$14.95
Manufacturer: Shadowfactor
www.shadowfactor.com

BattleCom started life as BattleField Communicator, but the new name is an easier mouthful. BattleCom's strength and weakness is its tweakability. There are numerous voice compression settings, not to mention arcane settings like "Record Guardian Enable." The downside of this line level of control is that it's often confusing if your sound card and microphone setup don't quite match up with the defaults. If you have a fairly standard PCI audio card, you should be okay. The HTML help file is fairly complete, though I would have preferred a real Windows help file so I could more easily search for problems. There's still good, hyper-linked information, and the troubleshooting section will be useful.

And you'll be troubleshooting if you haven't had any experience in voice communication. One thing most newbies do is uncheck the microphone playback box in the Windows mixer so they can hear the sound of their voices. It sounds cool, but you don't want this turned on. One very useful tool built into BattleCom is the test tool, which simulates an Internet voice session using just your audio setup.

Once you're up and running, you can either connect to a BattleCom server or host a session yourself. The latest version of BattleCom allows the client software to host a session on its own, prior versions required access to a system running BattleCom server software. For most casual gaming use, the peer-to-peer sessions possible with the BattleCom client software work well. BattleCom will also work over a LAN using the IPX networking protocol, further, it has a feature that allows you to invoke it from within ICQ, a popular Internet connection monitor



and conferencing application.

Once up and running, BattleCom does what it's supposed to, providing there's enough bandwidth. To avoid hours of frustration, it's very important that you correctly answer the questions in the wizard when you're installing BattleCom. Voice quality does drop with higher compression rates, since there's only so much you can squeeze through a thin data pipe. We had varying degrees of success, depending on the game. Turn-based and even real-time strategy games worked well (on a Pentium IV550), but in HALF-LIFE sessions we experienced dropouts severe enough to require a "say again" pretty often. Then again, HALF-LIFE is a very network-intensive game at times. EVERQUEST, a massively multiplayer game, yielded varying results—more positive than negative. AIR WARRIOR worked very well, but AIR WARRIOR's been tuned over the years to work with slow modems, so it leaves some bandwidth for voice comes on a 56-Kbps modem. Note that if you're hosting a session, you do need to feed your IP address to the other users.

ThrustMaster Talk n' Play

★★★☆☆

PROS: Good hardware included with package, large built-in community, good audio quality
CONS: Poor game compatibility, clunky UI on PeopleLink application
REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133MHz CPU
Price: \$15.99
Manufacturer: ThrustMaster
www.talknplay.com

ThrustMaster isn't exactly a household name when it comes to audio. But they've put together an interesting package called Talk n' Play (TNP), which is billed primarily as a way to jabber on the Net. ThrustMaster has a tie-in to PeopleLink, a huge online community, and this connection

provides a large built-in initial play group you can connect to. TNP is based upon Intel's Multi-Point Audio technology, and it allows up to four people to connect at once. It's different from the other voice-comm packages in that much of its interface for starting a conference is

Web browser-based, although using the PeopleLink application you can add your gaming buds to your list and start a session with them if they're connected. We found that TNP works quite well for online chatter, with very good sound quality, but the PeopleLink application proved to be awkward at times, kind of like a poor man's ICQ. We also found that TNP fired the worst of the three

packages for game compatibility.

TNP can access your sound card using either Wave or DirectSound mode; we tested first using the latter mode, figuring it would enable TNP to more easily share sound card resources. It turned out that neither mode allowed TNP to function alongside all of our test games. TNP connected fine in all instances before getting into any of the test games, but in HALF-LIFE, for example, once the game started we lost the TNP connection. The one test game where the connection remained was FIGHTER SQUADRON, where TNP performed adequately. Another minor downside to TNP is that it requires an Internet connection in order to function, since the initial connection must be made either via the TNP Web site or through the PeopleLink server, so LAN play is not an option.

ThrustMaster may have figured that since Intel's Multi-Point Audio could access the sound card via DirectSound, TNP would naturally work well with DirectSound games. But it appears that they didn't do much play-testing with audio-intensive games before shipping the product. The result is substandard game compatibility, which, coupled with TNP's somewhat clumsy user interface, keeps Talk n' Play out of the winner's circle.

Preview of Roger Wilco

PROS: Very simple to install; very clean user interface.
CONS: Still beta.
REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200MHz or better; Price: \$24.95.
Manufacturer: Finetuning Technology
www.rogerwilco.com

Roger Wilco is still in beta at the time of our testing, so we didn't rate it. It's simpler to install and set up than the other two packages here, but some of the complexity is merely hidden. For example, some games require you to edit a configuration file called GAMES.TXT, whereas BattleCom provides a point-and-click interface integrated into the software for the same function. Wilco has no compression settings—the program either works with a single form of compression or auto-adjusts to your link.

Roger Wilco also doesn't require a server, but if you host a session, you need to supply



your IP address. One feature lacking in the beta we tested was the lookback test that's part of BattleCom—with Roger Wilco there's no real way of knowing whether your connection is working until you try to make a real connection.

Game performance was something of a mixed bag. HALF-LIFE once again demonstrated that it's a bandwidth-hungry game, and voice communication broke up in heavy sessions. AGE OF EMPIRES seemed to work just fine. EVERQUEST exhibited the oddest behavior: After about a half hour of gameplay, the voice communication slowly degraded until it was unrecognizable. Only restarting both the game and Roger Wilco seemed to fix the problem. Roger Wilco's performance over standard analog modems seems mixed, too, with good results in less demanding games but significant problems in bandwidth-hungry titles.

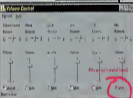
Like BattleCom, Roger Wilco supports both "push to talk" (PTT) and voice-activated mode. While talking in PTT mode you have to press and hold down a key on the keyboard (both programs default to F12). This emulates the behavior of real two-way radio communication, and a lot of flight sim jockeys love it. Voice activation is just that—when you talk, the mike detects it and becomes active. This is the preferred mode for 3D shooters and strategy games.

Still, this is beta software, although it seems pretty solid for a beta product. At \$24.95, it's the same cost as BattleCom. The trade-off is simplicity versus features. We'll revisit Roger Wilco when it ships, but we're very encouraged by what we've seen so far. **CGW**

Getting Blather-Ready

Setting up voice communication requires some understanding of the Windows mixer. When you first pop up the mixer, you normally see the playback mixer. You want the microphone muted in the playback mixer—otherwise, you hear yourself talking through your headphones or speakers, which can cause annoying feedback. Bring up the recording mixer (see screen below). You do this by pulling down the Properties menu on the Mixer menu. You'll get a window that looks very similar to the playback mixer. Make sure the microphone record volume is turned up at least halfway.

Once you've got the mixer properly set up, you need to configure the voice-comm software. BattleCom has a more detailed and somewhat confusing setup wizard. Roger



Wilco's is simpler, but you don't have the ability to force any configurations. All the products go through a microphone test phase—make sure this test completes successfully.

If you're the host, you'll need to let the other participants know your IP address. If you're using a dial-up account, your IP address will change every time you log on to the Internet. You can get your IP address by clicking on the Start menu, selecting Run, and typing WINIPCFG. Then you can email the IP address or transmit it another way, such as via ICQ.—Lloyd Case

How We Tested

Testing these packages involved many arduous hours of multiplayer gameplay... or, testing. We used multiple games with each package. We tested using HALF-LIFE, FIGHTER SQUADRON, EVERQUEST, AIR WARRIOR, and AGE OF EMPIRES. We also looked at each package's ability to function over a local area network (LAN) and took a look at its ability to support multiple protocols (all support TCP/IP, and BattleCom supports IPX). We then tested over 33.6-Kbps modem connections to force the apps to function in a narrow data pipe to see how'd they fare. Next, we took a look at how easy it was to configure the audio settings, as well as how easy or difficult it was to get a session going. And finally, the hard part: play-testing during multiplayer games to see how well the packages cooperated with our test games.

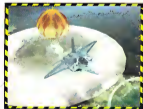
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Yet Another Laptop With the Gamer in Mind

Micron Takes Gaming Mobile

You're a road dog. You live in 737s, making puddle-jumps on business so often you could probably land the damn plane if called upon. And despite your hectic schedule, you still find yourself with thumb-twiddling time while en route to your next stop. If only that laptop could play 3D games... Sound familiar?

Mobile PC gamers have been locked out of the 3D gaming party until recently. But thanks to a few new laptops, 3D gaming has finally arrived for the mobile set. Micron, with their TransPort NX, is the latest to join this club, coupling good 3D gaming performance from ATI's Rage LT mobile chipset (based on the Rage Turbo Pro) with 4MB of video memory, a 366MHz Pentium II, a DVD player, 128MB of RAM, and 14GB of hard-drive space, all for about \$3,700.

ATI's Rage LT—the chipset that finally made 3D gaming really possible on laptops—also shows up in mobile offerings from Dell and Compaq.

We took a beta unit of Micron's new NX for a spin, and were encouraged by what we saw. Graphics drivers were still a bit shaky, which resulted in some crashes, but hey, that's why they call it beta. Running *QUAKE 2* at 640x480, the NX was very smooth, and gameplay flowed well.

But almost as cool as competent 3D is the ability to watch DVD movies. How many times have you boarded a five-hour flight, only to find out the in-flight movie was going to be something toothless like *My Giant*? With the onboard DVD, you can watch whatever movie you want to. Eat it, Billy...

Micron was in the latter part of their beta testing of the NX at press time, but stay tuned and as soon as it goes final, we'll bang on it with 3D GameGauge 2.0 and see how it fares versus the big boys on the desktop.—Dave Salvatore



When Tchotchkes Go Bad

Take a silly tchotchke (the gas mask from *FALLOUT 2*), an even sillier product (the UR Gear Helmet), and hold an intern at gunpoint, and this is what you wind up with. And what Jesse doesn't realize is that this setup, in addition to warding off Jehovah's Witnesses, makes a great contraceptive. Go get 'em, Jesse.



INSIDE HARDWARE



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PHOTO BY MICHAEL D'UCONER

From Slowpoke to Screamer

Free (or at Least Really Cheap) Ways to Keep Your Rig Humming

by Loyd Case

Let's face it: PCs are more complex than ever. This is especially true if you're a hard-core gamer, since you've most likely got a big hard drive, perhaps Voodoo³ SLI, a fast primary graphics card, a 3D positional audio accelerator, and an Internet connection. Keeping the whole thing well tuned is enough to make you want to become a Trappist monk.

So it's time to revisit performance tuning. I'm going to take you down some side streets and examine some free—or nearly free—ways of maximizing your performance. I'll try to cover each area individually, then look at the whole enchilada.

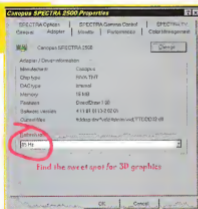
Graphic Images

When's the last time you updated your drivers? What? Okay, march to your computer, log on to the Web, and download the latest set of drivers for your graphics hardware. It's amazing how much of a difference this can make. This is especially true if you have a recently released card. (There's a syndrome called *driver du jour* that happens every time new graphics or audio technology is released.) Before you install those sparking new drivers, though, make sure you set up your

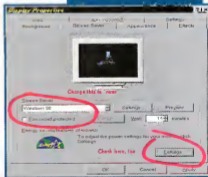
system for VGA, then reboot. Otherwise, all the old driver files may not be replaced.

If you want a fairly cheap and easy way to play around with your graphics card settings, check out Powerstrip. You can download a shareware version from www.entech-taiwan.com. It enables you to play around with a plethora of settings, and even

It's also a good idea to turn off the screen saver. Be aware that there's actually more than one screen saver in Windows 98. There's the normal screen saver that displays weird animations, and then there's the power management saver that shuts off your monitor. Both can interfere with gameplay. There's nothing more disconcerting than having your monitor shut down just as you're trying to repel a Zerg assault in STARCRaft.



When running 3D graphics on a fast PC, play around with the refresh rate a bit at a particular resolution. Depending on the game and your system, this can make quite a difference in frame-rate if your graphics card is just missing the next scan line, then it could cut your frame-rate by as much as 50 percent. Note that the sweet spot for the refresh rate may vary according to resolution, game, and color depth. If you want a single number, 60Hz works most of the time, but it's pretty hard on your eyes. A few accelerators, such as 3dfx cards, allow you to differentiate between 3D refresh rates and Windows 2D refresh rates.



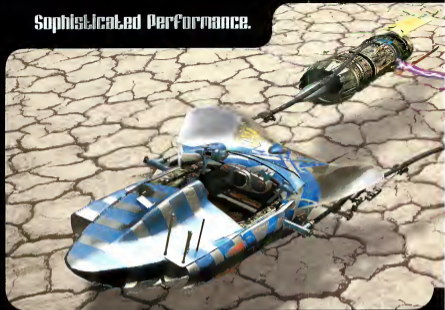
allows you to alter the clock rate of your graphics chip (but do take great care in doing this—you could render your system unbootable with the wrong setting). One nice feature is the ability to set refresh rates for all resolutions without having to actually switch resolutions.





The modified G20C

Sophisticated Performance.



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From Watto's rubbish pile comes the horsepower that could save the galaxy. Reworked and rewired by Anakin Skywalker himself, you'll soon discover that even from an early age Darth Vader had a truly sinister sense of design.

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Specifications

Engine	Rodoo-Ulzer 620C Engine Length: 7 meters Fuel: Tradium power fluid Repair/alt. altitude: 105m
---------------	--

Performance	Max. speed: 947 kph (588 mph) Braking: Triple Scoop Air Brakes Quarter Mile: 1.53 seconds
--------------------	--

Cave Space

Cave Type	Top Speeds of 600 mph PC: 1-8 players 3-D Hardware Acceleration
------------------	---

Features	Number of Podracers: 21+ Worlds: 8 Number of Tracks: 22 Upgradable Parts
-----------------	---

Hazards	Scorching Lava Tunnels Meteor Showers Tusken Raiders
----------------	--

Track Space

Contacts	www.starwarsracer.com
-----------------	--


Desert Wind Tan


Two Moon Blue


Naboo Red


Afterburn


Tatooine Night Sky


Keizaar Ghost


Starfighter Glow


Emerald Mist

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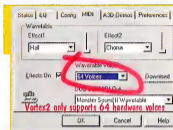
To discover for yourself how LucasArts has thoroughly redefined the driving experience, visit your local LucasArts dealer. Or reward yourself with an exhilarating test drive at www.starwarsracer.com



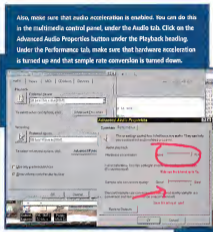
www.starwarsracer.com
www.starwars.com

The Sound and the Fury

Like graphics accelerators, the new generation of 3D audio accelerators is much more sophisticated than past sound cards. The result has been something of a driver-droptoo phenomenon there, too, though not quite as drastic. Still, check to see if your drivers have been updated. For example, I've seen a steady drop in the CPU utilization of the Diamond Monster Sound MX300 over several driver releases. Creative Labs is steadily introducing new features in their driver updates, so these are worth a download, too.



If you have an MX300, bring up the MX300 control panel. Click on the MIDI tab. See how it's set for 320 voices? Change that to 64 voices. The Vortex2 audio accelerator on the MX300 only supports 64 hardware voices—the other 256 are software only. In reality, it's the rare game that supports MIDI these days, but you never know. If some of those software voices ever kick in, it's a performance hit.



Also, make sure that audio acceleration is enabled. You can do this in the multimedia control panel, under the Audio tab. Click on the Advanced Audio Properties button under the Playback heading. Under the Performance tab, make sure that hardware acceleration is turned up and that sample rate conversion is turned down.

Platter Chatter

Before you read any further, go to your PC, turn it on, and defrag your hard drive. You can use the Windows 98 defrag utility. If you happen to have Norton Utilities, and you use Norton Speedisk, you can set it up to move your files around for optimal startup. But the important thing is to simply defrag once a month or so.

If you've been using Windows 98 for a while, you may notice that your disk drive will start thrashing like a freshly caught catfish at seemingly random intervals. It's disconcerting to say the least, and a serious performance drag at times. There are actually several potential causes for this.

First, if you have Microsoft Office 95 or 97 installed, make sure you remove the Fast Find utility from the startup folder. Fast Find periodically indexes the hard drive so it can search for files faster. Unfortunately, I've seen Fast Find do this at really inconvenient times.

Another possible cause of disk thrashing is that Windows 98 will occasionally grow or shrink the swap file (virtual memory file) according to some mysterious algorithm that seems to depend on the alignment of the

planets. You can stop this from happening by setting the maximum and minimum swap file sizes to the same number. A conservative rule of thumb is to set it to 2.5x your installed memory—though if you have more than 128MB, 1.5 to 2x is more than enough. This will create a permanent swap file that won't grow or shrink. After you've done this, and then rebooted, you'll want to defrag one more time. Note that if you have two physical hard drives, putting the swap file on the second (non-boot) hard drive can also speed up access to virtual memory. Do not do this if you have a single physical drive with two partitions.

Finally, one other culprit is Windows 98's disk cache. In the old days, you had SMARTDRK, but that's long since been replaced by VCACHE. VCACHE is a program that caches hard-drive data in system memory. Occasionally VCACHE can get pretty big. This can have two simultaneous adverse effects. First, you have less memory for your programs. Second, the disk will begin to thrash as VCACHE gets big and programs are forced to swap to virtual memory. One solution is to

limit the size of VCACHE. You do this by editing the file `\\windows\\system.ini`. Search for VCACHE—you'll probably find it as a header with no entries underneath. Ideally, you'd like VCACHE to be about one-fourth of your system RAM up to 64MB. If you have more than 64MB, leave it at 16MB. The key is to make it a fixed number for minimum and maximum. Add the following two items underneath the VCACHE heading.

```
MinFileCache=16384
MaxFileCache=16384
```

Do this only if you have more than 16MB of system RAM.

You may want to play around with this setting a bit over time—but remember that any memory that VCACHE uses isn't available for your programs. On the other hand, if VCACHE is too small, you'll notice more disk activity every time you load your system. If you're curious, you can monitor your VCACHE behavior with a cool tool called VCMon, which you can download from www.sysinternals.com/vcmom.htm.

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Cable	522MB Internal CD cache	522MB Internal CD cache	522MB Internal CD cache
RAM	2 x 64 33MHz SDRAM	2 x 64 33MHz SDRAM	2 x 64 33MHz SDRAM
Hard Drive	8.4GB Ultra ATA 44 hard drive*	8.4GB Ultra ATA 44 hard drive*	10GB 7200 RPM Ultra ATA 44 hard drive*
DVD/CD-ROM	32x or speed DVD-ROM drive	32x or speed DVD-ROM drive	32x or speed DVD-ROM drive
Monitor	20in ColorView 900 Windows™**	20in ColorView 900 Windows™**	20in ColorView 900 Windows™**
Graphics	3896 ultra-A3D graphics	3896 ultra-A3D graphics	3896 ultra-A3D graphics
Sound System	PCI 128-voice WaveTable sound	PCI 128-voice WaveTable sound	Sound Master 5200™ Value audio card
Speakers	About 4000 speakers	About 4000 speakers	About 4000 speakers
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Factory Direct Price without monitor	\$1,349 ^{95/mo.} Micron Consumer Credit Card 48 mos.†	\$1,599 ^{66/mo.} Micron Consumer Credit Card 48 mos.†	\$2,098 ^{61/mo.} Micron Consumer Credit Card 48 mos.†
Upgrade to	UPGRADE TO: 2048 Ultra ATA 44 hard drive* 32" Micron 7000x (15.1" display) monitor	UPGRADE TO: 2048 Ultra ATA 44 hard drive* 17" Micron 7000x (15.1" display) monitor	UPGRADE TO: 40000 3-play speaker system 2048 Ultra ATA 44 hard drive* 32" Micron 7000x (15.1" display) monitor
Factory Direct Price with monitor	\$1,749 ^{61/mo.} Micron Consumer Credit Card 48 mos.†	\$2,049 ^{55/mo.} Micron Consumer Credit Card 48 mos.†	\$2,499 ^{72/mo.} Micron Consumer Credit Card 48 mos.†

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Talking to the Big Pool.....

The best thing you can do to improve your performance when connected to the Internet is to make sure your ISP (Internet service provider) has a fat pipe to the Internet. A provider with redundant T3 lines, for example, will yield much better performance than an ISP with a single T1 line. Sometimes it takes a little research to find out what your

ISP uses, but it's time well spent.

You connect to the Internet using the TCP/IP protocol. If you're still running Windows 95, one of the key issues in the way Windows 95 handles dial-up TCP/IP connections is an arcane parameter known as MaxTMMU. Changing this involves editing the <shudder> registry. Alternatively, you can download the cool

shareware utility TweakDUN (Tweak Dial-Up Networking) from www.patterndesigns.com/tweakdun/. It is shareware, though, so if you find it useful, make sure you pony up the 15 bucks—it's a small price for this useful tool. Another piece of freeware that fills the same role is PPP Boost, which can be found at www.hotfiles.com.

