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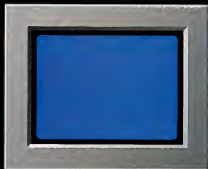
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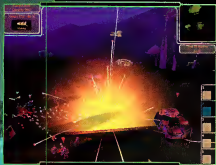
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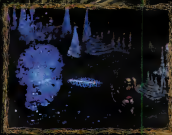
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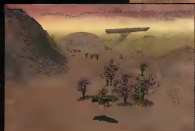


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COVER STORY

We scoured the world for the most promising games in development. We got up before noon every day in L.A. to see the hottest games at E3. We found off the determined advances of convention booth models (well, most of us). We even went to Dallas during the summer. The result: 38 pages of the coolest games heading your way.



Madden 2000



C&C: Tiberian Sun



Giants



Prince of Persia 3D



ONI

BLOCKBUSTER FALL PREVIEW!



82 Flight Sim Summer

The last wave in the recent flood of WWII flight sims will soon be upon us. From B-17 FLYING FORTRESS II's unprecedented simulation of every station of a lumbering bomber to FLIGHT COMBAT's kitchen sink of features, these prop-driven sims will let you stencil your initials on Wolfgang's canopy well into the new millennium.

Motor City

Real men race Detroit iron for pink slips.
Now the rest of us can, too.....35

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Motor City



Orcs: Revenge of the Ancient



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• **Mark Asher** takes a closer look at online RPGs.

• **Plus News;** Pipeline; The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly; and Will Wright on robots and virtual people.



GAMER'S EDGE

CG Tips

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

ROLLER COASTER TYCOON

MIDTOWN MADNESS

F-22 LIGHTNING 3

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1, THE PHANTOM MENACE



TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

STAR WARS:
THE PHANTOM MENACE

MIDTOWN MADNESS

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FROSTLESS

ENERGY



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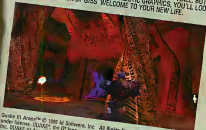
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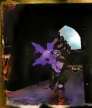
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Real Multiplayer Gaming

Baseball fever has gripped the CGW staff in a way that's almost perverse. It all started back in April when nine of us, each armed with a manila folder full of player rosters, fantasy league advice, and simulated drafts, locked ourselves into our conference room to conduct our player draft. The rest of the staff left us alone thinking we were in "a very serious meeting."

Our addiction got progressively more out of control as time went on. The low (or high, depending on your point of view) point? I found myself, not playing, but watching a game

between editors Tom Price and Rob Coffey. At least I wasn't alone in my darkness—five other editors were right there watching with me.

In a day and age where Internet and LAN play are flourishing, it's odd that the most enjoyable multiplayer experience we've had this year is taking place not over a network, but at a single computer. Why this freakish phenomenon is occurring doesn't really need much explain-



When are we going to get this kind of socially immersive experience over the Net?

ing—it's for more fun to play an opponent who's in the same room with you. To taunt mercilessly when you're ahead, and, in the sad case of Technical Editor Dave Salvatore, to sweep bitter tears and break game pads when you lose on a two-run homer in the bottom of the ninth. With a crowd watching, no less.

But this sad case does beg a simple question. When are we going to get this kind of socially immersive experience over the Net? Is it even possible? Can you create an online game environment that successfully straddles the social elements of play without devolving into a chat room?

These are the kinds of questions that will hopefully be answered over the next few years. And who knows—maybe one of the games in this month's cover story will be the one to break this issue wide open.

What's your take?

Got an opinion? Want to write reviews for CGW? Contact the EC at gnews@twittd.com. **CGW**

George Jones

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Oarsman

Can't move...arms...slowing...down. How many ships do they think we can ram in one day? That's it, I'm taking this up with the union.



Priest

Stop! Thief! My God Ma'at gives me the power to strike you down where you stand! Feel lucky punk!

Thief

The Pharaoh's palace is filled with loot. They'll never notice if a little is missing! I might anger the Gods, but you won't catch me rowing in a gilly all day. Next stop, the Beer Maker's. Stealing is thirsty work.



Beer Maker

Shay whayta will, I gotta keep tasheng my brew. The Pharaoh demanded the best. And that's what hesh gotta get. Hail Oshirish, may the barley crops grow shtrong!

Nile Farmer

Nobody told me that when the Nile floods I have to work on the pyramids. Why didn't I go to embalming school like Mom wanted?

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**9 out of 10. "Descent 3 is a must have.
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vehicular shooter ever."**

- IGN

**★★★★ "Kudos to Outrage and Interplay for
a job well done on Descent 3!"**

- Thresh's Firing Squad



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WHERE'S THE DUKE?

I find no mention of **DUKE NUKEM FOREVER** in the June or July "Pipeline." Is the game still in the works?

Tom Barnett, St. Petersburg FL, via the Internet

Duke isn't dead, says 3D Reviews, he's just been spending a lot of time in training for detox, take your pick. They say the king is scheduled to battle aliens in Vegas sometime next year (ouch like the other King). Independent sources say it's amazing, so we're working on taking you deep into Duke country sometime in the spring.

ALL-NIGHT TECH SUPPORT

I just built my version of your **Lean Machine** (Killer Rigs), and it runs like a banshee. I then built my home network, mostly inspired by the pages of CGW. It is rare to find a bunch of people that care about the end user. Thank you for all the tips, how-to's and enriching the life of all us repressed gamers. I want to express a personal thank you to Loyd for answering an email I sent at 3 o'clock in the morning (EST) within 45 minutes. I know that that is not normal. But it was comforting to realize I'm not the only one sitting at the tube late at night when it's finally quiet.

Lester Lammonds, via the Internet

Loyd often goes above and beyond the call, but if he doesn't answer your email at three in the morning, don't despair. Watch for his new technical Q&A section with technical editor Dave Salvatore starting next month.

PICK A CARD

I need your help. I want to buy a video card that's going to make games run fast at high resolutions. I don't know which card to buy, either the Diamond Viper V770 Ultra 32MB 4X or the new Voodoo3 3500 15MB. Which card do you recommend, or if you know a better card than these two let me know please.

Norberto Ortiz Jr., Brooklyn, NY via the Internet

Ah, the eternal question: "Which 3D card should I buy?" Beginning this month, we answer it, along with several of gamers' other questions, in the "Killer Rigs" section (see

page 100). For Mr.'s other tough decisions, we recommend Toyota, Ansett, ESPN, Thai, Avireis, and Guinness.

FLIGHT SIM DROUGHT

Perhaps this flight sim drought will be good for gamers. The publishers and their bean counters can produce all the hunters and shooters they want. I've seen enough of them crammed onto the shelves from CompUSA to WalMart, and guess what? They're still sitting there, and eventually they wind up in those large bargain bins and still sit there. The drought will give me time to finally concentrate on FALCON 4.0 and EUROPEAN AIR WAR—definitely two thumbs-up for MicroProse.

The game developers should use this dry-spell to fine-tune or release add-ons to current sims on the market. Jane's WWII definitely can use it.

Gordon Chiu, via the Internet

DEADLY GAMES

The hypocrisy of our society becomes apparent in an argument I had with one of my non-gamer friends. We were having this discussion in an amusement park about two weeks after the (Colorado high school) shooting. In the middle of lambasting me and my ilk for the violence in our society, she stopped and commented on how cute it would be to put her two-year-old on a ride we just passed. The ride had airplanes with toy machine guns bolted to it. The children were encouraged to shoot each other.

James Stimpff, via the Internet

BAD TREMORS

My latest issue just arrived, with **QUAKE III** splashed all over. I read the article and the accompanying ones on **HALF-LIFE** and **UNREAL TOURNAMENT**. I also downloaded and played the **QUAKE III** test. A lot of things struck me as unusual in the article and made me think how it is treated in gaming magazines.



UNREAL has consistently (and justifiably) been knocked for its poor multiplayer code. Yet, it seems like the totally crappy single player "game" in **QUAKE II** is easily forgotten because the multiplayer rocks. Why is it okay to bash one game for lacking an area in the game while excusing it in another?

Graphically, **QUAKE** brought us 65,000 shades of brown. **QUAKE II** brought in gray and brown. And **QUAKE III** (from all the screenshots I've seen) has really pushed the envelope and is going to WOW us with brown, gray and sandstone red. Sure, they throw in some colored lighting, curved surfaces, etc., but please, the **QUAKE** series has to be the most boring, dull use of colors since crayons only came in the basic eight colors.

Seems like every game is bashed (rightfully so) because of the patches needed after their release—what version are we up to in **QUAKE III**? I am still waiting for the one that makes the single player game FUN.

Paul Mancine via the Internet



IN NEED OF A MECH-OVER

After playing **MECHWARIOR 3** for a few days I've come to the conclusion that the graphics are amazing, but everything else needs a little work. Being a big fan of the BattleTech Universe and the other **MECHWARIOR** games, I had really high hopes for **MW3**. But there are some glaring omissions—The lack of Inner Sphere Mechs (especially Medics especially), another **MECHWARIOR** game focusing on the Inner Sphere vs. the Clans, only 20 missions, buggy multiplayer mode, among other things. I was hoping that the computer gaming industry has learned that a great graphics engine can't make up for a lack of content. But then again look what the computer gaming industry learned from **TOMB RAIDER**. I guess for now I'm going to have to go back to my little cardboard cut-out BattleMechs, and paper hex-maps to have some real BattleTech fun.

Chris Green, Victoria, BC, Canada, via the Internet

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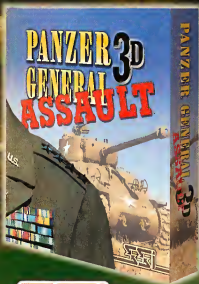
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Malice in Wonderland

American McGee Teams With EA For...An Alice In Wonderland 3D Shooter?

Have you heard the rumors about American McGee and Electronic Arts? Recently, an EA-hosted Web site created a flood of gossip on the Internet regarding the possible game offspring of such a union. The site (www.american.ea.com)—which featured bizarre sketch art, creepy children's music, and a mysterious jack-in-the-box—appeared to be paving the way for some kind of announcement regarding the top-secret game McGee is rumored to be working on.

After checking out the site, the crack team of reporters at CGW got to the bottom of the mystery. By applying skills we've cultivated over the years (begging, pleading, sending small dead rodents in the mail, and impersonating janitors), the vaunted editorial engine at CGW broke through Electronic Arts' cone of silence and finally got the company talking about their highly guarded project involving American McGee.

What we discovered is tantalizing. McGee—one of the top level designers at id Software for years—is working on a twisted 3D shooter adaptation of *Alice in*



Wonderland. Currently titled **AMERICAN MCGEE'S ALICE** and scheduled for release late next year, **ALICE** is going to take the Disney-fied version of Lewis Carroll's story and turn it upside down with a darker, edgier, Tim Burton-esque approach.

The game's storyline will be based on the classic tale, meaning you'll probably encounter the likes of the Jabberwocky, the Tweedle twins, the Mad Hatter, and many of the other characters from the book. (How you will play with them exactly has yet to be revealed). Given McGee's shooter background, we're sure the game will emphasize action. We do know that the game will be played in the third-person perspective, with the possibility of a first-person perspective multiplayer mode.

Regarding the 3D game engine, all we could squeeze out of EA is that the game will be utilizing an "advanced, next-generation 3D engine."

Look for more coverage of **ALICE** in upcoming issues of CGW.

S3 to Acquire Diamond

If you can't stand the heat, go out and buy another company. That would seem to be the message being sent by the graphics hardware industry in yet another consolidation move, graphics chipmaker S3 is acquiring Diamond Multimedia in a stock-swap deal valued at about \$173 million. The deal is a marriage of two troubled companies both trying to return to profitability, and it opens up more questions than it answers. The move now leaves one major chipmaker (nVidia), and one large board maker (Creative Labs) as the only two players without a dance partner at the 1999 Graphics Kite-Down.

The Savage4 has been successful both with board and system makers. With this new Diamond deal, S3 will be able to diversify their businesses, including sound cards, modems, and perhaps most interestingly, motherboards. Last year, Diamond acquired motherboard maker Micronics, and has been marketing motherboards under the Diamond name. S3 has been working on a graphics chip that will integrate into a motherboard's "North

bridge" (the interface between the CPU and the main-ory), and will now be able to market

that motherboard for low-cost PCs. But given that Diamond has been losing money despite its diverse product line-up, it's not at all clear that S3 will succeed in making money where Diamond has failed.

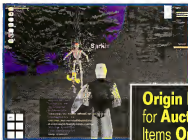
So what does this bode for we gamers? Expect to see Diamond boards use only S3 parts in the near future, since nVidia has stated that it will no longer have dealings with Diamond because S3 is a direct competitor. Creative Labs, who has been shipping a Savage4-based board, is likely to become the preeminent board supplier of nVidia-based boards here in the U.S., though Hercules and Guillemot will give chase as well, both here and in Europe. —Dave Schiavio

New Graphics Landscape Leaves nVidia as 'Last Man Standing'

Revenge of the Faeries

Orcs and ogres in *Time* magazine? Game characters and items selling for hundreds or thousands of dollars? Star programmers being lured away from high-profile game companies? With the remarkable success of massively multiplayer games like Origin's *ULTIMA ONLINE* and Verant's *EVERQUEST*, we may be witnessing a sea-change in the gaming world.

Both *ULTIMA ONLINE* and *EVERQUEST* have gained huge followings,



with approximately 125,000 active accounts each. At nearly \$10 per month per account, these games are generating a lot of Britannia gold and Norrathian platinum for their parent companies, Electronic Arts and Sony. Soon they will be competing with another heavy hitter, *ASHERON'S CALL*, which is being backed by Microsoft. Other companies already fielding games include Simutronics, with the text-based *GENSTONE* and *DRAGONREALMS*; TER, with *DARK SUN ONLINE*; Mplayer, with *UNDERLIGHT*; and 3DO with *MERIDIAN 59*.

And the mainstream media is noticing. *Time* ran a one-page story about *EVERQUEST* in their June 21st issue. "*EVERQUEST* thrives on the relationships that develop among players," wrote Michael Krantz. "Players attend concerts, auctions and weddings,icker over everything from wolf meat to scimitars; and pool talents and resources to quest for distant treasures." That's not a bad summary of the action. With national publications jumping on the bandwagon, can it be too long before politicians proclaim they're "proud to be a compassionate conservative" and a 12th level rogue?"

Active Insanity

Another sign of the rabid popularity these games often engender is the recent spate of eBay madness: Several *ULTIMA ONLINE* accounts have sold for more than \$3,000, and *EVERQUEST* items and accounts aren't too far behind. A quick search on eBay pulled up 239 *Everquest* items up for bid,

Thanks To
ULTIMA ONLINE
And
EVERQUEST,
The Online
Revolution Is
Now

Origin Fires Staffer for Auctioning UO Items Online

The wages of *ULTIMA* sin are cold, herd cash. In late June Origin issued a press release saying that one of their *ULTIMA ONLINE* Game Masters (GMs) had been fired for "engaging in activities that breached the trust that must exist between a company, its employees, and its customers." One of the many *ULTIMA* fan sites, Dr. Twister's, then broke the story that the terminated employee was GM Derwin, whose real name is Kevin Roseler, and that he had been fired for creating *ULTIMA ONLINE* gold and houses and selling them through eBay. A quick check of eBay records shows that Roseler sold nearly \$8,000 worth of *ULTIMA* items. This included over 19 million gold pieces, two castles, and several houses.

Origin declined to discuss specifics or even name Roseler as the former GM who was terminated. When contacted, Roseler's wife admitted that he had indeed sold the *ULTIMA* items and that he had used his powers as a GM to create them. All Roseler would say is that he had, "made a mistake." Roseler did post a farewell message to the *ULTIMA* community in which he said, "I am no longer employed with Origin Systems end thus this ends my time in UO. I hold no ill will toward Origin Systems as my leaving was my fault."

—Mark Asher

5, 10, and 15

Years Ago in CGW

What We Were Writing...Just What We Were in Dispers

15 Years Ago: October 1984

Proving that the CGW editors have always had an uncanny sense of humor, the October 1984 issue featured a joke mini-story, "Four Articles We Will Never Print in CGW." Among the funniest of these rib-tickling non-stories: "Interfacing the Original PC Keyboard to Your IBM PC,"

"The TI-99A Success Story," and "A Gray Emulator for Your C-64." Sorry, Jeff—your column idea for next month has already been done.



10 Years Ago: October 1989

If our April 1989 cover shocked you, the October 1989 cover is living proof that the CGW editors have always been cleavage-obsessed pervs. One of the feature reviews that month was *STAR SAGA II*, an "interactive novel played through a stack of 14 booklets containing over

50,000 paragraphs of excellent fiction" and no graphics save a glossy, colored map. Woo-hoo!



5 Years Ago: October 1994

"From low-res headsets to new controls and immersive audio products," we gushed back in 1994, "we're getting closer to home Virtual Reality than ever before!"

Um, right. At the top of the charts that issue: *MASTER OF ORION*, *WING COMMANDER II*, and *DOOM*.



Eidos Jettisons CONFIRMED KILL

Discontinued

Project Looks

For Safe Place

to Land

Just two weeks after releasing a playable demo of **CONFIRMED KILL** to the public, Eidos interactive pulled the plug on the project. The online-only WWII flight simulation promised a large, multiplayer air combat environment in which pilots re-enacted historical air battles. The game was released to beta testers last fall and had so far met with an enthusiastic reaction. A public beta release was rumored to be imminent.

This is the second flight sim Eidos has cancelled in the last two years. The company stopped production on **FLYING NIGHTMARES 2** early last year and trans-



ferred the entire team to CK. (An earlier **CONFIRMED KILL**, begun in 1994 and appearing

on CGW's May 1995 cover, went on to become ICI's **WARBIROS**.)

Rumor has it that the project is being shopped to other publishers and may yet live to fight another day. We wish it well, but don't hold much hope considering the recent cooling trend in the sims market, and the fact that the game may be a long flight away from delivering on its full payload.

The demo release of **CONFIRMED KILL** can be found on the August CG-ROM and can be played on MPlayer at www.mplayer.com.

Web Picks of the Month

The most important thing that happened Web-wise around the CGW office was Denny Atkin's, Thierry Nguyen's, and Jeff Green's avowed moratorium on buying old comic books on eBay. But, like the pathetic addicts they are ("we can quit any time!"), they just couldn't stay away. Now Denny's *Starman* collection is complete, Thierry has the entire covered early issues of *Transmet* (which Jeff hasn't returned yet), and Jeff is making his way through 100 old *X-Men*s.

Denny's Pick

www.3dfiles.com
The source for the hottest game demos, driver files, and graphics gadgets

George's Pick

www.thesagebegins.com
Weird Al Yankovic's *Ode To Star Wars*, set to the tune of "American Pie."

Jeff's Pick

www.anotheruniverse.com
An online goldmine of all things darky: *X-Files*, comic books, *Star Wars*—all the usual suspects. Some decent articles and lots and lots of junk to buy, like "Mail Me" action figures.

Chris' Pick

www.playhooky.com
A paragon of game design destined for digital glory: *DEER HUNTER* and *BASS TROPHY*, your days are numbered.

Johanny's Pick

www.alleria.org
THE WORLD OF ALLERIA is a wild and woolly play-by-e-mail game that puts the imagination back into role-playing.

Robert's Pick

www.xmission.com/~plicktm7/
A great resource site for *MIGHT AND MAGIC VII* players, with detailed quest lists, maps, item lists, and so on.

Scooter's Pick

distefano.com
A corpse replica store where you can order a custom-made corpse, and even order a manual on corpse replica making. We don't know what's scarier: that the OldManMurray guys found this site, or that Scooter asked for it.

Tom's Pick

www.ganglandnews.com
If you're tired of waiting for the new *Sopranos* episodes to get your Mafia fix, check out *Gang Land*, the best source of mob info on the net, courtesy of New York Daily News reporter Jerry Caspey.

CGW's Reality Check

Do gaming editor all think alike? We often wonder that, here at Reality Check. Does a steady diet of junk food, weeks with no natural sunlight, and a prolonged fear of women conspire to make us all love **ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON**. For example, but hate **LANDS OF LORE III** AI, sweet mystery of life! In any event, here's the latest roundup of 10 recent games and their corresponding review scores from the major gaming mags and Web sites. All scores use each pub's own scoring system.

	CGW (90% = 5.0)	PC GAMER (100 = 10.0)	EX-STRATEGY PLUS (100 = 10)	PC ASSOCIATION (100 = 10)	GAMESPOT (100 = 10)	GAMESTREET (100 = 10)
Civilization: CEP	3.5	85%	2	6	6.7	6
EverQuest	4	86%	4.5	9	8.4	9
Heroes of MIB III	4.5	86%	4.5	7	9.1	9
High Heat 2000	4.5	85%	4	5	8.6	*
Jack Nicklaus G	5	88%	*	*	9.1	9
Lands Of Lore III	2	64%	*	4	4.3	6
Populous: Apocalypse	3.5	72%	4	7	7.3	8
Rollercoaster Tycoon	4	83%	4.5	8	8.6	8
Sim City 3000	4	83%	4.5	*	8.4	8
Triple Play 2000	2.5	67%	2.5	7	6.2	7

*no rating available at press time. ■ red indicates editor's choice games

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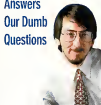


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Will Wright

The Man Behind SIMCITY And The Upcoming THE SIMS

Answers Our Dumb Questions



1. Name, title, games you've worked on, and any PIN numbers you'd like to share.
Will Wright, purveyor of fine horse care products (and part-time game designer), RAD ON BUNSLING BAY, SIMCITY, SNEARTH, SIMANT, SIMCITY 2000, SIMCOOPER, 6723, 1132, 3399.

2. What are some rejected concepts for sim games?
Anything involving politics, SIMSTOCK (no fun without real money), SIMTAXES (actually suggested to us by a tax agency in Australia), SIMSUNICLOUD, SIMSEWER, SIMMADISON, SIMGAMEDVELOPER.

3. What's this about a red electric scooter you ride around on in the office?
One day in a fit of corporate genius I decided to form the 1st Mechanized Management Brigade. This basically involves weaving between cubicles at high speed on my electric scooter. So for the death toll remains at zero.

4. Tell me about Robot Wars.
This is something I've been doing with my daughter since around '94. We build small (25-50 lb.) remote-control robots, and then attempt to beat the hell out of other robots. It's sort of a high-tech cock fight. What's really interesting about it is the other people you meet (and compete with) who are also attracted to such weirdness. I'd say the contestants are about one-third software people, one-third movie special effects people, and about one-third survivalist sorts from places like Montana and Texas.

5. The Sims is the new game you're working on. I have enough trouble with my real family. Why do I need a virtual one?

Maybe you'll have better luck with the virtual family? What I like about THE SIMS is that after playing it for a while you realize how much of your actual life is a real-time strategy game. We have hypothetical tools (such as spreadsheets) for our businesses—why not a tool for experimenting with various lifestyles?

Revenge of the Faeries (continued)

Just how big can the massively multiplayer market get? "We're just seeing the tip of the iceberg now," said McQuaid. "The potential is in all genres, not just role-playing games." Indeed, by the time you read this, Verant will have announced their next game, a massively multiplayer real-time strategy game set in the near future, tentatively titled SOVEREIGN. Verant is also working on an expansion to EVERQUEST and a couple of other unannounced massively multiplayer games.

Garratt also sees a lot of growth potential in this market. "We see these games going all over the map. We have only just begun to scratch the surface with this style of gaming. Right now all our competitors are doing 'me too' virtual world games. We have a list of over 100 announced competitors. The list shows 60-percent ULTIMA-style games, 30-percent WING COMMANDER-style games."

So will massively multiplayer overtake single-player games in popularity? Brad McQuaid doesn't think so: "I wouldn't say overtake," he said. "But they can become as large. They provide different experiences. They can co-exist with single-player games." Garratt agrees: "They will at least rival them for dominance to be sure. Single-player games will always be a strong force in gaming though. I still see both styles of game with a great future." What Origin doesn't see, however, are any new single-player games in their own plans beyond ULTIMA ASCENSION and A-10 WARTHOG. After that they have only multiplayer games planned, including the all-but-announced WING COMMANDER ONLINE and ULTIMA ONLINE 2 games.

More To Come

Other upcoming massively multiplayer games players can look forward to include MIDDLE EARTH from Sierra, set in Tolkien's National Land; HERO'S JOURNEY from Simutronics, their first graphical RPG; FREELANCER from Chris Roberts' Digital Anvil, a PRINATEER-like game; and the rumored Advanced Dungeons & Dragons game being developed by Bioware (makers of BALDUR'S GATE) for Interplay.

There is one sticky aspect about these games that may keep some developers away, according to McQuaid: "You need a large company with a lot of funding behind you. These games cost two or three times as much to develop as a traditional game." Maybe they should just auction off some of their characters on eBay.

—by Mark Asher



THE NEXT BIG THING? Verant's follow-up to the wildly successful EVERQUEST is an online-only, massively multiplayer real-time strategy game called SOVEREIGN.

Tchotchke of the Month

Tchotchke (chotch'ke): slang, from Yiddish; a cheap, shabby trinket.
—American Heritage College Dictionary, Third Edition

Some people just don't get it. Every day, things show up in the CGW mailbox that have nothing to do with us. Attention boresheaded PR people: We are a gaming magazine. Okay? Computer Gaming World. That's our name. It says so right on the cover.

So when a place like Buy.com, which is some kind of "e-commerce" site, sends us an incredibly cool lava lamp in the mail, what are we supposed to do? Mention them in our magazine, for no reason other than they gave us the lamp? Give the lamp back? Throw out the accompanying press release—but keep the lamp?

Faced with such tough moral questions, we passed the buck to Editor Ken Brown, who is forced to make these kind of hard decisions every day. He hasn't gotten back to us yet. Not actually, has he, given the lamp back.

Hey, Ken, if you're finished, can we get the lamp back?
Please?
(No. —Ed.)



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No cure. No hope.
Only death.

ABOMINATION

The Nemesis Project

The plague is once again stalking the earth. In six days a superpower has vanished under the heels of the most virulent virus humanity has ever known. As the devastation spread, so did the insanity. A cult blossomed as the body count rose. Calling themselves the Faithful, they preached the demise of mankind and the absolution of the BROOD.

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- * Equip your operatives with over 150 different weapons
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in EA's Online

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Racing World

Need for Speed: Motor City

by Jeff Green



NIGHT RIDER MOTOR CITY's Challenge races will have an outlaw veneer to them, taking place late at night on deserted city streets, with the ever-present threat of a police crackdown.



I'M IN LOVE WITH MY CAR The gorgeous graphics that have been a hallmark of the NFS series are returning for MOTOR CITY's muscle cars, but will online play be able to handle it?

the Man on the digital speedways? Now you can prove it to the rest of the world in a persistent online universe where the car—not the spellbook—is king.

You Are What You Drive

The driving force behind MOTOR CITY is ownership—and the pride and bragging rights that go with it.

EA got midway there with the recently released **NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES**, which adds a career mode so players can purchase cars and upgrade them as they win races. MOTOR CITY takes this model but makes it infinitely more exciting by sit-

ting it in an online world. Now, you'll take your car and race it against other humans, for all to see. Now you can tinker with your car—upgrading it with name-brand car parts, applying your own custom paint job—and then watch as others drool over it, or maybe even get in a bidding war to buy it from you.

When you enter MOTOR CITY for the first time, you'll be given a small amount of money to purchase your first car, which you'll buy from one of the game's virtual lots (complete with city-sounding salesmen). Depending on what "neighborhood" you're shopping in, different cars might be available. Shop in a more run-down neighborhood, for example, and the only thing available (that you can afford) may be a beat-up '67 Impala. At each lot, an element of supply and demand will also factor in, so if there's a run on a particular model, it may not be available when you first log on.