Other Tuning Tips.....

There are a few other things you can do to help system performance. One is to remove all the files that are created in the temporary folders. I once found 9MB of data in `windows\temp` and `TOMB` in `\temp`. That's a lot of disk space for files that have only been used once.

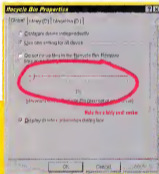
While we're on the topic of disk space, also check the space reserved for Internet temporary files. You can do this from the

deactivate it during gameplay, then turn it back on when you're done. Another problem-child background app can be monitors, like those loaded by Norton Utilities or Nuts and Bolts. Take special care to deactivate crash-protection software while playing games. They work pretty well with standard Windows applications, but a game is a different beast altogether.

Finally, if your system has bogged down incredibly and nothing you do can perk it up again, you may be at the point where you'll need to do a clean re-install of Windows. I don't have the space to cover it in detail here, though.

Note that you don't need to reformat your hard drive, but you do need to boot to the DOS prompt and remove the Windows directory. But before you do that, back up any email files—especially if you use Outlook 98. Also back up your "favorites" folder (if you're an Internet Explorer user), your dial-up networking settings, and your password (.pwd) files. Then make absolutely sure you have all your latest drivers and applications install CDs, because you'll need to reinstall

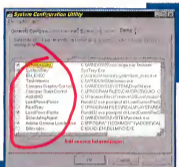
everything from scratch. You can save some effort by copying `\win95` or `\win98` (depending on your operating system of choice) from the CD to the hard drive. That way, you can run setup right from the hard drive. It may be useful to do a refresh install first. That is, run Windows setup from within Windows. Sometimes that will do the trick, especially with Windows 98. **CCNY**



Another space hog is the good old recycle bin. If you right-click on the recycle bin, you can change the setting for the amount of disk space reserved for the recycle bin. If you have a big drive, set this to 2 or 3 percent.

Internet control panel. The temporary file property sheet is one of the first listings you see.

For best gaming performance, you never want to have anything running in the background. Unfortunately, Windows 98 sets up a lot of programs to AutoStart when you boot the system. Virus checkers, in particular, tend to interact badly with games. If you have a virus checker, you may want to



What Windows 98 takes away, Windows 98 can give back. Run `MSCONFIG`, and you can easily uncheck items you don't want loaded.

At this point, you've had a taste of the things you can do to improve your rig's performance. There's a lot more information available, so there it is. In addition to other Ziff-Davis computer publications, I've found these Web sites to be useful:

Graphics

www.tweak3d.net (3D graphics cards and other great tweaks)

Shareware

shareworld.computer.com/homepages/helming/faq.htm (Windows 95 networking FAQ)

Speed Windows

www.kpan.com/~dwts/performance.html
www.zanoyances.org/win98/

And finally, a little shameless self-promotion:
www.gamespot.com/features/pcworkshop/

DEMONSTRATION #2:

- 1 Tear out your old sound card.
- 2 Smash into pieces.
- 3 Toss over your shoulder.

► The sound those pieces make when they hit the ground all *around* you is you is the power of A3D from Aureal, the only audio that works the way your ears do.

That's why leading sound card vendors, such as Diamond, TerraTec, Turtle Beach, and Xitel, are using Vortex audio technology from Aureal, the only 3D audio accelerator that supports industry leading A3D positional audio technology.

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POWER RIG



COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	THE SKINNY
Motherboard	ASUS P2B-F	\$140	Back to the future.
CPU	Pentium III/500	\$686	The coolest fastest gun in the West.
Memory	256MB of CASD Corsair PC100 SDRAM	\$405	Just think, a quarter gigabyte.
Disk Controller	Adaptec 2940a/Uw	\$345	60MB per second.
Primary Graphics	Hercules Dynamite TMT	\$130	Stability, speed, and cooling.
Secondary Graphics	QuantumID Obsidian X16	\$348	The ultimate single-slot Radeon™ card.
Floppy Drive	Teac	\$20	You still have to have one.
Hard Drive	Seagate Cheetah 18	\$925	It's big, it's fast, it's local... two out of three ain't bad.
Backup	Imaging Jet 2	\$300	2GB of backup.
Hard-Disc Controller	ATI Technology drive controller	\$40	Cost 4, baby.
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer 66 SCSI DVD	\$248	New Pioneer slot-drive DVD.
Monitor	Sony F520	\$1,080	Perfectly flat, just perfect.
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound MK100	\$69	For four-speaker DirectSound, A/D, and S/PK.
Speakers	LF1-11	\$500	Bountiful imaging, clean sound.
Rear Channel Speakers	Imax CS 5	\$560	Ultimate rear channel powered speakers.
Modem	Copper Router DSX modem	\$400	DSX in line.
Networking	3COM Etherlink 10/100 PCI	\$70	For hogging my buddies.
Case	In-Win 2508 full-tower ATX	\$115	New improved model.
Power Supply	TurboLord 300	\$125	More power, baby!
Keyboard	Logitech NewTouch	\$45	In with the NewTouch, out with the National.
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech Conflux Wheel Mouse	\$59	No roller!
Action Game Controller	ThrustMaster Passion Digital	\$25	Comfortable controller with USB.
Flight Joystick	ThrustMaster T22 Pro	\$129	It just feels right.
Thruster	ThrustMaster T25	\$115	More control than a ryanair needs.
Rudder Pedals	ThrustMaster Elite RCS	\$79	Nearly perfect foot placement.
Driving Controls	ECCO CS-4000	\$1,128	For the serious sim driver.

TOTAL: \$8,619

LEAN & MEAN



COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	THE SKINNY
Motherboard	Abit DD1 rev 2.0	\$140	Five PCI slots. Software, 4GB3E—ready for Pentium III!
CPU	Celeron 700	\$175	Use exactly the same as a PIII400.
Memory	128MB Corsair PC100 SDRAM	\$200	128MB at last!
Disk Controller	Built-in LDM433	\$0	
Primary Graphics	Hercules Dynamite TMT	\$130	Stability, speed, and cooling.
Secondary Graphics	Galileo2 Management2	\$80	Voodoo2™ for those Glisc games.
Floppy Drive	Teac	\$20	Still gotta have it.
Hard Drive	Western Digital Expert 9.1	\$225	7200rpm from Western Digital.
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer DRU-701	\$89	Yeah, it's got a tray. But it's fast.
Monitor	Optiquest V95	\$445	Solid 19-inch monitor at a budget price.
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound MK100	\$69	A/D and clean audio for under a C-note.
Speakers	Rossini Acoustics Set 625	\$99	What's back to my favorites.
Modem	Diamond Super 16e	\$166	Solid performance, good price.
Networking	N/A	\$0	
Case	Euro Win T19-4B	\$82	Use case for upgrades.
Power Supply	BullDog 125W	\$2	
Keyboard	Logitech NewTouch	\$45	In with the new, out with the National.
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech PS/2 Wheel Mouse	\$18	Better than its "gaming" mouse.
Joystick	CF Gamestick 3D	\$55	Still the best-balanced flight stick around.

TOTAL: \$4,990

The Fine Print: All recommendations based on actual evaluations. Prices listed are average low quotes from Web price search engines like www.computer shopper.com or www.pricewatch.com — Lists compiled by Dave Salvator and Lloyd Cole



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essential
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Voodoo³: Fightin' the Good Fight

A Bit Feature-Limited Maybe, But Slow It Ain't

by Loyd Case

There's something to be said for mature technology, and 3dfx is saying it loud and clear. The company's \$20 million ad campaign, which touts its new Voodoo³ chipset (and targets general consumers rather than game geeks), is getting a lot of attention. All the noise does distract a little from the realization that Voodoo³ is probably the final chapter in the book that was Voodoo graphics. 3dfx's next architecture will entail a pretty serious redesign.

Voodoo³ is, in essence, a Voodoo Banshee board with two rendering pipelines running at 143MHz or better. We looked at the 3000 model, which clocks in at 166MHz. (We'll take a look at the Voodoo³ 3500, which runs at 183MHz, in next month's roundup.) All Voodoo³ boards—models 2000, 3000, and 3500—ship with 16MB of RAM. Model 2000 lacks TV out.

The dual rendering pipelines behave the same way as a pair of Voodoo² boards in SLI mode. In addition, the high clock speed makes for some serious 3D performance—as 3D GameGauge numbers show, Voodoo³ is no slouch in this department. So in a single AGP slot, you have Voodoo² SLI performance, pretty decent standard 2D (Windows) performance, and the ability to run Glide games very, very fast. OpenGL and Direct3D games also perform well with Voodoo³.

When you open up the package, the first thing you see is the heat sink, which looks to be roughly the size of Manhattan, and covers more real estate than just the chip. The software bundle is quite good, too: full versions of UNREAL and NEED FOR SPEED III, a coupon

for UNREAL TOURNAMENT, and an extended demo version of DESCENT III. Finally, there's 3dfx Tools, which puts a lot of control into the hands of users (and has a slick user interface).

But there are limitations. There's no option for 32-bit rendering and there's no memory configuration larger than 16MB. In addition, Voodoo³ can't do AGP texturing. This was apparent in the 3D WinBench 99 test, in which Voodoo³ couldn't run at a resolution of 1600x1200x16. The Hercules Dynamite TNT, also with 16MB of RAM, could run at that resolution—albeit slowly. It's possible that the 3000 could have run 3D WinBench at 1600x1200 if it had 32MB of RAM, but it doesn't.

So Voodoo³ is fast, but the competition, in the form of nVidia's TNT2 and Matrox's G400 Max, among others, will give Voodoo³ a run for its money. 3dfx has no real alternative to the feature sets of its competitors; all it currently has is Voodoo³—its version of a stripped-down Dodge Charger with a 440-cubic-inch engine. Still, the technology, though older than the competition, gives up nothing in raw performance.

Thirty-two-bit rendering won't start to become a big deal until QUAKE 3: ARENA ships later this year, and that game will likely be followed by other titles that need 32-bit rendering capability. But 16-bit output still looks good in current games, and for these games Voodoo³ definitely delivers. **GG**



COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: It's fast and it runs Glide.

CONS: Feature-limited; no 32-bit rendering, only 16MB frame buffers, no AGP texturing, no OpenGL ICD.

REQUIREMENTS: Celeron, Pentium III or K5 system, with AGP slot.

Price: \$179 (street)
Manufacturer: 3dfx

www.3dfx.com (support from www.3dfx.com)

Performance Benchmarks

WinBench 99 Business Graphics WinMark (1024x768x32)

Voodoo3 3000 (166MHz) **388**
Nvidia GeForce2 TNT **322**

3D WinBench 99 (1024x768x16)

Voodoo3 3000 **584**
Nvidia GeForce2 TNT **495**

3D GameGauge at 800x600

Voodoo3 3000 (166MHz)	157.7	168.4	92.5	100.8	103.4	90.2	691.1
Nvidia Dynamite TNT	147.2	98.0	87.4	88.8	92.0	100.8	505

Legend: FORTRESS (pink), BURNING (purple), TULSA (green), QUAKE II (blue), QUAKE (cyan), F2D/MP (grey)

Motherboard (1280x1024x16)

Voodoo3 3000 (166MHz) **481**
Nvidia GeForce2 TNT **333.8**

The Final Print: Tests were conducted on a Pentium III 500MHz system with an Intel SE10002 motherboard, 128MB SDRAM, a Vertex2 sound card, and EIDE storage components.



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IS TO AVENGE HER PAST.*



Oni

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For screen shots and additional information visit oni.bungie.com

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Aiming High

K6-III Guns for Pentium III, but Offers No Price Advantage Over Intel

by Dave Salvatore

Playing second fiddle is just no damn fun. But having to watch the number-one guy repeatedly get all the glory (and the girls) can be a powerful motivator. Such has been AMD's plight in the CPU business. But 1998 saw some very important gains for AMD, the only X86 maker really willing to take on big kahuna Intel in all ranges of performance. One advantage AMD's K6-2 has held is that it's been a solid performer that could be had inexpensively, and it's delivered good, though not market-leading, performance for games. But AMD lost nearly \$104 million last year, and it needs to reverse its fortunes; as a result, street prices at press time for the new K6-IIIs were about the same as for the Pentium III at the same clock speed.

But given that K6-III doesn't clearly outperform Pentium III, and that there's no longer a price advantage, it seems AMD doesn't have a very compelling case to make with gamers.

So what's new in the K6-III? Basically, this part has its Level 2 (L2) cache integrated into the chip core, which allows the cache to run at full processor clock speed. Perhaps more importantly, the L2 cache now runs on a backside bus, so it no longer has to share bandwidth with system memory, as in previous AMD parts. However, despite this improvement, K6-III's floating-point unit remains unchanged from K6-2, and so AMD is still dogged by a traditional weakness in relation to Intel: floating-point performance, which is key to making 3D games fun.

Number Crunch

When looking at CPU performance, there are three areas to examine.



PROS: Solid integer performance, good performance boost with 3DNow.

CONS: No real price advantage over Pentium III; floating-point performance still lags.

REQUIREMENTS: K6-III-compatible motherboard.

Price: \$68 (street), to \$29 (MSRP)
Manufacturer: AMD

www.amd.com

Integer performance (whole numbers, like 24) is important for business apps, and meters for gaming as well. Floating-point performance (numbers with decimals, like 3.14) is extremely important for 3D games, since the triangles in the 3D pipeline are first processed in the CPU's floating-point unit. And finally, a relatively new consideration is SIMD (single instruction multiple data) floating-point performance, which Intel and AMD have in the form of SSE and 3DNow, respectively. SIMD floating-point allows the CPU to handle more data per CPU cycle, thereby speeding up 3D performance. Of the three, traditional floating-point performance still matters most, since that's what nearly all current 3D games use and need. SIMD floating-point performance will matter if



and when many games begin taking advantage of it, which may happen later this year.

In our testing, AMD outscores Intel on integer performance, probably due to K6-III's onboard L2 cache. But on traditional floating-point performance, Intel still clearly outpaces AMD, which means on games with ever-growing triangle counts that don't use SSE or 3DNow, Pentium III will get you more frames per second. Lastly, on SIMD floating-point performance, the results tend to favor AMD, whose score on 3D WinBench 99's Transform test was well ahead of Pentium III's. This test measures how fast triangles get transformed (moved from frame to frame of animation) in Direct3D's Transform and Lighting (T&L) engine. Next, the T&L test measures how fast triangles can be transformed and lit using D3D's T&L engine. Here the result was too close to call.

This is where things got a little weird. Given Intel's faster floating-point performance, we expected Intel to outperform AMD at game tests, and yet K6-III outpaced Pentium III running 3D GameGauge 1.0, which left us scratching our heads. But then we noticed that on QUAKE II (which has the highest triangle count), Intel bested AMD. So we fired up several newer test games with higher triangle counts, and here AMD's floating-point unit ran out of gas versus Intel. So while K6-III can hold its own on older games, Intel still was running newer games with higher triangle counts.

Yeah Well, Wait Till Next Time...

AMD does respectably versus Intel in this round, but their second-class performance on traditional floating-point tests still keeps the crown out of reach. AMD's upcoming K7 will have a re-architected floating-point unit that could well put AMD over the top. For now, K6-III is a competitor, though given its lack of price advantage, Pentium III is still the better choice for about the same money. **CGW**

Performance Benchmarks

WinBench 99 CPU/Mark99

AMD K6-III 450 **37.6**
Pentium III 450 **36.4**

WinBench 99 FPU/Mark

AMD K6-III 450 **1520**
Pentium III 450 **1280**

3DWB99 Transform

AMD K6-III 450 **185**
Pentium III 450 **173.9**

3DWB99 Transform and Lighting

AMD K6-III 450 **195.9**
Pentium III 450 **151.9**

3D GameGauge @ 640x480

AMD K6-III 450 **3218.3**
Pentium III 450 **3022.2**

Quake II Time Demo

AMD K6-III 450 **23.4**
Pentium III 450 **19.3**

Quake II Crusher Demo

AMD K6-III 450 **21.2**
Pentium III 450 **27**

Half-Life

AMD K6-III 450 **38**
Pentium III 450 **34**

The New Price: All test systems tested with 128MB of 100MHz SDRAM, AMD 7500-based graphics cards (using either 3DFX's Voodoo3 or ATI's Rage2), and 33MHz integer clocks. All tests run at 60FPS to limit any possible bottlenecks by the graphics card. Pentium III was tested on an AMD K6-III motherboard; the DR-II test used an ASUS P54.

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AT RAGE FURY (RAGE 128)

66 fps

ATI VELOCITY 4400 (RAGE 128)

46 fps

ATI VELOCITY 3 1000

Not Supported

DIAMOND MONSTER FUSION (RAGE 128)

Not Supported

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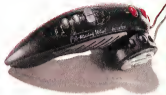
Drives Me Crazy

The Force Feedback FX Racing Wheel is a "rifeel" only in the loosest sense. Rather than employing the typical wheel-with-pedals arrangement, the Force FX is actually a hand-held device modeled after remote controls used for miniature race cars.

Installation was easy using the supplied driver CD, but one major downer is that the FX needs a pair of AA batteries for its force-feedback effects.

When playing NEED FOR SPEED III (NFS3) with the FX, I found that the knob's short throw and high resistance to movement left me facing the sides of the track more often than not. The device worked much better with MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS 2. One good aspect of the FX is the force feedback, which was decently rendered in NFS3.

The package boasts that the FX is "perfect for those long, grueling days of racing," but reality tells a different tale. My left hand became seriously fatigued after just four laps in NFS3. And given that I'm



ambidextrous and a southpaw mouse, this was especially surprising.

As it turns out, using the FX is an acquired taste—and it's a taste I'd rather not acquire. —Samuel B. Baker II

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



PROS: Great idea, decent controller; good feedback effects for its size; easy installation.

CONS: Somewhat steep learning curve due to design; fatiguing to use; poor documentation; no power supply included, so it needs two AA batteries.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 75MHz or higher; Windows 95 or better; 16MB RAM; 20MB hard-disk space; 2x CD-ROM; DirectX-compatible video card; DirectX 5.0-compatible sound card; game port; 2 AA batteries.

Price: \$29.99
Manufacturer: INTERACT ACCESSORIES, INC.
www.interact-usa.com

REVIEW • THRUSTMASTER FUSION DIGITAL

Beauty and the Bus

It's official. I'm now a USB game controller convert. And with gobs of new USB gamepads on the market these days, it's pretty much all I'm using.

ThrustMaster's new Fusion Digital, an updated version of their Rage3D gamepad, proved to be a solid USB performer, though it wasn't flawless.

Installation is pretty straightforward, although you still have to connect the controller midway through the installation process. After connecting the Fusion to the joystick port of a Turtle Beach Montage II (Vortex2-based) PCI sound card, it showed up as "Not Connected."

I took the Fusion for a spin through HIGH HEAT 2000, and it performed like a champ. Its "lizard-eye" D-pad design is still one of the most comfortable I've ever used, and it helps to reduce the



"game-claw" feeling you get in your left hand after a long session.

Problems with the traditional joystick port are disappointing, but if you have USB ports on your system (you do, don't

you?), you'll probably want to use one of those ports anyway. This way, you can keep both a regular joystick (connected to your joystick port) and a gamepad attached to your system without swapping. —Dove Salvator

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



PROS: Solid USB gamepad, comfortable to use; painless USB installation, inexpensive.

CONS: Doesn't work as gameport on some PCI sound cards.

REQUIREMENTS: Windows 98 for USB

Price: \$25
Manufacturer: ThrustMaster
www.thrustmaster.com

REVIEW • GAME COMMANDER

Listen Up!

Speech recognition for games isn't new, but the Game Commander software package seems to really work. It's a relatively simple system with a fairly clean user interface. You use the included microphone headset to give verbal commands, which are either preset for a handful of "built-in" games or added by you for other games.

Unlike more complex packages, like IBM's ViaVoice, Game Commander requires no training for built-in game commands and minimal training for games you add.

The current version 1.0 doesn't support multiple-keystroke commands, but there's a beta up on www.gamecmd.com that adds this important capability—with a few bugs, however.

Still, Game Commander is amazing to use. I checked out the built-in presets for the games BATTLEZONE and MICHENWARRIOR: MERCENARIES. These worked well, so I created a template for EUROPEAN AIR WAR. Within about a half hour, I was up and flying, telling the computer "Check six" and "Wing-engage bandits." After the battle I could say "Vector home" and get the heading for home base. It was a real eye-opener.



COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



PROS: Simple speech recognition, minimal training, easy setup.

CONS: Multiple keystroke versions still in beta stage.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200MHz or better

Price: \$44.95
Manufacturer: InterMedia Software
www.gamecmd.com

This is probably not a package for first-person shooters, though. In this way, you can keep both a regular joystick (connected to your joystick port) and a gamepad attached to your system without swapping. There is a momentary delay while the command is executed, and in multiplayer games, a split-second could mean instant death. But sim jockeys may have finally found something better than keyboard templates and even more complex HOTAS controllers. Check it out. —Lloyd Case

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 Polygon Academy
 Quake III
 Mario Party
 Grand Inquisitor
 Wars
 NFL Blitz '99
 FaceOff '99
 Wario Land II
 Wario Land II
 Warzone 2100
 Warzone 2100
 Age of Empires II
 Deer Avenger
 Total Annihilation
 Resident Evil
 Battle Zone
 Populous The Beginning
 Unreal Tournament
 NHL Blade of Steel
 Rollcage
 Akuji
 Wario Land II
 NCAA Final Four '99
 Resident Evil 2
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 Bass Fishing
 Rollcage
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 Wing Alliance
 Duke Nukem Zero Hour
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 Unreal Tournament
 Heretic 2
 Tomb Raider III
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 Akuji
 Daikatana
 Duke Nukem Zero Hour
 Klingon Academy
 Crash Bandicoot 3 Warped
 NHL Blade of Steel
 Slave Zero
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REVIEWS

How Do We Rate?

★★★★★

Outstanding

The rare game that gets it all right. A must-play experience



★★★★☆

Very Good

Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks



★★★☆☆

Average

Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just another done



★★☆☆☆

Weak

Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another done



★☆☆☆☆

Abysmal

The rare game that gets it all wrong. Poetic. Coaster material.



Does Not Rate



We review only finished products—no betas, no patches.

Quote o' the Month

“

This game says hello like the business end of a Louisville Slugger.

—Dave Salvator, reviewing High Heat 2000

”

LOOKING PAST THE HYPE

Everquest



130

The antithesis of ULTIMA ONLINE

Roller Coaster Tycoon



159

In some ways, better than THEME PARK

Back by popular demand! Now including the highly anticipated first page

Heroes of Might and Magic III



148

JULY REVIEWS

CG EDITORS' CHOICE GAMES IN 1999

GAME	ISSUE	PRICE
Battleground: Chickamauga	★★★★	162
Civilization: Call to Power	★★★★	145
Darts	★★★★	146
Email Battleship	* - - -	166
Email Scrabble	★★★★	166
Everquest	★★★★	130
Fighter Squadron	★★★★	137
Fleet Command	★★★★	152
Heroes of Might & Magic III	★★★★	148
High Heat 2000	★★★★	140
Lords of Lore III	** - -	133
Machines	** - -	165
Redline	★★★ -	123
Requiem	★★★★	127
Roller Coaster Tycoon	★★★★	159
Smolensk to Moscow	** - -	165
Triple Play 2000	** - -	141
Warzone 2100	★★★★	162
X-Wing Alliance	★★★★	134

Email Battleship



166





HOMEWORLD

Actual Game Screen



Game of the Show E3 1998 - CGW



Choose unit types, fleet formations and flight tactics to create the best combat group for each tactical situation.



An advanced research tree lets you construct 50 ships between two distinct races, from lightly armored fighter class interceptors to gigantic carriers that can build and transport up to 250 ships into battle.



Detailed weapon systems - including mass drivers, guided missiles, ion cannons and mines - operate automatically to track multiple or single targets.

Find detailed gameplay and ship specifications at www.homeworld.net

LOCATION: The Great Wasteland.

DESTINATION: Galactic Core.

WARNING:

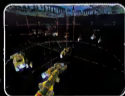
Enemy Tallidan strike force sighted.
Mothership under attack.

Tallidan Carrier with Missile Destroyer and Assault Frigate Fleet bearing striking distance.

Maneuvering Klaskan Scout Squadron in Delta Formation.

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The Bloody Red Line

REDLINE Delivers Postapocalyptic Car-nage

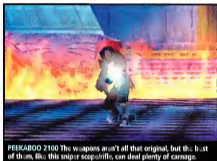
by Mark Clarkson

Things have been tough since the apocalypse. Gangs roam the cities and highways in lethally armed cars, killing and sometimes eating their foes. Unwheeled gas is up to \$12.75 a gallon—don't even ask about nitro. Fortunately, you're not out to save the world—it's far too late for that. You just want to save your ass.

Blood on the Highway

Set in a grim future of warring gangs and greedy companies, REDLINE is particularly bloody, even for a first-person shooter. Characters don't just die; they explode like an M-80 going off in a baggie full of liver, leaving headless bodies and severed legs stumbling and dancing around. You deal death roughly half of the time on foot and the other half in various vehicles, from motorcycles and dune buggies to tanks and turfs.

The eye candy includes the distinctive particle and lighting effects, wall damage, and huge explosions. Cars blow up with a ferocious bang that throws big chunks of scrap metal into the air, where they explode again.



PEEKABOO 2100 The weapons aren't all that original, but the best of them, like this sniper scope rifle, can deal plenty of carnage.

And when something really big lets go, the ground shakes and rolls, the screen flashes white, and shock waves race outward. Plenty of items in the levels are destructible—boxes, rusting hulks, street lamps, you name it—and you can blast your way through the occasional crumbling wall or crooked door.

REDLINE's hand-held weapons are mostly standard fare: buzz saw, rocket, machine gun, and grenades. Some new toys include flash grenades, available only in multiplayer, which blind your opponents, and the EMP gun, which temporarily disables a vehicle and forcibly ejects the driver. My personal fave? The sniper rifle with a 4X scope and explosive slugs.

Vehicles also come equipped with an assortment of guns, cannons, mines, and rockets (both guided and unguided). Most even have guns that shoot sideways—nice to have when you're fending off a horde of mutant cannibals.

Sounds vary from great (the machine gun) to so-so (the cars' engines), and the voice acting is

pretty solid, particularly in the case of the gruff but lovable commander, Liddy, who guides you through the missions. Interspersed movie segments and briefings are rendered directly in the game engine; unfortunately, this forced me to restart once when a guy got stuck behind a parked car and couldn't continue the canned sequence.

Mixed Bag o' Carnage

REDLINE has 12 single-player missions, ranging from car-versus-car battles and stalking aliens on foot in a crashed spaceship to racing full-out across the blasted wasteland in an attempt to reach a garage with the "jaws of life" before the bomb that's wired under your car goes off.

Still, the main goal of gameplay is pretty straightforward: Kill everything in sight. There are a few hidden areas scattered around, and there's the occasional simple puzzle, but they're so rare I hardly ever thought to look

for them until I found myself stymied.

Multiplayer action—deathmatch and capture the flag—tends to be almost prohibitively fast and fierce.

Unfortunately, level design is so often of the "let's create a big room with 32,000 monsters in it" variety. In the very last segment, you defend your base against seemingly endless waves of

cars that keep coming for more than an hour (not counting any time you might spend dying and restarting the game).

While other games have tried to mix vehicular and on-foot combat and done it badly (think NECRODOME), REDLINE does a better job of blending the two into a flashy, fast-paced package. If you can tolerate the somewhat derivative gameplay structure and the endless waves of enemies, you'll enjoy a spin behind the wheel of this deathmobile. **C-+**



TIME FOR A LURE JOB When you get tired of blasting foes from a distance, REDLINE lets you run them over for a change o' pace.



WHO NEEDS THE AJURORA BOREALIS? One thing about a post-apocalyptic world: It sure makes for great sunsets.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Both four-wheeled and on-foot monster-fog-gin' fun.

CONS: Drive-force level design.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 206, 32MB RAM, 350MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D required.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN or Internet (2-12 players), 1 CD per game.

Price: \$19.95
Publisher: Acclaim
www.acclaim.com



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Torched by an Angel

Angel With an Attitude Hits Lucifer Hard in 3DO's Action-Thriller

by Gordon Goble

Set against a pulsating, almost liquid backdrop of blood-red textures pulled from Hell itself lies a mélange of death, a landscape dotted with the writhing, partially gutted bodies and torsos of those unfortunate enough to be on the front lines of a marauding rampage. This is Chaos, where Satan's demons have their way with us humans, and you'll find yourself wading through it within the first five minutes of *REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL*. Yet this graphic introduction is less a visual indicator of upcoming gameplay than an impetus for you, as God's chosen angel Malachi, to fight for what is right and ensure that such carnage does not spread to Earth.

On a Mission From God

fighting on a grand scale, with creatures, weapons, and sinister environments that rival those

of any game, *REQUIEM* is somewhat less sophisticated than the reigning shooter king, *HALF-LIFE*. The manual and online tips try hard to convince you it's not a blatant killfest, but the game is far more shooter than thinker. Still, you must kill selectively, since killing the innocent has dire consequences; use the art of conversation to extract important information from NPCs; and locate and utilize various items to help you along your way.

It's a good thing, then, that Malachi is one capable spirit, with an array of both magical and secular powers at his disposal. As God's smiling hand, you'll have command over an assortment of offensive and defensive spells, each geared after completing certain tasks or entering key areas. Spells are cast in much the same way you'd fire a traditional weapon.

And man, do some of these spells pack a wallop. For example, *Apocalypse* destroys everything in the vicinity amid a blinding flash of light, while *To Salt* reduces animated bodies to crumbling pillars of dust. *All*, however, pale in comparison to *Bloodball*, where your target percolates and spews blood before ejecting limbs and head and ultimately exploding.

Malachi can also Heal, Deflect attacks, shine *Holy Light* in dark tunnels, take momentary flight, or just simply mosey about unarmed



BATTLING YOUR PERSONAL DEMONS In this case, your personal demon just happens to be Satan. *Har, a nice day.*

to avoid suspicion. You may even want to *Warp Time* and slow things down—great when surrounded by monsters.

Holy Hand Grenade

Alternately, if mystic powers leave you feeling cold, more conventional worldly weapons run all the way from your basic handgun to grenade launchers, zooming sniper rifles, and missile launchers. Each shot is accompanied with believable audio bursts and slick visual indicators, the most spectacular being the tremendous fireballs and thick smoke screens from the powerful long-range missiles.

The fast-paced and mostly Earth-bound *REQUIEM* world, meanwhile, is simply beautiful. It's peppered with dizzying ups and downs, water to swim through, breakable windows, moving subway cars, open-air rooftops, elevators, and murky caverns. Each thoroughly convincing outdoor and indoor backdrop is draped with superb lighting and color.

It's worth noting that, particularly at the middle and upper difficulty levels, the progress of Malachi will be stalled intermittently by maze-like nooks and crannies, puzzling mobility tests, and that tired old unlock-the-door recipe. With all this and a legion of

evildoers to boot, saving religiously is strongly recommended.

Adding to the game's appeal, bad guys come in virtually any form you can imagine, from humans, human-mechanical hybrids, and pure machines to demon dogs and beamie flying beasts with diaphanous wings. At the completion of each of the trio of acts waits a particularly vicious brute that will taunt and talk and perform an incredible circus of stunts and a great light show before killing you. While enemies generally act sensibly as they pursue you and coordinate assaults, they are also capable of acting like complete idiots, sometimes circling in front of you as if you weren't there. Other drawbacks include monsters' propensity for appearing out of nowhere and for simply standing in one place, waiting for you to cross a trigger point before they notice and attack you.

REQUIEM follows the *HALF-LIFE* recipe of mini-chapters as opposed to time-consuming full-level loads, and in this way it's wonderfully fluid. Voice acting, so vital in a game with this much verbal interaction, is strong throughout, and ambient sound effects are appropriately frightening. Heavy-duty log time bedeviled online play on *MPlayer*, but hopefully 3DO will fix that.

Still, with its thundering gameplay, frightening sound and graphics, and innovative use of holy powers, *REQUIEM: AVENGING ANGEL* is a hot-as-Hell title number. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Excellent violence; better-looking monsters and 3D environments than most competing games; great traditional variety; powerful weapons and spell effects; some interaction between characters.

CONS: Excessive violence; sometimes questionable monster actions and reactions; extreme difficulty forces lots of repetition.

DIFFICULTY: Advanced.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 275MB hard-disk space.

3D SUPPORT: 3ds, Direct3D

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, serial connection (2 players), LAN, Internet (2-8 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$49.95
Publisher: 3DO

www.requiemgame.com



Wrath of God

Turning your enemies to salt or boiling their blood until they explode are just a couple of the nifty heavenly powers you'll use to show heathens the error of their ways.



"IN 1982, HE TERRIFIED A GENERATION OF ARCADE
PLAYERS AND BECAME A CULT FIGURE."



SUMMER '99

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Online Bashfest

Despite Technical Problems and Simplistic Premise, EVERQUEST Is Actually Fun

by Thierry Nguyen

EVERQUEST is the DIABLO of 1999. An odd comparison, you say? Well, here's how they're alike: They both offer a very simple premise ("go forth and slay many creatures to gain levels and loot"), and despite this simple premise (or maybe because of it), they're both damn addictive and fun. While many details keep EVERQUEST from being perfect, it's ultimately a great way to eat up your time online.

Elven Rangers Away!

For an online-only game, EVERQUEST is very much a traditional RPG. It begins, like most RPGs, with character generation. First, you need to choose a server (they are all located in southern California, so you just need to select one based on how many people are on it). Then you choose your race, class, face, and name, and distribute attribute points. Due to the time investment this game requires, and the reality of deadlines, I did most of my gaming with a traditional RPG class (Half-Elf Ranger), and dabbled with some other characters and



servers to get a feel for the game. Leveling is like AD&D, in that it takes a long, long time to gain levels depending on what you do. Realistically, most people will only have time to develop two, maybe three characters at most.

Character development in EVERQUEST is skills-based. Each character starts with a certain set of skills, and you improve these skills by using them. Your skills will cap out after a while, however, and you'll need to gain another level to develop them further. The way to increase levels is either through lots of combat or finishing quests for your guild or other NPCs. Finally, every time

you gain a level, you get five "practice points" that you can use with your guild trainer to immediately increase a skill's level. This is useful for skills that take a while to rise, as you can give them a slight boost right on the spot.

Combat is real-time, but it's not a frantic mouse-clicking festival. Each weapon has a specific speed, so clicking your mouse as fast as you can won't work—you have to wait for your weapon to be available again. Even easier: you can just target your foe and press A to initiate auto-combat; all you have to worry about is keeping the enemy in view.

A Hunting We Will Go...

EVERQUEST is an extremely social game. Several aspects of its design are geared to support teamwork. For one thing, to ease concerns about rampant killing and looting, there is a player-versus-player (PVP) flag. Non-PVP players cannot be harmed by PVP players, and can't be looted by them either, in life or in death. You have a choice of whether or not to be PVP. You can either activate PVP mode yourself or start on a server where everyone is PVP.

After that, you'll realize that once you hit a certain level, it's usually pretty hard to take on monsters by yourself. It's then time to find some other players around your level (up to five others), and band together. That fearsome Orc legionnaire won't seem so bad once you have a Mage, Cleric, and fellow Warrior taking it on. However, if you are three or more levels apart from each other, the lower-level person won't get any XP. This is to deter newbies from tagging along with their buddies for free XP.

Finally, there is a thriving player-driven economy. While people still buy from NPC shops, a lot of gamers develop their trade skills, and you're guaranteed to see someone auctioning off some odd item every couple of minutes. With NPCs chugging outrageous

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Good graphics engine, large game-world, choice of PVP or not, teamwork emphasizes.

CONS: Simplistic game play, abysmal manual, occasional minor technical problems.

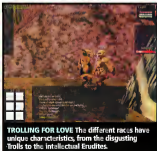
DIFFICULTY: Int. med.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, 500MB hard-disk space.

3D SUPPORT: GDI, Direct3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Multiplayer only.

Price: \$44.95
Publisher: Snow93 Studios
www.s93studio.com

Newbie's Guide to Norrath

The game's manual is "bysmal, but fortunately there are quite a few online sites that give you great information on this game. News sites like www.eqvault.com or eqstratics.com are good places to start. The best site for newbies is AllaKhazam's guide (everquest-games-tats.com), which offers good tips for character generation, plus links to the main EVERQUEST sites. Also, be sure to check out GameSpot's excellent GameGuide at www.gamesguides.com/guides/evrquest/index.html.

prices (armor that costs as much as my San Francisco apartment), players turn to each other for commerce.

When playing on an unofficial "role-play" server (like Fernin It), you really see people taking the game seriously. There, I've seen people debating the true nature of a Paladin, or

snobbish High Elves making disparaging comments about both Dark Elves and Wood Elves in conversation. Okay, it is a bit geeky, but it's better than seeing guys named h4x0r1D00 talk about their latest warez trade.

Clockwork Machinery in the Fair Land

Technology-wise, EVERQUEST is outstanding. It uses a 3D engine comparable to those of action games. Spell effects earn a lot of "wow, pretty" reactions, as do the changing weather and the overall look of the characters and the towns. There are still some rough-looking areas, but overall, the engine puts EVERQUEST light years ahead of other RPGs. The gameworld is huge (boat travel between



BRING OUT YOUR DEAD When you die, you suffer an XP loss and you need to go find your corpse and snag all the stuff you had on you when you died.

the three continents takes about 45 minutes in realtime), and there's a variety of environments, from the peaks of Everfrost to the dingy underground caverns of Ak'Anon.

Lag is handled extremely well. Client prediction is built in, and what sometimes happens is that an enemy stands still and then "warps" forward, but that's nothing big. When the lag does hit, however, it hits hard. A couple of times, I got severe packet loss, and just dropped out of the game altogether.

What's wrong with EVERQUEST? Well, the manual is horrid. An ugly table listing all the skills would have helped greatly, instead of a wordily vague description of about five skills. Also, the quests, as they stand, offer too little for too much. I find an Orc with an axe, and all I get is a bit of XP and the equivalent of four cents? So, until the quests become more motivating, you have to gain XP through lots of combat, which may be too simplistic for some gamers. Finally, the loading times between the various zones of the world can take a few minutes.

Then the inevitable question: EVERQUEST or ULTIMA ONLINE (UO)? I have to take the "apples and oranges" argument here, because that is what it boils down to—even if that sounds like a cop-out. UO is a world simulation, EVERQUEST is a social hack-and-slash. UO has more freedom built into it, and you can actually make a living off of trade skills. EVERQUEST is more about sheer adventure and combat, and the trade skills are useful, but you can't really be a tailor or a baker. Those wanting a deep world sim should go to UO, while those who like hack-and-slash gaming should go to EVERQUEST.

Is it worth the \$9.99 per month? That depends on three things: (1) you don't mind the pure hack-and-slash gameplay, (2) you can find some like-minded adventurers to quest with, and (3) you're willing to put up with the minor annoyances that pop up every now and then. If you meet these criteria, you'll find EVERQUEST a very fun and rewarding online RPG. **CGW**



LESSON IN THE DOJO Level gains give you the chance to practice your various skills with your designated guild trainer.



FLUTTERING FAERIES EVERQUEST has all the typical fantasy critters to kill. Note that this is nighttime and the Pixie generates her own light.



MURDERERS AND THIEVES The red names indicate that the player is in PVP mode. You can either activate PVP mode yourself or start on a server where everyone is PVP.

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Strike Three

LANDS OF LORE III Continues the Franchise's Steep Decline

by P. Stefan "Dasslock" Janicki

When **LANDS OF LORE: GUARDIANS OF DESTINY** was released in 1997, many role-playing game fans were disappointed that the beloved sequel cast players in the role of a single, preset character and bore little resemblance to its predecessor, **THRONE OF CHAOS**. By minimizing RPG elements and crafting an adventure/RPG/action hybrid, developers at Westwood hoped the second **LORE** game would have broader appeal. With RPGs enjoying a renaissance, **LANDS OF LORE III** has been released with the enticing prospect of enhanced RPG elements. Unfortunately, simplistic gameplay, barren environments, and horrible character AI collectively make playing **LANDS OF LORE III** an unsatisfying gaming experience.

Soul Purpose

Players are given the guise of Copper LeGue, who, after witnessing the dismemberment of his father and nasty stepbrothers courtesy of dimension-hopping hounds, realizes that he's both become the heir to the throne of Gladstone and lost his soul.



I HATE IT WHEN THAT HAPPENS Gladstone falls to pieces as the dimensions cross into one another.

Copper has to travel through portals to five strange "worlds" in order to conveniently both save the realm and recover his soul. Thanks to the court mystic, locking a soul hampers Copper less than losing a wristwatch and bears no impact on gameplay whatsoever, other than giving you additional motivation in case "saving the realm" wasn't sufficient encouragement.

Unfortunately, gameplay is substantially similar, and uniformly simplistic, in each dimension. The realms lack scope and, with the notable exception of the Fire World's dragon city, any sense of scale. There's only a handful of creatures in each realm and less than a dozen characters who have more than two lines of speech. Exploring a world largely consists of traveling down barren, linear, claustrophobia-inducing paths. A capable 3D card will produce some nifty, if overused, colored lighting effects and impressive background, but the quality of the graphics varies greatly, as the voxels and sprites used to depict characters and items devolve into prelated blobs up close. Certain areas (Underworld, Shattered Desert) overcome the limits of the game's engine, producing a few memorable moments. Others, such as the forest, with its canopied roof, prelated bushes, and solid walls of textured trees, look completely artificial.