Did we say '67 Impala? Yes, you need that right, *Gasoline Breath*. For the first time in the **NEED FOR SPEED** series, EA is abandoning the rich man's luxury wheels in favor of something (somewhat) closer to reality for most of us. According to the

team, MOTOR CITY is going to feature somewhere between 20 to 40 licensed vehicles at launch, all classic American hot rods from the 1930s through the 1970s, with the primary focus on the muscle cars of the '60s and '70s, such as the '63 Corvette Stingray and the '70 Mustang 302.

Though the game features some killer hot rods, you'll only be able to afford a lower-end "beater" to start the game. This gives the game an online-RPG feel: The thrill of MOTOR CITY, the motivating force that EA thinks will keep you coming back for more, is the opportunity to build up that car bay (or wife) new ones, increase your reputation and skills—all in an attempt to become the biggest badass with the hottest

wheels in town.

Race for Pinks

One thing we should make clear is that MOTOR CITY is not an online-only game. It will actually be playable in three modes: Single Race, Motor City Offline, and Motor City Online. Single Race is just a quick "get in-get out" offline race against the computer on a randomly selected track. Motor City Offline will let you practice customizing and tweaking your car, as well as racing on the 8 to 12 tracks scheduled to be available online. EA hasn't settled on the final number yet. Those worried about getting crushed online thus have a good place to hone

Need For Speed: Motor City

GENRE: Sports/Racing
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '99
DEVELOPER: Electronic Arts
PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts

their skills, and those who simply want to enjoy the game offline can do so as well.

The heart of the game, however, is the online play, and here EA has big plans. Once you buy a car, you'll be able to participate online in two main kinds of races: sanctioned races and challenges.

Sanctioned races will be "official" races set up by EA, where gamers pay an "entry fee" (with their MOTOR CITY money, not real cash) to join races of about six to eight players for prize money (again, not real cash). Sanctioned races will include drag races, racing ovals, and Grand Prix-style races through city streets.

Challenge races are where it seems that the real heat is going to be. Here players will be able to host or join races that take place late at night (in the gameworld) on city streets, with the possibility of police cars in pursuit. Races will be either for a set amount of cash, or for the truly bold, for pink slips. That's right: Lose the race, and you lose your car, permanently (unless you win it back). EA is working on a whole reputation system, based on such elements as your win/loss record, how many challenges you've refused, how many times you've dropped out, and the number of times you've successfully eluded the police.

A Whole New World

EA is aiming for much more than a simple matchmaking service here. Their big goal is to create a virtual racing world, with a dynamic economy and real sense of community. The "hubs" where gamers will meet to chat and to host and join races are represented visually by '50s-style diners and drive-ins. When you enter a hub, your car will be seen parked in the lot (or cruising by if the lot is full). Gamers will be able to set up clans, or racing teams, and a dynamic buddy list will let you keep track of where your friends are online.

The Motor City Gazette will be a daily online news source where gamers can submit listings to buy and sell (and possibly auction) cars, paint jobs, and custom parts. Those who've designed a particularly cool paint job can also upload it to one of the game's paint

CRUISIN' FOR A BRUISIN'

A look at one of MOTOR CITY's '50s-style hubs, where gamers will be able to chat, set up races, and show off their wheels in the parking lot.



shops, and if another gamer buys it, the designer gets a cut of the profits. Buying, selling, and trading cars is anticipated to be as huge a part of the game as the actual racing—and it doesn't take much of a stretch to imagine car sales winding up on separate auction services such as eBay.

The biggest hitch for this whole project, of course, is the technology. Will EA really be able to translate the high-polygon, 3D beauty of its NFS engine into an online racing game that won't break down over latency issues? Will only those with cable modems or T1 lines be able to play? EA is claiming they'll be able to keep the requirements relatively low but admit that they are breaking new ground here and, like ULTIMA ONLINE, it may take a while to shake itself out.

As of this writing, EA is on the verge of beta testing for Internet play through HIGH STAKES and hopes to work out the latency problems in time for MOTOR CITY's scheduled winter release. Look for a hands-on field report from a CGW grease monkey just as soon as they let us on the track. **CGW**

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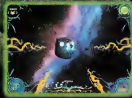
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ORCS: Revenge of the Ancient

Berkeley's Tolkien Game Is Almost Impossible to Describe—But We'll Try Anyway

by Robert Coffey

If you're expecting *ORCS: REVENGE OF THE ANCIENT* to be just another trivia game from Berkeley Systems well, Jack, you don't know (big-zug, Berkeley is taking some big risks with its first move into the hard-core gaming market: Not only are they working with a license with fans that are notoriously difficult to please, but the game's design is a new, near-identifiable mix of role-playing and strategy.



MOMENT OF TRUTH All your training and preparation comes down to this, pitched battles where you find out if you created an orc army capable of defeating your enemies, or a squad of losers that will disgrace you before your masters.

In some really weird way, *ORCS* is a lot like *X-COM*, except that, well, it's not. Not really taking place at the end of the Third Age of *Lord of the Rings*, you are an orc chieftain serving Sauron. As leader of your camp, you recruit orcs to serve as a sort of police unit, squelching the black market, landing off-raiding parties, battling highwaymen, and the like.

Much of your time in camp is spent preparing your orcs for battle. The orcs are rated with RPG-style attributes like intelligence, speed, strength, and discipline; additionally, they can learn 40 skills, encompassing individual weapon abilities, magic proficiency, and defensive prowess. This is where the game is

ORCS: REVENGE OF THE ANCIENT

GENRE: RPG/Strategy • RELEASE DATE: Q1 '99
DEVELO: ERG: Berkeley Systems
PUBLISHER: Sunn Studios

most like *X-COM*, charging you with developing your team your way, steering *Hobbit* toward a specialty in magic while *Nathrak* masters the barterhouse.

The customization is taken even further with the game's combo generator. As orcs gain experience in using weapons, new moves will be unlocked. Your job is to link up a series of sweeps, stabs, and chops into devastating attack combos that are then taught to your squad. While you can make scores of combos, your orcs

can only retain a few of them as dictated by their intelligence. In a sense, the combos become almost another piece of equipment for you to slap on your charges since, just before combat, you'll decide which combos your forces take into battle.

All that preparation culminates in the frequent arena battles where you get to see if your orcs are the vicious war machine you envisioned or a bunch of dirty pigmen. *ORCS'* RPG

influences carry over into the combat that unfolds via a turn-based, state-driven engine that plays out in real time.

Hub? Turn-based and real-time? What the hell does that mean? Basically, this: you'll see the action unfold in a seamless animation without obvious turn breaks. The orcs will fight on their own, without direct control from you, but you will be able to issue commands. Whether they listen to your orders depends on their discipline rating; headstrong orcs will ignore your directives and follow their inner problem child.

While every little decision is crucial, you'll also

be charged with making some big choices as well. The Orc Clan Council will periodically alert you to situations you may or may not want to deal with. Do you go to stop some raiders believing a crossroads? After wiping out some black marketeers, do you return the warhammer they stole or keep it? Further, every NPC has a personal agenda, so every decision will echo even in one deeply into the gameworld. So many choices, with each helping to determine your path through the game's branching structure.

Tying these disparate components together is a storyline worthy of the source material. While the first act will acclimate you to the gameworld, your character will also hear stories and start to experience vivid dreams of bloody wars fought at Sauron's old fortress. By the end of the act you'll learn that these are the memories of *The Ancient*, a rival of your current master and an orc who dares to possess the one quality no orc has ever had—freedom. By Act II you'll have embarked on a path to either serve or crush Sauron, traveling even further across the sprawl of Middle Earth until you encounter an even more shadowy figure when Act III commences.

Is Berkeley more than a one-trick quiz pony? Here's their chance to prove it. Whether they pull off this ambitious design remains to be seen, but you've got to give them this up-front—they're jumping head-first into the belly of the gaming beast. **EW**



SUITING UP You prepare your Orcs on these two screens. You physically equip your Orcs in the first screen and train them in the second.



Grendyl



Grabatok



Afrodeslak



Wigwack

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Age of Wonders

Epic Covers HEROES' Tune, But Makes It Their Own

by Jesse Hiatt

Epic Megagames' AGE OF WONDERS looks an awful lot like HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC III. The game opens with a guy on a horse in the middle of a map full of rolling hills and pink dust. Your task, as in HEROES, is to muster an army of fantasy creatures and capture towns. So our first reaction was, why bother? Why bother playing a rip-off of an award-winning, classic design? But once we got beyond the surface similarities, we found that AGE OF WONDERS doesn't play the same as 3DO's fantasy classic. We also found that the design differences are significant enough to make the game worth a turn. In fact, after a few hours of play we realized we actually preferred AGE OF WONDERS to the game that it imitates.

Hero, Go Home

The first major departure from

HEROES, and the difference that makes all the difference in play style, is that units are free to roam around the map without a baby-sitting hero. Individual units can run errands, pick up goodies, scout, and reveal the contents of an enemy stack. This freedom totally opens up the game, making it more free-wheeling and faster paced. In addition, diplomacy and alignment play a much bigger role than in HEROES; combat is more flexible and less abstracted, and there is actually a semi-compelling story to pull you into the campaign.

The tale begins when marauding humans overrun a peaceful island. There is widespread devastation, and the surviving native elves are divided into two camps. The light elves are against war and want to find a way to live in harmony with the humans. The dark elves want revenge and would like to get rid of the humans once and for all, even if they have to embrace

evil to do it. Both sides are compelled to travel to a place where a prophecy predicts a final showdown. The goal is to gain control of the fractured island and to recruit local inhabitants to your cause.

Diplomacy and alignment factor heavily into the story and the gameplay. Every action you take will affect



AGE OF IMITATION So it looks like HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC III. Get over it—and take out some dark elves while you're at it.

your diplomatic relations with the other races of creatures. If you capture a goblin town and burn it down, any goblin units you control could defect and attack. If they are pissed off enough, you may have to garrison a goblin town to hold onto it.

Alternatively you could force races out of their homes and bring in a friendly race. The refugees you create won't like you very much, and you'll probably see them on the other side of the final showdown, but the new residents will appreciate the gift of the new town. The diplomacy elements carry over from mission to mission, increasing the replayability of the campaign.

Fantasy Flexibility

One of the best features of AGE OF WONDERS is the combat system. For one thing, it can be adapted to your preferred playing style. If you're faced with a particularly one-sided battle, or don't really care about tactical maneuvering, you can automate the battle via a combat system similar



BIG BOOK OF MAGIC See Spot run. See Spot disappear. See Jane scare Spot with some cool land-deformation spells.



WELCOME TO MY LAIR Though a strategy game, AGE OF WONDERS even tosses in a little dungeon crawling for RPG fans.

to that in WARLORDS III. If you choose to get into the nitty-gritty, you are treated to a zoomed-in map of the area or town upon which you maneuver individual units. The maps are much larger than anything in the HEROES series, but what's really great is that any unit in a hex adjacent to the one being attacked can participate, adding an extra dimension of subtlety to combat tactics.

AGE OF WONDERS is stepping into a realm dominated for years by the HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC and WARLORDS series. AOW fits squarely in the middle of these two strategy-game giants, blending the better elements of both and adding something of its own. What it brings to the table is fresh enough to make AOW a serious fantasy-strategy contender.

CGW

Age of Wonders

GENRE: Strategy/War RELEASE DATE: Q4 '99

DEVELOPER: Epic Megagames

PUBLISHER: Gathering of Developers



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remain focused.
Mastery of the Force
requires that one
purge all unnecessary
activities from daily life.

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www.lucasarts.com/products/phantommenace
www.starwars.com

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Gearbox Comes Up With a Unique Take on the Original Story

Half-Life: Opposing Force

HAL-LIFE: OPPOSING FORCE opens with you, Corporal Adrian Sheppard, sitting inside a military chopper on its approach to the Black Mesa compound. The drill sergeant is briefing you on your mission—which basically centers around “containing” the quagmire Gordon Freeman is stuck in the middle of—when your Osprey goes down in a ball of flames. Tended to by some scientists, you come to your senses inside Black Mesa. Being a tough-as-nails soldier type, you pick up a pipe wrench and join the fray



MMMM...DONUTS Note: to s.u.f.f. Otis, one of the game's new AI characters, may not make the best travel companion.

Answer My Questions!

OPPOSING FORCE is more than a more-of-the-same add-on. It expands the HAL-LIFE universe in terms of both gameplay and, more importantly, story. A batch of new weapons (see sidebar) await your most destructive impulses, and a new cadre of moose—from the new Pit Drones to the massive, highly intelligent Shock Troopers that control the Pit Drones—can't wait to make your acquaintance. Also new to the game are the nifty Black Ops forces to complement the rare but lethal female Assassin units.

Thankfully you're not alone. Your soldier friends are at your side this time

around. These super-powered AI soldiers will play vitally helpful roles in the game; you can call them up from radios for support, get them to cut through doors, or even get the medic soldiers to heal you.

But the game wouldn't be HAL-LIFE without two key components: that made this 3D shooter such a smash in 1998: plot development and terror. You enter the plot right around the time Gordon Freeman encounters the military in the original game. But from this point on, you and he are on separate story paths within the same universe. While your paths may cross a few times, you have your own business to take care of, bub. (Part of said business: Using the loader you see at the beginning of HAL-LIFE to solve a puzzle.)

Let's spoil the story. I'll stop short of giving the specifics, but having played through a few of the game's levels I can say that OPPOSING FORCE has more twists and turns than the lines to see *Phantom Menace* and more horrifying moments than a high-school dance. In one scene, blue arcs of electric energy start whittling down the size of the room you're trapped in, which then begins flooding with toxic green goo.

The OPPOSING FORCE designers promised me that over the course of the game they would answer many of the questions HAL-LIFE left lingering. The suitcase-bearing G-Man's role will be explained a bit more, as will the nature of the experiments going on at the Black Mesa facility. I'd be surprised, however, if OPPOSING FORCE doesn't create as many questions as it answers, what with HAL-LIFE 2 in the works and all.

That's What Friends Are For

OPPOSING FORCE should one-up the original product as the multiplayer arena. Gearbox has approached several of the top 3D-shooter level designers, such as Ritual Entertainment's Levelord, and signed them up to design multiplayer levels for the game. The final product will feature 12 of these celebrity-designed maps. The multiplayer mode will incorporate all the game's weaponry—old and new. It sure would be nice if you could play as the aliens, though. (Hint, hint.) **GGW**



TOUGH TOYS FOR TOUGH BOYS At one point in the game, you face a massive alien confrontation with a squadron of your boys by your side.

Half-Life: Opposing Force

GENRE: Action • RELEASE DATE: Q4 '98
DEVELOPER: Gearbox Software
PUBLISHER: Valve Interactive

Biological Agents of Justice

OPPOSING FORCE will add seven new weapons to the mix.

Pipe Wrench: Functions like the crowbar, but it's three times as large.
357 Desert Eagle: A fast and accurate sidearm; using the alternate-fire laser scope makes the gun even more accurate.

M2S: A super-heavy machine gun capable of firing many rounds per second.
Spore Launcher: A biological rocket launcher with an alternate-fire grenade launcher.

Barnacle: This biological grappling hook allows you to bring the enemy into your arms, or make like Spiderman.

Shock Rifle: It's a rapid-fire energy weapon. It's a splat. It's both! The Shock Rifle infuses victims with blue pulses of energy.

Displacer: In the multiplayer game, the Displacer (the massive weapon modeled by the soldier to the left) instantly teleports multiplayer opponents to a random region position on the map. Use the weapon's alternate-fire mode and you'll be temporarily transported to the alien world of Xen, where you may find regeneration pools or hostile alien creatures to play with before.

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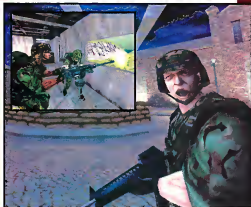
HOT LIST

2000

We've scoured the world for the most promising games in development. For our faithful readers, we've spent hot summer days in Dallas, Texas, researching the newest shooters; we've sneaked unauthorized peeks at software in development, to see if it's really going to deliver; we've listened to estimated ship dates without laughing out loud, in order to get you the scoop; we've even fended off the advances of booth models at E3 (well, at least Jeff Green claims he has). The following, then, is our list of the games we think you'll buy, you'll play, and you'll love (and not in that unnatural Jeff Green kind of way, either).

All the Games You'll Want to Play, You'll Need to Play, From Now Until the Next Century

Team Fortress 2: Brotherhood of Arms



If you've seen a WWII war movie, you've seen a preview of Valve's **TEAM FORTRESS 2: BROTHERHOOD OF ARMS**. TF2's intense 3D action and team-based play evoke classic scenes of badass under fire. Designed to be immediately accessible and understandable to even the most casual gamer, TF2 could bring 3D action to the masses of armchair Private Ryans.

The team-oriented design will offer something for everyone and every style of play. While veteran action gamers will surely go gung-ho for the heavy infantry, rocket infantry, and sniper classes, gamers with less refined shooting skills or more refined sensibilities can choose to contribute in crucial supporting roles as medics, turret-building engineers, or overseeing commanders that direct the movement of their team. While every class will be able to do at least one thing well, no one class will be able to succeed without the help of others. For example, a heavy infantryman can lay down a withering barrage of suppression fire, but he'll need snipers to take out rocket-firing foes that see punting him down and medics to pull shrapnel from his hide. By making each unit a unique and vital part of the whole, the Valve design team is clearly encouraging tight, disciplined team play as opposed to the loosely allied, chaotic mobs that pass for teams in other 3D action environments.

While TF2 will have standard play modes such as Capture the Flag, we expect TF2 will really shine in its campaign games, in which the linked scenarios unfold with sweeping cinematic effect. One campaign puts teams on either side of a beach invasion, segues to a perilous march through fields, and then culminates in a pitched struggle over a village bridge. Our editorial Magnificent Seven can't wait to play it.

(For a more detailed overview of TF2, check out our July 1999 cover story.)

Q4 '99, Sierra Studios, www.team-fortress2.com

ACTION

We're really looking forward to NovaLogic's **DELTA FORCE 2** (Q4 '98). The trademarked voxel engine is sporting 32-bit color for environments that are nowhere as drab as those of the first game, allowing for the use of fog to counter players who leaned too heavily on sniping in multiplayer mode. DELTA FORCE's terrain was second to none, and that dominance continues with the addition of rocks, trees, and very tall grass—perfect for a sniper to slither through. With vastly improved teammate control, fixed weapon emplacements, and new weapons that can shoot through tents and walls, DELTA FORCE 2 is looking sweet indeed.

We're also looking forward to **PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D**, the sequel to Jordan Mechner's classic side-scroller. POP 3D preserves the flavor of the original game with realistic, motion-captured animations of running, jumping, climbing and fighting. The artwork looks great, and the action is perfectly evocative of an Arabian Nights adventure. (To see for yourself, check out the preview trailer on this month's CG-ROM.)

DEEP FIGHTER



SUB CULTURE was a cool game that got overlooked. Even so, it must have caught the attention of enough gamers to warrant a sequel, **DEEP FIGHTER** (Q1 '00). DEEP FIGHTER will retain the Liliputian feet, physics model, and abundant sea-life of SUB CULTURE, while adding more action and some strategy (think BATTLEZONE) to the mix.

While Eidos has announced a new **TOMB RAIDER** game for 2000, the designers at Core Design are being very close-mouthed about the whole thing. What we do know is that **TOMB RAIDER IV** will feature a brand-new game engine and that it will be one of the first games optimized for the Pentium III.

The wish for a decent Star Trek action game could finally come to fruition in Activision's **STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE** (Q1 '00). Developed by Raven Software, the first game based on the Star Trek Voyager TV series is a first-person shooter using the QUAKE II engine. As the leader of an elite security force, you'll defend Voyager after it is sucked into a new dimension; you'll gain rank and the ability to command forces as the game progresses.

Not quite Austin Powers, not quite James Bond, Monolith's **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER** (Q2 '00) is a tongue-in-cheek

treatment of the super-psy chick. This first-person game will cast the player as a delinquent playboy spy circa 1964. As undercover operative Adam Church, gamers will conduct missions in a sunken freighter, fight aboard a doomed airplane over the North Sea, woo Ms. Sultry Lovechild, and destroy the dastardly with weaponry inspired by the nutty gadgetry of the 007 films.

SANITY (Q4 '99) casts gamers as a psychic government agent investigating an evil cult. The game's big hook is the psychic power players will be able to wield. Starting with the ability to mentally ignite fires, players accrue new powers as they progress through the game and defeat

SANITY



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE



bosses. The catch is, every spot takes a toll on your atropop's mental health, so overuse of your abilities will make your head pop like a chowder-filled balloon.

Expect to see lots of Activision's **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE** (Q4 '99) on the evening news if the debate on violence in games develops into a hot election year topic. **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE** is an action-packed first-person shooter with an unparalleled level of violence and messy effects. Basically realistic in weapon effects, **SOF** is over the top in carnage, with victims losing entire limbs, complete with torrents of blood and ribs of exposed bone. If Liddy Dale ever seen this game, expect to see her head explode **SANITY**-style.

Oni

Depending on where your interests lie, **ONI** can be either (a) a mythical Japanese demon/aiien or (b) a soon-to-be-legendary action game that features a locke-and-loke names heroine and a new twist on the whole 3D shooter concept. Since most of us were geeking out in front of our computers in college instead of hitting the books, you can probably guess which **ONI** we'll be dealing with today.

Konoko, the heroine of Bungie's radically departing fighting game, is a green-eared member of the CTFE, an elite technological task force responsible for maintaining the peace in the futuristic, anime-styled universe where **ONI** is set. During the course of her short career, **Things Happen**, as the game's designers like to say. In short order, anime turns to autostray, and Konoko finds herself fighting anyone and everyone just to stay alive.

Here's the twist about **ONI**: when we use the word fighting, we're not just lightly tossing the word around. Konoko wails on the badasses in full-contact, head-to-hand battles with attacks and special moves the likes of which PC gaming has yet to see. (Yeah, you can use heavy weaponry, too, if you're not into fistcuffs. And, oh yeah, you're a wuss.) The game provides a storyline to drive the 3D combat for the single player, but better yet, **ONI** will feature LAN-based multiplayer combat between the various game characters.

Q1 '00, Bungie, www.bungie.com



Tribes 2

STARSEIGE: TRIBES WAS one of the most pleasant surprises of the past year, brooding a ravid following with its seamless blend of action and team-based strategy. Given its success, it's no great shock that designers at Dynamix are already hard at work on a follow-up. While the various contests in the sequel will be enhanced and/or replaced, the main thrust is on providing more of what gamers came to **STARSEIGE** for: There will be new vehicles, including ground-based bovecraft and boats that will prove ideal for fighting on new watery terrain. There's a new race, the Bio-Demos. There are three new weapons



tossed into the mix, and there's an overhauled game engine that serves up stunning visuals with even more dramatic landscapes, environmental hazards like lightning and quakesand, and some wild architecture. Finally, a more robust AI will make for an improved single-player experience and allow tribes to practice their tactics before facing the real deal online.

Q1 '00, Sierra, www.star-seige.com/tribes/

Hidden and Dangerous

An action game from the wargamers at TalonSoft?

Yeah, and John Carmack's given up programming for cross-stitching. But it's no joke. While **HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS** is actually more of a WWII S.A.S. commando simulation (featuring covert operations and special missions deep inside Axis territory, it has a strong action component. You command a squad of four commandos—geared up with historically accurate uniforms, weapons, and equipment—from a top-down map view. Or you can take control of any one of your soldiers individually in third- or first-person mode.

Having some twitch skills will help you survive, but this game is no **OGAKE**. When one or two shots can kill you, firefights are short, terrifying, and deadly. In a hostile environment where you're almost always outnumbered, you must use careful planning and strategy to succeed. A lot of games have been reaching for this ultimate combination of strategic and action elements; it's a tough blend to get right. But **HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS** actually comes to something: wargame purists and action fans can agree on.



Quake III: Arena

U...you might have heard about this one. The no-question, must-have title for action fans this year, **QUAKE III: ARENA** is shaping up to be the best word in DeathMatch. The release of the test version has only heightened our pathetically slobbering anticipation by offering a glimpse at the beauty, speed, and sheer explosive power of the game as well as a tantalizing taste of the deviously crafted levels

we can expect to litter with the cobs of friends and loved ones. With dynamically scaling bots ensuring that games of all skills can seem their chops in single-player before taking the plunge into online play, **QUAKE III: ARENA** could be the game that brings the brutal art of DeathMatch to the masses.

Q4 '99, Activision,
www.activision.com



Giants: Citizen Kabuto

The MDK team is back with another wacky third-person game, but don't turn the page just yet. **GIANTS**, a 3D action game inspired by atomic age monster flicks, looks to be one of the better third-person games for the winter season.

GIANTS' visuals and play style really blow us back a few feet. No dark tombs here, the game takes place on colorful islands populated by the most bizarre critters. Of course, pretty graphics can't carry a game, so we were thrilled to play a scenario as Kabuto, the very angry giant representing one of those sides in the game, and experience the happy-happy-joy-joy of smashing buildings and picking up little human types to munch on. The other teams of monstrosities have their moments, too; conjuring sea monsters and tornadoes with the spell-power of the Sea Reeper is great for looks, as is using the more staid but ruthlessly efficient formations and stealth suits of the techie Meccaryns. As of press time, the single-player game is still being tweaked, and the multiplayer mode should be hammered out by the time you read this.

Q4 '99, Interplay, www.interplay.com



Tom Clancy's Rogue Spear

With an all-new graphics rendering engine, vastly improved AI, and a host of new features, **ROGUE SPEAR** should only improve on its groundbreaking precursor, **RAINBOW SIX**. The new pixel-pushing code will allow for spectacular environments such as the Prague Opera House and impressive weather effects like snow and rain. The Observer mode from the **EAGLE WATCH** expansion pack has been retained—great for gamers who opt just to command their teams and not actually do the shooting.

An emphasis on ease of use is apparent in a sleek, streamlined interface that will make team selection, load-outs, and commands easier to manage. That's a good thing since play-

Loose Cannon

Car combat games are a dime a dozen, but when the lead designer is Tony Zurovec, the man behind both of Origin's incredible **CRUSADE** games, gamers had better keep their eyes on the road. Players will be cast as Ashe, a mercenary in a near-future America ravaged by economic collapse. Unlike the tongue-in-cheek style of **INTERSTATE '76**, **LOOSE CANNON** is going for a more realistic feel to draw gamers in, with realistic traffic patterns, a police force that will respond to reckless pedestrian poaching,



and no action-gamey power-ups. Gameplay will blend both on-foot and behind-the-wheel battles, with Ashe able to leave his car at will to fight enemies, car jack new rides, and pursue fugitives into buildings. The action rolls through nine cities and 12 sprawling countryside areas where the bad guys have barricaded themselves in well-guarded fortresses. Twenty open missions develop a story-line centered on busting a criminal cartel, with optional money-making missions such as hostage rescues, recon assignments, and assassinations.



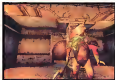
ers will have even more options and tools at their disposal,

including the ability to peer around corners, move while crouching, and sit down in an accurate sniper posture. Overhauled AI should result in even deadlier enemies that will seek cover instead of waiting to be killed and, even more importantly, in team members that won't biddle in the corners of rooms like a bunch of shifty-pants recruits.

Q4 '99, Red Storm Entertainment,
www.redstorm.com/rogue_spear

Wheel of Time

Based on the popular series of fantasy novels by Robert Jordan, **WHEEL OF TIME** is unlike any other first-person action title. Instead of just blowing away hordes of monsters while looking for an exit, gamers will instead be collecting and defending a number of magical seals as they combat the evil Black Ajah. Rather than weapons, players will wield spells in the form of Ter'angreal, magical elements that will let you shoot fireballs, release enemy-seeding magic missiles, and even disguise you so you are able to blend in with your enemies.