Familiar Play

You can customize your character by joining one or more guilds and by selecting a familiar (a guide). There are four guilds (fighter, mage, cleric, and thief), but there's little incentive not to enroll in all of them. Copper gains levels faster with fewer memberships, but levels are relatively unimportant, since there's readily available equipment that'll enable neophyte characters to dish out formidable damage. Gaining levels is ludicrously easy in any event, as you can rack up experience stomping pitiful training opponents. Each guild offers only a couple of quests once you've completed its initiation, and later quests primarily require a tedious return trip to an explored realm to grab a previously inaccessible item.

Voice acting is generally painful and often occurs at inappropriate times. During frantic moments, your familiar will invariably announce an intention to look for trinkets while Copper retorts that he's "hungry enough to eat a horse." Huh? Get in the game, Copper. Play to win.

It is atrocious, as the mute lower-Gladstone citizens smash against walls and the pathfinding of the three dozen enemy types makes combat almost always a joke, winnable by strafing left and right and bounding arrow after arrow off

the heads of your hapless, uncoordinated foes. Since opponents are rare, the environments themselves challenge you with jumping and "thrilling" box-stacking puzzles that are apt to cause more character deaths than the game's battles. It's hard to understand Copper's constant need to inhale food, or the gameplay benefit which that touch of "realism" provides, in a light-hearted game that features fireball-hurling chickens.

Concluding LORE

The game isn't all bad. Music and sound effects are varied and appropriately reflect Copper's immediate surroundings. Some elements from past games make welcome reappearances. The interface provides convenient access to available items, spells, and weapons and the comprehensive journal automaps your travels and records NPC conversations and other useful information.

But the few noteworthy features are overwhelmed by the game's flaws. The initial release is unstable, frequently crashing on startup with some video cards, and it's intolerant of certain virtual memory cache settings and 3D sound cards. Clipping errors and missing textures are frequent enough that I suspected pits of being graphical errors. Ultimately, however, it's the simplistic and repetitive gameplay that makes **LANDS OF LORE III** more of a chore than a pleasure to play. **CW**

Editor's Note: A longer version of Dasslock's review can be found at www.gamespot.com.



MIXED BAG The graphics in **LANDS OF LORE III** are not very impressive—but some effects, like these flames, are cool.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Nice sound effects, decent interface and cutscenes, it's short.

CONS: Outdated graphics, horrible AI, overly simplistic combat, barren environments, bad voice acting.

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 24MB RAM, 450MB hard-disk space.

3D SUPPORT: 3ds, Direct 3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None.

Price: \$49.99
Publisher: Westwood Studios
www.westwood.com

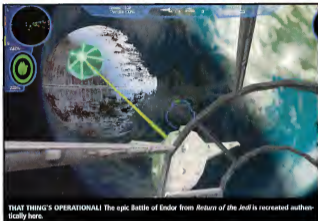
Death Star Duel

Numerous Glitches Weaken Lucasarts' Epic New Star Wars Sim

by Thierry Nguyen

A shady figure plays with a deactivated fighter. "I understand. You found paradise in the Empire, had a good trade, made a good living. The storm troopers protected you, and there were courts of law. And you didn't need friendship from me. But now you come to me and you say, 'Don Azzameen, give me justice.' But you don't ask with respect. You don't offer friendship. You don't even think to call me Jedi Master. Instead, you come into my house on the day the new Death Star goes online, and you ask me to do murder, for money."

Okay, perhaps X-WING ALLIANCE isn't quite that close to *The Godfather*. But there are definite similarities. Remember the shady conflict between the Corleone and Salvozza families, where one family stuck to their traditional values while the other family ventured off into dark, corrupt territory? Now imagine that scenario, but within the *Star Wars* universe. That's the heart of X-



THAT THING'S OPERATIONAL! The epic Battle of Endor from *Return of the Jedi* is recreated authentically here.

WING ALLIANCE, where the honest Azzameen family is pulled into a familial war with the Viraxo family, who have embraced both the Galactic Empire and the Black Sun syndicate. The final entry in Larry Holland's line of *STAR WARS* space sims, X-WING ALLIANCE is a lot like *Return of the Jedi*. It looks great and ends with a bang, but has several flaws that keep it from being the best of the three. (At least there aren't Ewoks everywhere.)

Family Business

Listening to the flood of com-

plaints about the lack of single-player in X-WING VS. THE FIGHTER, developer Totally Games went back to its traditional formula of a scripted single-player campaign. While previous games had you playing a nondescript pilot for either the Rebel Alliance or the Galactic Empire, this installment has a more personal feel to it.

You take the role of Ace Azzameen, the youngest son in the Azzameen family. At first, you're just hauling containers for your father's trading business, but soon enough, the Rebel Alliance recruits you. During the 53-mis-

sion Rebel campaign, you'll be flying normal military missions, mixed in with the occasional family business-themed mission. Ace's story is told through a series of emails, mission briefings, and a large amount of plot-related radio chatter during missions.

Because the campaign is linear, with pre-scripted missions, you'll have to replay failed missions until you succeed. You can "sit out" up to three of the Rebel campaign missions, but you'll have to fly all the family business missions to success.

Although the scripted cam-

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Great mission design, but it's a story that for some games good 3D graphics.

CONS: Quirky scripting, audio bugs with Voice 1 crew, shallow multiplayer disappointing ending.

DIFFICULTY: Advanced.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 150MB hard drive space.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem or serial (2 players), TCP/IP internet (2-4 players), IPX or TCP/IP LAN (2-8 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$19.95

Publisher: LucasArts

www.lucasarts.com



FEEL THE FORCE The updated flight engine allows for some truly epic fleet battles.



LIKE SHOOTING WOMPRATS If you're looking for a little variety, let your droid fly the ship and hop into one of your ship's turrets.

paign means there won't be any surprises when you replay, it does allow for some genuinely interesting missions. One mission is something of a "practice Death Star run," as it entails your entering an Imperial Research Facility and destroying its reactor. Others start as routine missions and end up with surprises like a visit from the Super Star Destroyer Executor, or an attack by a swarm of Zero-G Stormtroopers.

Doing the Kessel Run in Three Bars

The missions have a more epic feel here, as the paltry 32-ship maximum of earlier games in the series has been bumped up to 96. One mission redefines the term "fairball," as you scramble to defend your capital ship from an immense horde of incoming Tie Fighters. And in missions that take place in neutral territories, you'll actual-

PROPHCY or even INDEPENDENCE WAR, but it does look markedly better than previous releases. Colored lighting indicates shield damage, and doing damage to installations and capital ships rewards you with explosions, sparks, and gases drifting from various spots. The sim also supports DirectSound 3D audio, providing a slick Doppler effect when Tie Fighters fly past.

Your Jedi Training Is Incomplete

Unfortunately, X-WING ALLIANCE scores another first for LucasArts: The game is riddled with minor bugs and technical flaws. The scripting system has several. The email system would send me email about plot revelations before

mode is nice for quick missions, but there aren't any good cooperative missions along the lines of those in X-WING VS. THE FIGHTER or its BALANCE OF POWER expansion. Some of the single-player missions are just plain dumb, as well. Who thought it would be entertaining to search for one specific container in a group of 30? Thankfully, these boring missions make up only a small portion of the campaign.

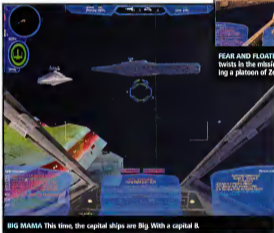
The biggest disappointment, though, comes near the end. As advertised on the box, you'll fly the Millennium Falcon at the Battle of Endor. The problem is, you don't fly as Ace, the

character you've spent the game building. No, suddenly the spirit of Billy D. inhabits you and you're Lando Calrissian recreating the mission from the end of *Jedi*. At the end of the original X-WING, you did replay Luke Skywalker's mission against the Death Star. But that game didn't have you invested in your pilot. Here, you see much attention given to Ace's family troubles, then after a seemingly

rushed mission, their story is thrown out and you're flying a rebash of a movie scene.

I commend the team for making a great reenactment of the destruction of the second Death Star, but at the same time, it's disappointing that they finished with the Battle of Endor rather than really tying up Ace's story. Hopefully we'll see the story given a better wrap-up in the inevitable expansion disc.

X-WING ALLIANCE does a good job of solving many of the problems with earlier games in the series, but some gamers won't like its fundamental design. And this is a product with numerous odd little quirks and glitches, which is very unusual for LucasArts. Still, it's a much higher note to leave on than X-WING VS. THE FIGHTER. **CGW**



BIG MAMA This time, the capital ships are Big With a capital B.

ly see civilian traffic passing by a customs station or a spaceport.

Cockpits have seen a big improvement. The 2D bit-mapped cockpit imagery is gone, replaced by a full 3D cockpit with a HUD overlay. In addition, the developers brought over the concept of a podlock view, which tracks your targeted enemy from flight sims. This can make a huge difference in combat, discouraging "sit and spin" tactics. When flying transport ships, you can hop into a turret to defend your ship. There are automated features to improve your gunnery. You can either set the turret to auto-fire on your current target or man the turret and have your droid co-pilot fly to loop the target in your firing arc.

This is the first Star Wars sim designed from the ground up for 3D cards, and the Direct 3D support is much better than that retrofitted to X-WING VS. THE FIGHTER. This doesn't quite have the all-out 3D beauty of, say, WING COMMANDER:

such revelations occurred, alerting me to plot twists before they happened. Also, if I didn't follow the script exactly, I was rewarded with a host of weird errors, such as critical ships exploding for no apparent reason, critical ships dumbly flying into enemy opposition and hence getting shredded, and ships sitting there doing nothing, leaving me twiddling my thumbs in the cockpit.

While the single-player game is dramatically improved, the multiplayer support is merely decent. An option-packed skirmish



FEAR AND FLOATING Look for plenty of twists in the missions, such as encountering a platoon of Zero-G Stormtroopers.



BZZZZZ IN THE ZONE The podlock view locks your eyes on your current target.

ENEMY ENGAGED
APACHE

HAVOC

"LOOK OUT LONGBOW!"
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Boom and Zoom

In FIGHTER SQUADRON, It's All About the Dogfight

by Robin G. Kim

FIGHTER SQUADRON: THE SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE (SDOE) doesn't just stand out for having the longest name. Where its competitors concentrate on broad historical campaigns, SDOE has a smaller scope, carving out a niche for itself with quick-to-fly sorties and good dogfighting action.

SDOE lacks any sort of campaign mode, limiting gameplay options to instant action, multiplayer dogfights, and a mix of canned missions playable in any order. The sim provides 30 missions, but because each can be flown from several viewpoints, the number of scenario combinations runs into the hundreds. For example, a mission pitting a flight of B-17s with P-51 and Spitfire escorts against two groups of German interceptors can be played from five different perspectives. You can even switch between aircraft in-flight. And you can create additional missions to play or share with friends using the sim's mission editor. To maintain continuity between missions, the sim keeps pilot records that track cumulative scores, kills, and decorations.



ON A WING AND A HALF D-mage effects feed into the flight model, but the results are rather forgiving. This FW190 actually landed safely, albeit after some unintended snap rolls on its final approach.

Stay Within the Lines

Missions take place in three theaters: North Africa, Rhineland, and the Strait of Dover. Each area is drastically scaled down into a square patch with invisible barriers that prevent you from venturing outside White

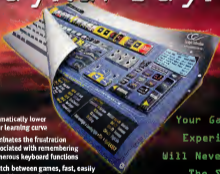
realism obviously suffers here, impatient players will appreciate the shorter flight times. Cursory mission briefings and nonexistent mission planning also help speed you into the action.

Unfortunately, lengthy loading times when you switch theaters can cause delays if the game isn't allocated 160MB (beyond the minimum install) for terrain caching. Or worse, you may be totally roadblocked by a copy protection bug (already fixed in a patch) that prevents some PCs from even starting the game.

SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE has only 10 plane

types, all of which are flyable. You could conceivably create more using the game's "Open Plane" interface, but the effort and expertise required for the task are daunting. The default set consists of assorted German, British, and American fighters and bombers.

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Good flight model; best 3D graphics; fun in-to-air combat; excellent dogfighting and physics modeling.

CONS: No campaign, small maps, unexpected flight model simplifications, limited plane selection, dedicated mouse.

DIFFICULTY: Beginner.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 10266, 128MB RAM, 120MB hard-disk sp. ca.

3D SUPPORT: 3dfx Glide, Direct3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, LAN, Internet (2-16 players), 1 CD or 4 player (separate, patch eliminates CD requirement).

Price: \$49.95
Publisher: Activision

www.activision.com

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★
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★
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★
Command Helo over a Chinese tank platoon.

★
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★
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★
Engage artillery to the North. Launch an air strike to the East.

★
Switch to platoon commander of an electronic warfare unit.

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YOU ARE CHINA

★
Mobilize armored unit into Kazakhstan.

★
Lay minefields in tactical mode.

★
Move to maps. Conduct reconnaissance.

★
Mobilize anti-aircraft weaponry. Launch air offensive to the North.

★
Two tanks are destroyed by U.S. helicopters.

★
Return to maps. View U.S. artillery enter minefield.

★
Switch to helicopter platoon commander. Head East.

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PAINFUL PHYSICS The bent-back propeller blades and collapsed landing gear of this P-51 Mustang testify to the sim's top-notch physics modeling.

Regrettably, oversimplified bombsights and an intractable autopilot make flying the bombers visually pointless.

The combat engagements are typically small, with fewer than a dozen planes and a few ground units present in an entire theatre, but the sim's outstanding AI, flexible view systems, and detailed damage modeling make for some great

dogfights. This holds true for Internet play as well, which is exceptionally smooth and stable.

Carefree Flying

Flight modeling in SDOE feels very realistic out to the edge of the envelope, though not beyond, where you should stall or spin but do not. For most players, these simplifications won't detract



HEADS UP FIGHTER SQUADRON: SDOE provides several mechanisms for artificially boosting your situational awareness, including an overfly map, a heads-up display, and plane icons.

much from the fun, but why mix them with advanced features like torque effects and snap rolls? The skimpy game manual is of little help in learning such characteristics—or even some of the basic game functions.

The 3D-accelerated graphics give good frame-rates at high resolutions even with the stunning cloud effects enabled. And though the terrain looks nice, rendering distances are so short you sometimes have to look down to see the horizon.

Overall, SDOE doesn't stand out in enough areas to have truly broad appeal. Despite this, its quick action, fun dogfighting, and excellent Internet play still offer a compelling combination for sim fans who prefer to cut to the chase. **CGW**

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Goin' to the Show

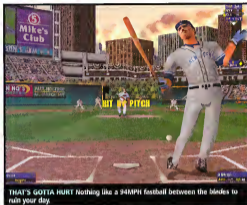
HIGH HEAT 2000 Blasts One Waaaaay Outta Here

by Dave Salvatore

This ain't nothin' compared to EARL.* After a dozen years, EARL WEAVER BASEBALL on the Amiga is still the definitive benchmark for baseball games. Last year's crop of underachievers left baseball aficionados sorely wanting for something better. HIGH HEAT 99 was probably the best entry in the otherwise unremarkable class of '99. Well, it seems the second time's the charm for Team 366. In HIGH HEAT 2000 (HH2K), they've come up with a sharp-looking 3D engine, a plenty-deep statistics model, and great gameplay, all of which combine to knock one out of the park. Even the die-hard EARL-heads here at CGW are ready to admit that HH2K is a real winner.

Variety Is the Spice...

One of the most challenging parts of building a good baseball game is appealing to the arcade guys, keeping the stat-fanatics happy, and still making the whole thing fun. The first thing you notice about HH2K is how many different ways you can play it. For



THAT'S GOTTA HURT Nothing like a 94MPH fastball between the blades to ruin your day.

the arcade crowd, HH2K is a great-looking game in which you can control nearly every aspect of gameplay, from the pitcher going low-and-away with a slider, to the right fielder scaling the wall to rob a homer of a home run. What's really cool here is the granularity of control, wherein you can have the CPU handle different gameplay elements to taste. This year, HH2K lets you throttle game tempo, so you can find a speed that works for you.

For would-be managers, there's Manager-Only mode, in which you can call plays pitch by pitch, on both offense and

defense. Here's where HH2K's stats modeling really shines, since the CPU is essentially playing most of the game. You'll occasionally see 15-3 blowouts, but most games end with very realistic scores. When two strong teams face one another, it more often than not becomes a pitching duel, where the bats go quiet until around the fifth inning, when the hurlers begin to tire. But again, true to baseball, even the best of aces can have days when they just get shelled. And, better still, the game seems to model first-inning jitters that can make for early naps before pitchers settle into their rhythm.



GOES DOWN LOOKIN' This slider just catches the outside corner for the put-away.

every which way, they do it in varying degrees depending on how well the pitcher can throw that pitch. And if Jarret Wright has just come at you with a 95MPH heater, and then comes back with a 70MPH change-up, you'll often find yourself swinging way ahead of the ball. Yet another nice touch is that not only do sidearm pitchers deliver the ball from the side (which takes some getting used to) but their pitches move very differently there's also a rendered strike zone that you can bring up during play—

or in an instant replay if you think the ump's strike zone is a little stingy. And if you've got Random Umpire enabled, he'll occasionally make the wrong call, though usually only on close pitches.

HH2K is well tuned out of the box, and the controls work well for getting the ball around the bags. And while controls are hard-mapped, you can use Alternate Throwing Controls, which map each base onto Gravis GamePad Pro's diamond button configuration, making throw-outs a snap.

Grand Slam

Is there anything HH2K hasn't done right? Well, yes. HH2K has a draft this year, and there's minor-league roster management over multiple seasons to develop and bring up young players as they mature. But you can't create your own custom league with a set number of teams, which makes things like office leagues harder to put together.

Still, HH2K has so much going for it that if you're a hard-core baseball fan looking to get in the action, this game says hello like the business end of a Louisville Slugger. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Great gameplay, robust stats engine, very breakable game engine

CONS: Can't create custom leagues; occasionally unrealistic; hard-coded controller mapping.

DIFFICULTY: Easy

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 16MB RAM, 60MB hard-disk space

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, LAN, Internet (2 players); 1 CD per player

Price: \$29.95
Publisher: 366

www.366.com



Blammo-Ball

If Baseball Were a Comic Book, This Is What It Would Look Like

by Dave Salvador

Stealing rivalry is a bitch. When you come from the same house that has given us FIFA, NBA LIVE, Madden, and NHL, people tend to expect great things. And why shouldn't they? With this august stable of titles, EA Sports reigns supreme for PC sports gaming. But then there's TRIPLE PLAY. Last year's version was much anticipated, mainly because it was being ported onto a full 3D engine. But the game disappointed, with a lackluster look as well as underwhelming and clumsy gameplay. In TRIPLE PLAY 2000 (TP2000), EA finds some redemption, and has improved the franchise's stock. But still, TP2000 isn't a platform-defining title—the definitive sports game that others aspire to be—like its other EA brethren. Couple that with the arrival of 3DO's fantastic HIGH HEAT 2000 and TP2000's mediocrity becomes even more painfully apparent.

TP2000's shortcomings are numerous, ranging from base-headed base-running AI, to ridicu-



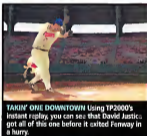
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL Robert Alomar had a good jump, but he's thrown out at second.

lous hit counts that must learn dream of, to a "color" commentary engine whose color can only be described as pungent plaid. If I never hear Buck Martinez explain the origin of the term "can of corn" again, it'll be too soon...

The Night Has a Thousand Bats

Until you did up the difficulty, it doesn't matter what the AI pitchers serve up—fastball, curve, slider, whatever—the pitching rightfully earns the nickname "Tea." You'll hit left, you'll hit right, you'll hit down the alley, you'll hit down over hell's half ace. When you really connect with one, you'll hear what sounds like Thor's hammer, indicating that you really hit-tooled one. And all the while, Tee will just keep serving 'em up. To add insult to injury, we're not talking about pitchers like Chico Escuela of Saturday Night Live fame; TP2000 would have you believe that you can light up Roger Clemens or Randy Johnson like this, an occurrence rarely found in nature.

Perhaps in an attempt to balance this big wood, TP2000's strike zone seems to include the lower shin. The default batting camera doesn't give you a good



TAKIN' ONE DOWNTOWN Using TP2000's instant replay, you can see that David Justice got all of this one before it exited Fenway in a hurry.

look at ball location, but even with the ground-level camera view you'll see pitches that are well off the plate, and some that threaten to break an ankle, that are routinely called strikes. In TP2000 you'll see some ball movement that matches the pitch throw, but curve balls in particular don't seem to have much vertical movement on them (sliders fare better). Also lacking is much perceived difference in speed, say from a 90MPH heater to a 75MPH change-up.

Timing Is Everything

Another curiosity is outfielders' superhuman ability to throw a ball in from far allied—sans cut-off man—to get a runner

out at home. This happened on several occasions, and the ensuing verbiage I directed at the machine (which garnered some astonished looks from my wife) would have been more than enough to get me ejected from a game. It's as though they moved the outfield walls in about 100 feet for the purposes of throwing.

And speaking of glitches (deserving of some choice off-color verbiage, TP2000's base-running AI is another one spot. With automatic base running turned on, I managed to get caught in several triple plays, sometimes two in a single game. The scenario usually went like this: I'd have two men on, and hit a pop fly. The base runners, rather than holding their bases to await the outcome of the catch (or lock thereof), would run ahead to the next base, and the ball once caught would come down and catch both runners off their bases.

Bottom of the Ninth

Despite these shortcomings, TP2000 is actually kind of fun to play, even with its dopey gameplay. But the game definitely shows that it has been designed more for the console world than for the PC. Its second-generation 3D engine is improved over last year's inaugural version, but the players still look blocky, and this engine lacks that X factor found in other EA Sports titles' engines. If you've enjoyed TRIPLE PLAY over the years, then this latest installment won't disappoint. But if you're looking for something that plays like America's Great Game, this still isn't it. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: This is Eddie Ruzh's game, not Michael Ruzh's, buddy. Midgame save, copy sound effects.

CONS: Dim base-running AI; pitching lacks good ball movement; offense is an absurd slogfest and difficulty is dialed up.

DIFFICULTY: Easy

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 16MB RAM, 20MB hard-disk space.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, Internet, EA Sports Net, serial, modem (2 players); 1 CD per player.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D, Glide.

Price: \$29.95
Publisher: EA Sports

www.easports.com

THIS AIN'T NO SKINS GAME.



Links ~~ES~~ EXTREME

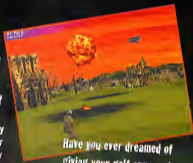


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Zero-Sum Game

CIVILIZATION Shoots for the Stars, Ends Up on the Moon

by George Jones

When I was young, my parents took me to what was advertised as "the scariest, deadliest haunted house in Los Angeles." My brother and I walked in nervously excited, half expecting not to make it out. We walked out disillusioned and disappointed beyond belief. What had gone wrong? First off, the haunted house just wasn't great. Secondly, my expectations were unrealistically high. (I would not recommend this sort of self-analysis without the aid of a licensed psychotherapist.)

Two years and countless hours of therapy later, I find myself wondering if the cold, occasionally angry reaction CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER has received from gamers isn't for similar reasons. First, we all had super-high expectations for it. Second, the gameplay, to be perfectly blunt, just doesn't have it. All the cool new features are outweighed by play-balancing issues, gameplay frustrations, and the fact that this version of CV just doesn't hang together as well as it could.



NOW WITH FLAVOR CRYSTALS CALL TO POWER boasts crisp graphics and a streamlined interface; the public works system of improving the land leaves a little to be desired, unfortunately.

Not Just Another Pretty Face

Instead of relying solely on the strengths of CIVILIZATION II, CIP's designers decided to spice up the traditional game by not just tweaking but completely changing some aspects of this classic game. The most immediate and prominent differences are the presence of many new units, a

new win-game scenario, the ability to play in space, and an evolved interface. Unfortunately, many of these new additions aren't as helpful to the game as they sound.

Take, for example, the game's special stealth units: Clerics who can drain money from enemy cities, Lawyers who can bring city production to a standstill, and so

on. Conceptually these units sound great, but they fail to make the game better. The Stealer unit can be the most frustrating, particularly because he can cripple you badly at the beginning of a game. And when he attacks—by stealing your citizens and making them work for his civilization—he can set you back big time by stunting the growth of your early

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



PROS:

CIVILIZATION gameplay; improved graphics; great soundtrack.

CONS: New features that don't add much to the game.

DIFFICULTY: Advanced

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, 32MB RAM, 400MB hard-drive space.

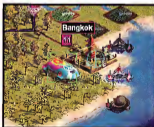
3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modern (2 players), IPX, TCP/IP (2-6 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$44.95

Publisher: Activision

www.activision.com



NO MORE MESSY STAINS The Eco Ranger looks groovy, but you won't be laughing when the computer sneaks one up to your finest city and flattens it into parkland.





I KNOW WHAT YOU KNOW In addition to a gorgeous soundtrack, *CALL TO POWER*'s cut-scenes—shown when you complete Wonders—have a level of humor and thoughtfulness rarely seen in computer games.

cities. Defending against this stealth unit requires you to build City Walls or a Slaver of your own (who can detect enemy Slaves). The catch is that at the advanced difficulty levels, the mere presence of Slaves can restrict your strategy or set you back.

Other special units, such as the Telewingsuit and the Subneural Aid, are more nuisances than major frustrations. While they do add a small bit of strategic depth to the game—particularly because each is attached to a different government type—I spent so much time containing these units' damage that I found myself wishing the game allowed me to cut them out entirely.

One aspect of CTP that does work is the handling of military endeavors. Instead of forcing individual cities to take the production hit for units, your whole nation does. This means that you can crank units out of certain cities without worrying about accumulating costs. Also nice is the ability to toggle your at-war setting between three different levels. This creates an added element of strategy that fits nicely into the context of *CIVILIZATION*.

End-Game Woes

CTP's end game is a great idea that I wish worked better than it does. As you near the end of the game, you research the wormhole advance. When discovered, a wormhole appears somewhere in the second layer of the game map space. You then need to secure the wormhole, build a Wormhole Probe, and send it in. When it comes back, you can begin the Alien Life Project. The first player to finish the Alien Life Project wins the game.

Again, what sounds cool turns out to be considerably less exciting when you play the game. Space itself, in fact, is simply not an exci-

ting place to be in CTP. I never really used space except to enter the wormhole. Small-map games tend to be conquest-oriented, and on the larger maps, there's plenty of land to go around, particularly since you can turn swamps into grasslands.

Another reason the newly implemented space layer fails is because of its fuzzy graphics. You'll have a rough time figuring out where your units and cities are.

I wish the designers had allowed the wormhole to somehow present itself on the main map instead of in space—the game would be much more exciting if you had to track down a wormhole that existed in your enemy's backyard.

Making matters more discouraging, the Alien Life Project is more or less a rehash of the "build a colony ship and send it to Alpha Centauri" end game of *CIVILIZATION* and *CTI II*. You put together the project piece-by-piece and when it's finished, you win the game.



GUNS VERSUS BUTTER KNIVES The new combat model adds a little more strategy to warfare, but creates an imbalance. You can beat powerful high-tech enemy units with a large number of cheaper, outdated units.

Looks Good, Tastes OK

This seems to be the fate of *CALL TO POWER*: cool new ideas thwarted at every turn. Even the coolness factor of the game's new futuristic military units like the War Walker are negated by super-high production costs and the fact that you don't have to use super-powerful units to win. In one game at the Emperor Level, I was dropping way behind on the technological front. With the all-powerful Incans declaring war on me and eating away at my frontier cities, I decided to make a run at conquering the whole map by creating a massive army full of Musketeers and Cannons. It worked so easily I was shocked. (It took a mind-numbingly long time to amass my armies, however.)

Another example of what I'm talking about: The AI plays appropriately at the five different difficulty levels, and can even create a daunting challenge at the higher levels of the game. But I wish the diplomacy model of the game was as intelligent as *ALPHA CENTAURI*. Maybe it's just me, but I miss hearing the desperate pleas for mercy that an opposing civilization vocalizes in *ALPHA CENTAURI* as I whittle down their empire.

Even the niceties in *CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER*'s interface design left me with bitter-sweet feelings. I love being able to queue up and save build orders for city improvements and units. I love being able to sort out all of my cities by Happiness, Production, or even what units are being built there. But I wish that tile improvements were handled a little better. Now handled by a public works system rather than by Settler units, the end result is pretty much a wash. You can focus your Settlers solely on building new cities now, but you're still saddled with having to micromanage the land surrounding your cities. I hate to cite *ALPHA CENTAURI* again, but its ability to automate the improvement process is much more elegant.

At the end of the day, the *CIVILIZATION:*

CALL TO POWER design team should still be applauded for trying to extend one of the classic games of all time. Even though this incarnation doesn't hang together as tightly as it could, I'm glad Activision didn't just slap new graphics on *CIVILIZATION II* and call it a game. Why? Because even though my experience wasn't overwhelmingly positive, and even though I wish CTP offered more—individual scenarios that focus on different portions of the game would be awesome, as would a better multiplayer experience—I still enjoyed my time discovering this new take on a past classic. It just won't be a game I'll go out of my way to play all the time. **CGW**

The world will end in a firestorm of destruction.
Have fun.



WORMS ARMAGEDDON



Exploding sheep, mad cows falling from the sky, mole bombs, detonating old ladies - this can only mean one thing: **Worms Armageddon!** In the latest chapter of the Worms series, following *Worms II*, PC Gamer's 1998 Turn-Based Strategy Game of the Year, you'll get more features and more weapons for more strategy. It's never the same thing twice, and now you can do battle with up to six teams on one machine, or on-line. But there's still only one way to win. Destroy all your enemies!



July '99



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Hail the Conquering Heroes

Expansive Sequel for Hall of Fame Series Is a Resounding Success

by Robert Coffey

I'm ready for my neural implant now. Crack open my skull and stab that little microprocessor deep into my medulla oblongata. I happily embrace my cyborg future. At least as some unholy union of man and machine I'll actually be able to play HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III every waking hour instead of just thinking about it every second that I'm away from my computer.

For those of you unfamiliar with the series, HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III (HOMMIII) puts you in the position of commanding armies of dragons, vampires, knights, and the like in a traditional fantasy setting. The turn-based gameplay is divided in thirds: An expansive adventure map, where your heroes traverse the terrain in search of resources



GATE-CRASHERS More units and combat maps twice as large as in the previous game turn castle sieges into epic struggles.

and enemies; city maps for each town, where players build structures and purchase units; and a hex-based combat map, where battles play out like elaborate, magic-enhanced chess matches.

In addition to resource management, building, and combat, games are charged with managing heroes who lead the armies. Heroes accrue experience with every successful battle, allowing them to gain and enhance a host of abilities that affect their performance. It's a delicately balanced, thoroughly engaging for-

mula that has made the HEROES games a truly stellar series.

Bigger Than Life

HOMMIII expands upon the insanely addictive play of the pre-

vious edition, retaining the core gameplay while enhancing almost every aspect of the game. This is first apparent in the size of all the maps. The adventure maps are frequently enormous, and

several of them feature a new subterranean level that effectively doubles their size. Town maps have ballooned to hold a host of new buildings, and combat maps are about twice the size of their counterparts in the previous game—all the better to accommodate the new armies that can now hold up to seven different unit types.

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. There are now eight different types of towns, each generating a unique set of creatures requiring a specific combat strategy. The devastating hand-to-hand attacks of castle units demand a head-on assault, while the ranged attacks of units from tower towns benefit from a more defensive posture. Every monster in the game has an upgrade available, whereas HEROES II allowed only some of its units to



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS Numerous upgrades and building options in HOMMIII give gamers a multitude of choices to make as they develop their towns from simple hamlets, like the one on the left, to sprawling cities, like the one on the right.

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



PROS: Same, compelling HEROES-style strategy, loads of new units, upgrades, more hero abilities, bigger maps and bigger conflicts.



CONS: Can't load single scenarios from completed campaigns; poky Internet play; uneven campaign pacing; unhelpful tutorial.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: None

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, direct connection (2 players), LAN, Internet, hotseat (2-4 players), 1 CD per player.

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: 3DO

www.3do.com

UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT



The addition of sprawling subterranean areas in the adventure section of the game effectively doubles the size of many of the HERDES III maps.

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS



Rather than let a hero load up with every artifact in the game, HERDES III uses a paper doll model to limit how many artifacts a hero can use at once, forcing you to make strategic decisions.

be upgraded. Most units have special attacks/abilities that impact combat strategy. For example, incredibly powerful archangels can resurrect fallen comrades, while undead ghost dragons can age opponents, thus halving their hit points. Every unit is now rendered in 3D, with a more realistic look than the cartoonish units of the previous game.

Finally, a slew of new heroes and artifacts throws more strategic factors into the mix. Every hero has an innate special ability—such as being able to gain a bonus when commanding certain troops—and there are lots of new abilities to acquire as well. One new ability, tactics, lets heroes move their forces within a limited range immediately prior to a battle—it's great for offense-minded heroes, letting them move ranged units into prime positions while cutting down the distance melee units have to travel.

All this makes for a game that is mind-boggling in its depth, and the designers deserve praise for adding so much while managing to dodge the paralyzing feature bloat that could have easily sunk the title. Unfortunately, they also deserve a slap on the wrist for a tutorial that requires players to either print out a huge manual or constantly toggle between the game and a separate text file.

Storyteller Theatre

HOMMIII breaks from its predecessors in its campaign mode. Instead of a pair of linear

Killing Kendal and Capturing Steadwick

You'll need two moves of enormous armies to take out General Kendal, who guards Steadwick. The key to this limited-time scenario is to grab the dragon generator in the lower-right corner of the subterranean level. Load your best hero with units and then seize the generator before the end of the first week. Build up your dungeon town first, initially choosing upgrades aimed at creating black dragons. Above ground, secure resources quickly and don't waste any units in fights with creatures who want to flee. Raise gold any way possible. By the second month, break through the southern magic-labelling garrison, rugging the griffin towers and the lone gold mine. Load up your best heroes and then attack, using your first hero to take out Kendal's biggest stack and mopping up with your dragon-laden hero.



Heroism 101

To protect your more valuable units, let your weakest creatures attack tough enemies first so they absorb the counterstrike.

The AI almost always focuses its attack on the largest group of units, so build up hordes of cheap cannon fodder units to occupy enemies while your stronger armies pound on them. For inferno heroes, bait enemies with impa so that mages can hurl fireballs with-out damaging more-expensive units.

Build marketplaces early. Almost every map is scarce in some resource (generally gold), so you'll need to convert resources early and often.

Just because you start a scenario with two towns doesn't mean you need two heroes. Instead, use one town as your central production point while building up only the income-generating aspects of the second town. With one well-equipped hero you'll be able to win crucial early battles for resources that will eventually make additional heroes affordable and effective.

Use your units' special abilities. For example, since cavaliers and champions get 5 percent extra damage for every hex traveled, they should always charge before an attack, even if it means just circling an enemy that's already next to them.

campaigns with a few branches, the campaign is broken up into six minicampaigns of three to four scenarios apiece. While this lets the game tell a more interesting story, fans of the series will probably miss the either/or branches of HERDES II that rewarded them for taking on more challenging scenarios.

The campaign mode's greatest drawback is that gamers can't load individual scenarios from any completed minicampaign—you have to save each scenario at its start to replay it. While the campaign game is loaded with more than 20 great, challenging scenarios featuring a variety of goals—including wiping out enemies, seizing specific towns, escort missions, and more—they're unevenly paced, with one cruelly hard mission finishing up the relatively easy second campaign (see sidebar for tips on beating this scenario) before lapsing into easy mode for the next campaign. Fortunately, the game ships with an enormous number of mostly customizable single scenarios, giving the game remarkable replayability, while the map editor that's included ensures that tons of user-created maps will be available online.

HOMMIII has improved its multiplayer play, allowing for timed turns and letting strategists

scan the map and their towns during an opponent's turn; while you can't issue orders during your enemy's turn, at least it's better than just staring at your monitor. A problem with DirectPlay makes Internet HOMMIII a sluggish experience, but that should be corrected in an upcoming patch.

Ultimately, the rewards of HERDES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III far outweigh its few drawbacks. Hopefully most of those shortcomings will be patched, but even as it stands now HOMMIII is a game that strategy fans should absolutely be playing. **CGW**



TO OUR READERS

This review was intended to appear last month, but our printer erroneously omitted the first page. We apologize for the inconvenience and hereby reprint the review in its entirety.





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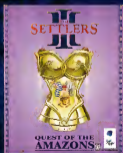
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Ship Shape

A Strategy Game for Real-Time Strategy Fans and Naval Warfare Experts Alike

by Jeff Lackey

FLEET COMMAND is a naval warfare game that should appeal to gamers whose primary understanding of carriers and cruisers comes from CNN. However, FLEET COMMAND also has enough substance to bring some serious wargame fans into the real-time strategy fold. This "HARPOON LITE" game's point-and-click interface, 3D views, and fast-paced campaign missions are clearly targeted at gamers who want to jump in and play without memorizing pages of complex commands, but there's enough substance here to intrigue the progamer.

Anchors Away

FLEET COMMAND's user interface is simple, but extremely functional. The lower third of the screen is divided into three windows: a big-picture overview, a 3D view of the action, and a panel of information on the selected unit. The top two-thirds of the screen is a tactical top-down map. The 3D window and the large tactical map can be swapped out to provide a larger



SOME DAYS YOU GET THE BEAR A Russian bomber bites the dust.

view of the action, while another key press will bring up a full-screen 3D view.

Your role, appropriately enough, is that of overall fleet commander. You command forces by clicking on them in the top-down tactical map and giving them orders, such as identify contact, engage, patrol, transit, and rescue. Everything can be accomplished via mouse clicks and pop-up menus: Click to choose a unit, click to select an action, click to choose a location or target.

As one might expect from a Jane's product, a wide assortment of ships, subs, and planes are at the player's disposal—everything from transports to carriers, from fighters to bombers, representing the navies of 16 nations. The world's oceans are your battlefield,

with accurate ocean maps provided for the entire globe. The game sports a good variety of interesting single missions, with a diverse range of platforms, force sizes, and objectives demonstrating the versatility of the game system. Also included is a story-driven campaign.

The campaign is one area that may receive mixed reviews from both hard-core naval gamers and more casual players. First, it's composed of only four missions—missions that might more accurately be called scenarios. Each mission is composed of multiple tasks, many of which are revealed only upon completion of earlier objectives. It could easily take hours to successfully complete each mission (and success in a mission is required to

progress in the campaign). More importantly, there's significant variability when you start a campaign mission, with the enemy's make-up and location changing with each replay.

However, the pace of the campaign missions will be a little hectic for players who cut their teeth on serious naval simulations. In what may appeal to casual gamers (who would be bored with simulated hours of searching for the enemy), the campaign missions typically start with a hail of enemy missiles in the air. You must rapidly click on your ships and the incoming missiles in an attempt to shoot them down before they sink your forces. At the same time, you'll need to quickly launch your own missiles, launch and direct aircraft, send out anti-submarine warfare (ASW) forces, launch strikes against surface sites, and much more. If you survive the initial onslaughts, the action will slow down long enough for you to catch your breath. Later mission tasks involve more thoughtful objectives such as finding and eliminating lurking submarines.

But Will Mikey Like It?

So, is this a game for real-time strategy fanatics or serious naval wargamers? Often games that



THAR SHE BLOWS Weapon launches are animated, such as this cruiser's ship-to-ship missile.

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD



PROS: Wide range of world navies and platforms; visual mission briefing; nice 3D views.

CONS: Campaign consists of only four long missions; action may get too hectic for serious wargame buffs.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 250MB hard-disk space.

3D SUPPORT: 3dfx Glide, Direct3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: IPX, TCP/IP (2-4 players); 1 CD per player.

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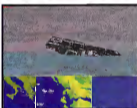
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INCOMING! The fourth campaign scenario begins with Russian missiles heading toward your carrier battle group.

try to be everything to everybody and up failing to please anyone. *FLEET COMMAND*, however, has the potential to please a surprisingly broad range of gamers.

The wargaming acolyte can have a great time, patrolling the oceans and kicking the butts of the international bad guys. All of the military platforms that are so prevalent on the news these days are under your control; you can launch cruise missile strikes on terrorist sites, rescue downed pilots, enforce no-fly



RAINY DAYS GET ME DOWN A carrier is sunk by a pack of persistent submarines.



THE REPLAY'S THE THING An after-action replay mode can show you where you went wrong.

zones, and generally impose your own military justice on the world. Gamers who don't know the difference between a Flanker and a Tomcat can press a key and have Jane's reference guide pop up more data than you need. The manual is pretty sloppy on explaining some options, but a little experimenting will usually be sufficient to figure these out. The point-and-click interface ensures that novices can jump right in and play—they may not win right away, but intriguing scenarios and fairly constant action should keep them involved.

The trickier question is whether hard-core naval gamers will enjoy *FLEET COMMAND*. The answer is a qualified yes. Some compromises are required, as many factors normally player-controlled in traditional hard-core games are abstracted or computer-controlled here. For example, you can't set the specific speed, depth, or altitude of weapons platforms. More micromanagement than expected is required in some situations; for example, a helicopter on ASW search will usually not attack a hostile sub it discovers unless you click on it, an aircraft ordered to identify unknown aircraft will not automatically attack if the plane is hostile, and so on. Generally if you want a unit to do something, you'll need to specifically give it those orders.