The game makes its break from the ordinary with its multiplayer game, in which gamers will have to collect seals from opponents while guarding their own seals in a custom-built citadel. Utilizing a simple editing tool, you'll plot your own defenses in the form of tilting staircases, spear traps, and groups of monsters, freeing you to go out in the world and thwart the devious traps of your enemies to match their seals.

Q4 '99, 6T Interactive, www.wheeloftime.com

SWAT 3: Close-Quarters Battle

In a radical departure from the removed perspective of previous SWAT games, **SWAT 3: CLOSE-QUARTERS BATTLE** puts gamers into the police-issue boots of this elite strike force. Set in Los Angeles in the year 2006, SWAT 3 is shooting for a high degree of realism with its 20 missions taking place in real-life locations such as the air traffic control tower at LAX, Gruyman's Chinese Theatre, and the lush Bel Aire Hotel.

SWAT 3's ambition to create as truthful and tense a close-quarters combat experience as possible is impressive, and is especially apparent in a painstakingly accurate ballistic model, which goes so far as to track each pellet fired in a shotgun blast. As in real life, high-powered weaponry can be used to shoot through walls, and, of course, your enemies will be able to do the same. In order to survive, gamers will have to learn such real-life tactics as working corners, following appropriate room-clearing procedure, and even counting the rounds their weapons fire.

Q4 '99, Sierra Studios, www.sierrastudios.com



Vampire: The Masquerade

Remember when everyone said that RPGs are dead? Now, following the massive success of **BALDUR'S GATE**, the genre is hotter than ever. How appropriate, then, that the RPG we're most excited about in 1996 is about rising from the dead. The developer, Nihilistic Software, gave us a spin on its latest build of **VAMPIRE**, and we're still a bunch of drooling sicks after seeing this game.

In case you missed our infamous April issue, the story focuses on what happens when a fictional anti-vampire knight ironically becomes a vampire. You can play the game from either a first- or third-person perspective (we preferred third). The interface is a simple point-and-click affair; combat is real-time, but the team is feverishly working on reducing the **DIABLO**-style choices. The party members already move autonomously depending on their general aggression, and you'll have easy access to various Disciplines (a.k.a. skills), weapons, and abilities.



We also got to see a lot of the Disciplines, with **Plague Wind**, **Obfuscate**, and **Lure of Flames** looking particularly cool. Of course, how can you talk about vampires without the blood sucking? The "feeding" looks as creepy as it should, and we noticed that if you try it right in the middle of the street, the guards will come after you, so you'll need to be discreet. Also, feed on too many humans, and your Humanity rating drops, and you may lose the game. The architecture for both 13th-century Prague and modern London looks great, there'll be two sets of party members for both periods, with the character **Christof** being the only constant. With the current status of the single-player, and Nihilistic's bold plans for the Storyteller multiplayer mode, **VAMPIRE** looks to be the single coolest RPG this year.

Q1 '99, Activision,
www.activision.com

Deus Ex

Finally, this game has been declassified. Looking at it, you wouldn't think it was made with the **UNREAL** engine because of the numerous RPG-style additions, such as a skill system, dialogue, a real inventory, and a maddening sense of detail. Character development is defined with skills (à la **FALLOUT**), nanotechnology augmentations (physical enhancements), and even the contents of your inventory. Design guru Warren Spector showed off the effect of the skills system: with a low sniper rifle skill, the crosshair kept on jittering and making it hard to hit your target, but a high skill makes your crosshair stay in place. He hesitated to use the word immersive, but the gameworld is very detailed; you can read every newspaper and use every computer, and NPCs will react to whatever you happen to be doing. With the issue of linearity versus nonlinearity, **DEUS EX** will compromise by giving you missions with fixed goals; how you achieve said goals completely depends on how you play your character.

The back-story casts you as J.C. Denton, a new member of the anti-terrorism organization UNATCO. You start a



few missions in New York, but the plot really gets rolling once you travel to Hong Kong. Other locations include Paris and even the White House (as close to the real deal as they can make it), plus a

few places Spector didn't want to disclose just yet. Finally, he wanted to make sure players don't become frustrated, so every conversation, significant event, and important map will be logged in for easy reference later on. A world-spanning, first-person spy RPG—too bad it's coming here February 2000, at the earliest.

Q1 '99, Ion Storm, www.ionstorm.com

RPG/ ADVENTURE

More RPG Blockbusters

What more is there to say about **DIABLO 2** (Q4 '98)? As usual, Blizzard is taking its sweet time with this sequel to one of the biggest gaming blockbusters of the decade—and who can blame them? Every time they take the time to get things right,

they end up delivering killer gaming. This action/RPG is deeper, more complex, and a lot longer (filling four CDs) than the original, in hopes of delivering a minor role-play



ing experience to accompany the stellar hack-and-slash. Look for it to disappear off store shelves as soon as it's released this holiday season.

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ULTIMA ASCENSION (Q4 '99) has generated more Internet discussion among RPG fans than any other game on this list. And for good reason: It's better than most, and—surprisingly—the best of Richard Garriott's line of play-by-Ultima games—games that have defined and towered over the RPG genre for years. Featuring a gorgeous, fully interactive 3D environment and third-person perspective, the game generated early heat from here and elsewhere for veering towards a Total RAGEbit style of gameplay, but those fears may have been premature, as the latest versions we've seen reveal a game that's still unmistakably ULTIMA. Decide for yourself this Christmas.

Like **DEUS EX**, Tom Hall's right-evo-looking **AMACRODIX** (Q4 '99) is showing strong promise as a title that may turn Ion Storm's luck around. This ambitious, console-style, fantasy/sci-fi RPG had a great showing at E3, based mainly on some truly inspired 3D artwork and animation. We know, we know—the gameplay is the thing, and we desperately need to see more of it, but for now we're patting our fists in Ion Storm's resident mad genius—who has a couple of games called **WOLFENSTEIN 3D** and **DOOM** on his resume.

WEREWOLF: THE HEART OF GAA (Q4 '99) is the next game from CreativeForge and ASC Games, the team behind last year's award-winning **SINGULAR**. Based on the pen-and-paper RPG from White Wolf, **WEREWOLF** promises to be a dark, horror-themed, emotionally complex role-playing experience, as you take on the role of a shape-shifting werewolf. The state-of-the-art graphics, based on the UNREAL engine, may put this one over the top.

SEPTERRA CORE (Q3 '99) has been around a while, as it has bounced between publishers, but it looks to finally be on track for a release this fall from Microsoft. This anime-influenced, console-style RPG has some nice, original touches, and may be a sleeper hit.

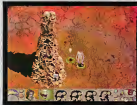
Speaking of console RPGs, SquareSoft EA is pouring over their next user-RPG, **FINAL FANTASY VIII**. They learned their lessons from **FINAL FANTASY VII**, and they're working on the 3D-card problems, making the art cleaner, and making the game look less like anime. They're also aiming for a ship date soon after the console release (Q4 '99), rather than the rusty-eye-water release for PC.

Planescape: Torment

When most people think of AD&D, they think of dragons and wussy little elves, not of sarcastic talking skulls or a tower of living heads. These are typical elements in **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT** and illustrative of the radical departure that developer Black Isle is taking for its next AD&D game.

While you do wringe with amnesia, you also realize that you died. Here you don't really gain levels, you trigger memories, since your character has literally done it all. It's single-player only and uses a modified version of the **BALDUR'S GATE** engine. The interface has been streamlined, so you get more eye candy when you walk around, which is helpful because **TORMENT** has such an abstract and imaginative setting. Gameplay is similar to that of **BALDUR'S GATE**, with the significant addition of the faction system; all NPCs now belong to factions, so every action has consequences for how NPCs will relate with you. The surreal look on top of the unique Planescape universe makes **TORMENT** a serious contender this year.

Q3 '99, *Interplay/Black Isle, www.interplay.com*



System Shock 2

Ask anyone in this industry about his or her favorite games, and you're bound to hear the name **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** a few times. **SYSTEM SHOCK** was one of those "great games that not enough people played," and for years and years fans kept on asking for a sequel. Well, those wishes have finally been answered; the premier offering from Irrational Games (a team of ex-Looking Glass developers) will be **SYSTEM SHOCK 2**.

Irrational has made quite a bit of progress since the last build we checked with our May issue preview. Psi Powers have been finalized, and there are a whopping 36 powers total, in addition to the 14 weapons, 11 implants, and dozens of random inventory items. Like **DEUS EX**, **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** will go for the "same puzzle, multiple solutions" approach, and for those of you who missed the puzzle-style mmo-games while backing, it's back. **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** looks very solid, and we think more people will play this title and give the series the recognition it deserves.

Q3 '99, *Looking Glass/Irrational Games, www.lglass.com*



Gabriel Knight III: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned

This is the adventure game genre's last great hope, or possibly last, dying gasp—not that there's any pressure on it or anything. But if any game could ever rescue the genre, **GABRIEL KNIGHT III** is it. Designed by Jesse Stern, the brilliant storyteller behind the first two games in the series, **GKIII** once again plunges headlong into the realm of supernatural mystery, as Gabriel and co-bot Grace Naleman investigate the disappearance of a deformed royal's newborn son. The investigation takes them all the way to a mystery of biblical proportions—as anyone who's seen the controversial ads for the game knows.

GABRIEL KNIGHT III is embracing the full-motion video approach of the previous game for a full-3D engine, an inevitability of the times. Stern was less successful than hoped for with **KING'S QUEST VIII**, their last major adventure game to make the switch to 3D, but **GKIII**, grounded with stubborn determination in traditional adventure gaming and emotionally complex storytelling, has a much greater chance of success, as adventure game fans, we sure hope so.

Q3 '99, *Sierra Studios, www.sierra.com*



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—Lloyd Case, July 1999
Computer Gaming World



April 30, 1999



June 1999

Adventure Games: Dead?

Despite the strong odor of death in the air, not every genre has completely given up on it.

STAR TREK INSURRECTION



adventure game. Activision's **STAR TREK INSURRECTION** (Q4 '99) may fill the void left by the now-dead (because us, "onibus") **SECRET OF WULFEN FURY**. This adventure game, a sequel to the movie, boasts a strong New Generation storyline, excellent rendered art, and adds traditional adventure gaming need in with some light action sequences.

Infragistics' **OUTCAST** (Q4 '99) is a striking-looking action/adventure, made even more striking by the fact that it is based on voxel technology rather than the now-out-of-print 3D. This fantastic voyage to a parallel universe to rescue a

dormed space expedition has an epic, cinematic feel to it, with a nice mixture of exploration, traditional puzzle-solving, conversation, and action.

Infragistics is also preparing the U.S. release of **SILVER** (Q3 '99), a charming-looking THQ/SKYBOX OCEANVIEW-style game mixing elements of adventure, role-playing, and action in a fantasy story about the fight against an evil sorcerer. Already popular with adventure-starved fans in Europe, **SILVER** is due in the U.S. this fall.

DIABLO-likes

We won't call them clones, because they all offer their own unique spins, but three games are on their way that are, shall we say, "highly reminiscent" of the Blizzard classic. G.O.D.'s **DARKSTONE** (Q3 '99) has a cool random quest generator, Westwood Studios' **NOX** (Q4 '99) boasts a furiously fun multi-player mode with great spell effects, and Epic's **REVENANT** (Q4 '99) adds a cool element of console-style fighting to the soon-to-RRP mix.

Asheron's Call

The next great massively multiplayer RPG comes from Microsoft, in which you play the role of a young computer scientist attempting to rid the world of an oppressive techno-corporate monolith. Just kidding! Following the groundwork laid by **ULTIMA ONLINE**, and later by **EVERQUEST**, **ASHERON'S CALL** is shaping up nicely as another fantasy-based online game overlaid with a strong social element.

The coolest and most original aspect of **ASHERON'S CALL** is the loyalty system, which allows newbies to pledge themselves to more experienced players. It's a win-win situation: Weak newbies get the protection they need, while the protectors get a portion of the protectees' experience points. Rather than actively hunting newbies in order to kill them, then, experienced players will be out to forge bonds with new albies—a brilliant



way to deal with the endless PK problem (not that it will ever go away.)

We'll bring you reports of the **ASHERON'S CALL** beta test very soon. Q4 '99, Microsoft, www.microsoft.com

Jane's F/A-18

From the Jane's Baltimore team that brought you **F-15** comes a simulation of the U.S. Navy's newest carrier attack plane, the **F/A-18E Super Hornet**. The sim will carry over the best elements of **JANE'S F-15**, including deadly realistic flight modeling, detailed instruments, and a wide variety of weapons and combat scenarios.

But what's even more notable is what's improved. The first thing you'll notice is the state-of-the-art graphics engine, which now supports Direct3D and is rid of the "melting mountains" syndrome that plagued **F-15**. Higher screen resolutions will also be supported. You'll fly the **F/A-18E** from the deck of the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan (CVN-76), and the action won't stop when you exit combat. In fact, the most challenging aspect of the game may be putting the plane down on the pitching, rolling deck in what promises to be the most realistic simulation of carrier operations yet. The **F/A-18E** is a fly-by-wire plane, so look for a very different feel than in the **F-15** sim.

The campaign promises to be more immersive and



replayable than the one in **F-15**. Although it's scripted, it's semidynamic, with lots of randomness as well as branching missions that vary depending upon your performance. Along with additional mini-campaigns, there's also an enhanced mission editor that will allow you to create your own sorties.

Multiplayer fans will be happy to hear that you'll be able to fly cooperative missions (including missions created with the editor) with up to eight players over LAN or Internet. Other features of interest include air-to-air refueling from S-3B Hoovers and a selection of the hottest new-technology weapons such as the AIM-9X Sidewinder and multiple weapons of the JSOW and JDAM air-to-ground weapons.

Q4 '99, Jane's Combat Simulations, www.janes.com



SIMS & SPACE

Sims Galore

Jane's A-10 **WARHOR**, previewed in our February issue, has been delayed until the third quarter. With its unique Forward Air Controller mode, it promises to be the definitive A-10 sim. Among the other sims we've recently previewed are **FLIGHT UNLIMITED III** (Q3 '99), a civilian sim with ultra-

Freelancer

Chris Roberts' epic space combat and trading game is undeniably one of the most impressive titles we've seen this year. In fact, it may be as groundbreaking as Roberts' original **WING COMMANDER**. Roberts wants to push technology to the limit, and he appears ready to accomplish that goal if the nebula-combat scene that journalists were shown at the recent E3 trade show was any indication. As the ship moved through a gaseous space crackling with electricity, viewers were treated to effects that blew away the nebula scenes in **THE WRATH OF KHAN**. Jumpgate and asteroid-belt scenes were similarly impressive, but perhaps most impressive was the sense of scale of the highly detailed, over-10,000-polygon space stations.

This isn't just a technology demo, though. It also establishes a new paradigm for space combat. Instead of flying your ship like a plane (an effort that, in space combat, often ends up involving little more than stalling and spinning), you'll actually guide your ship with the mouse, concentrating more on targeting than the minutiae of maneuvering. Instead of honing your twitch skills, you'll instead buy maneuvering upgrades for your ship's computer. We were skeptical about this, but seeing it in action, we're convinced.

Kiss the **WING COMMANDER** scripted storyline goodbye. **FREELANCER** sports a cause-and-effect universe with a predefined set of rules that governs events. This means that things are happening all over the universe, not just around you, and that you can take the storyline in unscripted directions.

The original plan was for **FREELANCER** to support up to 100 players on a **QUAKE**-style client/server, but now Roberts plans to release a 1,000-plus-player persistent universe version six months after the most game ships.

Q4 '00, Digital Anvil, www.digitalanvil.com



FLIGHT UNLIMITED III



detailed scenery of the Seattle area; **DESERT FIGHTERS** (Q4 '99), Dynamic's simulation of the desert war in Africa during WWII; and **Fly** (Q3 '99), TRI's feature-packed civilian sim, which aims to unseat **MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR**.

All of these games are standouts, but we're most intrigued by Empire's **MAG ALLEY** (Q4 '99), which highlights aerial jet gun-fight action over Korea with a superb 3D engine, an amazingly detailed dynamic campaign, and a wide variety of skill levels.

Also from Empire is **DOMANCHE/HORUM** (Q2 '00), a sequel to **AFRICHE/HAVOC** that will concentrate on the

USAF

USAF is being created with the assistance of the U.S. Air Force. Building on an improved engine that gets rid of the shimmering illusion of IAF, USAF promises an interesting balance of authenticity and accessibility.

USAF's campaigns span 40 years, from Vietnam to the Gulf War to a current-day German scenario. In Vietnam, you'll fly the F-4E Phantom and the F-105 Thunderbolt. The Gulf War will drop you into the cockpit of the F-16 Eagle, F-16 Falcon, and A-10 Warthog. The German campaign lets you pilot the high-tech F-22 Raptor and F-117 Nighthawk. Other traffic will range from MIGs and Sukhois to B-2 Spirits and KC-135s.

Look for some interesting AI here. According to Jane's, "It's easy to make the AI perfect, but it's not so easy to make it imperfect." The idea is to have the AI make the same sort of mistakes or have the same limitations as a human pilot. Multiplayer looks promising, especially if the Jane's World War scheme, which promises to link different sims in the same universe, actually comes to fruition.



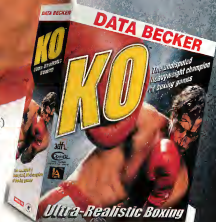
Q3 '99, Jane's Combat Simulations, www.janes.co.com

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Flight Simulator 2000

Microsoft's FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2000 offers detailed, high-resolution ground textures; 16-bit color; true elevation data with much more detail than in previous FLIGHT SIM releases; and seasonal effects. High-detail versions of New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, London, and Paris are included, and 40 other cities are present in reduced detail.

The addition of the Boeing 777-3000 and Concorde brings the number of flyable planes to 10. A Global Positioning System with a moving map makes navigation much easier, as does a new graphical flight planner. There are 20,000 airports here, up from 3,000 in the previous release. A new weather system lets you download actual weather conditions to the sim.

FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2000 PROFESSIONAL EDITION will include two high-resolution IFR training proficiency instrument panels, an expanded printed manual, and a sample of Cessna's CD-ROM training program. This edition also features two additional planes, the Mooney Bravo and the King Air 250, and high-res versions of Boston, Washington, D.C., Seattle, Berlin, Tokyo, and Rome. A flight dynamics editor and an instrument panel editor round out this version.

Q3 '99, Microsoft, www.microsoft.com/games



F/A-18E SuperHornet

Jane's isn't the only hornet game in town. Digital Integration's F/A-18E SUPERHORNET should provide a strong challenge with the help of its fully dynamic campaign, a feature with great appeal to hard-core sim fans. Digital claims that SUPERHORNET will model resupply and persistent damage with unprecedented accuracy in the campaign. There will also be a mission generator/editor for creating custom scenarios. Co-op missions, also, are limited to two players, but deathmatches can include up to 24.

The graphics engine, while not in a league with those of NATIONS and USAF, is still a dramatic improvement over previous DE engines. AVIONS

are modeled far more completely than in DE's earlier F-16 simulation, with eight air-to-air and seven air-to-ground modes faithfully recreated.

Perhaps most impressive is the carrier deck. While Jane's is still mulling over how much detail to include on their carrier deck due to frame-rate considerations, DI has loaded its active deck with other aircraft and a full crew that will marshal you around and get you into position for takeoff.

Q4 '99, Interplay, www.superhornet.com



Allegiance

Think of ALLEGIANCE as TREES in space. While hundreds of players can battle in enormous galactic arenas, the focus in ALLEGIANCE is on team play—specifically squadrons—as teams fight and develop together. Players can choose from a variety of different roles and different types of ships. Possibilities include driving an ambulance, serving as a turret gunner in a frigate piloted by another player, and playing a team commander.

The game provides strategic depth in its approach to handling resources. Resources are gathered and distributed as "pay" to each team member. At that point, each team member essentially votes on the team's direction by allocating its pay toward new ships or research into the game's tech tree. Alternatively, one team member can be designated Researcher; he goes forward with all the funds and makes the team decisions.

With every team and player's stat recorded online and the excitement of the BattleTech game for the game's back-story, ALLEGIANCE is hoping to build the sort of online community that only role-playing games have enjoyed thus far.

Q2 '00, Microsoft, www.microsoft.com/games



newest high-tech helicopter. Novologic also will visit the Comanche with COMANCHE 4 (Q4 '99), featuring a new 32-bit color Visual Space graphics engine. The company is claiming a "persistence real-world physics system" with six-gauss-of-true-time light modeling. Will it deliver realism? Watch for a hands-on look in an upcoming issue.

Another chopper sim, MicroPro's GUNSHIP III (Q1 '00), will let you fly the Apache Longbow, the AH-1Z Cobra, the Eurocopter Tiger, and the MH-53 Hawk. With front-seat/back-seat co-op multiplayer mode and campaigns throughout Europe.

GUNSHIP III



and Asia, this sim can show its bells, flint, and M1 TANK PLATOON II. (We'll take the helicopter crew; the helicopter crew is rounded out by KA-52 TEAM ALLIGATOR, from TEAM APACHE creators SINS.

If you're really worried about a potential sim drought, check out FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT 2, which lets you create your very own flight simulations. Using the hot 3D engine from TEAM ALLIGATOR, it should allow much more impressive creations than the original FS1.

FLANKER 2.0 (Q3 '99), from SSI, is finally getting close to shipping. Recent months have seen dramatic improvements to the performance of this Su27 simulation, which combines the realism of the original with a state-of-the-art 3D engine and even more dramatic detail. Rounding out the flight sim pack are JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER (Q4 '99) from Novologic and PRO PILOT 2000 (Q4 '99) from Dynamix. Finally, the developers of RENO AIR RACES, the air racing sim about



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doned by Sierra, were close to signing a publishing deal at press time.

After a dearth of submarine sims, **SILENT HUNTER II** (Q4 '98) fromSSI and **WOLFPACK II** (Q2 '00) promise to satisfy hard-core

Freespace 2



and casual players, respectively. And tank fans can soon look forward to Psygnosis' **PANZER ELITE**, a graphically splendid WWII tank sim, and NovaLogic's **ARMORED FIST 3** (Q3 '99), with support for NovaLogic's superb Novaworld massive multiplayer arenas.

Space Shots

If gravity gets you down, fear not. There's plenty of action coming on the space simulation front. **Freespace 2** (Q4 '99) features enhanced graphics, dazzling nebula effects, and enhanced squadron-based multi-

player support. Fans of **WING COMMANDER** who don't want to wait for Origin's distant online version will want to check out **STARLANDER** (Q1 '99), which has the feel of the classic **WING COMMANDER** games crossed with a WWII air-combat film.

Sierra's stunning **BABYLON 5 SPACE COMBAT SIM** has been pushed back into early 2000 due to upheavals at the company. Even with the delay, its awesome 3D engine will dazzle you with effects rivaling that of the TV show.

INDEPENDENCE WAR DELUXE will bundle the award-winning original with a

TACHYON: THE FRINGE



completely new campaign that lets you play for the other side.

Finally, there's NovaLogic's **TACHYON: THE FRINGE** (Q4 '99). While the graphics in early versions couldn't match the likes of **Freespace 2**, the game's free-form storyline and support for 120-player Novaworld play make it one of the most interesting space sims coming down the pipe.

ERVING CHAMBERLAIN



NBA Live 2000

Occasionally, we wonder if the NBA hasn't seen its best days. Yeah, yeah—Shaq and the Lakers are exciting, and sure the Knickerbockers' amazing run was great. But did it ever really get any better than the Magic Johnson-Larry Bird-Michael Jordan years? No sir.

Perhaps EA Sports feels our pain, because the company's expanding the scope of **NBA LIVE 2000** to include Afro-ed, short shorts-wearing classic players from the history of the NBA. Imagine meeting up Dr. J versus Bird, Kareem versus Shaq, or even Magic against Jerry West. (Don't even think about getting your hopes up for Michael Jordan.) And what better place to hoop it up than the new one-on-one street ball courts EA is wrangling into the game?

Old-school innovators like this, on top of the amazing graphics and court-side ambience **NBA LIVE** brings to the table, have us all excited about computer basketball again.

Q4 '99, EA Sports, www.easports.com

SPORTS

Driving

Super Super **SUNDRI**! Once the domain of the ultra-hard-core, w/nd-incl-wnd-richets style of g/ning, racing games are getting more popular and more mainstream by the month. As always, EA Sports is right in the thick of it w/ two tries. **NASCAR 2000** (Q4 '99), the company's latest evolution in their action-oriented racing franchise, sports some snazzy graphics and such i. w/ f. races as Jeff Gordon and Dale Earnhardt Jr. The company also recently announced an alliance with **RACE Motor Sports**, the organization that presents the Supercross/Motocross competitions.

One of the companies we haven't heard much from is **MotorStorm**. This newly created Dallas-based sim shop is working furiously on two upcoming N. U.-based racing games: **AMA SUPERBIKE** (Q4 '99), a motorcycle road-

Madden 2000

Football on the PC has never looked this good. In the latest edition of JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL, fans will finally feel what EA Sports basketball and hockey fans have experienced for the last few years: a gorgeous-looking, true-to-life sports game. Beyond the high-quality visuals, MADDEN 2000 features an improved running game, character sizes that allow players to accurately reflect their real-life counterparts, and the usually strong defensive AI. To top it all off, this time around you'll be able to set up a multiplayer franchise mode—perfect for beating your friends through the ages.

Q4 '99, EA Sports, www.easports.com



Motocross Madness 2

Graphics alone do not a great game make. But combine them with an already superb game, and you've got gold in them there hills. The premise of MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2 (Q1 '00) hasn't changed much since the original game, which received our CGW Editors' Choice award earlier this year. Hop on a dirt bike. Race against the computer or your friends. Perform death- and gravity-defying feats. Repeat. Repeat. Repeat.

The genius of MOTOCROSS MADNESS is that it makes riding a simulated dirt bike fun. Wide-open tracks and a mode that lets you compete in the open desert by giving you points for performing certain stunts make this so much more than a standard ring-around-the-track kind of game.

But what's really striking about MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2 is that when you're racing across the desert, the over-the-shoulder camera presents visual imagery so photorealistic, you can almost feel the wind buzzing through your hair.

Q1 '00, Microsoft, www.microsoft.com



more, and SCCA Club AM, which is based on the Sports Car Club of America's Can Am Prototype Racing series. Huge in the '5070s, this series is currently in the midst of a comeback, and Motor Sims will be capturing the thrill of this post-truck racing title on the computer.

And then there's TEST DRIVE. InfoGames (formerly Accel.) is going all out with their long-standing driving series. Over the next 12 months, we'll be seeing five different racing games under this title. The first two games scheduled for release are TEST DRIVE II (Q4 '98) and TEST DRIVE OFF-ROAD II (Q4 '99). Each will feature more of what made these games popular—slick graphics and fast, fun, racing action that surpasses last year's models. TEST DRIVE II will even incorporate car upgrades and multiplayer pink-slip racing. Later in next year, we'll see TEST DRIVE RALLY, TEST DRIVE CYCLES, and the ultimate endurance-racer, TEST DRIVE LE MANS, which will feature an optional, real-life 24-hour race.

Football

With Hasbro Interactive's recent announcement that they're getting into the sports field, expect to see an NFL-licensed, action-oriented pigskin title from them in the next two years. Other than that, it's slim pickings. EA Sports' FANTASY FOOTBALL (Q3 '99) recently missed some interest among the highly compensated but physically uncoordinated CGW staff. This Web- and subscription-based title allows you to set up your own online fantasy league and play

with your friends, or play in leagues across the country. And in a near best-for-a-lifetime league. Instead of relying on statistics that your player generates in real life, you can let the built-in EA Sports simulation engine play your game for you.