However, the serious naval wargamer is given a huge number of platforms and the entire world's oceans in which to conduct operations

The World Is My Playground



HAVE IT YOUR WAY A powerful missile builder allows the creation of everything from simple engagements to complex scenarios.

FLEET *COMMAND* features an extremely versatile mission builder. You can select any section of any ocean in the world and populate it with the ships and aircraft of most of the world's navies. The power of the mission builder is in its complexity, but it's very simple to use.

I had a great time setting up a simple mission in which I had to use a few Los Angeles-class submarines to locate and destroy a Russian carrier protected by a standard carrier formation and its ASW aircraft. Tools are provided to include enough variability and user-controlled randomness that you can be surprised by your own missions. The complexity is there to create full-blown scenarios, with multiple objectives, windows and platforms that appear only under certain conditions, custom event-driven WAV files, and much more. This excellent utility transforms *FLEET COMMAND* from a good game to a great naval gaming system.

Some results may be a little questionable (it took eight missile hits to sink a small transport), but in extended play most things feel right. Send a loaded Hornet into a close dogfight with a Flanker, and you'll likely be sending a rescue mission after the pilot. While you can send a squadron of strike aircraft to take out a target defended by surface-to-air missiles, you'll lose fewer planes if you also send an EA-6B prowler to jam the SAM site radars. And while the campaign missions may be better suited to the more casual market, the very powerful mission builder (see sidebar) ensures that serious gamers can set up almost any engagement conditions imaginable.

The bottom line is that *FLEET COMMAND* is a lot of fun. The average gamer will have a great time moving fleets of carriers and destroyers into battle and fighting off storms of enemy missiles. The more serious naval gamer, if willing to accept some abstractions, will savor having the navies of 16 countries and the world's oceans in which to set up historical and hypothetical scenarios. **CGW**

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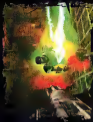


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Thrills and Spills

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON Is a Fun, Addictive—and Slightly Bumpy—Joyride

by Jeff Green

Here's a nice milestone for the millennium: a computer game in which you get to clean up vomit. Finally! Fortunately, this is but one of the many tasks awaiting you in **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON**, an utterly charming gem of a strategy game from MicroProse—and a welcome change of pace for those tired of conquering galaxies, fighting wars, and building global economies in game after game.

Reminiscent of classic "god games" like **SIMCITY**, **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON** has less serious intentions. Your goal, throughout the 20-plus scenarios, is to design and maintain a successful theme park. Merry-go-rounds, ice-cream stands, water slides, bumper cars—this is what you must command and conquer. It's harder than it sounds, and it's also a lot of fun.

Making Flippy Floppy

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON's look and feel will be instantly accessible to anyone familiar with **SIM CITY**-style gameplay. The game uses a standard isometric per-

spective from which you can rotate your park at 90-degree angles, zooming in and out for different views of your work-in-progress. From a distance, you can work on long-term planning and layout; fully zoomed in, you can check out your park in wondrous detail, complete with excellent visuals and atmospheric sound effects and music.

To succeed at the game's scenarios (unfortunately they're not linked, campaign-style), you must become adept at juggling numerous responsibilities. You must build decent rides that will attract patrons to the park—and you must build a variety of rides to keep people from getting bored. The park must be clean and safe, and you must constantly monitor rides for breakdowns. Your patrons will need places to sit down, eat and drink, buy gifts, and avoid the occasional rainstorm.

Finance plays a crucial role. Prices on admission, rides, food, and gifts must be set low enough to please people, but high enough to keep your revenue flowing. As in real life, money is everything. You need it to pay employees, maintain and landscape the park, advertise your attractions, research and build new rides, and expand the park's grounds so that people keep coming back. Operate at a loss for too long, and you'll find yourself with a dirty, broken-down, empty park



WHY, THANK YOU! Win a scenario in **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON**, and the tiny patrons of the park will stop to applaud your efforts—one of the game's terrific small touches.

Wild Gravity

The game includes a number of prebuilt rides, but **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON** enables you to custom-build your own coasters and attractions—and that's its particular ace-in-the-hole. Game designer Chris Sawyer clearly intended this to be as much of a coaster-building toy as it is a strategy game, and for the most part, it works. Those creative enough and somewhat mechanically inclined will have a blast structuring new rides, setting bands and rolls, intertwining tracks with other rides, and more, all in an attempt to win a high excitement and intensity rating.

For those less mechanically inclined, however, building roller coasters can be an intimidating

and difficult experience. The game cries out for an open free-form mode in which gamers can experiment without monetary limitations or a running scenario clock. It's a serious, frustrating omission.

Fortunately, the game's outstanding Web site (www.rollercoaster-tycoon.com) features batches of additional rides for free downloading, including hundreds of user-built rides.

I feel a bit like a humorless bully for picking on such a fun game, but **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON** has other annoyances. The tool for raising and lowering land and water is a total pain, and until you get it down, you'll drain your treasury trying to use it properly (How about an Undo button next time?) Also, there's just far too much window clutter, with practically every tool and item opening up a new window. Finally, there's only one game speed, meaning you'll often find yourself sitting around without much to do while waiting for time to pass—a deadly feeling.

Little Creatures

Still, **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON** is so dang eager to please, with so many great touches, it's impossible not to like. The first time you see the little patrons whooping with glee after exiting a coaster that you've built, or applauding you when you win a scenario, you'll feel it was all worth it. Even watching queasy patrons vomit brings a certain, twisted satisfaction; you feel this world you've created is alive. It's not the most macho strategy game around, but **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON** is a great little thrill ride—well worth the price of admission. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

PROS: Challenging, entertaining gameplay; great attention to detail and animators; numerous scenarios.

CONS: Cluttered interface; no editor; no campaign; some tool keys difficult to use.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 90, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 50MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: None.

Price: \$29.95
Publisher: MicroProse/Interactive
www.rollercoaster-tycoon.com



DEATHTRAP DOORUS My first custom roller coaster was this wooden right-mirre, which no one was dumb enough got on.



WINDOW HELL One of the game's big drawbacks is excessive window clutter—there's just too much going on for a window-based interface.

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WARZONE 2100 takes hard to compete with STARCRAFT and TOTAL ANNIHILATION, but its back-story is the same old postapocalyptic hoopla. Commanding a small force known simply as the Project, you venture from your underground labyrinth in search of artifacts (technologies) in a world shattered by nuclear fallout. Once a base of operations is created, you build and manage power plants, factories, and research facilities in order to supply, design, and upgrade your forces while searching for more artifacts. Long-term playability is assured through more than 400 technologies and 2,000 unit variations. Designing and building the perfect combat force is vital to surviving the deadly onslaughts of the evil Nexus, Collective, and New Paradigm regimes.

WARZONE 2100 takes place on three giant maps: Alpha (desert wastelands), Beta (diminished city), and Gamma (mountains). Each campaign map is carefully



divided into several scenarios that focus on base defense, assault, or recon missions. Each mission extends the campaign map, revealing more areas to conquer and explore. At times, the combat scenarios are repetitive, but there is a definite feeling of progression throughout the game.

The AI, for the most part, is solid. Tanks attack the enemy, and trucks repair damaged structures without requiring your constant micromanagement. Unit pathfinding improves as technologies improve. WARZONE 2100 also includes a multitasking feature in which multiple commands can be assigned to units or factories, making management easier; for example, you can dispatch a repair truck to a particular spot, use that same truck to build an oil derrick, then repair a structure somewhere else on the map.

Structures and units carry over from one scenario to the next, gaining combat ratings that range from rookie, green, veteran, and professional all the way to hero. The higher the rating, the more proficiently units move, work, and fight.

There are times, however, when the AI shows some vulnerability. Occasionally, tanks get sidetracked from reaching the battlefield. Attack formations also seem a problem; they really could have used a combat formation script similar to MYTH. Mastering the interface is no easy task, with so many mini-menus to navigate and a bazillion designs to utilize. The game gets increasingly convoluted over time, and the timed scenarios sometimes become more of a nuisance than your enemies.

The game's 3D graphics are a refreshing change from the standard 2D real-time strategy game format. However, the various camera angles and panning and zooming features sometimes impede the process of navigating the map.

All in all, WARZONE 2100 offers a unique mixture of building and combat. If you're a technical maven who enjoys customizing your forces, then this game is the one you've been waiting for.
 —Raphael Luberatore

Battleground: Chickamauga



Price: \$49.95
 Publisher: TalonSoftTake 2
www.talonsoft.com



Despite its age, the finest Civil War series ever isn't ready for euthanasia, thank you.

BATTLEGROUND: CHICKAMAUGA takes you west of the Alleghenies, where, instead of the hint of Victorian romance we always associate with Robert E. Lee, we are treated to the bare-knuckled, savage affairs of Generals Grant, Rosecrans, and Bragg. In addition to the heroics of Longstreet and Thomas at Chickamauga, we also get the Union's hard-fought victory at Murfreesboro, and a "what-if" battle that assumes Bragg failed to guess Rosecrans' movements between Murfreesboro and Chickamauga.

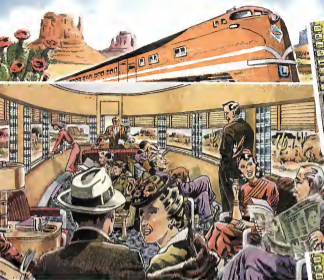
The basic Battleground system portraying these conflicts hasn't changed drastically. Like 32-bit graphics now stylistically resemble those of TalonSoft's WEST FRONT more than Charlie Kibler's earlier hand-painted Battleground maps, you may now deploy skirmishers, and there are a few common-sense changes to morale, fatigue, and defense.

The simulated situations vary in appeal: Though Murfreesboro isn't the most exciting battle, Chickamauga is particularly well balanced for multiplayer.

The new touches are evolutionary, but this game system manages well enough without a lot of innovation. If you're into the

American Civil War, you'll enjoy it. For others, you should be warned that there's probably more scholarship than excitement to be found here; this package isn't up to the level of, say, BATTLEGROUND: SHILOH.

—Am Cobb
CGW



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and melting ice caps would save havoc for the modern railroad tycoon. The United States is a watery wasteland. The Mediterranean is an empty basin with a blossoming Eden. Antarctica is a promising agricultural frontier. The heavy task of providing rail systems for this strange and exotic new world falls upon your shoulders. No doubt only the most ingenious advisors will do **ONE OF THE WONDERS OF THE WORLD!**

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Machines



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Price: \$46.99
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I've come across some really ugly game combinations in the past, but none that I wanted to see succeed as badly as this mixture of RTS and FPS. I can't count the number of times that I've cursed at my tanks in *COMMAND AND CONQUER* because they turned at the wrong time, and simultaneously thought, "If only I could have been at the helm." Unfortunately, the integration of these very different gaming styles was done so poorly in *MACHINES* that I found myself wishing that they had stuck to one and done it right.

The premise of the game is that humanity sent out robotic artificial intelligence seeding colonies in advance of the human "generation" ships that were following. The humans never arrived, and a bug in the AI code caused the original robot ships to make colonies of their own. When these empires of colonies bump into each other, the different AI's fight it out.

It's actually a pretty cool story, but instead of developing it into a truly wonderful plot-oriented campaign game, Acclaim stitched



a bunch of unrelated and illogical scenarios together, with a few new features acting as glue.

One of the most touted features has been the viewing interface, and this is where the game fails the most. None of the three settings—strategic view, ground view, and first-person view—really does the job well.

The strategic view offers a rotating, over-the-shoulder perspective that is good for selecting multiple units. But the onscreen visibility range is severely limited. You can't pan the view up very far, which severely limits the type of movement that you can effectively order. To make things even worse, you can't really see the terrain's elevation changes.

The ground view is probably the most useful of the three. With it you get to see much further into the distance and detect an enemy advance in time to do something useful; oh, well, I was able to visually spot a unit in this view long before it appeared on the strategic view or satellite map. But coordinating multiple units is difficult.

The first-person view is the most disappointing. You can jump into the cockpit of any mobile unit and control its directional movement, turret movement, and weapon fire. Sounds great, but once you go to this shooter POV you lose the satellite map, making it impossible to maintain any type of strategic control. Nor can you control multiple units anymore, making your attack a solo performance.

Buried in all this mess are a couple of gems, though. There are real micro-terrain features: small hills, shallow depressions, rainforests, trees, and other obstructions that offer localized cover from enemy fire and provide an opportunity to nullify longer-range weapons and let you "funnel" the enemy into your kill sacks.

This game combination still holds great promise, but you're better off looking for satisfaction in another title.—*Lance A. Laake*

German victories of the summer of 1941 and instead portrays the Soviets' stiffening before Moscow, thus examining how the Wehrmacht was worn down, slowed, and stopped during the infamous Russian winter.

An enlightened part of boardgame to computer, *STM* has the look and feel of SPI and Avalon Hill divisional-level games, but without the tedious paperwork for command control, morale, and supply. This convenience mostly makes up for the somewhat tricky interface and simplistic graphics.

The game's nine scenarios cover the period from October to December of 1941, with some fighting in 1942. The gameplay is so straightforward that any board wargame aficionado will be right at home. Optional rules add spice with fog-of-war and advanced combat postures; there's also a scenario editor. The AI is reasonably tough, and *STM* works very well for small play against another human general.

STM provides a solid, well-researched, and pretty enjoyable game with a lot of replay value. Even so, the DOS clunkiness of its engine is starting to catch up to Schwepunkt, which should consider a move to Windows 95/98. Otherwise, this little company risks being buried by the avalanche of scenarios found in high-test games like *THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR*.

—*Jim Cobb* **CGW**

Smolensk to Moscow



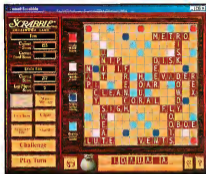
Publisher: Schwepunkt
Price: \$39.95
www.gbg.com.com/schwepunkt

Schwepunkt continues its series of little-known World War II battles with *SMOLENSK TO MOSCOW* (*STM*). Once again, we're in the Eastern Front of WWII; fortunately, the designer skips the easy



Step Into My Parlor

Bit-Mapped Tiles, Darts, and Salvos Bring Back Turn-Based Classics



Email Scrabble

★★★★☆

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Price: \$14.95

www.hasbro.com

Scrabble, the classic word-building game, is ideally suited to the play-by-email format. A fatal bug, however, prevents you from exchanging your tiles. Face it: When you've got X, Z, Q, J, F, M, and D, you really don't have much choice but to chuck it all into the bag and redraw; not being able to do that is a serious drawback.

On the plus side, EMAIL SCRABBLE is simple to install and quite easy to play, whether or not you're familiar with the board game. SCRABBLE clans are rapidly forming over in CGW's sales department, and even jaded editors have become hooked. Heck, some of us are even playing this game with our moms (but don't tell anybody).

While it lacks some of the chrome (sexier graphics, more robust dictionary, and so forth) of the bigger-budget SCRABBLE of a year ago, EMAIL SCRABBLE is aggressively priced and quite addictive. This is one email application we really like.—Tom Price

Elite Darts

★★★★☆

Publisher: Patch Products
Price: \$20.00

www.patchproducts.com

Welcome to CGW's Department of Crow Eating. Having taken an admittedly cheap shot at ELITE DARTS in my Greenspeak column last month—without ever having played the game—I felt it was my cosmic duty to take a higher road this month, be a professional, and actually play the game before reviewing it. And, yeah, for what it is, ELITE DARTS is actually really good.

ELITE DARTS is a surprisingly feature-rich darts simulation made by people who take their darts seriously. It offers three classic games—Cricket, 01, and Basaball—that you can play against up to three computer opponents or in multiplayer mode over a LAN or the Internet. ELITE DARTS smartly includes the games' most common rules variations, allowing you to customize play and scoring to the way you're used to playing in real life. For example, my real-life favorite is "Inverse Cricket," so I was thrilled to see it here

You can choose from five types of darts and four locations and boards. Computer opponents can be scaled from three levels of difficulty and can be mixed within one match—letting you play a match against two amateurs and one pro, for example.

The dart throwing itself is most akin to a golf simulation. A transparent arm appears on screen, you aim with the mouse and then throw by thrusting the mouse forward. The speed of your mouse movement determines the velocity of the dart. It'll take a couple of games to get the feel down, but once you do, the play is natural and pretty dead-on.

If this appeals to you, then ELITE DARTS is about as faithful and accurate a darts sim as you could ever hope for, minus the drunken morons walking in front of the board as you throw—the game's only serious omission.—Jeff Green



splashing sound. This game misses by a mile.

Which is a shame. First let me say that I have no problem with the game of Battleship itself. I wasted many a prepubescent afternoon on the shag carpet yelling out "You sank my battleship!" at one cousin or another. The game is a good way to waste a half hour. Battleship by email, however, is a bad way to waste a few weeks.

Worse, EMAIL BATTLESHIP can be a bit buggy. Unfortunately, I too often received "application not found" errors while trying to open the email attachment and was forced to detach the attachment and run the program in order to play my move.

It's CGW policy to finish every game we review, but EMAIL BATTLESHIP is so mind-numbingly tedious that after two weeks and only one sinken ship, I decided to give up. There's not enough strategy or planning inherent to the game to keep it interesting or compelling over that period of time.—Tom Price **CGW**

Email Battleship

★★★★☆

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive
Price: \$14.95

www.hasbro.com

In the traditional Battleship boardgame, each turn can result in a hit (which is signified by a

tinny "kaboom" sound in the old battery-powered version of the game) or a miss (creating a corresponding "splash" sound effect). Playing the game EMAIL BATTLESHIP by Hasbro conjured a sound in my head—a huge



Clans

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PC CD-ROM

Civilization: Call to Power

Excerpts From Brady Publishing's *Civilization: Call to Power—The Official Strategy Guide*

Whether you wish to conquer the world in the manner of Alexander the Great or just build a peaceful empire, it's inevitable that you are going to have to fight a war at some point during *CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER*—and not always at a time and place of your own choosing. Therefore, the first question you should ask yourself is, "What is my strategic goal in this particular game?" The second question, which follows from this, is, "Can I afford to undertake my chosen goal?" What newscast to *CALL TO POWER* often fail to ask is, "Can I afford not to undertake my chosen goal?" Worse, still, they have no goal at all.

by Terry Coleman and Johnny Wilson

One thing we can assure you, however, if you simply go along, letting the game play you, instead of you playing the game, your civilization will be left in the dustbin of history. Therefore, whenever you are faced with the possibility of military conflict, ask yourself:

1. Does the potential enemy pose an immediate threat to the well-being of my empire?
2. Will this fight last a long, protracted war?
3. Why am I going to war?
4. How much can I afford to lose?
5. Will this war help me win the game?

At the risk of sounding cynical, we tend to go to war when it is most practical to do so. For the Alexander the Great-style player, this might be 90 percent of the time (yet you still don't want a war forced on you before you're ready). Even if you're a player whose style is better suited to economics and production, you'll eventually reach a point at which you're entangled in a "World War" that continues over a long number of turns. In either case, you are going to have to decide whether (a) crippling your opponents is enough (b) you should take an opponent entirely out of the game, or (c) you can derive a lasting advantage without expending as much effort.

See the Review

THIS ISSUE ON PAGE 145 • 33 STARS

CONCERNING THE ART OF COMBAT

When you attempt to enter the space of an enemy piece, combat occurs. Combat in open terrain is fairly simple, because you can make a rough estimate of your chances in a given combat by comparing the attack value (of the unit moving into the space) with the defense value (of the unit already in the space). Combat percentages are always figured from the attacker's point of view, as follows:

Attacker value divided by (Attacker value + Defender value) = Chance of a Hit

If the Attacker makes his Chance to Hit, he scores a single Hit on the Defender, who loses one Hit Point. If the Attacker misses his Chance to Hit, he loses a Hit Point. This continues until either the Attacker or the Defender has lost 10 Hit Points and is eliminated.

UNIT COMBAT MODIFIERS

Unit Condition	Combat Effect
At War status	Normal
On Alert	+12 percent
Standing Down	-25 percent
Fortified	+50 percent
Unit has 2/3 of a movement point left	-33 percent
Unit has 1/3 of a movement point left	-67 percent
Veteran unit	+50 percent

MULTIPLICITY OF WONDERS

Here are our favorite Wonders of the World for multiplayer games:

Wonder	Why to Build It
East India Company	Often better than in a solo game, as there's usually more trade between Humans.
Eden Project	One of your aggressive buddies will be a polluter noisepail.
Edison's Lab	Not as good as the Internet, but still helps your research efforts.
Forbidden City	Shuts off information to your enemies; drives 'em nuts.
Hagia Sophia	The multiplayer game without a <i>Thriving Theocracy</i> is rare indeed.
Internet	Almost guaranteed to keep you in a multiplayer game.
London Stock Exchange	Being more cost-efficient than fewer Humans is a key to winning.
Philosopher's Stone	It's more important to know what a Human is thinking than an AI.
Sphinx	As combat-happy as most games are, this gives you peace of mind.
Stonehenge	Grow fast, grow strong, below your neighbor does.