Soccer

When it comes to soccer, we have one word for you. Actually, it's an acronym: FIFA. FIFA 99 rocks, so we expect FIFA 2000 (Q4 '99) to go beyond that. How will they possibly transcend last year's sports game-of-the-year version? Better animations that include midair collisions, classic comebacks, and players from the past are just the start.

FIFA 2000



Proving that they catch on fast...and that some day soon they may be a serious challenger to EA Sports' domination, MICROSOFT'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SOCCER (Q4 '99) is no slouch in the soccer category.

Golf

By purchasing Access Software, Microsoft picked the crown jewel of golf and put it in their pocket. LINKS LS 2000 (Q4 '99) will feature five new courses, including St. Andrews Old Course, and new modes of play. The game will also provide an optional, one-click mouse saving mode for the uncoordinated among us.

And, of course, EA Sports will be releasing TIGER WOODS 2000 (Q4 '99), which will feature a heavier emphasis on accurate simulation and a Tour mode that lets you compete on the PGA tour.

Motor City Madness

In MOTOR CITY MADNESS, Electronic Arts is taking its veined NEED FOR SPEED racing franchise back in time...and online. Featuring a slew of classic cars, including the Corvette Stingray, the Pontiac GTO, and even a 1932 Ford Coupe, MOTOR CITY MADNESS allows you to race in two different ways. Sanctioned road races pit you against the computer or your friends



on a variety of different tracks. Unscheduled road races take place on city streets. Win and you get a chance to upgrade your beat-up P.O.S. into a real hot rod. Lose, and you may lose your car. For more on MOTOR CITY MADNESS, which also features a unique and robust mode of internet play, take a look at our sneak preview in this issue.
Q4 '99, Electronic Arts, www.ea.com

NBA Inside Drive 2000

Believe it or not, Microsoft has a hoops contender that looks like it can actually stay on the floor with NBA LIVE. We were able to spend some quality time playing NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2000 and came away mighty impressed. While the game's look and feel

were a little short of EA Sports' juggernaut, NBA LIVE 2000, the game action seemed stronger and more realistic in Microsoft's version. (Did we really just say that?) As the flow of the game unfolded, we got the impression that we were really playing basketball. Time will tell, but it would appear that EA Sports finally has some real competition on the court.

Q4 '99, Microsoft
www.microsoft.com



NHL 2000

The CGW crowd is an odd bunch. A crowd will gather to watch two editors play PC hockey, but the real thing comes on TV and you'd think someone had flipped to ESPN. Either real life is too frightening a concept for us or somehow EA Sports has created a hockey game that is actually more interesting than the real thing.

NHL 2000 features more of the same quirky gameplay we've come to expect, and then some. Header hits, improved player animations, and a simple two-button play mode see just some of the improvements we're expecting to see this time around.

Unless Fox Interactive's NHL CHAMPIONSHIP 2000 pulls off a miracle shot, EA Sports has the hockey market all wrapped up. Q4 '99, EA Sports, www.esports.com





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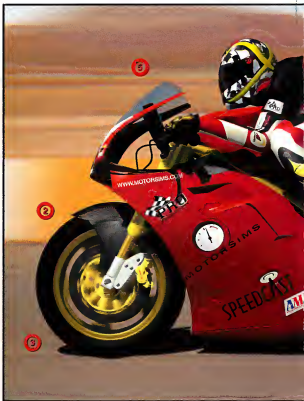
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you need to win are real. The competition is real.

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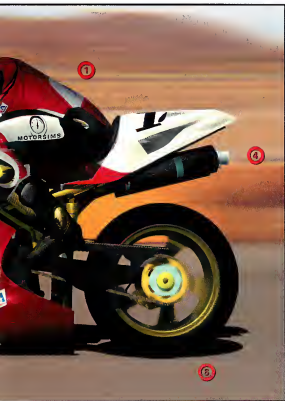
"Aims to take the Superbike racing
scene to a new level."

- Games.net

"A total focus on realism...
nice fans had better keep their eyes on this."
- Next Generation Online

"A very true-to-life physics
model and all of the elements you
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- PC Gamer

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Your knuckles are about to turn white.
Your pores are about to rain.
Your heart is about to machine gun.
Your body is about to get intimate
with the asphalt at 160 mph.
You are about to enter the world of
AMA Superbike racing.



Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun

The grandiosity of the RTS genre is expected to be reborn hard later this month (August 23). The long-awaited sequel to **COMMAND & CONQUER** preserves much of the original flavor while adding loads of environmental factors, from 3D terrain to weather effects. The game picks up 30 years after the first one, with the Brotherhood of Nod once again poised to kick the crap out of the GDI. There will also be a new faction, the Forgotten, a group of former civilians (now mutants) who were left behind in the cities during the GDI evacuation.

Westwood's goal with **TIBERIAN SUN** is to break new ground, literally. They've rewritten the C&C engine to support 15 layers of terrain so you can tunnel under your enemies or blow up entire hillside. The weather can also change the map, as bodies of water freeze, bridges are destroyed, meteors crash, or ion storms modify the terrain.

Neither the terrain nor the units are modeled in 3D, which is good news for gamers who don't have 3D cards. The units will be voxels set on top of landscape viewed in an isometric perspective. Some of the old units return, such as the Cobra bomber and the Obelisk of Light (shown). New units include spies, recon drones, and missionary commandos. Our personal favorites include tanks that burrow underground and pop up for surprise attacks, and the Mammoth Mark II, a walking tank several stories high.

For more details, tune in next month for a complete overview of the game, along with killer strategies on how to win.

Q4 '98, Westwood/EA, www.westwood.com



STRATEGY/ WAR

More Bang for Your Buck

Star Trek's mission this year is to boldly go onto your hard drive, with no fewer than three strategy titles in the works. Intrepid has two of the games, **STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS** (Q4 '98) and **STARFLEET COMMAND** (Q3 '98). Using the complex pun-and-paper **STARFLEET BATTLES** game as a foundation, **STARFLEET COMMAND** melds an in-depth spaceship-management simulation with real-time combat, while **STAR TREK: NEW WORLDS** is a more traditional real-time strategy title, with four races vying for resources and engaging in ground-based combat.

Activision's **STAR TREK: ARMADA** (Q4 '98) is in the same real-time vein as **NEW WORLDS** but moves its battles into the wastess of space. While it doesn't feature all the

STAR TREK: ARMADA



new units sported by **NEW WORLDS**, every starship does have a special attack, and the game should enjoy the added

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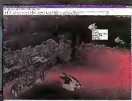
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SSI is in the midst of its most creative... explosion since the first days of **PLUNDER GENERAL: RITES OF WAR** (Q3 '99) brings the playability of PG to the Warhammer universe, and is possibly the strategy sleeper of the year. Now that they've finished with **BATTLE OF BRITAIN** for TalonSoft, Gory Grigsby and Keith Brers are hard at work on **STEEL PANTHERS IV**, which likely won't make it this year. The designers and SSI are debating the merits of switching the award-winning system to simultaneous turns. We'll keep you posted. SSI also managed to entice both SSG, with **REACH FOR THE STARS** (Q4 '99), and Atomic Games, with **CLOSE COMBAT: BATTLE OF THE BULGE**

UTES OF WAR



CLOSE COMBAT: BATTLE OF THE BULGE



(Q4 '99), away from Microsoft.

Among the Independents, HPS is upgrading its first release,

Point of Attack, to modern graphics and sound. It should benefit from a more sophisticated AI and combat resolution techniques used in HPS' **TIGERS ON THE PROWL 2**, though you shouldn't expect this until mid-2000.

Decoon Games, publisher of **Strategy & Tactics** magazine, is converting some of its board wargames to the PC, among them Darryl Parker's famed **BATTLES FOR THE ARDENNES**.

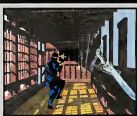
One of the more unusual titles in the works is Blue Byte's **SHADOWPACT** (Q4 '99), a strategy game that takes place in real-time yet utterly eschews the trap

Shogun: Total War

If you long for the days of epic samurai clashes, you should know about EA's **SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR**, one of the best-looking games we've seen in any genre this year. In addition to a turn-based strategic-level game, **SHOGUN** sports a sophisticated 3D wargame with elegant controls for formations, and one of the best computer opponents we've yet seen in a real-time game. The depth and breadth of research options are impressive yet still manageable, as you choose whether to go the more traditional Japanese route with spies and Ninja assassins, or forsake history for the Western firearms and trade.

Originally scheduled for fall of 1999, **SHOGUN** will be delayed until early 2000, but for good reason. EA will have a free online gaming service supporting up to eight players per tactical battle. You'll be able to create a custom army and improve its experience and morale as you campaign online. In either solo mode or multiplayer, you'll issue orders and designate melee states for your troops, and even queue orders to your veteran units. You'll also be able to erect battlefield defenses and create battle plans before jumping into the 3D tactical combat. We're very excited with the changes and are eagerly awaiting what looks to be a strategy classic in the making.

Q1 '00, Electronic Arts, www.ea.com



Black & White

The next "god game" from Peter Molyneux, the father of god games, accents the word "play" in "morality play." **BLACK & WHITE** is one of the most ambitious games we've ever seen. Set in an idyllic world of small villages populated by tiny people, gamers play the role of an omnipotent being overseeing the tiny lives below. The goal is to gain power through worship, whether that worship is motivated by love or fear is up to you. Careless moral dilemmas are presented to you play, and depending upon which path you choose, the world will reflect your choices, becoming charred and darkly brooding or evolving into a fairy tale paradise.



Your acting agent in the material realm is an AI-driven entity that becomes the physical manifestation

of your ruling philosophy. Nurture and reward the best and you'll end up with a King Kong version of Mother Theresa; train him through punishment and fear and your henchman will become a terrifying war machine. Using spell powers gained from a growing base of worshippers, you must spread the word of your religion until the whole world is united in praise of the One True God.

BLACK & WHITE's multiplayer game could be a god-send. At the outset there will be two multiplayer modes: a kind of chat world where you can upload your existing game creatures and let them mingle, allowing them to learn from other players' creatures; and an eight-player landscape where you play against others in a more traditional context. Lionhead is planning to follow this up with a gaming world where hundreds can join and play against each other, forming alliances, clans and the like. Q4 '99, Electronic Arts, www.ea.com



The Sims

You've played god with cities, civilizations, and entire planets. With **THE SIMS**, you'll finally get the chance to screw with the lives of individuals. Designed by Will Wright, who created the original **SIMCITY**, **THE SIMS** lets you take control of a man or woman and guide this Sim-person through life, from simple decisions like when to eat to more elaborate social situations such as making friends or seducing the neighbor. As your sim's life evolves, he or she can marry, move to a bigger house, and spend money littering that home with stuff—the of American dream. Go for the traditional nuclear family, having kids and backyard barbecue with the neighbors, or do things the Northern California way and turn the house into a commune with multiple adults living in "alternative" arrangements. Most intriguing is the capacity to extend the game with downloads: Mods or third-parties can design add-ons which add new behaviors and activities to your sim world. Very different, very cool.

Q1 '00, Maxis, www.maxis.com

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PROPS to the Spring '99 Winners!

THE GUILLEMOT CHAMPIONSHIPS OF THE AMD PROFESSIONAL GAMERS' LEAGUE, the live finals event for the PGL's Spring '99 season, took New York City by storm. Thousands of spectators attended the two-day event at XS New York in Manhattan's Times Square, and 20,000 more followed the action via the live Webcast!

IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUNDS OF COMPETITION, Guillaume "X'Ds-Grrrr" Patry overcame the notorious Wayne "Soso" Chiang to take the Strategy (Starcraft) title, and Bon "Kuin" Danan captured the Action (Quake II) crown by beating out Erik "Vorador" Spoor. Kuin and Grrrr took home \$10,000 in cash apiece, and more than \$4,000 in prizes - all told, more than \$100,000 in cash and prizes was distributed among the top 64 players in the Spring '99 season!

IN ADDITION, KUIN RECEIVED AN AWESOME BONUS PRIZE: an all-expense-paid trip to id Software's headquarters in Mesquite, TX, courtesy of id and Activision!

The finalists in each of the Spring '99 categories placed as follows (with city of residence):

Quake II

Jon "Kuin" Danan: Montreal, Canada
Erik "Vorador" Spoor: Amsterdam, NY
Sebastian "Sobek" Lesart: Mississauga, Canada
Burt "Immortal" Shindler: Pleasanton, CA
Alex "Bad-habit" Puzoski: Helsinki, Finland
Gordon "EP-Gawwster" Iuk: Los Angeles, CA (tie)
Jason "Master" Sigaly: Fremont, CA
Eric "DB-Sabotez" Manfredi: Mendota, IL (tie)

Starcraft

Guillaume "Grrrr" Patry: Deserport, Quebec
Wayne "Soso" Chiang: San Jose, CA
Dave "303P" Bavelle: Guelph, Newfoundland
Christopher "Pillars" Page: Andover, MA
Patrick "Kuo-the-beard" Chapdelain: Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada
Stephen "Taurus" Oum: Culver City, CA (tie)
David "DeepBlue" Mager: Rochester, NY
Dennis "Warlogst" Lee: Good Plains, TX (tie)

Quake II winner
Bon "Kuin" Danan
receives his \$10,000
winner's check from
PGL Commissioner
Nolan Bushnell.



Fans packed XS New York in Times Square to cheer the top players in North America do battle for prizes in prizes!

Starcraft champion Guillaume "Grrrr" Patry is all smiles as he receives his winner's check while PGL commissioner Nolan Bushnell (left) and Starcraft co-producer Rob Tuck of Blizzard Entertainment (right) look on.

Registration for the Fall '99 Season is Now Open!

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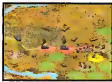
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Panzer General 3D Assault

Any time you hear a critic say, "I don't know why they're doing another sequel to that game. What else can they do with that system?" you know the poor guy is jaded. Such naysayers will no doubt wallow in self-indulgent whining rather than enjoy the freshness and sheer fun of **PANZER GENERAL 3D ASSAULT**.

The rich 3D environment is more than mere eye candy for the 200+ 3D-modeled vehicles and troops to blitz through; it also allows for dynamic lighting, true line-of-sight, and realistic movement and assaults between attackers and defenders on different terrain elevations. The interface is one of the most elegant we've seen, and both the campaigns and multiplayer options look terrific. The game system has been totally revamped, adding new rules for leaders, air strikes, supply, replacements and the like. Somehow, it's even more accessible than the original...and easily the most gorgeous turn-based game we've ever seen.

Q1 '99, SSI, www.ssionline.com



Warlords Battlecry

Generally speaking, going from turn-based to real-time with a strategy game is akin to serving aspirin as ice cream for dessert. The reason we didn't run screaming from **WARLORDS BATTLECRY** is that the SSG folks know their way around real-time strategy (RTS) from the **CARRIERS AT WAR** days.

WARLORDS BATTLECRY differs from standard RTS fare in its emphasis on heroes, training and morale. Leaders have a command radius—once outside of that radius, units lose effectiveness. Also, troops don't always fight to the last one, but may break and run if surprised or outmaneuvered.

Resources (gold, metal, stone, and crystals) are collected automatically, which means you can get to the heart of the matter—lots of combat. **BATTLECRY** features five different races, each with distinct animation and unique attributes. In addition to the branching solo campaign, there are 10 different victory conditions for solo and multiply that may be modified, plus a scenario editor. All in all, **WARLORDS BATTLECRY** offers the usual polish and attention to gameplay that we expect from SSG, but in a "new" direction.

Q1 '99, SSG/Red Orb Entertainment, www.redorb.com



SHADOWPACT



prings of your traditional RTS game... In **SHADOWPACT**, gamers will fight a war against a cabal seeking to subjugate the world under the rule of a band of fallen angels. The war is fought in virtual reality, with gamers recruiting special agents to fight for them. Combat is handled in a system similar to the **WARLORDS** series, but the real trick to the game will be in selecting the right agents for the right job and deploying them at the right time to counter threats. A robust multiplayer package is planned with even more agents available online.

Every time we see Pandemic Studio's **DARK REIGN 2** (Q3 '99) we're blown

DARK REIGN 2



Theme Park World

Don't have the time to visit Disneyworld anytime soon? Who cares? With Bullfrog's **THEME PARK WORLD** you'll be able to create and manage virtually every facet of your own amusement park, from setting the admission price and quality of balloons to designing the drops, loops, and stomach-churning leaps of your own roller coasters. While a deeply involved business simulation lurks at this game's core, an intuitive interface and beautifully realized, whimsical graphics should make the open-ended play of **THEME PARK WORLD** accessible to even the most casual gamer.

The best part of this game is in the extras. After laying out your park, you can stroll around it from a first-person perspective and ride on any of the rides. But that's the least of it: parks can be uploaded to a **THEME PARK WORLD** web site, where gamers will be able to sample the designs of other players and even send postcards to friends from their virtual vacation spots. This game promises to be the E-ticket title this holiday season.

Q1 '99, Electronic Arts, www.ea.com



Conquest: Frontier Wars

As much as we were looking forward to playing CONQUEST this year, the reasons we're hearing regarding this outer space real-time strategy title's delay until mid-2000 are encouraging. Digital Anvil is using the additional time to overhaul the ships for each of the four different races. One of our early concerns—the similarity of the ship designs—is being addressed. Not only will these be



more marked differences between the races, but the ship styles should be easily differentiated through interface cues. The core of the game still relies on large fleet combat, with gamers rewarded for taking the fight to their enemies with salvage after a battle. With its random map generator and the added tactical challenge of acquiring and defending the jump gates linking battlefields, we're really looking forward to multiplayer CONQUEST.

Q2 '00, Microsoft, www.digitalanvil.com

SimMars

Sid Meier and ALPHA CENTAURI may have beaten them to space, but WB Wright is betting that gamers will want to master a planet a little closer to home, namely

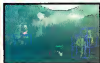
Mars. The goal is to build a colony on the Red Planet that can exist with very little to no support from Earth. Gamers will have to terraform the hostile environment in order to create and maintain a network of colonies. The specialized colonies will provide food, shelter, and power as well as conduct research into advanced genetics to accelerate mankind's evolutionary progress. Meix is working closely with NASA for this real-time title to better understand the realities of space colonization in order to give the plausibility, scientific accuracy, and strategic depth. Fortunately, the game's release isn't quite as far off as an actual Mars landing.



Q2 '00, Electronic Arts, www.ea.com

Force Commander

Forget everything you thought you knew about FORCE COMMANDER. When this title reappeared on our radar after a considerable absence, it was as an entirely new game. Gone was the standard RTS top-down perspective to be replaced by a robust 3D engine sporting a silky free-moving camera. Gamers will get to fight on both sides of a conflict set in the classic Star Wars universe, playing as an Imperial commander who eventually defects to the Rebel side. Action will



take place almost immediately in every mission since LucasArts has teased out the resource gathering that dominates the early part of most RTS games, instead, players will have to fight in order to secure "command points" that are earned by defeating enemies and achieving mission goals. These points are then used to purchase units to be dropped planet-side. Units and their experience can be carried over from mission to mission or placed "on leave" until they're needed again.

Q4 '99, LucasArts, www.lucasarts.com

away crew. A drastic reworking of the engine, DR2 may be the sharpest-looking RTS to ship this year; but, by a sliver, it's the 3D

graphics and lighting effects actually impact game play with the detailed, interactive terrain a silent but active player in the game. We really like the game's use of cycling day and night, with units specifically designed to be most effective under cover of night (we'll always welcome a new way to be devious). Activision should be releas-

ing this beauty sometime in the fall.

Harpoon 4

HARPOON was a landmark game because it proved that hard-core wargames could still sell in big numbers. It didn't hurt that designer Larry Bond and Tom Clancy used the game to model the conflicts in their novel Red Storm Rising. HARPOON 4 is based on the latest in the renowned tabletop gaming series, and it offers all of the data with none of the hassle of wading through Bond's exhaustive tables and combat charts.

The time period is the height of the Cold War, chosen

because it puts the two largest sea forces in history—the United States Navy and the Soviet Navy—against each other in a number of missions and campaigns. The arena is still operational combat, mostly at sea, but with a lot of variety. You might hunt down enemy submarines one mission, then tackle a guided missile cruiser group the next, followed by an aircraft carrier strike group. HARPOON 4 is also rather attractive and fairly easy to navigate during play considering the game's complexity. Even with its outdated Cold War setting, this one looks promising.

Q2 '00,SSI, www.sionline.com



ORCS: REVENGE OF THE ANCIENT



with the game slated for release in late 2000. It's likely that there will be at least one add-on pack for CV III, as well as a scenario add-on. Activision is still planning on publishing an add-on for CIVILIZATION III to POWER, as well.

Check out our Preview section for Berkeley Systems's ORCS: REVENGE OF THE ANCIENT (Q4 '99).

Finally, Firaxis has signed on to do the long-awaited CIVILIZATION III for Hasbro,

with the game slated for release in late 2000. It's likely that there will be at least one add-on pack for CV III, as well as a scenario add-on. Activision is still planning on publishing an add-on for CIVILIZATION III to POWER, as well.




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PUZZLES & CLASSICS

Puzzle Me This

International chess master Josh Waitzkin (of *Searching for Bobby Fischer* fame) has joined the creative team of **CHESSMASTER 7000** (Q3 '99) shake the series out of its corporate doldrums. This time around, there are AI opponents that a normal human being can actually defeat (and that also have some personality), as well as the tonight-computer-routine based on famous human grandmasters that have always been a CHESSMASTER strength. The graphics, tutorials, and online play have been upgraded, and you can supposedly get a rating of your computer-play ability that approximates your own chessboard strength. We'll keep our post-pushing fingers crossed.

Likewise, for **IRISN II** (Q3 '99) Hasbro has beefed up the already solid AI of the original. The new game plays very hotly, though we're still unsure how well it will work online. The interface was a lot cleaner than you'll find in most board-to-computer conversions—though we miss riding our own dice.

Those who love spatial logic puzzles should check out Microsoft's unassuming and impressively priced, **PANGORA'S BOX** (Q3 '99). Finally, if you're too cheap to buy anything, you can still have a good time with Berkeley Systems' **GET THE PICTURE** (out now), a free online game that lets you vote on your friends' captions for pictures, doodles, and the like. It's a lot like the PC **PICTORAMA**—but this time, the idea works.

Creatures 3/ Creatures Adventures

When the first **CREATURES** was released three years ago, it was remarkable: a true artificial-intelligence product that also happened to be a fun family game. Any rough edges (and there were more than a few) were counterbalanced by the sheer charm of raising your cute little Norm. Life forms from hatchlings to adults. **CREATURES** was even better than having a Tamagotchi, because you could turn the blasted thing off and save your little society in progress without worrying about your Norms starving to death. **CREATURES 2**, on the other hand, was a huge disappointment—too hard, too hamless. So it's nice to see that the **CREATURES** products planned for later this year are moving back in the direction of the first game.

CREATURES 3 has its share of creepy moments—at times, it seems like everything in the game has a hope set of teeth. But it also has plenty of cool environments to explore. The game takes place on a starship that is so huge it supports multiple weather zones (see it legend Arthur C. Clarke would be proud), and it's surprisingly enjoyable running over fields of lush vegetation just yards removed from airless space.

CREATURES ADVENTURES, on the other hand, is sort of a **CREATURES** goes Candyland. The usual threats are missing, and you don't spend much time trying to figure out how your Norms (which are now larger and more cuddly) tick. Instead, you romp, explore, and play over a stylized and very friendly environment. But you might look at it like eating a bowl of Frosties Flakes: Who's to know that you don't have a five-year-old in your household?

Q4 '99, Mindscape, www.mindscape.com



You Don't Know Jack Offline

It's always amazed us that the Jetvision and Berkeley Systems folks could crank out enough material to refresh the **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK** experience online on a daily basis. **OFFLINE** is a collection of 800 of the most irrelevant questions from the popular **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: THE NETSHOW**, plus 200 new satirical questions based on "Pissed About a Question?" letters sent by JACK fans.

While this collection is a bit more traditional than the recent **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK: THIS RIDE**, **OFFLINE** does have better graphics and audio than the online version. It'll have to be enough to keep us Jack Attack fans happy, because the oft-rumored **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK 5** is at least 12 to 18 months away. (Conspiracy alert: We were also pleasantly surprised by the PlayStation version of **JACK**.)

Q3 '99, Berkeley Systems/Bavas, www.berksys.com



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ACTUAL GAME MODEL

Flight Sim Summer

(of '42)

The Last of the WWII Sims Are Ready to Take Off, and They're Better Than Ever

by Denny Atkin

The WWII simulation deluge is nearly over, and it looks like another drought may be in store for prop combat fans. But this last batch of propeller-driven sims looks ready to keep gamers entertained until more sims arrive after the turn of the millennium. From B-17 FLYING FORTRESS II's unprecedented realistic simulation of every station of a lumbering World War II bomber to NATIONS: FIGHTER COMMAND's you-are-there graphics and sound to FLIGHT COMBAT's litchen sink of features sure to please even the most hard-core of sim fans, there's plenty of virtual war left for sim fans to fight.

✶ Flight Combat: Thunder Over Europe

Could This Be the Definitive WW II Flight Simulation?



It's happened to every serious flight sim fan. You boot up a new game only to find a major feature was omitted or botched up. Oh, sure, all the things you'd like to see in a flight sim exist, but they're spread across five different simulations on your shelf. You don't care about the realities of badges, marketing input, or time-to-market. You just want a sim with the works—with the working works—not excuses.

If FLIGHT COMBAT THUNDER OVER EUROPE creator Constantine Hantopoulos has his way, your dream may come true. Talking to Con, you know this game is in the hands of a die-hard simulation fan, one of us. But Con and his team

have that rare understanding of how to create a simulation with the depth to satisfy the hard-core and the flash and dazzle to bring in the newbies. From what we've seen of FLIGHT COMBAT so far, Constantine Hantopoulos is a name you may soon be hearing in the same breath with Larry Holland, Denon Slye, Gilman Louie, and Andy Hollis (better learn to spell it).

Such accolades don't come cheap in a industry of rye-too products, in a market with over half a dozen new WWII sims. But as I took my first flight in the oddly acronymed FC:TOE, I kept barraging Con with questions about features. And the answer to almost every question was a resounding yes.

Planned Yet Random

One significant feature from the hard-core sim player's laundry list that didn't get a yes was a dynamic campaign that generates the war on the fly. But FC:TOE has what some would call an even better solution: a "semidynamic" campaign that consists of prescribed, branching missions with a high degree of randomness. This allows the designers to create missions that are historical in nature but unpredictable even upon replay. You'll be able to go off on interesting side missions, depending upon your

performance in regular missions.

While you can't change the outcome of the war, there will be different levels of victory. For instance, if you're flying for the US and you get a major victory, you'll reach Berlin before the Russians, which would have major benefits for postwar Europe. Decent performance may find both companies reaching Berlin at about the same time, while a poor showing may have the Russians taking most of Germany.

The campaign choices here look familiar: You can fly in the Battle of Britain or the later battle for Europe. You won't fly as a persistent character; instead, you'll be offered a wide variety of mission types flying different aircraft. Most intriguing are the night-fighter missions, something never before fully simulated. As you take off at night over London, searchlights will comb the skies, locking onto enemy aircraft and illuminating them for you. Ground radar controllers will also vector you towards your target. The team is still considering whether to model the airborne radar of the day; they were very primitive and difficult to operate, and thus a simplified version is likely here. During the day along with the usual escort and intercept missions, you'll also fly such tasks as train-busting, carpet-bombing, illuminating targets for Lancaster



BOMBER AWAY An Mi-163 closes in for the kill on a B-17G.