Legion Versus Phalanx

A Phalanx, with a defense strength value of 2, defends in Plains (whether or not the Plains space has a road, it's still considered open terrain). Assume that a Legion, with an assault strength value of 2, attacks the Phalanx. The odds are even, which you'll expect from two units with the same value. But let's go through the process anyway:

The Legion Attack is 2; the Phalanx Defense is 2.

2 (attack value) divided by (2 (attack value) + 2 (defense value)) = Chance for the Attacking Legion to Hit the Defending Phalanx.

2 divided by (4) = 1/2, or a 50 percent Chance to Hit for the Legion against the Phalanx.

At this point, the computer program would generate a random number from 1 to 100, much like rolling a pair of 10-sided percentile dice. If the number in this case came up as, say, 43, then the Legion would have made its Hit Chance and would inflict a hit on the Phalanx. If the random number was anything from 51 to 99, then the Legion would have failed its Hit Chance and would take a hit itself. The process repeats until one of the units loses 10 Hit Points and is eliminated.

Keep in mind that all units on At War status have a full allotment of 10 Hit Points. Units that are Standing Down, however, can have no more than 75 percent of their normal Hit Points, making them brittle in combat.

CONCERNING RANGED ATTACKS

Ranged combat is new to the *CIVILIZATION* series, but it's not terribly complicated when compared to other strategy games—just different.

1. Basically, all units with a Ranged Attack (Archers, Musketeers, and so forth) are placed in the "back row" of each side, as long as they have normal land combat units (Marines, Phalanxes, and the like) in front of them, in the "front row."

2. When combat begins, the attacker's Ranged Units fire on defending enemy units in the front row, and the defenders do likewise at the attackers in the front row. The combat is resolved similarly to the usual fashion, except that:

- Each back-row unit attacks with its Ranged Attack value;
- Each Ranged Unit attacks, or "fires," 10 times (with arrows, musket balls, whatever);
- Anything that would normally count as a Hit to the Ranged Attacker has no effect (since they are firing from too great a distance for opposing units with nonranged weapons to really hit them);
- Next, the front-row troops conduct combat as normal.

4. This continues until all front-row troops of one side are eliminated. Then, the Ranged Units of that side must move up to the front row and use their normal (non-Ranged Attack) values; now that they are in the front row, they may be fired upon by enemy units in the second row using their Ranged Attack).

5. Combat continues until all units of one side are eliminated.

Land Combat Versus Ranged Combat

Two Roman Knights (red) and a Legion attack a group of three Greek Phalanxes and one Archer on a hill.

1. Even though the Greeks are the defenders overall, the Archer still gets to "attack" the Romans by using its Ranged Attack value.

2. The Archer opens fire on one of the two Knight units, firing 10 times:

(Archer Ranged Attack of 3) divided by (Archer Ranged Defense of 3) + Knight Defense of 3) 3 divided by (3+3) 3 divided by 6 = 1/2, or 50 percent.

In this example, the Archer does slightly less than the average damage, scoring 4 hits on the Knight.

3. The fresh Knight (which took no hits) defeats the opposing Phalanx, but loses 8 Hit Points.

4. The other Knight, damaged by the Archer, loses to its opposing Phalanx.

5. The Legion loses a close battle to its opposing Phalanx.

6. Outnumbered, the Knight takes 5 hits from the Archer's Ranged Combat and is easily dispatched by the Phalanx.

It should be noted that without the Archer, the Knights would probably have had enough firepower to take out the Phalanxes.



EAST INDIA CALLS TO YOU Since humans trade more, on average, than AI civilizations, you should consider building the East India Company wonder.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

In *CIVILIZATION: CALL TO POWER*, you deal with 12 forms of government. Each has different effects on Growth, Production, Science, Gold, and Military support. In addition, each governmental form has a maximum percentage of Gold that can be spent on Science... in any given turn. As a result, each of the following forms of government has an appropriate point at which it can be used most efficiently for your strategy.

Anarchy: This gives you only one-tenth of the amount usually provided for Science and three-quarters of the amount usually garnered in Gold. The most inefficient form, but a necessary evil to make the transition to more advanced governments.

Communism: Assumes that the central planning mechanism of a totalitarian regime can be very efficient in the short run, but forces you to pay the price in Pollution. By using the 1.75x multiplier for Production and 2x multiplier for Science, you can develop your industrial base rather quickly. Of course, your citizens will be checking on their own soot.

Corporate Republic: A fictional form of government designed for a totalitarian regime can be very efficient in the short run, but forces you to pay the price in Pollution. By using the 1.75x multiplier for Production and 2x multiplier for Science, you can develop your industrial base rather quickly. Of course, your citizens will be checking on their own soot.

CALL TO POWER: It's superior to Democracy, Monarchy, Republic, Theocracy, and Tyranny in terms of its impact on your local (Gold) and Industrial (Production) status.

Democracy: The leader of a Democracy can assign 10 percent more Gold to the advancement of Science (70 percent as opposed to 60 percent), which represents a significant edge over your opponents as you move through the technology tree. On the downside, the possibilities of unrest during wartime make Democracy a poor proposition for gamers who prefer to conquer above all else.

Ecotopia: An ideal government for those who wish to prosecute an efficient war. It is particularly effective when you wish to attack heavy polluters.

Fascism: Is the ideal governmental form for prosecuting a war prior to the advent of Ecotopia. There are no major disadvantages for the conqueror unless you happen to build so many Fascist units that you take a significant force reduction when you change to Ecotopia or a more advanced government later in the game.

Monarchy: The slight bonuses for Science and Production gained by this government during the early portion of the game are far outweighed by those of other forms of government as the midgame approaches. Note also that the larger the empire, the less efficient the Monarchy becomes. As your empire grows, don't hesitate to change to a new form of government.

Republic: The most efficient form of government for a medium-sized civilization. It offers you across-the-board bonuses to the Science, Gold, and Production modifiers. It also has the least downside of any government until you are able to establish a Democracy.

Technocracy: Though inhumane, this is a useful form of government, since it has the highest Production modifier in *CALL TO POWER*. It is definitely the form of government to use when you're falling behind and you need to pump up production in a hurry with no distinct downside.

Theocracy: A relatively efficient form of government, but one that doesn't pay dividends as big as some of the later governments; still, the Cleric attack could become a big income producer for your government. This is a very nice form in the early portion of the game for someone who prefers to build rather than conquer.

Tyranny: The baseline government for *CALL TO POWER*, with no advantageous modifiers. When it is possible to move on, we advise you to change governments out of Tyranny as quickly as possible.

Virtual Democracy: A highly ideal and futuristic version of pure democracy. It is the best government for making progress in science. If you're headed for the Wormhole Sensor and Alien Synthesis Project ending, this is the government you'll need for success.

Continued on Page 178

Heroes of Might & Magic III

Build Strongholds, Augment Spells, and Rule Erathia in No Time

Even given the excellence of the entire series, HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III still stands out, with eight castle types to choose from, 16 different types of heroes to play, over 100 creatures to command, and a detailed magic system to master. In a game with so many options, it can't hurt to get a few pointers, especially if you're facing a bully like CGW Features Editor Denny Atkin, who is just begging to be beaten. With that in mind...

by Elliott Chin

THE ABCS OF COMBAT

Need for Speed

Nothing spells victory like initiative. If you can move first in battle, you can draw first blood and cast the first spells. Being first thus means having a great advantage. Try to ensure that you have at least one stack in your army that has speed 9 or higher. Also, make sure your ranged units are faster than the enemy's ranged units. If your ranged units aren't faster, then take the opportunity to cast Haste or Prayer on them to speed them up. It's important that you attack with your ranged troops before spells or faster ranged units cut down their numbers.

Morale and Luck

These two factors are very important to any tactical battle. Good morale allows your troops to attack again, while good luck means your unit deals double damage. Conversely, bad morale paralyzes your unit for that round. Never mix more than two types of creatures from a town, because that lowers morale. Try to get the Leadership skill for your heroes: it adds +1 to +3 to your units' morale. Still, keep in mind that morale can never go higher than +3. Similarly, you should try to acquire the aptly named Luck skill.

Heroes

Be mindful of the fact that heroes add their attack and defense to their attendant troops. Thus, although the goblins and the gnomes have very similar statistics, when matched against each other, the goblin will be twice as effective if it's commanded by a barbarian (+4 attack) and the gnomes is commanded by an alchemist (+0 attack). As in previous HEROES games, you want to create a killer superior and have him initiate the majority of your offensive strikes.



IT MIGHT BE MAGIC

All magic: In HEROES III falls under four elemental schools: Air, Earth, Fire, and Water. Every hero's command of magic is dependent on whether he chooses to learn the Air, Earth, Fire, and Water skills. Each skill allows the hero to cast spells in that school at greater effectiveness. In addition, having the matching skill will make all spells in that school cheaper to cast. While you can still cast a spell even if you don't have the appropriate skill, it would behoove you to learn that skill as quickly as possible for both the increased effect and lowered cost. Here is a rundown of each school's pros and cons.

Air: This school has excellent movement spells for the adventure (strategic) map. Both Fly and Dimension Door are excellent for moving around the map, and the latter practically implies your move. If you master Air magic, you can cast Dimension Door four times a day. The Air school has two potent attack spells—Lightning Bolt and Chain Lightning—but few other direct damage spells. The all-important Haste spell—a must-have for slow troops—is an Air spell.

Earth: This school has not only the effective Meteor Storm spell but also the most powerful offensive spell in the game: Implosion. In addition, the very useful Town Portal spell belongs to this school. If you master Earth magic, you can specify the town to which you want to teleport.

Otherwise, you teleport to the nearest town without an occupying hero. The undead spells (Animate Dead, Death Ripple, Destroy Undead) all belong to the Earth school.

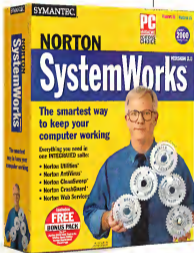
Fire: Fire is a heavy on offensive magic, with spells such as Fireball, Inferno, and Armageddon. However, this school has neither a spell quite as destructive as Implosion nor one so far-reaching as Chain Lightning. This school does have some interesting augmentation magic, such as Bloodlust (increases attack rating) and Frenzy (adds all defense points to your attack rating). However, Fire is probably the weakest of the game's schools.

Water: The Water school has many powerful augmentation spells, including Bless (maximum damage), Mirth (increase morale), Teleport (move anywhere on the map), and Prayer (increase attack, defense, and speed). This school lacks effective attack magic, but is the best for enhancing your troops in battle.



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CHOOSING YOUR TOWN

If you are going to play one of the more expensive town types—tower, castle, or dungeon—always take the bonus for extra resources. Likewise with the rampart—even though it's cheaper—because you need the extra crystal to build the Pegasus dwelling.

Castle Town

The game's strongest town, the castle has excellent units throughout the tech tree. Upgrade your archers and swordsmen early and you will have arguably the game's best early-level ranged unit and the best mid-level melee attacker, respectively.



THE FORTRESS It has a serious lack of might and magic, and requires more wood for building dwellings than any other town type.

Dungeon Town

The dungeon has average-strength early units, but from levels three to seven it has very powerful creatures (with the exception of the sixth-level manticores). Having two strong ranged attackers in the midgame (levels three and four) gives you incredible firepower and allows you to pick off the slower troops of the tower, rampart, and inferno towns. Add in the fifth-level minotaur, which is as strong as several sixth-level troops, and you have the only midgame army that might be better than the castle's. This town provides excellent magic.

Fortress Town

This town is the weakest in the game. It has a barely average first-level unit. Its second-level unit, the boardman, is the game's weakest ranged attacker. Add to that a fatal lack of strength and staying power for its sixth- and seventh-level units, and you have a town that one's really stand toe-to-toe with any other. The only highlights are the gorgon and basilisk, although they are most effective in large numbers. This town is also incredibly weak in magic. To add insult to injury, the fortress town needs an exorbitant amount of wood, so you'll need at least three wood mills.



THE DUNGEON Although the castle town is the strongest, this dungeon formation can best an army of like-level castle troops.

Inferno Town

Although the inferno is stronger than the fortress town, all inferno units (except for the seventh-level devil) are pretty slow. In addition, most inferno units lack significant upgrades. Creature-wise, this town loses out to most others, and its only saving grace is having powerful magic.

and then behemoths or go for ranged units and the orc, then the eagle, and finally the cyclops. The stronghold's creations have low hit points and defense, but you'll have high attack, so go on the offensive early. The town is also very weak in magic.

Necropolis

This town is schizophrenic. Itsliches, knights, and upgraded vampire lord are extremely powerful, but the second-, third-, and seventh-level creatures are extremely weak. If you do play this town, scramble up the tech tree to get the three good units and bypass the third-level wizard, which you never need to build.



THE STRONGHOLD Build a wall pen, a roc's nest, and finally the behemoth bar to gain the mighty behemoth unit in only three turns.

Rampart

This town has very slow creatures, so it is imperative that you get the Pegasus unit early to have a chance at gaining initiative in battles. Make sure to upgrade the elven archers to grand elves, which enables them to shoot twice.

Stronghold

The stronghold has some powerful melee units but lacks any ranged strength for much of the game, mostly because the path to the cyclops is so expensive. This town has two very distinct building tricks. You can either climb up the tech tree and go for wolf riders, then rocs,

Tower

The tower is the most expensive town in terms of unit cost and building dependencies. The first two units (greenin and garryle) are pretty weak, especially when you factor in the physical weakness of this town's heroes. However, the tower is very strong in magic. If you go with the tower, you need magic to bolster your troops, and you must go for the naga queens and stiras as fast as possible. The town's creatures are all slow, which is yet another disadvantage in combat. **GMW**



ONLINE

For more on using HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III, visit GameSpot's www.gamespot.com and download the nearly 200-page HEROES III game guide.

See the Review 100 ISSUE • 4.5 STARS



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JENSEN

BARBARIANS AT THE GATE

Barbarians are the embodiment of chaos theory in CALL TO POWER. Here are a few ways to impose order on the madness:

1. You know those villages that you always swear over entering, because you don't know whether they hold the promise of shiny new gold, a welcome technological advance, or the threat of a Barbarian horde? Wait to explore those close to your empire until you've built a city near them. A village within your city limits (the two-space radius) won't spawn a Barbarian.

2. A corollary to this is that the CALL TO POWER program doesn't like to give you the same village result within the same turn. So, consider exploring three to four outlying villages on the same turn. While you might get a Barbarian, you are almost certain to get a free advance.

3. Also, keep in mind that there's about a 50-50 chance that the free advance you discover will be the one you are already researching. So, you



might take a chance and bump down your science output during this turn, until you see what gifts you get.

4. If a Barbarian should capture one of your cities, consider building a trade route to it before you recapture the city. You'll make money in the short term, and it's a good step toward a monopoly in many cases.

5. If a Barbarian is making progress against another empire, send a Spy or Cyber Ninja to shadow the Barbarian. If the Barbarian gets lucky and captures an enemy city, you can loote Revolution and grab the city without starting a war with the former owner of that city. Your action will cause that nation to drop one happiness level toward you, but this negative effect is well worth it to gain a city. Also, this action does not cause any adverse effect on your reputation vis-à-vis other countries, besides the one on which you pulled this wicked trick.

SOLVING THE HAPPINESS PROBLEM

Improvement	Cost	Direct Happiness Effect	Indirect Happiness Effect
Capital	Stone Working + 405	Slight Increase	Lowers Crime
Temple	Religion + 270	+2	N/A
Courthouse	Jurisprudence + 270	N/A	-50% Crime
Theater	Philosophy + 495	+1 ¹	N/A
Coliseum	Engineering + 1,305	+2	N/A
Hospital	Medicine + 2,250	N/A	-3 Overcrowding
Cathedral	Prosperity + 2,475	3 ²	N/A
Movie Palace	Electrification + 1,500	N/A	-100% War Discontent
Drug Store	Pharmaceuticals + 3,000	+3 ³	N/A
Security Monitor	AI Surveillance + 4,000	N/A	-50% Crime ⁴
Water Filter	Fuel Cells + 8,000	N/A	-5 Overcrowding
Archaeology	Archaeology + 5,000	N/A	-4 Overcrowding
House of Freezing	Cyronics + 5,000	0 ⁵	N/A
Mind Controller	Mind Control + 10,000	75 ⁶	Special Defense ⁷
Body Exchange	Life Extension + 10,000	+3	N/A

Notes:

1. Defines the effectiveness of Entertainment by providing a permanent venue.
2. +5 in a Theocracy because of least in faith, +1 in Communism because religion is the opiate of the masses.
3. +25 Production units per turn because increased health means more reliable war hours.
4. -60 percent Pollution and +25 percent Production.
5. +5 Happiness in a Theocracy because citizens can "die" and have their taste of heaven and then come back to life.
6. Raises Happiness Quotient at a very fast 75.
7. 50 percent chance to prevent Great City attack and 100 percent chance to prevent Capture Slaves attack.

WOLFPACK ATTACK

Given that Subs can be seen only by a handful of units (and Cities with Sonar Boats), they can wreak havoc on your Aircraft Carriers and even your Battleships if left uncheked. The classic method is to seek them out with Destroyers and sink them with a combination of Destroyers and Aircraft.

So, what do you do when you want your Subs to send your opponent's tonnage to the bottom of the ocean? During World War II, the Germans developed the tactic of sending large groups of Subs, called Wolfpacks, to overwhelm unsuspecting prey. It's a little more difficult to manage this in CALL TO POWER, but the idea is still valid. The best method we've found is to put



together a Wolfpack of four or more Subs

and hold them off a couple of spaces. Then, send out one or two other solo Subs to try to break through the "packet line" of Destroyers that's spread out, trying to protect the valuable Carriers and Battleships. If the solo Subs get through, fine—but chances are good that at least one of them will be detected. The computer is not terribly disciplined, and it will often break up its Destroyer packet line to converge on your Sub and kill it. This generally opens up a hole for you to plunge through with your Wolfpack and haul straight for the plucifer enemy targets.



• Most units with Ranged Attacks are much more effective in the second row than in the first. So, make sure that you have a balanced force, with plenty of front line troops to protect your Ranged Attack units. A good example of this would be to have only half as many Archers, for example, as you have Legions, Samurai, and/or Phalanxes combined in a particular force.

• Normally units controlled by a computer player are less likely to attack when they have less than a movement point remaining (if they have been moving down a road, for example). If you move to where your unit is at the far end of the computer unit's movement range (such as just alongside, but not on a road) the computer's unit is likely to move next to you, but not attack you at unfavorable odds. This allows you to attack the defending computer unit on your next turn or to reinforce with other units if the odds are unfavorable for you.

• Keep track of your opponent's aircraft: Some of them are almost certainly operating at the farthest range of which they are capable. In such a case, all you have to do is place a row of Air units between them and their refueling base. When the enemy Air units can't get home, they crash—quick, simple, and deadly. Remember, there are no aerial zones of control, so your aerial blockade must consist of a solid line of aircraft, with no holes. When executing this tactic, Terry especially likes using obsolete aircraft. **CGW**

This completes CALL TO POWER guide, has tips on how to conduct blitz attacks, set up mobile defenses, and carry out a Clarion or Talon night raids. It also discusses wonders, explains technology advances, and suggests the best times to switch governments. Besides, the guide confirms our suspicions that Terry and Johnny are exactly Best-foresights at heart.



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Railroad Tycoon II

Here's a dirty tactic:

Lay a dike of track that crosses a competitor's layout as much as possible, build a dummy station with a roundhouse and water towers, and then run a train with the maximum number of cars. Run two trains, if you like, in order to thoroughly clog the opposition's rail net.



Keep in mind,

especially on longer runs, that if your train's oil level is one notch above empty, the chance for a breakdown doubles.

Never underestimate

the economic power of renewable resources: A well-placed cluster of cattle yards will produce enormous quantities of milk and woolah. —Sam Baker

Heroes of Might and Magic III



During play, press **F6** and then enter any of the following:

Code	Effect
<code>swcstblock</code>	all siege weapons
<code>swcvertigoeyes</code>	all structures
<code>swccastleathru</code>	randoms lock
<code>swccocounts</code>	unlimited movement
<code>swcgenalldirections</code>	entire map is revealed
<code>swcaxchrejoicing</code>	maximum morale
<code>swchrubbery</code>	+100 all resources and +10,000 gold

West Front

In scenarios

where you cut units off the map, you should resist the urge to slaughter the enemy and hold all victory bases. Try grabbing one or two bases close to the exit and letting the enemy batter himself against your rear guard while you hustle the bulk of your force off the battlefield. Empty tracks are fine candidates for cheap victory points.