DIRE STRAITS A damaged B-17 looks for a flat surface to set down on in the Alps.

bombers by dropping flares from a Mosquito, and even torpedo-bombing from Ju-88s. You'll choose your flight from a list of missions that are active at the time, so fighter jocks aren't likely to be forced to fly bombers.

Look for the team to fill in lots of the details missing from other sims. If a German pilot gets shot down over the English Channel, for instance, you'll have to watch for German seaplanes trying to rescue him.

In addition, there's a slick instant-action mode that's set up similar to the one in the classic CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT, in which



INSTRUMENTS OF DESTRUCTION Instruments are very detailed, if perhaps not quite as 3D-looking as those in WWII FIGHTERS.

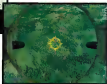
you build your scenarios by filling in the blanks to create a sentence along the lines of "There I was, in my P-38, escorting two B-24s, when I jumped three B-109s..."

The game's multiplayer mode will allow you to fly any single mission from the campaign, either cooperatively or antagonistically. There's also a training section to help you get your wings.

Model Flight

There are 17 flyable aircraft to choose from, along with nine variants. These include various models of the P-38, P-47, P-51, B-17, B-24, Spitfire, Hurricane, Lancaster, Ju-87, Ju-88, He-111, Bf-109, Bf-110, Me-262, and Me-163. The planes feature a force-based

flight model, similar to the one used by WARBENDS. With all the options turned on, you'll deal with spins, accelerated stalls, and all the other details of a realistic flight model. The sim features independent engine control, so you could use a duct-throttle to control each engine on a P-38 individually. How detailed is the control? Well, in the Me-163 rocket plane under full realism, you'll have to control the fuel mixture to keep



FEED THE TREES You can man the belly-mounted ball-turret position in the B-17; note the rich terrain textures.

the engine running (and keep it from exploding).

The cockpit in the version I saw were still preliminary, but the team is planning to go all out in detailing them. Look for a full suite of view systems, including customizable fixed views and podlocks. Plane exteriors in the early version didn't look bad, but they weren't up to the quality of B-17 FLYING FORTRESS II or WWII FIGHTERS. Hopefully the art team

will be able to improve the textures before the sim ships. Most impressive were the terrain ships. Most impressive were the traces, which had the "squiggly" effect you see in wartime gun camera footage.

The scenery looks very good, but isn't as detailed as that



EDITOR IN CHIEF The Plane Editor will let you alter the most minute details of an aircraft, turn your P-51D into an H model, or see what happens if you add more armor.

in the company's FLIGHT UNLIMITED II civilian simulator. That's because while FL3 models only a single city, the terrain in FCTOE covers over a million

square miles of Europe. The environment promises to be not only realistic but also useful. Clouds aren't just for looks—you'll be able to lose pursuing players by maneuvering in the cloud layers.

One of the favorite features of classic WWII sims, the flight recorder, makes an appearance here, but this is far more powerful than the recorders of old. You can edit your combat recordings to add wipes between scenes, drop images and text over the video, and even add your own voiceovers.

Custom Combat

The feature we're most looking forward to, though, is the ability to customize the simulation. FCTOE opens itself up like no simulation ever has before. While sims like COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR and FIGHTER SQUADRON have allowed customization through the editing or creation of external files, FCTOE actually includes a built-in graphical editor that lets you modify nearly every object in the sim. Is your favorite variant of the Bf-109 not included? No problem. Open up the object in the flight model



CANDID CAMERA FLIGHT COMBAT's gun camera feature lets you save and edit detailed films of your combat experiences.

editor, alter the weight, armor loading, powerplant, and armament; and now it's in there. Adding completely new planes will also be possible, albeit more difficult since you'll need to create the models in a package like 3D MAX.

When creating your own mission areas, you'll be able to use a full 3D object editor to raise and lower terrain.

Missing a favorite landmark? Add a custom terrain tile. And, of course, you'll be able to create your own missions, complete with randomness in object appearance probability and location, so you'll even be able to surprise yourself.

Customizable and feature-packed, FCTOE should have no trouble in making a name for itself in a crowded market. **CGW**



DAY AND NIGHT Although it's masked by the sun here, this Bf-110G is actually a night fighter.

B-17 Flying Fortress II

Finally, a Bomber Simulation Done Right

If a B-17 Flying Fortress was anything but fun, the plane itself was tough and had an amazing propensity for making it home even with large pieces missing, but nothing stood between the crew and deadly bullets and flak except thin sheets of aluminum and Plexiglas. Flying in box formation with bullets careening all around the plane—from other B-

have used simplified renditions of the aircraft, with basic instrumentation, rudimentary bomb-sights, and so on. Not so here. Although there will be simplified modes for those more into action than minutiae, look for all of the flight systems to be simulated in great detail here. If you so desire, you can start the engines with a keypad and simply control them with the throttle control. But if you want the complete experience, you can also worry about manifold pressure, turbochargers, mixture, prop pitch, and so on. The instrument panel is recreated in exacting detail. The same holds true

if flying a bomber seems too slow-paced to you, don't write this sim off. Along with the B-17G, the sim also lets you fly the P-38 Lightning, P-47 Thunderbolt, and P-51 Mustang as escort for the B-17s. Or try your hand at taking down the bombers in the German Bf-109, FW-190, Me-262, or rocket-powered Me-163. The latter should be particularly interesting to fly. You have three minutes of fuel to use to get to 30,000 feet, make screaming passes at the bombers at 600 mph, and then glide to a landing as a sitting duck for Allied fighters.



SHE'S DA BOMB You'll be able to choose custom nose art for your B-17.

17s, escort fighters, and deadly Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs—every step towards completing the required 25 missions had to come as a huge relief to bomber crew members.

MicroProse's B-17 FLYING

FORRESS II is designed to capture the feelings of excitement, terror, glory, fear, and relief that those crews felt. Where too many sims are sterile recreations of the hardware without much thought given to the lives of the men who crewed these awesome machines, B-17 strives to recreate the "terrible beauty" of the experience without romanticizing it. From what we've seen so far, all you'll need to complete the experience is a Betty Grable pinup next to your computer.

Behind the Wheel

Previous sims that have let you fly the B-17, such as *WARBIRDS* and *FIGHTER SQUADRON*,



JUG WHINE Detail abounds, down to the bouncing of gear oleos and the castering of the tailwheel.

can mean. In the nose, you'll find an accurate recreation of the famous Norden bombsight. Because this system was so highly classified, the Wayward game design team had difficulty finding information on it even today. However, the developers have worked with ex-bombardiers with over 70 missions between them to ensure the device's accuracy.

The crew slots are more than just positions you can man in the plane. Each position has an AI crew member who gains experience on each mission, so it's in your best interest to bring your boys home alive. If a garner is injured, you can send another over with a first-aid kit, and move another crew member into his position.



MOTLEY CREW Clicking any crew member lets you take his station, or send him to man an injured crewman's position.

for the other stations in the plane, all of which you

not only makes things look more realistic but also helps provide an unprecedented sense of speed at low altitudes.

Aircraft textures are amazingly detailed, complete with weathering and chipped paint around leading edges. Watching a plane taxi, you get a good indication of both the sim's visual and behavioral realism. As the plane rolls towards the runway, you'll see the oleo shocks compress on the main landing gear and the tailwheel castering back and forth as the plane turns. When AI planes reach the runway and run up for takeoff, you'll see the control surfaces move as the pilot does a control check. The detail extends to props. Not mere alternating 2D textures, the propellers are 3D even when spinning. In fact, you can use the interference patterns where the props overlap to sync the

continued on page 88



A full-page photograph of a construction worker in the foreground, wearing a red helmet, a silver reflective safety vest over a black long-sleeved shirt, and a tool belt. He is captured in a dynamic pose, swinging a large sledgehammer with both hands. In the background, another worker in a white shirt and tan pants is working with a vertical rebar. The scene is set on a construction site with rebar and concrete forms visible. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Mark Norris
10:25 a.m.
September 18, 1999
Sitrin Development, Site #21

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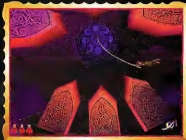
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JERRY AT 3! The ball-turret gunner of the B-17 in the foreground unloads at a Bf-109, assisted by the tailgunner of the second fortress.

continued from page 84

engines, just as the real pilots did. You'll also find real-time lighting and shadowing and dramatic flak and explosion effects. And, of course, you'll be able to select your own nose art.

The team didn't slack off on the fighters. The detailed cockpits even include accurate gunsights, with which you can optionally dial in the range and wingspan of your target.

As for audio, look for more than a repeating drone here. Wayward sent a sound engineer up in the Callings Foundation's B-17 to record the actual sounds of aircraft from each position.

Of course, one of the biggest challenges was nursing a damaged B-17 home. You'll relive this terror through detailed damage effects. For instance, if an engine is streaming fire, that fire can actually burn through the fabric elevator surfaces at the tail. When a part is damaged or lost, the flight model will be affected appropriately. In addition, damage also affects the structural integrity of the plane. And if you do have to bail out, it pays to try to make it to Allied territory first, as your

experienced crew will have a better chance of making it back to the airfield to fly again.

Tour of Duty

Like a real B-17 pilot, you'll fly a campaign consisting of 25 mis-



STOP PRODUCTION You'll be able to pilot both fighters and bombers; here, a P-47 makes a low-level pass at an Axis factory.

sions. The campaign is dynamic, and you can choose starting dates between 1943 and 1945. Targets are generated on a priority basis, and damaged targets will remain damaged in future missions, until they're repaired or replaced. The sim will feature over 250 historical targets. You'll play the campaign as a Bomber Commander, where you'll be responsible for only your plane, or as a Squadron

Leader, where you manage planes, crew, targets, and plan routes, and where the other planes in your formation will bomb on your lead. In addition, you can fly escort as an Allied fighter pilot, or attack B-17s for the Axis.

Perhaps most intriguing is the multiplayer mode, where up to 30 players can man various positions in bombers, or fly escorting and attacking fighters. With 12 B-17s, eight escorts, and eight attackers, there are 136 possible positions to man.

Given its attention to detail and historical accuracy, along



LITTLE FRIENDS Although your B-17 is armed to the teeth, escorts can make a big difference in whether you make it home intact.

with dazzling graphics and a campaign that promises great replayability, we don't see how B-17 FLYING FORTRESS II could possibly bomb **CGLW**

Nations: WWII Fighter Command

A Sim With a Dangerous Atmosphere

The most striking aspect of Pygnosis' entry into the WWII sim arena, **NATIONS: FIGHTER COMMAND**, is the graphics engine. As you fly escort for a group of Blerheim bombers over France, the cloud

your engine coughs out puffs of smoke. Closing in on the target, you unload your guns and are treated to a Hollywood-class explosion.

Coming from a team that has the impressive-looking action



SHIP STRAFE A P-40 makes a low-level run at enemy ship-pong. Note the 3D clouds above.

cover becomes darker and more threatening, and flashes of lightning crackle around you. You throttle back too quickly as you make a pass on a Bf-109, and

game G-POLICE under its belt, **NATIONS**, not surprisingly, looks good. The graphical environment here is stunning, with detailed cities full of polygonal buildings,



MOSQUITO BITE A British Mosquito strafes an Axis convoy

not flat ground textures. When enemies are far away, you see realistic sunlight glints off their canopies, not big red icons. Atmospheric, from clouds to the haze on the ground at dawn, are unparalleled. Aircraft and cockpits, of course, look great. Birds even trail behind ships. About the only area where the engine falls down in the current build is in the mountains, which are very polygonal in appearance.

This game isn't all eye candy, however: The campaign will allow you to fly 15 historical



BOOM BABY BOOM Pyrotechnics abound during combat sequences.



OVER LAKE CHAMPLAIN A long-nosed FW-190 flies low over a lake as it searches for Allied fighters.

missions for each country (England, Germany and the U.S.), all of which are based on actual British war records. Flying the first mission of the German campaign and escorting a group of Ju-88s over the Channel, I had a you-are-there feeling I hadn't felt since the classic *THEIR FINEST HOUR*. While 45 scripted missions isn't much, Pygnosis plans to release a mission editor via the Internet. In addition, there will be a variety of instant-action missions. And look for support for up to 64 players in multiplayer combat (deathmatch, team, and "VI Football" modes), as well as built-in voice support.

NATIONS appears to strike a careful balance between realism and flash and dazzle, making it appealing to first-time sim pilots as well as more experienced fliers. **EGM**

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the MAGAZINE

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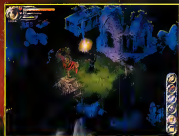


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HARDWARE

IN SEARCH OF THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE • REVIEWS • KILLER RIGS • NEWS

SCOOP

nVidia's Next-Gen Chip Could Bring Cut-Scene Quality to Gameplay

The Next 3D Revolution



As amazing as game graphics have become, they still don't measure up to the stunning animations that kick off most games. Gamers have been dreaming of the day when the gameplay looks as good as the cut-scenes. If nVidia's next chip delivers on its promise, that day may not be far off.

We cornered one of nVidia's lead chip architects and got him talking about nVidia's next chipset, code-named NV10. He terms this new chip a "graphics processing unit," or GPU for short. nVidia chose this term because the chip, scheduled to ship this fall, has more than twice as many transistors as a Pentium III CPU. In addition to having lots of raw processing power, NV10 will be able to take on a substantial portion of the CPU's workload, resulting in dramatically improved graphics and freeing the CPU to handle other chores like artificial intelligence (AI) processing.

nVidia says the main goal of the NV10 is to take on the role of calculating 3D geometry (called transform and lighting, or T&L). In current systems, 3D geometry chores can consume three-quarters of the CPU's time, leaving everything else in a game—controller input, audio, AI, collision detection, and physics, among other factors—to fight over the leftover time.

By off-loading geometry calculations from the CPU, the NV10 will let games have radically higher polygon counts, according to nVidia. For example, a typical scene in *QUAKE II* might have 3,000 polygons. But imagine that same scene with 10 times as many polygons. (Heck, maybe we'll finally see characters with round necks.) OpenGL and Direct 7.0 both support T&L acceleration, so games using those application program interfaces (APIs) should see vastly improved performance.

Afterburner On

There are many speeds and feeds to consider in 3D chip performance, but two of the most important are triangle rate and fill rate. Triangle rate refers to the number of triangles the processor can draw on the screen per second. Fill rate describes the speed at which those triangles can be filled with shading or texture information. Traditionally, 3D chips have concentrated more on fill rate to allow for more filtering and rendering effects, as well as higher resolutions. But NV10's design will also emphasize triangle rate. nVidia reps say that NV10's sustained triangle rate will be about three to five times that of a Pentium III CPU, which can put out about 5 million triangles per second.

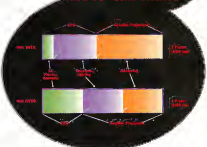
The NV10 should be no slouch in the fill-rate department, either. nVidia conservatively estimates that NV10 will deliver about twice the fill rate of current generation 3D chips. So what can you do with that much horsepower? How about running your games smoothly at a resolution of 1600x1200x32 with all the rendering goodies turned on? Sound appealing? Yeah, we thought so too.

Other Goodies

In addition to raw horsepower, NV10 will also deliver new DirectX 7.0 3D rendering features, which we'll cover next month. The NV10 will also support HDTV, accelerating x-y video scaling, colorspace conversion, and motion compensation for full 1080i/480p HDTV displays.

NV10 will support the AGP 4X standard, effectively doubling the rate at which it can get data from system memory to a speed of 1.1GB/sec. A 350MHz RAMDAC will make for higher refresh rates at high resolutions, and nVidia plans to offer the NV10 in two RAM loadouts, 32 and 64MB. NV10 will support SDRAM and SGRAM, and nVidia is considering support for Double Data Rate (DDR) SGRAM if it becomes widely available.

The Difference NV10 Can Make



Given the recent 3Di/Diamond merger, and that nVidia has made public its intent to no longer sell chips to Diamond, we're likely to see NV10-based boards from Creative Labs, Hercules, Galliot, and several Taiwanese board makers—the same companies that are making TNT2-based boards. TNT2 is also currently a darling among system makers including Falcon Northwest, Dell, Gateway, and Microw, and those companies are going to be giving NV10 a serious look for their fall and holiday season offerings.

With NV10's balanced yet aggressive design, nVidia is poised to yet again reshape the 3D graphics landscape this fall when NV10-based boards start shipping. Stay tuned sports fans, because we'll be getting our mitts on a reference board soon, and we'll tell you how it fares in next month's issue of CGW. And for the full lowdown on the latest graphics cards, check online at www.3dgamegauge.com.

—By Loyd Case and Dave Salviator

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UNDER THE HOOD

Welcome to the Minefield

This Year's Upgrade Paths Are Fraught With Danger

Planning for future upgrades is a baffling business these days. And if it baffles me, then you should worry.

Until the beginning of this year, the upgrade picture was fairly straightforward. If you had the budget, you'd get some kind of 440BX motherboard. You might have to live with a Celeron CPU, but you could anticipate Pentium III prices dropping later in the year. Users of Intel competitor AMD's K6-2 microprocessors could look forward to the K6-3. Recently, though, the picture has become more complicated—ridiculously so, in my opinion.

Cutting Corners

As the demand for cheap PCs gets more intense, so does the pressure to drive down costs. One resultant abomination was the Cyrix MediaGX processor, which coupled a really slow CPU with really slow graphics. The good news for gamers is that Cyrix/National Semiconductor will be getting out of the market for PC processors. The bad news is the Intel B10. There are several flavors of the B10, and you should avoid them all. The reason is that Intel has built the graphics controller into the motherboard chipset itself. This setup may be fine for someone running Word or doing some light Web browsing, but 3D game performance will be abysmal compared to what's possible with the current generation of 3D accelerators.

Slot + socket = slotket

Early this year, systems using Intel's new Socket 370 format started appearing. The reason, again, was cost. Back when Intel began shipping the Pentium III, it

introduced the SECC (single-edge contact cartridge)—also called Slot 1—format for CPUs. This allowed Intel to package a CPU with somewhat slower-speed Level 2 (L2) cache in a cost-effective manner. But the low-cost Celeron CPU has all its L2 cache on the CPU die itself, making the cartridge format superfluous. So Socket 370 was born—a more



LOYD CASE

cost-effective design that accommodates the newer Celerons' onboard L2 cache. This makes upgrade decisions more difficult, though, because there's no guarantee that a Socket 370 motherboard owner will be able to drop a future, Socket 370 Pentium III into their system. A number of companies stepped into the fray, offering adapters (termed "slotkets") that permit insertion of a Socket 370 chip into a Slot 1 connector, allowing users to contemplate future upgrades to a Pentium III. One could question why the Celeron, with 20 million transistors, is cheaper than the Pentium III, with 9 million transistors. You could also ask why Celeron is running at a 66MHz memory bus speed. This state of

affairs is known as "market segmentation," which is how Intel can put the screws to AMD while still charging gobs of money for the Pentium III.

Distant Memories

It's likely that these faster, socketed Pentium IIIs will require a new motherboard and chipset, code-named Camino and dubbed the Intel B20. The B20 creates yet another puzzle for users: choosing memory upgrades. The good news is that Camino will support a front-side bus of 133MHz—about 33 percent faster than current Pentium III memory bus speeds—and will yield a peak throughput of 1GB/sec. The bad news is that Intel is trying to push a completely new memory type: RDRAM (RAMBUS DRAM). RDRAM memory

SDRAM. So if you're contemplating a 600MHz PIII later this year, be ready for a little financial pain.

On the AMD Front

Things aren't so rosy for AMD customers, either. Many K6-2 users, anticipating an easy upgrade to the K6-3, received a couple of rude shocks when the K6-3 shipped. First, a number of K6-2-capable motherboards couldn't handle the odd voltages of the K6-3. Then there's the K7. There's a lot of excitement about the potential of the K7. But the K7 plugs into AMD's "Slot A," derived from the DEC/Compaq Alpha CPU's EV6 bus. Naturally, it's not compatible with anything except K7, meaning that AMD fans will finally get to step away from the ancient Socket 7 format, but at

...which is how Intel can put the screws to AMD while still charging gobs of money.

modules will be called RIMMs—RAMBUS inline memory modules. Like all new memory introductions, RDRAM is likely to command a 50-percent price premium over SDRAM—even over 133MHz

the cost of new memory and incompatibility with any Intel CPU. K7 motherboards will likely support new DRAM formats, but will at the very least require PC133-certified SDRAM. **GGT**

TechTIPS

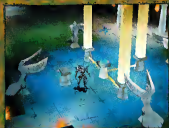
Q. I have a P2-266 machine running with Windows 98. Installed as my primary card is the STB Velocity 6400 and I have a Diamond Monster 3D 2 with 12MB as my 3D add-on. I like the idea of running games like QUAKE 2, HALF-LIFE and KINGPIN in higher resolutions than 800x600, which is the maximum I can use with my Voodoo 2 card. It would certainly be nice if I could use my TNT based card for my DopeGL games for larger resolutions and keep my Voodoo 2 card installed for any Glide games. Is there a simple way to disable or override my Voodoo 2 card when I would like to use the TNT for DopeGL gaming?

A. Yes. All three of these games are Quake-based, so the workaround is the same for all three. Just go to the Video Options screen, and select "Default DopeGL" instead of "3Dfx OpenGL," and the TNT card will take over 3D rendering in the game.

TO ALL THOSE CARRIED TH

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POWER RIG

Hercules Dynamite TNT2

In our most recent round of testing, the Dynamite TNT2 graphics card was the fastest gun in the West. The card ships with clock- and memory-speed sliders, and because it uses InnMax's Lesagna cooling fan, it's able to run at a higher clock speeds and stay stable. About the only thing it won't do is run Glide, but in the Power Rig, you'll have the Voodoo² board to handle those chores. The board doesn't come with a software bundle, but does have TV-out.



COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	THE SKINNY
Motherboard	Asus P2B F	\$175	Back to the future
CPU	Pentium III/500	\$750	It's the top of the heap, for now
Memory	256MB of PC133 certified 4GBRAM	\$398	Just think: a quarter gigabyte.
Disk Controller	Adaptec 2940UW	\$349	BBMBac.
Primary Graphics	Hercules Dynamite TNT2	\$245	The fastest 3D gun in the West
Secondary Graphics	3dfx Voodoo ² 11000	\$99	Single Voodoo ² for Glide compatibility
Floppy Drive	None	\$0	You will have to live with it.
Hard Drive	Quantum Atlas 10K	\$820	A little warmer than the Fujitsu, but much faster
Backup	Imaging Jet 2	\$308	7 GB of backup
Hard-Disk Cooler	APS Technologies drive cooler	\$40	Cool like Florida
CD ROM/DVD	Pioneer DV-S02 DVD	\$88	New Pioneer slot-drive DVD
Monitor	Viewsonic ViewsonicPro 2620u	\$5,300	Perfectly flat; good USB support
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound MX300 w/M925	\$819	Five four-speaker DirectStream, A/D, and EAX
Speakers	UFI 11	\$500	Beautiful imaging, clean sound
Beer Channel Speakers	Acme CS-6	\$500	Ultimate non-sterile channel speakers
Modem	Copper Pocket P9, modem	\$448	DSL, at last
Networking	3COM Etherlink 16700 PCI	\$70	For hugging my buddies
Networking Hub	Netgear DS100	\$178	Multiplexer and DNS router support
Case	In Win Q520 full-tower ATX	\$115	New expansion of model
Power Supply	Bullitool 180	\$129	Man, power. Scooby!
Keyboard	Logitech Netwacht	\$45	In with the Netwacht, out with the Netwacht
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech Conflux Wheel Mouse	\$99	Off the leash
Action Game Controller	Game Gearball Pro USB	\$30	Familiar gamepad with USB
Flight Joystick	DirectMedia F12 Pro	\$129	3 just links right
Thruster	DirectMedia T05	\$115	More control than anyone needs
Builder Tools	True3Maxim 08e REC	\$79	Really perfect tool placement
Driving Controls	ECCI CDS 4080	\$1,129	For the serious sim driver

TOTAL: \$8,225

LEAN & MEAN

3dfx Voodoo³ 3000

Although not quite the fastest, 3dfx's Voodoo³ is still a venerable part, and at about \$150 it delivers just about the best bang for the buck of any graphics card going. This one card will run Direct3D, OpenGL, and Glide titles well, and it'll free up a PCI slot since you don't need that Voodoo² board for Glide now. The card also comes with one of the more serious bundles we've seen in a while: NEED FOR SPEED III (full version), UNREAL TOURNAMENT (full version), and DESCENT 3 (full version).

COMPONENT	PRODUCT	PRICE	THE SKINNY
Motherboard	Abit EB1 rev 2.0	\$125	Five PCI slots, Software, AGES—ready for Pentium III
CPU	Pentium III/500	\$380	Effectively the same as a Pentium
Memory	128MB Corsair PC100 SDRAM	\$120	UNREAL in RAM
Disk Controller	Realtek UDMA/33	\$0	
Primary Graphics	Voodoo ³ 3000	\$150	Stability, speed, and cooling
Floppy Drive	None	\$20	Soft gear, how is it
Hard Drive	Western Digital Expert 8.1	\$190	7200rpm from Western Digital
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer DVD-140	\$130	Slot-drive DVD
Monitor	Optimus V95	\$420	Solid 19-inch monitor at a budget price
Primary Audio	Diamond Monster Sound 10000	\$82	A/D and clean audio for under a C note
Speakers	Boston Acoustics BA-625	\$99	Soft, our favorite
Modem	Diamond Supra 56k	\$144	Solid performance, good price
Networking	D-link DFE90 ethernet	\$28	Can do 100MB/sec.
Case	In Win V10-88	\$82	The case for upstarts
Power Supply	Bullitool 235W	\$0	
Keyboard	Logitech Netwacht	\$45	In with the new, out with the Netwacht
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech F90 Wheel Mouse	\$18	Better than that "gaming" mouse
Joystick	Orb Gamestick 3D USB	\$55	Sell the unbalanced flight stick around

TOTAL: \$1,001

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

WHAT 3D CARD SHOULD I BUY?

You've got questions, we've got answers. And if there's one question readers have asked us more than any other, "What 3D card should I buy?" would have to be it. Look for this how-to-choose-a-3D-card guide every month here in CGW.

Choosing the right 3D card depends on your CPU and your motherboard. So we have two recommendations for you:

Choice A If your CPU is a Pentium 233MHz or slower, or your motherboard is All-PCI (no AGP), or you've got a motherboard-down AGP graphics chip with no AGP slot, then get 3dfx's Voodoo² 1000 board. At about \$100, it will do a very good job with current games and a pretty good job with games coming out soon. And the best part is, when you swap in a new motherboard/CPU, you can migrate the Voodoo² board to the new setup.

Choice B If your rig's motherboard has an AGP slot, then go with Hercules' Dynamite TNT2, which is currently the fastest 3D gun in the West. At a street price of about \$180 for the 32MB version, this card is actually quite a deal. Even if you're running a Pentium II/233 or 266MHz CPU, when you upgrade your motherboard/CPU, you can migrate the card into your new setup, and it's got room to grow with whatever CPU you mate it with.

PRODUCT WATCH

Look Out Intel! At press time, the most interesting product about to ship is without question AMD's K7 CPU, which they've rechristened Athlon. If the performance rumors we've heard about this new chip are true, then the CPU market could be a whole new ball game, with Intel finally facing serious competition in every market segment, top to bottom. AMD has traditionally lagged behind Intel in a key area for gamers: X87 floating-point performance, which can make all the difference in 3D games. But AMD's Athlon chip has a superscalar (able to execute more than one instruction per clock) floating-point unit with three pipelines, which may well finally give them the performance edge over Pentium III in this key area. So who'll be the last chip standing? Tune in next month to our CPU shootout in which two chips go in, and one chip comes out. —Dave Solvator

When you're ready to put your dream rig together, check out www.gamespot.com/features/pc_workshop5/index.html for Loyd's step-by-step guide to getting your Ultimate Gaming Machine up and running.

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Innerworks Dual Video Cooling Architecture
Toshiba 6X/32X 3rd Generation DVD Drive
Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live! Value
Cambridge Soundworks FPS 2000 Digital Surround
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3CDM/USR Sportster 56k Fax/Data Modem
Logitech MouseMan Wheel 4 Button USB
Logitech Enhanced Keyboard w/ Palm Rest
Microsoft Sidewinder Precision Pro USB
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Innerworks 3D Optimization System
Innerworks Dual Video Cooling Architecture
Toshiba 6X/32X 3rd Generation DVD Drive
Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live! w/ Digital I/O
Cambridge Soundworks FPS 2000 Digital Surround
with 25W Subwoofer and Remote Volume Control
3CDM/USR Sportster 56k Fax/Data Modem
Microsoft IntelliMouse USB
or Logitech MouseMan Wheel 4 Button USB
Microsoft Natural Keyboard
Microsoft Sidewinder Force Feedback Pro
or Logitech Wingman Force USB
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or Gravis Xterminator
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DirectX 6.1 & Latest SSE Compatible Drivers
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Incredible 32-bit color performance

Goin' Mobile

Micron Delivers A Solid Mobile Offering, But with a Few Gotchas

by Dave Salvatore

Laptops have come a long way. For this they owe a lot to ATI and the Rage LT chipset, which finally brought good 3D graphics performance to the mobile set. Dell and Compaq have been shipping Rage LT-equipped laptops for a while now, and Micron is the latest to join this club with their Transport Tek NX.

Laptops have always lagged their desktop brethren in graphics performance, and the 3D revolution only compounded the problem. And while the Rage LT chipset does a good job with 3D chores and deserves praise for what it has done for the 3D-challenged mobile graphics chipset market, it's now looking long in the tooth. In fact, the latest round of desktop graphics cards we tested here were three times faster on average than the Rage LT chipset in the Transport. Still, some better 3D is better than no 3D, and as long as you keep the resolution down around 640x480, the Rage LT fares pretty well, although its OpenGL ICD driver still has some very rough spots, including some serious drawing errors in HALF-LIFE.

Road Dog

In redesigning the Transport, Micron added some gamer-friendly features like a joystick port and an easily accessed USB

port for newer game controllers. Its 14.1" TFT display generally looked good, although when on batteries it dims somewhat to conserve power. Battery life was pretty good, with about two hours of operating time before things went dark. More impressive was the Transport's ability to spin the DVD drive for 90 minutes, meaning you can watch a feature-length DVD movie on one charge. That's a major plus for those long plane trips where the airline's feature film is something wretched like "Benji vs. Bambi: There Can Be Only One."

But we also uncovered some rough edges during gameplay that ranged from annoying to unacceptable. The Transport's

only one-third as fast as the average desktop 3D graphics card from our most recent roundup. In fact, most games weren't playable at the 1024x768 test resolution. The news does get better at 640x480 where frame rates improve and games get playable. However, the Rage LT's OpenGL ICD, despite this chip being in the marketplace for nearly nine months, was still not all there. In HALF-LIFE, for exam-



TEST RESULTS

WinBench 99

Business Graphics WinMark
(1024x768x32) ... 85.5
CPUMark 99 ... 31.4
FPUMark ... 1950
BDWM ... 1590

CD WinBench 99

CD-ROM WinMark 565
CPU Usage ... 2.05%
Access Time ... 155 ms
3D WinBench 1.2
(1024x768x16) ... 161

3D GAMEGAUGE

Frame-rate for games running at 1024x768x16

BattleZone II ... 20
Descent 3 ... 9.3
Expendable ... 11.5
Half-Life ... 17.6
Jane's WWII Fighters ... 11.4
Madden 99 ... 14
PowerSlide ... 20.4
Quake II Crusher ... 9.1
Unreal ... 9

3D GameGauge Score 13.6

Speeds and Feeds

CPU: Pentium-4 366MHz
RAM: 64MB SDRAM
Graphics: ATI Rage LT with
8MB of video memory
Display: 15.1" TFT
Hard Drive: 6GB IDE
CD-ROM: Matsushita
DVD-ROM
Removable Media:
15-120MB drive (reads standard
floppies)
Battery: Lithium Ion
Weight: 8.7 lbs.

Matsushita DVD-RDM drive spun down quickly and was very slow to spin back up. In a game of HIGH HEAT 2000 for instance, there were long pauses in gameplay whenever the game accessed the DVD-RDM for the announcer's voice data. In addition, the drive made quite a racket when it spun up, and there were periodic hiccups during movie playback, although that may not have been the DVD-RDM drive's fault. And during game-play in QUAKE-based games, the only way to avoid broken and chunky sound from the ESS Maestro chip was to dial the audio setting down to "maximum compatibility."

effects were very pixelated.

ple, there were some really awful drawing errors that produced red blocks where part of the rendered scene was supposed to be. And though not errors per se, the Rage LT was showing its age in HALF-LIFE and during a deathmatch in QUAKE 3 TEST, where smoke

effects were very pixelated.

Still Not Bad for Mobile

Despite these shortcomings, the Transport is a fairly solid unit, and as mobile offerings go, it's a good performer that's dogged primarily by its now-aging 3D chipset and a so-so DVD-RDM drive. Still, if you need a laptop, and want to play games, the Transport will get the job done, and let you watch DVD movies to boot. Just know that, as a gaming rig, this one has a few rough edges. **CGW**

A Passable Performer

The increasing gap in desktop and laptop 3D graphics performance became painfully apparent during 3D GameGauge testing, where the Transport was

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

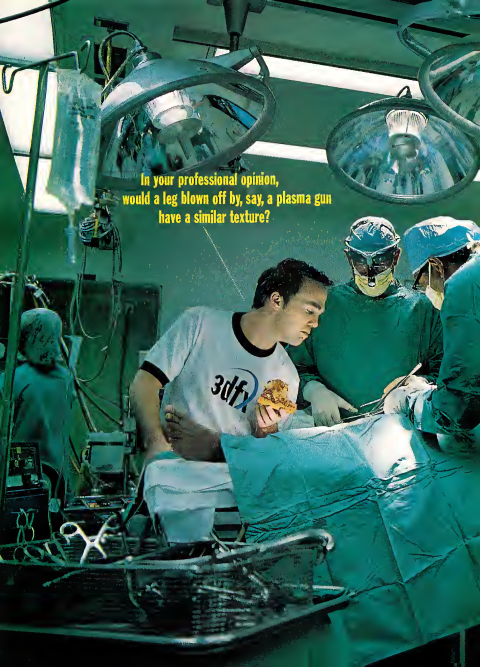
PROS: Good performer for a mobile machine; good DVD playback; convenient USB port.

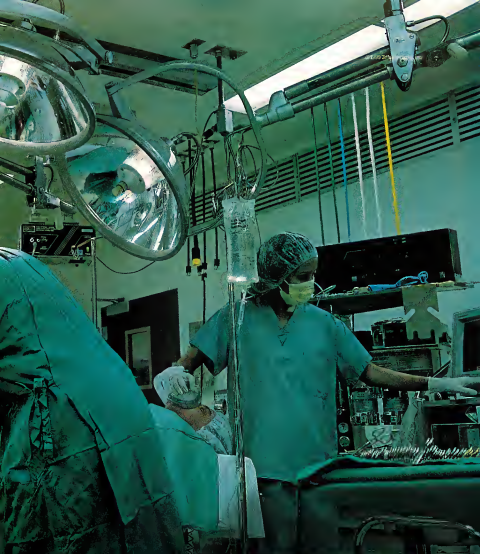
CONS: 3D graphics still very slow compared to desktop machines; OpenGL ICD has rough edges.

3D SUPPORT: Quake3, OpenGL.

Price: \$3,999 as equipped.
Manufacturer: Micron Computer
www.micronpc.com

**In your professional opinion,
would a leg blown off by, say, a plasma gun
have a similar texture?**





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For more information, check out our website at www.3dfx.com. **So powerful, it's kind of ridiculous.**

Smooth Operator

Hard-core shooter guys will do anything to get that extra fring—dialing graphics way down for better frame-rate, trying different mice, looking up to USB, running the PS2Rate utility, using a bowling wrist support (OK, maybe not). If you count yourself among these zealots, then say hello to your next purchase, the EverGlide mouse pad. Made of high-density plastic, the EverGlide features a slightly rough surface to allow even tracking of your mouse's ball. This makes it easy to execute minute, precise mouse movements—the key to accurate aim when camping.

Using my PS/2-connected Logitech MouseMan Wheel, and running the PS2Rate utility at 200Hz, I took the EverGlide for a spin through HALF-LIFE TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC, STARSIEGE TRIBES, and QUAKE 3 TEST. The overall result was very impressive. Because the EverGlide surface is consistent across the entire pad, the mouse ball never stopped tracking. And for the occasional camp-out with the crossbow in HALF-LIFE, lining up the money shot was easy thanks to the precise mouse movement possible with this



pad. And general mousing with the EverGlide in Windows OS was smoother, too.

So if you're an avid camper in shooters, the EverGlide is something you'll definitely want. But even if you're just looking for a way to smooth out your shooter gameplay, the EverGlide's surface, along with a good mouse, will get you most of the way there. Of course, you'll still have to do the aiming and shooting yourself. — Dave Salvo

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Rough surface allows for precise mouse movement.

CONS: It would look cooler in black (and hide game better).

REQUIREMENTS: A horizontal surface.

Price: \$17 (Web Direct)
Manufacturer: Ironhorse Inc. Products
www.everglide.com

REVIEW • KENWOOD 52X TRUEX CD-ROM DRIVE

Fast, but Not Cheap

The X-factor is getting out of hand. Here we have what is probably one of the fastest CD-ROM drives you can get. It's the Kenwood 52X TrueX, the latest drive using Zen Research's technology for reading multiple CD tracks at a time. But the question remains: So what?

That may sound odd coming from me, but as fast as the Kenwood is, it's not that much faster than other drives—and it has some problems. Beyond that, it's a bit on the pricey side.

The drive scored a 1410 on CD WinBench 99, with an access time of 91.8ms and an acceptably low CPU utilization of 3.27 percent. A full, 2.4GB installation of BALDUR'S GATE seemed to cruise by relatively quickly, too. Then things got a little ugly. I tried installing some beta software I had on recordable (CD-R) media, and the Kenwood choked. I'd run into this with the Kenwood 40x40 drive, too, but hoped it had been fixed in this iteration of the drive. Apparently not.

Overall, though, the TrueX drive is well-mannered. There's very little of



that annoying vibration that you get with some high-speed drives. It also seems more solid than the 40x40, which had some teething problems.

If you don't use recordable CDs, the Kenwood should serve admirably. But if you routinely use CD-R media, you may want to pass on it. — Lloyd Case

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: It's really fast.

CONS: A bit pricey, doesn't like some CD-R media.

REQUIREMENTS: SCSI interface

Price: \$125
Manufacturer: Kenwood Technologies
www.kenwoodtech.com

REVIEW • FLIGHT SIM YOKE LE FOR USB

Get the Yoke?

For civilian flight sims, having a yoke controller adds that extra bit of realism you don't get with a stick. Now, CH Products has delivered the Flight Sim Yoke LE for USB, a hot-pluggable controller that works with both the PC and Macintosh. This revamped version of CH's yoke device—it's also lighter and more compact than the original design—is a good, low-end, entry-level controller for sim fans.

Installation is really plug-and-play; the device uses the USB driver built into Win 98, eliminating the hassle of using a flight yoke on a system that already has a joystick or gamepad. The all-black design features an eight-direction view hat, three buttons, two toggle switches for gear and flaps, two rocker-tilt switches, and a throttle lever. It attaches firmly to your desk with two screw clamps.

CH touts the lack of a detent on the wheel for better control. However, the controller has a very loose feel, and I found it difficult at times to find the center for straight-and-level flight. Also, be warned that getting it to work with analog rudder pedals requires a game that can simultaneously handle input from multiple controllers. Microsoft FLIGHT SIM 98 should in



theory support multiple controllers, but the game wouldn't allow me to select the analog rudders. CH will be releasing compatible USB pedals in late summer.

Finally, be careful when shopping for this yoke. There are two versions, and CH's box pictures the Flight Sim Yoke, which has additional buttons and two levers for propeller pitch and mixture. Look carefully at the checkbox on the front to see which model you're getting. — Devry Adkin

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Easy setup, good selection of buttons.

CONS: Loose feel, USB rudder pedals not yet available.

REQUIREMENTS: Win 98 system with USB. Mac with OS 8.1 or above.

Price: \$109
Publisher: CH Products
www.chproducts.com

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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 vanilla.



Weak

Seriously lacking in play value, poorly conceived, or just another clone.



Abysmal

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



Does Not Rate



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

Quote o' the Month



...you will discover, maybe even once and for all, just how much or how little you care about the Star Trek universe and its inhabitants.



Keith Ferrel, reviewing

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION



IN THIS CORNER, WEIGHING IN AT 70 TONS...



It's not in this issue... but we still think it sucks!

SEPTEMBER REVIEWS

CO EDITORS' CHOICE GAMES IN 1999

Birth of the Federation	★★★★	154
Descent 3	★★★★	117
F-22 Lightning 3	★★★★	139
Heavy Gear II	★★★★★	124
Magic & Mayhem	★★★★	149
MechWarrior 3	★★★	129
Midtown Madness	★★★★	142
Operational Art of War II	★★★★	160
Tk: Nagasaki	★★★★	151

BEYOND IT LIES THE SECRET OF
RENNES-LE-CHÂTEAU.

AND THE KEY TO
YOUR VERY SOUL.



blood of the sacred
GABRIELKNIGHT3
blood of the damned
A 3D MYSTERY ADVENTURE

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This quaint, French countryside hides a real-life enigma involving untold treasures, heinous betrayals and bloodthirsty demons. For thousands of years, religious historians, researchers of the occult and covetous treasure hunters have tried to unveil the secrets buried here.

Fate has brought Gabriel Knight and Grace Nakimura to this modest, unassuming village where they open the door to a 3000-year-old mystery. Without question, Gabriel is compelled to find the answer, no matter the price he may pay.

Here is where destiny meets truth — where your search will conjure up covenants, heresies and lies that have hidden a frightening story through the millennia.

To find the child — and to reveal the secrets held in Rennes-le-Château — you will guide Gabriel and Grace as they question suspects, uncover hidden agendas, solve elaborate puzzles and follow a dark path to one inescapable truth.

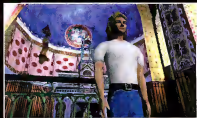
The warning is real — once you enter Rennes-le-Château — there is no turning back.



Explore a true, historical mystery set in stunning real-time rendered 3D environments.



Solve intricate puzzles essential to unraveling the enigma of Rennes-le-Château.



Control your point of view with unlimited camera angles.



Play as both Gabriel and Grace.



Interact with an eclectic cast of characters, each with their own secret motives.

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OPEN
THIS DOOR,
AND IT
CAN NEVER
BE CLOSED
AGAIN.



Fantastic Facelift

Graphics and Gameplay Make DESCENT 3 the Best of the Series

by Jim Lynch

Far too often, drastic overhauls are a bad idea. New Coke, *Raywatch Nights* and a Beo Arthur facelift are all testaments to the nightmares that can result when mankind messes with God's work. After two hot games, the makers of the DESCENT franchise took an incredible risk by overhauling their game. But unlike a post-operative, Kabuki-visaged Beo Arthur, this reworking really pays off.

Right from the five-minute opening movie, you know that you're in for a visual treat. This year's DESCENT takes full advantage of everything 3D acceleration has to offer with fluid, crystal clear graphics that never overshadow gameplay—no mean feat considering the impressive lighting effects and enemy robots with distinct moving parts. Everything looks crisp and feels just right, right down to the explosions.

DESCENT 3 comes with what can only be described as kick-ass weaponry. You'll get the chance

to use everything from the tried and true Voss Cannon to an exceptionally cool Microwave Cannon that distorts the screen of your opponent as you fry him. One of my favorites was the Cyclone Missile, which splits itself into six smaller missiles that home in on your target.

The Great Outdoors

Forget the sterile feel of the mines from the earlier games. This time around you'll be immersed in a variety of beautifully textured environments and will even take the fight outdoors as you soar across sweeping landscapes and through towering canyons. DESCENT 3's engine



GOT A LIGHT? The flaming aftermath of a napalm bomb really shows off the game's brilliant explosions.



IN YOUR BRIEFINGS Focusing the single-player game on objectives detailed in mission briefings is a significant improvement on the repetitious gam-play of earlier DESCENT games.

is as seamless as TRIBE8 when it comes to moving between indoor and outdoor areas.

Moving outdoors only underscores the sprawling nature of the game's 17 levels. And DESCENT 3 needs the room since the mission-based gameplay has moved beyond the "find the reactor, destroy it, and run away" formula of the previous games. This time you'll rescue hostages, retrieve computer data, and hold off enemies assaulting a base. Having said that, Outrage has included one "blow the reactor and run like hell" scenario, as well as a caved-in version of DESCENT's first level for veterans like myself.

A couple of less-welcome old

friends appear from the previous games as well. The difficulty of controlling your craft in the game's 360 degrees of movement, and the nausea that some gamers experience while negotiating the spinning, twisting gameworld. To control your craft, use a joystick and take the time to run the game's tutorial. To control your lunch, take occasional

breaks.

Smarter Than the Average Bot

The robotic enemies in DESCENT 3 have also benefited from the facelift and are even craftier than in previous games. At times they're downright cunning, working in teams and using the environment to their advantage.

To combat these nasty little suckers, DESCENT 3 gives you the option of flying three different ships: the fast, agile Phoenix; the slower, more heavily shielded and armed Magnum; or the well-balanced Pyre. In solo play you have to progress through the game to get the other ships, but in multi-

player you can choose your favorite ship right away.

As one of the first action games to be really viable over the Net, you'd expect DESCENT 3 to have some killer multiplayer action. Net players won't be disappointed; DESCENT 3 includes options for Capture the Flag, Team Anarchy, Robo-Anarchy, Entropy and more. The action in multiplayer is fast and furious so if you're a newbie to DESCENT, you're best off using the Magnum—you'll stay alive just a little while longer while you learn the ropes.

DESCENT 3 is simply one of the most solid action games out there, with superb visuals and silky smooth gameplay. Once you get used to the freedom of movement, expect addiction. **CGW**



FREESPACE The most obvious improvement to the DESCENT series is the ability to leave the cramped confines of mining tunnels for the wide-open spaces.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

PROS: top-notch graphics; huge, mission-based leveling; great AI; one excellent multiplayer support.

CONS: Ship controls can be tricky and confusing to learn for newbies; you can't self-destruct.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200, Windows 95/98, 16MB RAM, 30MB free hd space.

3D SUPPORT: G3D, 3Dx, Glide.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Serial Connection, Modem Play (2-Player), LAN, Internet (2-16 players), also CD-ROM game.

Price: \$49.99
Publisher: Ion Storm
www.ionstorm.com



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of the Year
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PC Gamer



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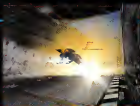
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Be prepared to alter your plan or attack as intelligent A.I. learns as it racks up kills. Risk it all in highly-evolved Instant Action and Instant Strategy modes.



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Coordinate full-scale attacks as morphing 3-D units, destructible terrain, and incredible explosion and weapon effects intensify the killer gameplay.

Command WWII from the comfort of your own home.

CHINA HAS INVADDED NEIGHBORING KAZAKHSTAN. THE U.S. IS SPEEDING TO HELP RUSSIA CONTAIN CHINA'S EXPANSION. RED STORM'S FORCE 21 TAKES YOU TO THE FRONT LINES OF WORLD WAR III. AS PLATOON COMMANDER YOU WILL BE PLACED AT THE HELM OF UP TO 16 ARMORED PLATOONS AND A VARIETY OF THE LATEST COMBAT VEHICLES. IT IS YOUR DUTY TO LEAD YOUR MEN AND THE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN MACHINERY TO VICTORY.

Set in 2015, Red Storm's FORCE 21 is an examination into the future of conventional

warfare. Like the U.S. Army's inquiry of the same name, this real-time 3D tactical wargame applies the technology of the booming Information Age with present day military hardware. As a Chinese or U.S. platoon commander, you will need to make split second decisions and dictate second decisions and for your forces. You will be plunged into the heat of battle, leading your force in up to 40 combat vehicles. The real-time scenarios and action sequences will excite and challenge a variety of gamers. The makers of RAINDOWN SIX have yet again digitized reality. Tom Clancy's team at



Red Storm was provided with high-definition 3D graphics and sound effects from the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps. FORCE 21's 3D battlefields and maps were built from satellite imaging to produce realistic terrain and settings. The game designers

even tested and drove military hardware, in order to create virtually real experiences and viewpoints. Players select the platoons, military vehicles and commanders they want to take with them into each battle situation. Equipped with weapons from the

"Our goal is to capture, in a realistic context, that split second process of the combat commander's decisions. It means distilling METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops available and time) into a virtual world of armored warfare and then letting gamers make their own best decisions. We will never capture the chaos of real battle, but we may, in some way replicate the decisions, forces, capabilities and some of the human factors that are involved."

General Frederick M. Franks, Jr. USA (Ret.)

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Computer: Minimum 200 MHz with 30-MHz cache
 recommended 500 MHz (200 MHz with MMX
 software required)
 Memory: 20 MB RAM Required 64 MB RAM
 Recommended
 Operating System: Windows 15 or Windows 95
 Video Software: Resolution only 20 30 64 SVGA 16M
 Video Card
 3D hardware Support: Direct 3D compatible video
 card required. Supported chipsets include: 3Dfx,
 Nvidia, Nvidia Riva, Matrox G200 (for a full list of
 supported cards visit www.motlabs.com)
 CD-ROM: 4x or better
 Sound: Direct3D compatible sound card required
 Modem: 28,800 (or higher) recommended speed
 Network: Direct3D 4 (included on CD) must be enabled
 Internet/Network Play: Proxy/Configured TCP/IP
 connection at 24 7 Mbps or better





M-1 tank to engineering platoons you must formulate and see through a flexible battle plan. Your goal: victory with minimal losses.

Red Storm worked closely with project advisor, four Star General Frederick M. Franks, Jr. U.S. Army (Ret.). General Franks commanded 146,000 British and American troops during Operation Desert Storm and commanded the VII Corps from 1988 to 1991. Red Storm hoped to duplicate the pressures, emotions and rush of leading men into battle that General Franks described.

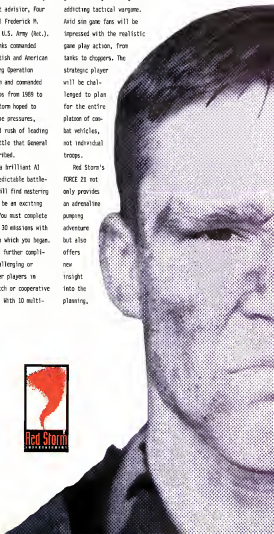
Against a brilliant AI and an unpredictable battlefield, you will find mastering the game to be an exciting challenge. You must complete each of the 30 missions with the men with which you begin. Game play is further complicated by challenging or joining other players in the deathmatch or cooperative multiplayer. With 10 multi-

player maps, FORCE 21 can be played via LAN lines or the Internet.

FORCE 21 creators have successfully crossed over genre lines by creating an edifying tactical wargame. And sin game fans will be impressed with the realistic game play action, from tanks to choppers. The strategic player will be challenged to plan for the entire platoon of combat vehicles, not individual troops.

Red Storm's FORCE 21 not only provides an adrenaline pumping adventure but also offers new insight into the planning,

strategy, and technology of conventional warfare. This one belongs on every serious gamer's shelf.





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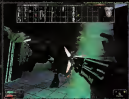
system shock 2

She doesn't need to use her body
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She's got yours.



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Fighting in 3D realism gives you an all-over suspension perspective. In fact, the environment is so interactive, your enemies are even sensitive to light and sound.



Intriguing character generation lets you choose from three distinct personalities, each with their own special weapons and abilities.

You wake aboard the Van Braun with a mind-altering Implant in your brain and no memory of recent events. As you wander the dark, eerie decks of the derelict spacecraft, you discover an alien material is slowly taking over the ship — feeding upon the flesh of your former comrades, leaving zombies and corpses in its wake. Behind the engulfing terror, you sense the presence of the evil cyber-being, SHODAN. She is seductive and sinister. And she pulls all the strings in the most chilling role playing game ever. Enter Shodan's terrifying world to discover her ultimate plan — or die trying. For all the gory details, visit www.lglass.com



Heavy Hitter

Activision Is Once Again King of the Giant-Robot Hill

by Greg Fortune

Activision set the standard for the giant-robot genre with the MECHWARRIOR 2 series. After losing the BattleTech universe license, they licensed the Dream Pod 9 gear universe and promised an even better follow-up. But HEAVY GEAR

was a disappointment, a half-baked game.

Now Activision has redeemed itself. HEAVY GEAR II does right almost

everything that MECHWARRIOR 3 does wrong. While HEAVY GEAR II has a different scope than the MECH games—think powered armor suits rather than hulking battle tanks with feet—this game is still the clear choice for fans of this genre.

Armored Fists

The game places you in an elite special-ops unit on the plane-

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Rock-solid mission design, very good multiplayer, beautiful engine

CONS: No AI opponents in multiplayer mode, minor menu and configuration issues

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard-disk space

3D SUPPORT: Direct 3D

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, LAN, Internet (2–8 players), 1 CD per player

ESRB RATING: TEEN, Animated blood and violence

Price: \$49.95

Publisher: Activision

www.activision.com



ONE SHOT, ONE KILL The sniper and stealth settings really add to the game, if you want to live longer than this guy that is.

et Terra Nova, and as one of the planet's finest warriors you're outfitted with a top-of-the-line suit of powered armor called a Gear. Your unit will be transported to the planet that serves as the enemy's base, and you'll go behind enemy lines to gather intelligence about future attacks against the home planet.

HEAVY GEAR II is as much about managing your squad-

mates as it is about your individual performance, so you'll be glad to know the game features an impressive control system that covers nearly every possible option. Squad commands are particularly well covered. One gripe: You can't change your control settings from within the cockpit, nor is there any method to test how your Gear will respond to the controls from within the configuration screen. Another problem is the lack of numerical range

data for the weapon systems.

A weapon will be classified as short, medium, or long range, but I was unable to find anything that told me where the ranges begin and end numerically. These are annoying problems, but once you've compensated for them, they become pretty minor.

Into the Fray

Once you've got your controls set up, try out the training missions. It almost took me longer to complete all of the training missions to my satisfaction than it did to finish the campaign in MECHWARRIOR 3. Gears are unique vehicles, and it takes some training to get the hang of all the things your Gear can do.

Gameplay in HEAVY GEAR II is top-notch, with both instant action and the campaign modes

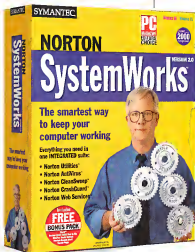


TAKING SIDES This tank just found out just how effective the flanking settings in HEAVY GEAR 2 are.

Continued on Page 130

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*"Norton SystemWorks combines the best individual utilities
with the best integration we've seen yet in a utility suite."*

—Windows Magazine, May 1999

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Mech Lite

So Much Potential, So Little Gameplay

by Greg Fortune

Want to know what a major letdown tastes like? I waited patiently for the follow-up to **MECHWARRIOR 2: MERCENARIES**, anxiously read everything that came down the pipeline about **MECHWARRIOR 3**, and drooled over promises of a vibrant and interactive Mech universe. When I finally got my hands on the final game code I booted it up, and it looked amazing. I launched headlong into the campaign... and haven't been able to get the bitter taste out of my mouth since.