Air strikes

generally don't come when you need them, and it's almost guaranteed that they won't hit the targets you specify. So, rather than whine about it, point the Jaboys in the general direction of a target-rich environment and let them have some fun. —Jim Cobb

TIPS

CHEAT CODES • HINTS • WALKTHROUGHS

SIMULATIONS/SPACE

X-Wing Alliance



Type `mecheater` to activate cheat mode, then enter any of the following:

Code	Effect
<code>evokosule</code>	invulnerable
<code>masteroda</code>	unlimited ammo
<code>killmore</code>	lose the level
<code>detastefactory</code>	win the level
<code>hyperstealt</code>	swap to different level, where ## is the number of the level

ADVENTURE/RPG

EverQuest

In early-level play, never go into combat without first considering your opponent. Either select **Kill** or right-click on the targeted enemy. Opponents that show up as blue are easy targets, but they still give you needed experience. Opponents with colors below blue on



the scale, like black or green, aren't worth your time. While you can try your luck with yellow enemies, you should get another party member to help you. Finally, never fight an enemy that shows up as either white or red, unless you have an army with you—or you're feeling suicidal. —Thierry Nguyen

ACTION

Army Men 2

Enter message mode by pressing **1** and then type `when all else fails...` (including the `_`) to enable cheat mode. Finally, enter one of the codes below to activate a cheat.



Code	Item Gained
<code>acme jets</code>	land mines
<code>illuminant ball</code>	flak jacket
<code>ibesultful night</code>	infinite sniper rifle
<code>hour of glory</code>	M-80
<code>ign of gambles</code>	random item, sometimes infinite
<code>ignoreset</code>	12 free air strikes
<code>ignoreset invasions</code>	explosives
<code>it have a rock</code>	infinite hand grenades
<code>too rocket launcher</code>	infinite rocket launcher
<code>ignorerolls</code>	panzerscrews
<code>trouch spray</code>	infinite venosol spray
<code>truly ray</code>	infinite augergrubing glass
<code>twiggie people</code>	infinite flamethrower

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TOP 100

CGW'S MONTHLY READERS' POLL

Each month, 2,000 CGW subscribers are selected at random to rate 100 computer games. The results of that poll are combined with the results of previous months to yield a cumulative average for the best plays in gaming. If you receive a ballot, please return it with your ratings so that other gamers and game publishers can benefit from your feedback.



TOP ACTION GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Half-Life Sierra	9.24	5
2	2	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II LucasArts	8.44	4.5
3	3	Quake II Activision	8.42	4.5
4	5	Thief: The Dark Project idgs	8.40	4.5
5	7	Quake Pack 1: Annihilation id Software/Rascal	8.39	4.5
6	4	Quake Pack 2: Dissolution id Software/Rascal	8.38	5
7	8	Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith LucasArts	8.23	4
8	10	Rainbow Six: Eaglewatch Red Storm	8.15	4.5
9	—	Shogun: Mobile Armor Division Monolith	8.14	3.5
10	9	Unreal GI Interactive	8.10	4



TOP ADVENTURE GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Grim Fandango LucasArts	8.74	4.5
2	2	Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	8.16	5
3	3	Saints Row ASC Games	7.90	4.5
4	4	Zork: Grand Inquisitor Activision	7.61	N/A
5	5	Tolson's Odyssey Atavism	7.60	5
6	6	Blade Runner Virgin/Westwood	7.53	4.5
7	8	Lost Express Red Orb	7.37	4.5
8	—	King's Quest: Mask of Eternity Sierra	7.20	4
9	9	Iris Murphy: Overseas Access	7.15	3
10	—	Quest for Glory V Sierra	7.08	2.5



TOP CLASSIC/PUZZLE GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	2	You Don't Know Jack 3 Berkeley Systems	7.93	4
2	4	Smart Games Challenge 2 Smart Games Inc.	7.90	5
3	3	You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems	7.80	4
4	7	Smart Games Challenge 3 Smart Games/Neuro	7.64	4
5	5	Warms 2 Microphone	7.75	4
6	6	You Don't Know Jack TV Berkeley Systems	7.66	2.5
7	8	Shanghai Dynasty Activision	7.26	3
8	9	Love Your Marbles Seajoshi	6.82	4.5
9	10	Creatures II Mindscape	6.56	2.5
10	—	Jeopardy! Hasbro	6.17	3.5



TOP SIMULATION/SPACE COMBAT

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Wing Commander: Prophecy Gold Origin	8.51	4
2	3	Longbow 2 EA/Gale's	8.41	5
3	2	Falcon 4.0 MicroProse/Halbro	8.26	3.5
4	5	Wing Commander: Prophecy Origin	8.26	4.5
5	4	European Air War MicroProse	8.20	4
6	6	F-15 EA/Origin	8.14	4.5
7	7	WWII Fighters EA/Gale's	7.97	4.5
8	—	Starship Troopers EA/Gale's	7.94	4.5
9	—	Forever: Silent Threat Origin	7.81	3
10	8	Independence War Intergalactic/Ocean	7.77	5



TOP SPORTS/RACING GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	—	FIFA 99 EA Sports	9.21	4.5
2	1	NHL Hockey 99 EA Sports	9.12	5
3	2	Links LS 1999 Access Software	8.90	4.5
4	3	NHL 98 EA Sports	8.53	4
5	4	World Cup 98 EA Sports	8.50	4.5
6	6	FIFA Road to World Cup 98 EA Sports	8.35	4.5
7	5	Need for Speed III EA	8.34	5
8	7	NBA Live 98 EA Sports	8.18	4.5
9	9	Motocross Madness Microsoft	8.05	4.5
10	8	NFL Blitz Midway	8.03	3.5



TOP STRATEGY GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	1	StarCraft: Brood War Blizzard	8.29	5
2	2	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty 3DDNew World	8.05	5
3	3	StarCraft Blizzard	8.06	5
4	4	Total Annihilation: Core Conspiracy Cavedog	8.03	4.5
5	5	Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics Cavedog	8.46	3.5
6	—	SinCity 3000 ModBTA	8.20	4
7	6	Total Annihilation GI Interactive	8.19	4.5
8	3	Red Alert: Counterstrike Virgin/Westwood	8.09	4
9	8	Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft	8.04	4
10	7	Railroad Tycoon II Gathering of Developers	8.03	4.5



TOP ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	1	Baldur's Gate Interplay	8.72	4
2	2	Night and Magic VI 3DDNew World	8.71	4.5
3	4	Fallout Interplay	8.27	4.5
4	3	Fallout 2 Interplay	8.21	4
5	3	Final Fantasy VII Eidos/Squaresoft	7.98	4
6	6	Hellfire Sierra	7.81	4
7	7	Return to Knossos Sierra Studios	7.00	2.5
8	8	Dark Earth MicroProse	6.63	3.5
9	9	Shadows Over Riva Sin-Tech	6.60	N/A
10	—	Lords of Lore II Westwood	6.16	N/A



TOP WARGAMES

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME/PUBLISHER	SCORE	RATING
1	2	Steel Panthers II Campaign Clok SS	8.25	4.5
2	1	West Front TolonSoft	8.22	4
3	3	Primer General II SS	8.17	5
4	4	The Operational Art of War TolonSoft	8.13	4.5
5	5	Sie Meier's Gettysburg EA/Texas	7.95	4.5
6	7	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia TolonSoft	7.79	4.5
7	6	Battleground: Bull Run TolonSoft	7.78	4
8	8	People's General SS	7.60	3
9	9	Great Battles of Julius Caesar Interactive/Magic	7.39	4
10	—	Close Combat: A Bridge Too Far Access/Microsoft	7.19	4.5

Games on unnumbered lines are tied with game on line above. ★ = Top game of genre. Red = New Game, AD = Adventure, RP = Role-Playing, SI = Simulation/Sport, Combat, ST = Strategy, WG = Wargame, AC = Action, SP = Sports, CP = Classic/Puzzle. Games are retired after two years and become eligible for the Hall of Fame.

YR	LAST	RANK	GAME	GENRE	POP. SCORE	IGN. RATING
NO.	MO.	ADJ.	ADJUSTED	GENRE	SCORE	IGN. RATING
★	1	3	StarCraft: Brood War Blizzard	ST	9.29	5
★	2	2	Half-Life Sierra	AC	9.26	5
★	3	—	FIFA 99 EA Sports	SP	9.21	4.5
★	4	1	NHL Hockey 99 Sports	SP	9.12	5
★	5	4	Links LS 1999 Access Software	SP	8.99	4.5
★	6	7	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty 3DO/New World	ST	8.89	5
★	7	8	StarCraft Blizzard	ST	8.76	5
★	8	6	Grim Fandango LucasArts	AD	8.74	4.5
★	9	11	Total Annihilation: Core Contingency Coverdog	ST	8.73	4.5
★	10	5	Baldur's Gate Interplay	RP	8.72	4
★	11	10	Might and Magic VI 3DO/New World	RP	8.71	4.5
★	12	12	NHL 98 EA Sports	SP	8.53	4
★	13	9	Wing Commander: Prophecy Gold Origin	SI	8.51	4
★	14	13	World Cup 98 EA Sports	SP	8.50	4.5
★	15	17	Total Annihilation: Beetle Tactics Coverdog	ST	8.46	3.5
★	16	14	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II LucasArts	AC	8.44	4.5
★	17	15	Quake II Activision	AC	8.42	4.5
★	18	19	Largrow 2 EA/Activision	SI	8.41	5
★	19	19	Theft: The Dark Project Eidos	AC	8.40	4.5
★	20	22	Quake Pook 1: Amalgam of Software/Real3D	AC	8.39	4.5
★	21	17	Quake Pook 2: Dissolution of Software/Rogue	AC	8.38	5
★	22	29	FIFA Road to World Cup 98 EA Sports	SP	8.35	4.5
★	23	23	Need for Speed III EA	SP	8.34	5
★	24	26	Fallout Interplay	RP	8.27	4.5
★	25	16	Falcon 4.0 MicroProse/Hasbro	SI	8.26	3.5
★	26	28	Steel Panthers II Campaign DiskSSI	WG	8.25	4.5
★	27	31	Wing Commander: Prophecy Origin	SI	8.24	4.5
★	28	29	Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith LucasArts	AC	8.23	4
★	29	27	West Front TitanSoft	WG	8.22	4
★	30	24	Fallout 2 Interplay	RP	8.21	4
★	31	—	SimCity 3000 Mac/EA	ST	8.20	4
★	—	25	European Air War MicroProse	SI	8.20	4
★	32	32	Total Annihilation GT Interactive	ST	8.19	4.5
★	34	33	NBA Live 98 EA Sports	SP	8.18	4.5
★	35	34	Panzer General II SSI	WG	8.17	5
★	36	37	Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	AD	8.16	5
★	37	42	Robin Hood: Siege of Basingstoke Red Storm	AC	8.15	4.5
★	38	44	Shogun: Mobile Armor Division Mac/Soft	AC	8.14	3.5
★	—	40	F-15 EA/Origin	SI	8.14	4.5
★	40	42	The Operational Art of War TitanSoft	WG	8.13	4.5
★	41	35	Unreal GT Interactive	AC	8.10	4
★	42	46	Red Alert: Counterstrike Westwood	ST	8.09	4
★	43	45	Monocross Madness Microsoft	SP	8.05	4.5
★	44	39	Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft	ST	8.04	4
★	45	36	Railroad Tycoon II Gathering of Developers	ST	8.03	4.5
★	—	38	NFL Blitz Midway	SP	8.03	3.5
★	47	19	Rogue Squadron LucasArts	AC	8.02	3.5
★	48	47	Quake II Pack 2: Ground Zero Activision	AC	8.00	3.5
★	49	52	Jack Nicklaus 5 Accolade	SP	7.99	5
★	50	48	Final Fantasy VII Eidos/SquareSoft	RP	7.98	4

YR	LAST	RANK	GAME	GENRE	POP. SCORE	IGN. RATING
NO.	MO.	ADJ.	ADJUSTED	GENRE	SCORE	IGN. RATING
★	51	51	WWII Fighters EA/Activision	SI	7.97	4.5
★	52	50	Quake II Pack: The Reckoning of Software/Activision	AC	7.96	3.5
★	53	54	Sid Meier's Gettysburg EA/Fractal	WG	7.95	4.5
★	54	—	Starline Tribes Sierra	SI	7.94	4.5
★	55	53	You Don't Know Jack 3 Berkeley Systems	CP	7.93	4
★	56	—	Freespace: Silent Threat Interplay	SI	7.93	3
★	57	59	Smart Games Challenge 2 Smart Games Inc.	CP	7.90	5
★	58	55	Age of Empires Microsoft	ST	7.89	4.5
★	59	58	You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems	CP	7.88	4.5
★	60	57	StarCraft: Insurrection Astech/New Media	ST	7.84	3.5
★	—	73	Smart Games Challenge 3 Smart Games/Hasbro	CP	7.84	4
★	62	61	Heifire Sierra	RP	7.81	4
★	63	64	Sanitarium ASC Games	AD	7.80	4.5
★	64	63	Battleground: Napoleon in Russia TitanSoft	WG	7.79	4.5
★	65	60	Battleground: Ball Run TitanSoft	WG	7.78	4
★	66	56	Independence War Infogames/Ocean	SI	7.77	5
★	67	65	Worms 2 MicroProse	CP	7.75	4
★	68	49	Warhammer 40,000: Chaos Gate SSI	ST	7.73	4
★	69	69	Heretic II Activision	AC	7.72	4.5
★	70	62	Worlds III: Darklands Rising Red Orb/SSI	ST	7.71	4.5
★	71	67	Civilization III: Fantastic Worlds MicroProse	ST	7.67	4
★	72	72	You Don't Know Jack TV Berkeley Systems	CP	7.66	2.5
★	73	74	Moto Racer EA	AC	7.65	4
★	74	75	Descent: Freespace Interplay	SI	7.64	4
★	75	71	Madden NFL 99 EA Sports	SP	7.63	4.5
★	76	77	F22 ADF Infogames/SSI	SI	7.62	4.5
★	77	66	Caesar III Sierra	ST	7.61	4.5
★	—	73	Dark: Grand Inquisitor Activision	AD	7.61	NR
★	79	70	People's General SSI	WG	7.60	3
★	—	76	Twinsen's Odyssey Activision	AD	7.60	5
★	81	78	Diamond Mind Baseball 7.0 Diamond Mind	SP	7.59	3.5
★	82	82	Fight Unlimited 2 Looking Glass	SI	7.58	4.5
★	83	79	MedWarrior 2: Mercenaries Activision	SI	7.57	4.5
★	84	83	Fighters Anthology EA	SI	7.56	3.5
★	85	84	Battlezone Activision	AC	7.55	5
★	86	80	Blade Runner Vega/Westwood	AD	7.53	4.5
★	87	80	Tomb Raider II Eidos Interactive	AC	7.51	4
★	88	87	Red Baron 3D Dynamix	SI	7.50	4
★	89	88	Dungeon Keeper Expansion EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.49	4.5
★	90	92	Baseball Mogul Eidos/Monkey	SP	7.48	4
★	91	89	Triple Play 99 EA Sports	SP	7.45	2.5
★	—	86	MechCommander MicroProse	ST	7.43	4
★	93	91	Myth Bungie	ST	7.44	4.5
★	94	96	F1 Racing Simulation Ubisoft	SP	7.41	3
★	95	95	NFL Gameday 99 989 Studios/Sony	SP	7.40	3
★	—	93	Virtual Pool 2 Interplay	SP	7.40	4.5
★	97	90	Great Battles of Julius Caesar Interactive Magic	WG	7.39	4
★	98	94	Interstate 76 Activision	AC	7.38	4.5
★	99	97	Last Express Red Orb	AD	7.37	4.5
★	100	99	Dungeon Keeper EA/Bullfrog	ST	7.29	4.5

A Brief History Of PC Gaming

A Handy Clip-and-Save Guide, Compiled With Love

Computer gaming has a long and storied history. Unfortunately, over the years, it has been obfuscated by a steady stream of misleading blather and erroneous hoo-hah. Of course, at times, it was the hoo-hah that was misleading and the blather that was erroneous, but we should not let such technicalities lead us astray. Once we're led astray, the way becomes unclear, and the threads of coherent argument vanish before us, like the proverbial dust in the wind of which the rock band Kansas once spoke so eloquently.

It'll start again.

This month, as a public service, Greenspeak presents to you, free of charge, this exclusive Pocket History of Computer Gaming, which you may feel free to clip and save in your wallet, or staple to the back of your brother's head, for easy reference. Many sources contributed to this work, though I must single out one in particular, the revelatory Dutch pictorial *How Yaks Mate*. Though it did not contribute directly to this piece, it was my constant companion during these exhaustive weeks of research—especially page 37.

Without further ado, or anything even slightly resembling ado, let us begin.

70,000 B.C. First recorded incident of human violence. Og, a Neanderthal, bashes Ug, another Neanderthal, over the head with a large bone, in a heated dispute over a mad paddie. A committee is formed, the Group of Outraged Neanderthals (GODN), who immediately blame the act on a popular game of the time, *Beat the Stone Neanderthal*. Gaming takes its first serious public relations hit.

500 B.C. Roman entertainer Juvenal Romanicus publishes a scroll detailing his plans to create a public spectacle known as "Daikatanana." He's later found wandering the streets shouting "Thou shalt be mine, bitch!" to bewildered Roman crowds, who promptly stone him to death.

215 B.C. China builds the Great Wall in an attempt to be the first civilization to build a Wonder and "win the game." Leaders are publicly flogged after it is pointed out to them that ACE OF EMPIRES won't be released for another 2,000 years.

410 A.D. Visigoths sack Rome. Disgraced Roman leader Tarricus Colemanus, in an attempt to explain why he sat idly while the city was destroyed, claims that he was

under the mistaken impression that the war was "fun-based." Bewildered Roman crowds promptly stone him to death.

1337 The Hundred Years' War begins, following a ugly deathmatch in which the King of England calls the King of France a "camping wussy."

1455 First DAIKATANA levels completed, then scrapped, following invention of the printing press, which renders the game obsolete.

1483 Spanish Inquisition begins. WizardWorks' budget-priced HERETIC HUNTER tops the best-seller charts for the next 100 years.

1492 Columbus discovers America. In a now-famous letter to the Queen of Spain he bitterly complains, "I would have discovered it a lot sooner, Your Majesty, if it wasn't for that freaking fog-of-war!"

1684 Isaac Newton invents mouse look.

"While my earlier success with this whole apple-falling-on-my-head gravity



JEFF GREEN

after an international gathering of scientists in Geneva is unable to explain the continued success of Billy Crystal.

1660 DAIKATANA team says a beta is "imminent," but outbreak of Civil War puts the game "on temporary hold."

1903 Wright Brothers fly first controlled airplane at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The following day, posts begin appearing on the flight sim newsgroups ridiculing the plane's "unrealistic flight model."

1920 First professional football league founded. Siena, in a disastrous public relations move, prematurely releases first football game, neglecting to include stadiums, players, or a football.

1931 William Shatner born. Decline of Western civilization officially begins.

1956 Elvis Presley sweeps the world with his swiveling, gyrating hips. Young male scientists, suddenly feeling awkward and confused inside, stop up their efforts to invent the personal computer.

1973 Embattled U.S. President Richard Nixon delivers famous "I am not a crook" speech. On the same day, DAIKATANA team assures public that the game is right on time, and should ship "within the month."

Our breasts will be huge in these games, and our butts, they will be fabulous.

business no doubt assures my place in the history books," he wrote in his journal, "I must say I am even more proud of the mouse look, which is finally going to allow me to kick some serious multiplayer ass."

1792 Women's rights movement begins with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. "Take heart, girls," she wrote, "in a mere 200 years, we will be the protagonists, the Aeries, of the games men play. Our breasts will be huge in these games, and our butts, they will be fabulous. Oesperate magazines will feature us half-naked on their covers, in a shameless attempt to boost sales. Even better, girls, we will still make them beg for sex."

1812. The War of 1812. First appearance of hexes on a battlefield.

1850 Charles Darwin publishes the *Origin of Species*, which expounds his theories on natural selection and the "survival of the fittest." Theory discredited 140 years later.

1981 First issue of *Computer Gaming World* published. Beginning with second issue, complaints appear on newsgroups lamenting CGW's decline.

1984 Apple Macintosh released, unleashing an exciting new era in gaming, in which year-old titles are made available to dozens of games everywhere.

1994 MYST released. Everyone and their grandma buys it. Half the people who buy it don't even have computers. No one knows how to play it. "What is this thing," asks my grandma, "a little fribbee?"

1999 DAIKATANA demo is released. The world's gone mad. Nothing makes sense anymore. Must be this Y2K thing. Time to head for the bunker.

What Jeff doesn't realize is that the circle strife evolved from a strange naked mating ritual of the ancient Druids. Send your survival tips, and other email, to Jeff@jgreen@red.com.

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