Everything you've heard about the interface, graphics, and physics models is true. They're amazing. The game ran smoothly on a Pentium II/266 with a TNT board, and configuring the controls was a breeze. Modifying a Mech's load-out is very straightforward. It's a pleasure from the main menu all the way to the cockpit.

Nice Ride

Once there, you are greeted by one of the most satisfying pilot-

ing experiences you'll ever have. The Mechs are a blast to drive, and if this game's aim was to be nothing more than the **FLIGHT UNLIMITED** of Mech games, I'd have to give it five stars. In fact, in multiplayer games against human pilots, this engine just plain rocks.

The campaign certainly sounds promising. It's made up of four operations, with missions involving smaller objectives within the framework of the current operation. The maps are huge, with each mission covering just a portion of the overall operational map. The briefings are detailed, and the tactical map from each briefing is available from your cockpit in the field—a nice touch. After you've been briefed, modified your Mech, and allocated your salvage from the last mission, you're ready for the battlefield.



MR. GOODWRENCH You have all day to repair your Mechs, because the Jaguars rarely try to take out your mobile field bases.

seven heavy Mechs—including two 100-ton Daishis taken at point-blank range—without even getting shot at?

It shouldn't be possible, but in this game it is. All the Mechs and tanks seem to run prescribed routes and do not respond to variables, such as incoming fire. If you fully exploit the AI's weakness, you can get through almost any mission with little or no resistance. The heavy reliance on trigger points and scripting makes the single-player game extremely predictable and fairly tiresome. Most of the missions play as if they came out of one of those cans in your cupboard that have no labels—they're that run-of-the-mill. It truly is a sad day in Medtown.

Wingman commands are pathetic. You can't issue orders to more than one member of your squad at a time unless you use

the tactical interface. This stops your Mech in its tracks, in the middle of battle, while you issue commands. There isn't even a way to tell a squadmate to go to a particular nav point. It's all right, though, because you'd never want to send one of these boxes out alone.

Even the instant-action mode reeks of heavy scripting and canned behavior. When battling waves of enemies, your opponents respawn in the same places every time, and follow the same scripted routine each time they regenerate. Bumping up the difficulty only seems to make you take more damage from hits and then take less—another huge disappointment.

Saved by Your Friends

Multiplayer fares better, since your friends are (hopefully) smarter than a tin of mystery

The Perils of Inbreeding

That's right where the fun stops. You'd think that given the care that went into the rest of the game the AI would be pretty solid, but you'd be wrong. Your opponents are so staggeringly stupid they make Todd Porter's **GENOME** AI look like a chess algorithm. Developer MicroProse would have been better off asking Microsoft about getting the talking-paperclip AI from Microsoft Office. Just how it is possible, on the second-to-last mission in the game, to take out

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Beautiful engine, highly configurable, strong multiplayer.

CONS: Scripted, stupid AI, campaign is too short and far too easy.

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard-disk space

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modern, LAN, Internet (up to 8 players); 1 CD per player

ESRB RATING: Teen, Animated violence

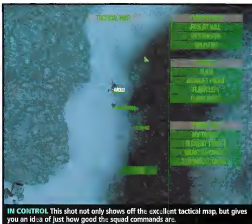
Price: \$49.95
Publisher: Micro

www.kl-games.com

REVIEW • HEAVY GEAR II

Continued from Page 124

well implemented. The visuals are compelling, the motion is smooth, and the action furious. This isn't a game in which you're going to run into a clearing with all guns blazing. You're going to sneak up behind that enemy Gear and put a couple of heavy autocannon rounds into the back of its cockpit before it knows what's happening. You'll infiltrate enemy bases. You'll execute a prison break. You'll attack a space station and disable its communication arrays before it can call for help. One mission culminates in a battle among about 20 units on the floor of a canyon. The AI is outstanding, and the wingman command structure is the best I've seen. You can even set the rules of engagement for individual units, either fire team, or the entire squad. The minute details that make this game great are far too numerous to list.



IN CONTROL This shot not only shows off the excellent tactical map, but gives you an idea of just how good the squad commands are.

Say Hello to My Little Friends

Multiplayer games of *HEAVY GEAR II* are also incredibly fun. In fact, several of us in the office have turned down invitations on the local *Quake*

server to play *HEAVY GEAR II* instead. This game combines the best elements of a *Quake* DeathMatch and a giant robot game. It's the kind of wild, in-your-face combat that'll keep your neighbors up late wondering just what all the yelling is about. There is one huge disappointment here, however: There's no option to play cooperatively against the AI. Other than that, just about everything is done right. This game will make you laugh, shout, and lose lots of sleep.

HEAVY GEAR II isn't perfect, but it sure comes close. The combination of good instant action, an outstanding campaign, and top-notch multiplayer mayhem makes this a game to seriously consider for fans of both giant robot games and 3D shooters.

Although there are problems, none of them hamper gameplay. If you want the best giant-robot game on the market, *HEAVY GEAR II* is an easy choice. **CGW**

REVIEW • MECHWARRIOR 3

Developers: Now Hear This!

We get a lot of mail about your games. We hear what people think of your games before you're even finished with them. Here are a couple of tips for you, just in case you want your next game to earn a five-star rating.

Multiplayer against your AI. We want this, badly. Not many of our friends like being fodder, but being able to play cooperatively with them against your AI will help us get them interested in the game. Then we'll smoke them.

Testing our controls. When we configure custom controls, we shouldn't be more than a click or two away from being able to test how the game responds to the new settings. More than that is just sloppy design.

Artificial what? We've played *HALF-LIFE*, been frayed by Reeper bots, and expect more than a bone-head script in the other cockpits. *GEAR II* got this right; *MECH 3* failed miserably. Folks, the bar has been raised. Jump over it or be beaten with it.

We really aren't asking for much, just a couple of features you are more than capable of giving us. In return, we'll buy your games and maybe even be nice to you on Usenet. Maybe.

most. Here, the engine gets a chance to show off how good it can be when you are presented with a challenge. An option to play cooperatively with your friends against computer-controlled Mechs would have been welcome, but given the shoddy AI present in the single-player and instant-action modes, I can see why they left that out. If, however, you are looking for a great Mech game to play



FISH IN A BARREL This Daischi is about to join his friend in the filter in the gene pool, without returning fire.



GOT PARTS? Salvage in *MECHWARRIOR 3* is an embarrassment of riches. The real question is, what to keep and what to toss?

against other human players, the team and deathmatch play with this engine is almost worth the price you'll pay for the game.

If the same care had been put into the AI that was put into every other aspect of the game, this almost surely would have been a five-star Editor's Choice. But by neglecting key aspects of the game, the design team has shot themselves squarely in the foot. *MECHWARRIOR 3* is in no way shape, or form the best giant-robot game on the market today, but it still deserves a crown—as King of the Could-Have-Beens. **CGW**

ABOMINATION™

The Nemesis Project



We recently had the pleasure of meeting Steve Goss, of Hothouse. Steve is the designer and producer of **Abomination: The Nemesis Project**. We asked Steve a few questions about his latest project;

From the
Creators of
**Gangsters:
Organized Crime**



What kind of game is **Abomination**?

ABOMINATION is a team based Strategic and Tactical Combat game, set in a 3D isometric world.

The player takes control of a group of survivors, after America has been all but destroyed by a catastrophic plague. The team is built around a Black Ops unit called, PROJECT NEMESIS, eight genetically enhanced operators whose unique abilities give the group their edge in a war against the vilest evil to ever slither across the surface of the planet.

The gameplay is split into strategic and tactical modes. In the strategic mode, the player is the group's commander. They are

responsible for monitoring the city, defending objectives, and dispatching the squads of survivors to fight the war.

The tactical play works in both Real and Pause Time (like Baldur's Gate) modes. The player has to complete a wide range of mission objectives including cap busting combat scenarios, snatch and grab, surveillance and specimen capture. There are over 60 unique objectives and 20 secondary objectives. Each time you play, the game generates unique combinations of mission sites, objectives, and enemy concentrations. Indeed missions can occur during the day, at dawn, dusk, and in the dead of night. Missions are set in over 40 different terrain types, each exemplifying differing tactical challenges.



There are 7 ways to play **ABOMINATION** as a multiplayer game - firstly, there is a campaign mode where 4 players can journey through the entire game - joining and leaving as and when they like. New players can join the group when others are unavailable to play. The team size can fluctuate too. It's a rather large game and we wanted to make multiplayer very accessible.



www.eidos.com

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Ultimately the player has to deal with an ever escalating conflict. They need to monitor the enemy and strike at key conflict points - fighting in the streets, the sewers or the concrete jungle. As the game progresses, the enemies change. Somewhere, new monstrosities are breeding. Players must seek out the breeding grounds and neutralize them.

This is a deep game. The environments are as detailed as your control over your squad. Unlike some games, Abomination. The Nemesis Project offers a comprehensive strategic element—one where research, resource

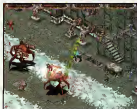
management, and team management offer a full level of strategic play value.



What was your inspiration for creating Abomination?

Well, my experiences as part of the team on the X-COM products whilst I worked at Microprose have some bearing on my work now. As a senior designer at Microprose I had the opportunity to design the sequel to UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN/X-COM: EARTH DEFENSE. I then became the producer for X-COM: APOCALYPSE and worked with Mythos on the production of that game. I see the genre of Squad level games as one that is very much unexplored, unlike say, 1st person shooters or RTS games in the mold of C&C. I was given a blank slate at Hothouse to begin a new game. I decided to work within this genre – squad based tactical games like X-COM and SYNDICATE.

The nature of the world in ABOMINATION is a product of my interest in the works of H.P. Lovecraft. The stories of the Cthulhu myths are always festering at the back of



my mind and the works of David Cronenberg - the new flesh - have heavily influenced my characterizations and creations. There is a lot of pretty horrific activities being perpetrated by your enemy in the game and in many instances you get to find out exactly what and how the Brood is doing things - in explicit detail.

Can you 'develop' your team members?

The team members each have a number of abilities; accuracy, health, stealth, reaction and special skills. As the game progresses you can invest combat experience to alter their ratings in these areas. Project Nemesis characters have superhuman skills - abilities beyond those of normal men and women.



For example, the ability to become invisible, the ability to heal ones self and others, and the ability to withstand normal weapons fire. Team members that you find during the game, survivors of the plague, have special skills with different weapons; handguns, support weapons, explosives etc... They receive bonuses in combat for using the appropriate weapons.

After each mission, the player can apportion the experience the TEAM has gained amongst its members. Enhancing their skills in any way they see fit. They can tailor the team to their style of play. I, for instance, favor a stealthy group and focus on that skill. Whereas Stuart - one of the guys on the project - ramps up their health and plays much more aggressively as a result.

Tell us about the multiplayer game?

There are 7 ways to play ABOMINATION as a multiplayer game. Firstly, there is a campaign mode where 4 players can journey through the entire game - joining and leaving as and when they like.

New players can join the group when others are unavailable to play. The team size can fluctuate too. It's a rather large game and we wanted to make multiplayer very accessible.

Indeed, the campaign game can even be played by email! A 100K file is generated by the first player which contains all the strategic information, characters, equipment etc, and a replay of the last mission played. When the next player receives the email file



and executes it, ABOMINATION will boot up and begin to replay the last mission. The player can even halt the action and take over the situation if they think they can do better! After the player reviews the replay and the strategic situation, they can re-equip the characters and complete the next mission. Then they email the 3rd player. This system allows unlimited players to participate, and

also appends the name and email address of

every player to have played the game....

The game also supports five multiplayer games - team

competitions where up to 8 players can play simultaneously; Arena, Survive, Capture the Flag, Lone Runner and Hold & Destroy. These games offer a wide variety of play possibilities in both normal game areas and custom designed multiplayer maps.

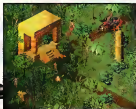
You mentioned email functionality. What else can you do via email?

You can send your city key code (12 digit number) or mission key code (12 digit number) to anyone so they can play either the same game or same level as you - rather than the generated missions. You can also send a mission replay (these are generated and appended to your mission debriefings for later watching), to someone else. They can watch your play, or interrupt it and take control and redo the mission. They can even send the replay back to you once they have "done it right"....

What have you done to maximize the replay value?

The whole game operates around a system of generated elements. The city you fight in is generated. Even the position and layout of strategic elements such as your HQ, Forward Command Posts, labs, and Satellite uplink are never the same. The streets and districts are never in the same place. From this, the land use is generated: downtown, the slums, the "burbs, industrial facilities and more. Each of these areas forms a mission site with over 1500 possible activity sites and over 100 city

layouts. Each land type is generated when a mission is actioned there. There are 30 different maps for each land type, of which there are over 32 types. Each mission can have one of 60 different primary and secondary objectives. We estimate that there are somewhere in excess of 1.2 million valid and playable missions the system can generate. Given that even in the



long game you are only gonna play about 300 missions there are a lot of missions you will only get if you replay the game. We even have some areas that do not occur in every game.

The reasoning behind a generated structure is core to the game itself. The game does not progress by the player playing mission one then mission two ad infinitum. Rather, the player chooses which missions they want to take, at what time of day and in what areas.

The enemy AI pursues its own course and the interaction of all these elements is what makes ABOMINATION organic, non-linear and rewarding to play.



Cutthroats™

Terror on the High Seas



Rob Davies
Project Leader

We asked Rob Davies, Project Leader of

Cutthroats: Terror on the High Seas to give us the low-down. This is what he had to say:

What was the inspiration behind Cutthroats: Terror on the High Seas?

The whole idea of a free roaming, do what you please, lawless pirate is powerful. The life and times in the 17th century Caribbean is a fascinating, unique, 'great-for-gameplay' historical era. Hollywood has decided to portray pirates as fictional, comical villains with wooden legs and hooks. Our pirates are dirty, flea bitten scoundrels that will slit your throat for looking at them the wrong way. Captain Hook may have lived in never-never land, but Blackbeard grew up in Bristol. He set out to terrorize the sea from the Bristol docks not a hundred yards from Hothouse's offices. Local inspiration plays a big part in the spirit of this game.

Secondly, we wanted to produce a game-world that is living, dynamic, and reactive, based on tons of historic research and including features such as real-time multiple ship/fleet combat, real-time hit-and-run land battles and a consistent economic and NPC strategic models.

The personal motivation also goes way back to working at Firebird and playing months of Elite, and then joining MicroProse and playing months of Sid Meier's Pirates. Both, classic games based around the 'ABCDE' of gaming (adventure/battle/conquest/diplomacy/economics).





Customize your fleet and create powerful warships and massive cargo ships.

What is the player's goal in Cutthroats? How do they accomplish this goal?

You are the leader of a band of pirates, and you must gain wealth and success on the high seas through any means necessary.

Your main objective is to obtain a hoard of money to divide among your pirate band. Money can be obtained in four ways:

- Raiding towns and robbing buildings
- Looting and capturing ships
- Performing missions
- Engaging in trade

You have many other short and medium term goals which will help you achieve this objective, including:

- Purchasing or capturing additional ships for your fleet, and finding the men to run them.
- Acquiring weapons to make your fleet more formidable in battle.
- Obtaining the ammunition, food and rum necessary for the day to day running of a pirate fleet.
- Developing a reputation, so that you are feared and respected throughout the Caribbean.
- Establishing friendly relations with one or more town governors.

From time to time, you must split the proceeds of your ventures with your crew. If each man's share amounts to a 1,000 pieces of eight, the voyage is a success. After a successful voyage, you choose to have at it again, or retire to live the life of an aristocrat.



Capture towns and create a new safe haven for pirates.

You can retire at any point, and you will receive a ranking. The more riches you have collected, the better your ranking. Cash, however, is not the only thing used to calculate your ranking; fame, ships captured, ships sunk, towns attacked, towns captured and sacked count as well. To obtain the status of Pirate King you are going to have to work for it.

What is the combat in Cutthroats like? Will there be land and sea battles that happen simultaneously?

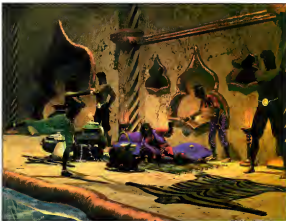
We've tried to give the game a realistic feel, but this isn't a naval simulation. The basic structure of combat is point-and-click; you can change your ship's route with a mouse click,



Governors can be crafty; watch your tongue or you may find yourself swinging from the gallows.

at the end of the battle. When ships sink during battles you see men and cargo floating, which you can pick through as you see fit.

In land battles your men have four different weapon types (gunpowder, pistols, muskets



Survive your adventures and find out why it's good to be the Pirate King.

and grenades), plus cannons to conduct hit and run raids on towns. You land at the beach and have to fight your way into buildings, loot them and get the booty back to your ship. The longer you take, the more chance other ships

chase or attack an enemy with another click or use the keyboard to manually line yourself up to take your enemy. There are lots of special orders you can also issue—change ammunition type, or aim only at the sails to cripple your opponent. Cutthroats has multi-ship combat (up to twelve per side) and you can decide how each ship is configured with men, guns, cargo and so on. You can configure your fleet to have aggressive warships and slower moving cargo carriers. Each ship will have a specific role in your fleet. You can give your ships orders to grabble and board the enemy, launch row boats, abandon ship, create fire ships and a whole lot of other stuff. When you board and capture a ship you can loot it during battle (and then escape) or capture it and add it to your side during battle by sending over crew, or capture it and hold it to pillage at



Pluck your victims from the water and put them to work, or leave them to the sharks and watch news of your brutality spread.



From the crow's nest view you can gain valuable information on enemy fleets, as well as finding safe harbors to repair your ships.

will come to the town's rescue. You will battle soldiers, civilians, militia, mortar-encrusted city walls and fortresses. There are 30 building types (from street houses, the Treasury taverns and warehouses), and once your brigands get the goods, they have to fight their way back to the ship!

And, just to make things even more exciting, you can have ship and troop combat happening simultaneously!

How historically accurate is Cutthroats?

We've picked the period 1625-1725, which is sometimes called the Golden Age of Piracy. (Henry Morgan, greatest of the buccaneers sacked Panama in 1668; Blackbeard's reign of terror was 1716-18; Bartholomew Roberts, last of the great pirates, died in 1722.) The big political events follow the established historical timeline: Spain dominates the Caribbean at the beginning of the time-period, but is gradually eclipsed by the end; and "off stage" events like the English Civil War happen when they are supposed to. But the player will be able to interfere with the historical flow of events—he might kill the historical governor of Jamaica and install one of his own men in his place, changing history forever.

The towns are based on historical maps and other written accounts, altered where necessary to make for good game play. For example, Havana is built at the mouth of a huge natural harbour. On one bank is the



Loot the town treasury and escape before the garrison arrives.

walled city, with the buildings in approximately the right position. On the other bank is a big castle that houses a garrison of soldiers. If you went to Havana today you can follow the old city wall and it has the same shape as the one in the game; the castle is in the right place; the docks are in the right place. The economy of the towns also reflects their size, wealth, imports and exports during this period. Towns will grow or shrink as time moves on. If you sack a town it may struggle for years to return to the size and economic prosperity that you first discovered it in, or it may just cease to exist all together.

You have stated that the Cutthroats game world is dynamic and evolving. How will this effect the game play experience?

As an example, ports and ships become increasingly hostile to the player as the game proceeds: if you attack french ships, then you'll find that more and more french ships



Up to 20 ships can be engaged in real-time combat at the same time.

and french ports will treat you like an enemy. Information about your activities are carried around the world by the ship's themselves: if you commit an atrocity at one end of the Caribbean and sail to other end, there is a good chance that news of your nefarious deeds won't have reached them. Similarly, if you persistently let ships escape, then your enemies will be able to pin point your location and try to destroy you. If you choose a particular area as your hunting ground, then coastal guard ships are likely to reinforce it. If you sack a town which is a big sugar producer, then the supply of sugar in the rest of the world is reduced, and the price of sugar goes up. As your understanding of the game world grows, you will be able to develop increasingly sophisticated strategies.

How much interaction will there be with NPC's?

The whole game is based around your interaction with other characters. Two brief



6,000,000 miles of game play area to pillage and plunder.

examples, one at sea and one on land:

You can fly the flag of any nation to trick ships into thinking you are a friendly vessel. This tactic will only work for a short time, before sailors stop falling for your deception. As you become more famous, the trick becomes less and less likely to work. "That's no Spanish trader, that's the famous Black Hawk pirate ship..." There's a certain element of bluff in being a good a pirate. If you run up the Jolly Roger, maybe the enemy will be so scared that they'll surrender on the spot; or they could turn and run and you'll loose your quarry.

While in port you will interact with governors and local leaders. The attitude that you display toward each governor will range from diplomatic and friendly to threatening and vicious. As a result, you can be given missions which involve you in storylines and sub-plots of various kinds, or start an open feud with the governor that will lead to either your capture and trial, or his death at your hands. If you are on good terms with a governor and his government you may be offered a Letter of Marque. A Letter of Marque is a legal license to attack ships of another nation that your country is at war with.

What is your favorite part of the game?

The really cool thing is the way your reputation spreads around the game world, so that other people change their opinion of you as time goes on. If you attack Spanish ships, other Spanish ships can hear of your actions (but only if the ships you attack escape) and will change their attitude towards you. Powerful fleets, warships, town guard ships and pirate hunters will be more likely to attack you. But weaker ones may run away as soon as they recognize you, making it more difficult to catch easy prey. The reaction of the world to your playing style and reputation adds a whole new level of depth that I really enjoy.

REVENANT™

Look for
the playable
demo at
www.eidos.com

THE REVENANT EDITOR: PUTTING POWER OF PROFESSIONAL CRPG DESIGN INTO CONSUMERS' HANDS.

One of the most understated features of Eidos Interactive's new Computer Role-Playing Game, *Revenant*, is the inclusion of the game editor with the final version that will ship in September. So, when you buy *Revenant*, you are not only getting a great single player and multiplayer RPG experience, you are also given the necessary tools to design your own levels, for you and your friends to play through, either alone, or in a cooperative game. In addition to the editor, you are also provided with every piece of art, every sound effect, and every 3D model that *Revenant* was built with. Enterprising CRPG designers will even be able to import their own graphics and sounds (along with 3D models and animations) into their personalized gaming experience.

The *Revenant* game world is tile-based, but there is no limit to the size that tiles can be. This allows for impressive game world features that are implemented with an easy to understand tile-layout system. Tiles are laid out in 3D space on an invisible grid (where they line up perfectly next to one another), or you can shut the grid off and move objects the tiniest bit, so that they are in what you consider to be just the right spot. Then, you can add such animations as glowing runes,

flickering torches, dripping water, and crashing waves to add vibrancy and realism to your level. Adding characters to the game is a breeze as well. As an added bonus, you will even have some control over the game worlds rules. You can make up "character classes" that specialize in certain areas, or you can put limits on what characters can learn. You will be able to conjure these characters up from scratch, or edit the ones that

Aspiring designers will also be able to run complex scripts that can be used as cut-scenes in their epics. Supply your own voice .WAV files for your characters in the game. All the power of what Cinematix Studios used to create *Revenant* will be at your disposal. And if you do manage to get stuck, an on-line hypertext manual will help you through some of the complex processes.

So, in a nutshell, you will be able to create your own scenarios which can be played as single player or multiplayer games. In essence, Eidos is progressing the art of being a Game Master in a Paper and Pencil RPG and enhancing it. Now instead of laying out dungeons on graph paper, you lay them out on your PC, with all the traps and monsters pre-set for a group of players to venture through. And when that module is defeated, you can make a module tailored towards the new power-levels of the PCs.

The RevEdit game editor is the most powerful development tool ever released to the public, and we hope that it is the first step towards creating a virtual Role-Playing community where everyone's swords will be raised high and their spells ready.



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REVENANT™

THE ISLAND OF AHKUILON IS FILLED WITH COLORFUL FOLKS
HERE IS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CHARACTERS WHO YOU
WILL MEET, AND IN SOME CASES DEFEAT, ON YOUR VALIANT QUEST:



YHAGORO:

A former priest, Yhagoro discovered an ancient legend that would forever change his destiny. Infused with unholo demonic powers, Yhagoro's physical and spiritual body were warped into an evil creature. He now believes he is a god of the demon realm.



SABU:

Sabu is the right hand man of Jhaga, leader of the Yhagoro cult. Although Sabu is fluent in the magic arts, he fears confrontation and will avoid it at all costs.



ELAHNI:

Misthaven's healer is quite an enigma. Although he has saved hundreds of lives over the years and pleases the townspeople with his singing, his insistence that he is from another place and time tend to cause him many lonely days and nights.



TENDRICK:

The ruler of Misthaven once had complete control over the island of AhkUILON. With the lucrative shipping trade, his home city of Misthaven flourished under his rule. The father of a single daughter and a former general, Tendrick is respected by his people.



OLIHOO:

This strange old hermit lives just outside of Misthaven in the forest. He has lived on AhkUILON longer than anyone can remember. Although he appears to have lost his mind, he can often be the source of crucial information.



GUS:

The harbormaster for Misthaven is a simple man. While not blessed with intelligence, Gus has a warm heart and always has nice things to say to people.



GINA:

Gina comes from a race of half human half feline creatures known as the Sinsj. She is a weaponry expert capable of crafting excellent tools of destruction. She is also known for her trading abilities, which allows her to acquire weapons both unique and legendary.



JHAGA:

The leader of the Children of the Change cult, Jhaga is a sorcerer who possesses incredible magic power. He is a worshiper of the demon god Yhagoro and will follow his master's commands at any cost.



RUBOLD:

Rubold is the owner of the local tavern. He is very proud of his establishment and does quite well for himself catering to sailors from other lands. He is fiercely protective of Lyile and has a short temper.



JONG:

Misthaven's resident combat trainer is a veteran of the eastern wars. Captured from his homeland by raiding armies, Jong made a daring escape at sea and swam hundreds of miles to be washed up on the shores of AhkUILON. Believing he was dishonored by not receiving an honorable death in combat, Jong has vowed never to return to the East.



SARDOK:

This sorcerer arrived in Misthaven shortly after the city began attacking the city. He quickly earned the trust of Tendrick and was appointed official advisor to the throne. Little else is known about this mysterious individual.



CRONUS:

Cronus is an orphaned Cyclops who knows nothing of his origin. He is an expert blacksmith and his armors have a unique style and strength not found anywhere else.

Nukes for Newbies

Nuclear-Armed Action Makes a Great Intro to Flight Sims

by Jeff Lackey

It's exam time! Question 1: I think flight sim manuals should be (A) heavy enough to require two men and a boy just to lift them, or (B) just large enough to serve as a drink coaster. Question 2: If a flight sim doesn't properly model snap rolls, (A) I trash the disk and start a venomous online discussion thread, or (B) I prefer cinnamon rolls.

If you answered A, skip this review and find the latest FALCON 4 patch. If you answered B, F-22 LIGHTNING 3 was targeted at your hard drive. Easy to learn and simple to play, even a rank newbie can breeze through the short manual and be in the air within 15 minutes.

Cleared for Takeoff

F-22 LIGHTNING 3 puts you into a combat environment that's full of activity, with numerous enemy and friendly sorties, ground and sea operations, and a headset full of relevant radio chatter.

Coordinated allied flight missions prevent the dreaded "you against the world" syndrome.

Miracle of miracles, you have a competent wingman to assist you; tell him to cover you, and he'll actually clear your six. Graphics aren't groundbreaking—they're only slightly improved over previous Novologic offerings—but they're still better than average.

F-22 LIGHTNING 3's flight model is simple enough that flying is fairly effortless. About the only way to get into trouble is to exceed 800 knots at low level, causing structural damage. Avionics are simple and functional, providing a wealth of battlefield info without the need for an engineering degree. Weaponry

missiles are powerful and reliable, with one missile usually sufficient to down a bogey. Unfortunately, your own plane appears programmed to go down after exactly two missile hits. The first hit will produce veniable damage (elevator damage, fuel leaks, and so on), but take a second shot and it's ejection time. Speaking of weaponry, F-22 LIGHTNING 3 allows you to drop tactical nuclear weapons. Beyond requiring authorization to employ, you use it like any other bomb, except that you don't have to worry very much about your aim.

The More, the Merrier

F-22 LIGHTNING 3 excels in multiplayer. One click and you're on Novaworld, Novologic's server that allows up to 128 players to fly in the same airspace. Novaworld features something for everyone, from guns-only free-for-alls to squadron-based cooperative missions. Also notable is Voice-Over-Net, a feature that lets you speak with other online



THE NUCLEAR OPTION You'll be called upon to use tactical nuclear weapons to take out the enemy's weapons of mass destruction.

You'll perform your aerial heroics in six linear campaigns, situated in locations such as Syria, Indonesia, and the Kola Peninsula. Missions within the campaigns are a mix of ground and air attacks and escorts. While they increase in difficulty as you progress through the campaigns, the similarities do eventually produce a "been there, done that" feeling.



ESCORT DUTY Keeping lumbering transports alive long enough to reach their destination is no easy task.



SQUAWK BOX The Voice-Over-Net option allows you to chat in multiplayer without taking your hand off the joystick.

options display some interesting design decisions: Other than HARM missiles, there are no standoff air-to-ground guided missiles, resulting in your having to fly directly over any ground target (and its airbase defenses) to attack it.

On the air-to-air front, your

options it worked as advertised, although you can only speak to one person at a time.

In a nutshell, although F-22 LIGHTNING 3 is an incremental improvement over its predecessors, if you're a casual gamer looking for a fun flight sim, it's a good choice. And if you're a hardcore simmer looking for a quick, fun break—well, we won't tell. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Simple to learn, simple to fly; Novaworld makes multiplayer easy for novices; built-in multiplayer voice communications



CONS: Limited variety of weapons, only slightly improved over Novologic's previous efforts.

DIFFICULTY: Easy.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 200, 32MB RAM, 225MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D, 3dfx Glide.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: LAN, Internet (2-16 players, Novaworld [up to 128 players]).

Price: \$34.95
Publisher: Novologic

www.novologic.com



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Got Dem Road-Rage Blues

Chicago Lives and You Get to Drive It in MIDTOWN MADNESS

by Gordon Goble

They're mad, mad, I tell you! Indeed, Microsoft has had the MADNESS for nearly three years now. It started in 1996 with *MIDNIGHT TRUCK MADNESS* and then moved on to motorcycles for last year's memorable *MIDCROSS MADNESS*. This summer, Microsoft has gone bankers for inner-city driving, enlisting the talents of developer Angel Studios (Nintendo 64's *MLB*, featuring Ken Griffey Jr.) to produce surely the greatest MADNESS of all.

How does driving a city bus through a downtown rush hour grab ya? Not too exciting? Okay, what if you could accelerate past 100 miles per hour and slam your way through traffic, tossing aside sedans and minivans, lamp-posts, and park benches like a berserk T-Rex as horrified commuters shriek? And what if that cityscape was a 3D view of downtown Chicago, complete with semi-intelligent traffic, working stoplights, and a bunch of take-no-



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION GONE BAD In *MIDTOWN MADNESS*, the fastest vehicle isn't necessarily the best vehicle, as proven by this car-killing bus and freshly overturned Panaz.

prisoners AI racers trying to do the same thing you are?

Sound like fun? I thought it might. In *MIDTOWN MADNESS*, Microsoft has released a racing game that offers substance, variety and an unparalleled sense of freedom. Got something against bus drivers? Well then, take a Mustang, a Cadillac, or a speedy but brittle Panaz roadster for a spin instead. Be careful, though; this MADNESS calls for certain strategies that vary with the type of race selected, the course, and the environmental conditions—meaning the fastest vehicle isn't always the best vehicle.

Da Gameplay

You can choose to race in the sunshine, under the veil of darkness, or through an all-too-typical Chicago snowstorm (where *MIDTOWN*'s brilliant depiction of slippery handling is showcased). Or you can opt for the almar confines of a Circuit Race, where barricades separate racers from commuter traffic, police cruisers, and other minor annoyances. Heck, you're even allowed to cruise Chi-Town without competition—a great time to drink in the startlingly realistic environment.

And if you're thinking this is street racing only, you're sadly mistaken. *MIDTOWN* is positively peppered with intriguing shortcuts, from underground parking

MIDTOWN vehicle, depending on its relative bulk and durability, will take an incredible amount of punishment before firing its last piston. And sadly, progressive damage affects only the look, not the performance, of the car.

Nevertheless, the game is nothing if not totally addictive and fun. You'll be kept busy reading maps, gauging distances, monitoring opponents' whereabouts, and often charting your own sneaky course to the finish line. Particularly impressive are the game's high-speed freeways, where learning how to drive fast while leaving big wreckage behind for the other guys is a game unto itself. And the competition only gets faster and smarter the further you go, with interesting new circuits and vehicles introduced along the way.

Da Verdict

MIDTOWN MADNESS would have been well served by a between-race fix-it shop and a true "season" mode with cumulative points. Personal gripes also include a race selection interface that forces players to choose a

lots to swank indoor malls, from treet parkland to construction zones. And yes, *CARNAGEDOWN* fans, pedestrians abound, though they always manage to miraculously dive from the path of your marauding vehicle at the last possible second. Wanna bet Microsoft bundled that one about before release?

Also a bit less than authentic is *MIDTOWN* driving. Certainly, each of the 10 vehicles has vari-



SOMEONE CALL A BODY SHOP! Against a stormy Chicago sky, a quartet of Mustang fastback drivers let their aggression get the best of them.

ous attributes that distinguish it from the others, and each is enjoyably proficient in terms of speed and handling. But in real life you can't jump a car over a street bridge at 120 mph and expect to survive, nor can you crash head-on and emerge with a running engine. Yet a typical

vehicle before viewing a map of the upcoming course, and a vehicle selection menu that doesn't allow on-screen comparisons. Untapped potential and questionable design elements aside, however, this is one hellaciously entertaining free-form racing experience. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Huge variety, unparalleled sense of driving freedom, wonderful recreation of downtown Chicago.

CONS: Some interior design flaws, big-time split-screen events, less-than-satisfying time management, no true "fix-it" mode.

DIFFICULTY: Intermediate.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 100, 32MB RAM, 300MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modes for 12 players, LAN, Internet (2-8 players); 1 CD per player.

ESRB RATING: E, animated violence.

Price: \$39.95
Publisher: Microsoft

www.microsoft.com/games



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Ye Olde Celebrity Deathmatch

Fantasy-Themed RTS From the Makers of X-COM

by Tom Price

MAGIC AND MAYHEM is fun and stimulating, but it may leave you hankering for something a bit more deeply satisfying. If all you want is a night of evil sacrifices, energy totems, and magic brownies, you can find it in this game (or in the personals section of your local weekly). But if you're looking for a more meaningful relationship, you might want to look somewhere else.

MAGIC AND MAYHEM is another game that mixes multiple genres (in this case real-time strategy

and role-playing) into a hybrid that is unique at its best and shallow at its worst. You play as the young wizard Cornelius, summoning and conjuring your way through generic mythological lands that draw from Greek, Celtic, medieval, and other sources. A huge number of spells are available for you to make in your portmanteau by combining different artifacts found randomly throughout the levels—or sometimes gained as a reward for beating a boss—with mystical talismans purchased with your experience points. That's about as deep as the RPG elements get, however. Along the way you are

aided by a mysterious raven named Hermes, who provides you with tips and clues to help move your quest along. Assistance also comes from your uncle Lucan, a more experienced wizard who fights alongside you with his own spells and creatures. He'll even cast a cure or bloodlust spell over you or one of your beasts in the heat of battle. The only really irksome thing about him is that he hogs the



KILL DA WIZARD, KILL DA WIZARD
Most missions boil down to fighting the enemy wizard until he or she dies. The best way to achieve this is by denying them mana.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Fun gameplay and vivid aesthetics.

CONS: Lack of depth, slow multiplayer gameplay, weird aesthetics.

REQUIREMENTS:

Pentium 133, 32MB RAM, 100MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: None

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: TCP/IP, modem (up to 4 players); 1 CD per player

Price: \$39.98

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks

www.magicandmayhem.com



Places of Power.

MAGIC AND MAYHEM should definitely be classified as a real-time strategy game, even though you can't build anything (other than totems that heal your troops or electrocute and infect the enemy) and there is no development tree. The only resource you need to harvest is mana, and that can be picked up in bunches, or can be absorbed at Places of Power by you or one of your minions.

Speaking of minions, there are over 20 you can summon, from hellhounds to elves to brownies (yes, magic brownies) who will help you defeat the wizard that blocks your progress to each level. In fact, killing the enemy



LIL WIZARD CHEMISTRY SET The portmanteau is where you decide which spells and creatures to take along on each mission—a crucial stage of the game.

wizard is essentially what each level boils down to.

No RTS game is complete without a multiplayer mode, and while MAGIC AND MAYHEM makes a good effort to be complete and offer all the features you might want or need, with only two players over a LAN the lag is atrocious.

Even if hard-core real-time strategy and role-playing fans might feel shortchanged, MAGIC AND MAYHEM adds up to more

than the sum of its parts. The game is a lot of fun, especially for someone like me who is lairne-phobic and gets bored building up defenses in STARCRRAFT when he'd rather be putting together a tank rush. Throw in an esteemed pedigree (M&M was developed by the same guys who did X-COM) and incredibly weird claymation artwork, and you've got a strange and addictive game that's worth a look. **CGLW**

CENTAURS AND BASILISKS AND HELHOUNDS, OH MY!

Every level in MAGIC AND MAYHEM has its own strategy for combining spells and creatures to achieve victory, but there are a few monsters that come in handy in nearly every situation.

Helbeards: These critters are great bodyguards. They're very tough and can paralyze enemies with a laser-like beam projected from their eyes. Add a bloodlust spell and the Executioner spell and you've got a beast that makes Stephen King's Cujo look like that Taco Bell dog.

Greys: These little winks aren't particularly tough, but they're quick; they don't cost much mana, and only the centaur has a better ranged attack. Employing a squad of these guys is usually the best way to take over a modestly defended Place of Power.

Bats: Always have a winged creature of some sort in your spell list—they can fly through windows and reach Places of Power behind locked doors. Bats are a good choice because they're cheap to produce.

Brownies: Because they're so damned cute.



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Kingdom Come

TOTAL ANNIHILATION Gets a Fantasy Make-Over

by Thierry Nguyen

Two dead guys and a B movie helped me through **TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS**. Napoleon's flanking cavalry maneuvers served me well, especially when combined with Sun Tzu's wise words about terrain ("those skilled in defense hide in the deepest depths of the earth; those skilled in attack maneuver in the highest heights of the sky"). But sometimes—particularly with a huge army of undead advancing toward my castle—I had to get a little more modern. Here I found myself relying on Bruce Campbell's eloquent line from the flick *Army of Darkness* for motivation. "This is my boomstick," I would cry, and let fly with muskets and cannons upon the rotting hordes.

Part cerebral, part brawl, **TA: KINGDOMS** carries on the fine real-time-strategy tradition Cavedog started two years ago.

Magical, Not Mechanical

TA: KINGDOMS is essentially the fantasy version of **TOTAL**

ANNIHILATION. While the original game focused on a vague and uninteresting war between two robot factions, **TA: KINGDOMS** goes for a high-fantasy angle with a touch of *King Lear*. A powerful king divides his realm among his four children, then he promptly disappears. A few hundred years later, the four children have split into two camps, one that emphasizes technology, the other relying on magic. One faction initiates an invasion, and the battle begins.

Cavedog developers should be commended for creating a much more interesting campaign than that of the original **TOTAL ANNIHILATION**. I barely played post the second mission in **TA**, but this time, I went through the entire campaign with pleasure.

The stylized cut-scenes, montages, and voiceovers made the story seem like a Ken Burns documentary at times. The missions themselves, while of the general "make camp and kill the opposition" type, have some variety sprinkled here and there. One has you enacting a daring prison break, while another places you in charge of a peasant revolt where you storm a castle and take control of a trebuchet.

Most notably, the game's campaign is large and continuous, shunning the conventional, episodic approach of games like **STARCRIFT** in favor of a more unique method. Instead of playing as one race throughout one campaign and then proceeding to another race and another campaign, in **TA: KINGDOMS** you constantly jump among all four factions during the game's 48 missions. This allows for some interesting angles on gameplay. In one scenario, you



TEAR DOWN THE WALL As an anti-rushing strategy, players can easily build walls and create defensive structures that tower over said walls.

establish a beachhead. The very next scenario puts you in the opposition's shoes—your objective is to eliminate the freshly established beachhead. Although

this is a great storytelling device, I can see how some gamers won't like it. You don't spend enough continuous time with any side in the battle. Just as you start to master tactics for one faction, the game switches you over to another.

I Know Why the Caged Demon Sings

Like **TOTAL ANNIHILATION**, **KINGDOMS** has 3D terrain and units. The terrain itself seems the



PUFF, THE ANGRY DRAGON Given the time and resources, any player can call upon a mighty dragon to terrorize his opponents.

same as in **TA**, but thanks to 3D acceleration, effects like fog of war, lighting, and shadows look way better. The unit detail is more exact this time; it's fun to see men push their catapults up hills, or dragons make slow, graceful turns during flight. And, much as in **TOTAL ANNIHILATION**, the physics and the line-of-sight make capturing tall hills doubly important.



VIVE LA REVOLUTION! The campaign is scattered with interesting missions, like this peasant revolution storming a castle.

continued on page 159

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★★

PROS: Interesting single-player campaigns, nice graphic additions, retains previous game's assets.

CONS: System lag, uneven AI, inadequate moral, inadequate feedback.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 233, 32MB RAM, 350MB hard-drive space.

3D SUPPORT: (Direct3D), Glide.

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

Price: \$49.95
 Publisher: Cavedog Entertainment
www.cavedog.com





He is coming.
Walking between worlds...
Traveling the road of souls from Liveside to Deadside.
And back again.

A dead man is coming, skull in one hand,
fambouss in the other...
a voodoo mask in his chest
and lines of power in his back.

A possessed man is coming,
stalking evil in tenements and deserts,
subways and swamps,
spirit world and real world.

Shadowman is coming...
To stop the Apocalypse.
To save your soul.

SHADOWMAN

Walk on
the Deadside



matsushita



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Infrastructure: The Final Frontier

Strategy Supreme—for Trekkers, at Least

by Keith Ferrell

Just how does the Federation work? What holds the Klingon Empire together? What are the Cardassians' goals, or the Romulans? What motivates the Ferengi?

Well, we know what motivates the Ferengi.

The economic underpinnings and infrastructure of the *Star Trek* universe have received relatively short shrift in the television series and in the movies, although, unlike *Star Wars*, those underpinnings are always present, and occasionally acknowledged.

Whatever its conceptual flaws, *Star Trek* from the beginning sought to create a "real" universe, not a fairy tale. Diplomacy and politics in particular have figured largely in many (if not most) episodes, and technology's impact on the universe's cultures has been more than once a plot fulcrum. The arrival and impact of warp drive undelay a whole movie.

Now MicroProse gives us an ambitious and mostly successful attempt to show the inner workings of *Trek*'s few largest political

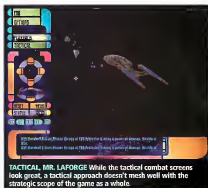
entities, their interrelationships, the philosophies upon which they are built, and the infrastructures that support them.

It's a tall order, and playing *BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION* imposes some hefty demands. Whether or not you feel like devoting the large amount of time the game requires probably will have more to do with how you feel about *Star Trek* than the actual game.

The game itself is attractively presented, with a variety of screens that range from menus of resource-management and construction options to wide-scale views of the galaxy complete with trade routes and empire signifiers. Each screen has multiple levels, each of which adds another degree of detail, another layer of data to be interpreted and managed. There is a lot of information here, and that's one of the prime contributors to the game's steep learning curve.

Start as one of the five bodies politic that are central to the series—Federation, Klingon, Romulan, Cardassian, Ferengi. Each has its own skills, resources, and—this is important in the context of the series and the game—cultural tendencies. Those tendencies—ferengi acquisition, Federation diplomacy, Klingon aggressiveness, and so forth—are reproduced within the game, up to a point.

Beginning with a single solar system, you have to develop fleets for exploration, contact and diplomacy, and colonization. Simultaneously you must invest



TACTICAL, MR. LAFORGE While the tactical combat screens look great, a tactical approach doesn't mesh well with the strategic scope of the game as a whole.

in technology and research, build structures and economic engines, monitor the size and morale of your population, and manage resources such as energy and finance. Resource management occupies much of your time in this turn-based game, although once you grow accustomed to the meanings of the various cursors, and the ways in which the various

screens are layered one upon another, your efficiency tends to increase. Still, even at the earliest stages, a turn takes a while, and I wouldn't want to play too long without a pencil and paper close by for note joting and reminders.

Dispatch a starship to explore the space around your home systems. MicroProse has done a good job of giving a feel for the size of the galaxy—it takes a while (at least a turn, often more) to get anywhere. Once you're there you may find a planet worth colonizing and developing, an alien race with whom you must negotiate or fight,



SECTOR 0-0-1 The map screen shows you how large your empire is—and how much larger the galaxy.

or a physical anomaly that destroys your craft.

Journey to Babel

Contact with aliens further complicates your management responsibilities. Negotiations and alliances are crucial to success, and to the expansion of the empire. Negotiation and treaty implementation are better handled here than in many such games, and they occasionally approach a level of subtlety and nuance that approximates some of the relationships of the show.

Because the game starts in the earliest space-faring days of each empire, you get to experience first contact with aliens. This is nicely handled and contributes



DETAILS, DATA Empires run on information—and the amount of info in this game can run over you.

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



PROS: Captures the feel of *Star Trek* in great detail; loaded with information; long playing time.

CONS: Steep learning curve; occasional information deluge; weak tactical systems.

DIFFICULTY: Hard

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 133, 16MB RAM, 16MB hard drive space.

3D SUPPORT: Direct3D

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Modem, direct cable, LAN, internet (2-5 players); 1 CD per player.

Price: \$49.95
Publisher: MicroProse

www.microprose.com



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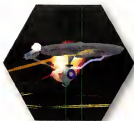


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Strategy First



PC CD-ROM

continued from page 154

largely to the game's ability to communicate that sense of exploration that was part of *Trek's* stock-in-trade. Establishing communication with a newly encountered species, whether a familiar one from the series or a minor one, is challenging and rewarding.

Your relationships with other species also have an economic impact as you develop trade routes and mutual economic dependencies.

But sometimes you have to fight (or let *Trek's* face it, you choose to, even if your race is not by nature warlike). Here's one of the weak spots of the game: the tactical combat screens, although attractive and well thought out, seemed jarring to me. You can issue combat orders to your fleet, then watch the orders

enacted. But because the overall game is so deeply based on grand strategy, its tactical aspects struck me as a distraction, if not an afterthought. I quickly shifted to auto-combat mode, letting the computer fight my battles (I found the auto-combat function to be fair. And, to be fair, the tactical game is probably more appealing in a multi-player game.)

Soon you'll have several systems humming or stuttering along. At this point there will be so much info coming your way, so many variables and minute details to juggle, such a large number of factors to consider, and so many decisions to make, that you will discover, probably once and for all, just how much or how little you care about the *Star Trek* universe and its inhabitants.

Do You Grok Spock?

If you care a lot, this is a fine game. You can drop for hours—lots of hours—into the *Star Trek* realm and have some fun there. The tactical weaknesses are more than made up for by the strategic strengths you can come to feel

Who's Who?

How you play *BIRTH OF THE FEDERATION* is in many ways determined by the race you choose...The options you select possess certain characteristics and...that, for the most effective gameplay, you should incorporate into your approach to the game.

Here are the basics:

- United Federation of Planets:** Think Picard, not Kirk. Talk, talk.
- Klingon Empire:** Home of the sensitive War-stuff. Let the fighting begin.
- Romulan Star Empire:** Pull the cloak around you and send in the spies.
- Cardassian Union:** Treelies? We don't need no stinkin' basties!
- Parorgi Alliance:** Have I got something to sell to you!

that you really are running one of the, er, enterprises of the Roddenberry-verse. And the game does offer an effective vision of a galactic empire in keeping with that of the TV series.

It's not, ultimately, a great science fiction game. The *Trek* paraphernalia and framework hold it back from fully projecting the kind of free-wheeling, galaxy-spanning sensibility that good science fiction communicates so well. I don't think *BIRTH* will displace *MASTER OF ORION* as the best of the space exploration, resource, and trading games.

In short, *BIRTH* is ultimately more successful as *Trek* than as either a game or science fiction. But if it's *Trek* you want... engage!

CGW



RED ALERT Sometimes you just gotta fight if you're going to expand your empire.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS • REVIEW

continued from page 151

One of the problems with the original *TOTAL ANNIHILATION* was that you couldn't really tell the difference between the two sides. This time, the four factions are unique in look and unit focus. The Araman (earth) faction has traditional medieval units like archers, cavalry, and catapults, while its ally, Verana (water), has musketeers, dragoons, and the largest navy. Zhon (air) has quick flying units, and it's so mobile that it doesn't even have standing structures for creating units; instead, mobile "builder" units generate troops. Finally, Taros (fire) has the undead, along with several mage units. While each faction has a unique set of units, each can eventually conjure a dragon, which is a great equalizer in just about any battle. Finally, there is a random chance that each faction's deity, an uber-unit of sorts that you control, will join any given battle.

One problem with the campaign is that the AI is a bit erratic at times. The pathfinding is solid; units usually get to their final destination, but they tend to take long, alternate routes. Also, I often found my men obviously polishing their muskets while yak-riding archers were firing at them three feet away.

KINGDOMS deemphasizes resource management, providing only one resource: mana. And it's unlimited. You capture mana sites by plucking ledestones on them, and the more sites you capture, the larger your mana pool becomes, which

makes your unit production more efficient. In this RTS, resources take a back seat to unit production and management.

Multiplayer consists of several skirmish maps, along with some special scripted scenarios like *King of the NW* and a beachhead invasion. Once you get tired of those, you can use the included map editor to create your own scenarios.

My Kingdom for a Horse

TA KINGDOMS does have some significant problems, however. First off, it's a system hog. On a Pentium II/400 with 128MB of RAM, I saw noticeable frame-rate drops at 800x600. On a Pentium III/300 with 64MB, I had to drop the game down to 640x480 to make it playable.

Also, while the manual is a vast improvement over that of the previous game, it still falls a bit short. It focuses too much on the back-story while leaving out important details. There's no explanation of how to use the different formations, and the multiplayer section is extremely weak. It would have been nice to know that you need to establish teams before a game starts, a requirement that in and of itself is discouraging. Not allowing in-game alliances is also annoying.

Another design limitation is the lack of unit



HERE THERE BE DRAGONS In *KINGDOMS*, as in the original *TA*, it's as important to conquer the air and the sea as it is to conquer the land.

sounds. I like hearing a unique voice acknowledge my commands for each unit. While each unit does have a unique sound, the game tends to use a universal chime as an acknowledgment response. The hero units in the single-player campaign have nice stats and names, but they lack personality, because they chime and beep rather than bark out a personal reply every time you order them around.

All in all, though, *TA: KINGDOMS* is an excellent RTS that distinguishes itself from most games in this crowded subgenre. It's just not the must-buy that its predecessor or *STARCRIFT* was. **CGW**

Marred Masterpiece

A Good Sequel, but Not Up to the Original Classic

by Jim Cobb

The original OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR won CGW's Best Wargame award because it was a wonderful study of 20th-century warfare and surprisingly enjoyable for such a complex game. THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR II (ART II) brings the series from WWII to the beginning of the next century, and it chronicles the changing effects of increasingly lethal technology on the modern battlefield. In particular, ART II's clever depiction of the concept of air mobility deftly shows the major difference between WWII and modern fighting, with the helicopter finally getting its due in a computer wargame.

No Battle Vacuum Here

Like its predecessor, ART II shines in its variety of scale and locations. Battles are fought in rugged mountain ranges, burning deserts, and lush jungles, complete with appropriate meteorological effects. These battles are not fought in vacuums. They



PAPER WAITS These views of a hypothetical 1976 Warsaw Pact invasion of West Germany give you a good idea of the game's detailed "cardboard counter" look.

interact with events happening elsewhere and include not only third-party intervention but also the use of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

Three hundred and thirty weapon systems are provided in all, allowing scenario makers free rein to create or modify conflicts around the globe. Units and forces are modified by many factors; readiness, proficiency, supply, experience, force cooperation, and morale are key to engagements in which a small band of professionals can hold off many times their numbers.

For those who like their games fast and easily digestible, ART II's standard mode eliminates such details as specific unit orders, supply, target and traffic density, and fog-of-war. On the other hand, if you want to blow up your own bridges, assign your own air units, or spice up the game with random events, you're better off playing the advanced game, though it requires a lot of attention to detail on your part.

Given the apparent simplicity of just right-clicking on a target to get a combat menu, you might want to ignore the analysis function. Yet you do so at your own peril, because the depth of the combat system makes simple odds calculations misleading. For instance, a company of regular infantry in a hilly forest can give a pure armor battalion more than it can handle. Reviewing terrain effects, proficiency, and supply modifiers will give you a better clue about whether to assault all-out or try some probing attacks first.

Tarnish on the Barrel

Combat resolution in ART II is much more detailed than in the original, with a set sequence of bombardment, antiarmor, and antipersonnel conflict. Instead of lumping all attack and defense

from the interface.

Other shortcomings: The computer opponent of ART II isn't quite as tough as that of the original (though the game is still a delight when played by email). The supply mechanism is still pretty abstract, given the concrete detail of the rest of the game. And how guerrillas, no matter how feisty, can hold out against large, well-supported regulars is a mystery to me. On other fronts, introduction results could be displayed better, naval forces are still a stepchild to the main thrust of the game, and the inability to use chemical weapons



HAVE A CIGAR OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR II sets up plausible "what if" scenarios, such as a full-scale U.S. amphibious assault on Cuba in 1962.

factories into one combat resolution, antiarmor and antipersonnel attacks are now calculated per weapon and per target. Antiarmor weapons also undergo to-hit and to-kill rolls; this helps rectify anomalies in ART I, in which large units occasionally suffered unreasonably high casualties.

The game's 13 scenarios cover three Arab-Israeli wars, Vietnam, and seven hypothetical operations. Four of the more detailed scenarios require that you launch them with the OPART2 300.exe file, which is a problem if you don't have the patch installed. Too bad the designers didn't set up this process so that it could be performed seamlessly

at will can be frustrating. The graphics—mediocre in the original—are serviceable at best a year later.

More of a concern is that ART II shipped with so many bugs. We expect patches for minor flaws, and we even welcome them when they represent player-suggested upgrades. Putting unplayable scenarios on the market, however, creates an atmosphere of mistrust. Don't get me wrong: THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR II is still a good game, the best of its kind on the market. But works of art, alas, weren't meant to be rushed out the door. Get the patch. **CGW**

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

★★★★☆

PROS: Improved combat system, and the most comprehensive view of 20th-century operational-level warfare.

CONS: Bugs, dated graphics, and mysterious game mechanics take this less than the original.

REQUIREMENTS: Pentium 166, 32MB RAM, 115MB hard drive space

3D SUPPORT: None.

MULTIPLAYER SUPPORT: Email (1-2 players)

Price: \$49.95
 Publisher: TalonSoft/Talon
www.talonsoft.com

SOMEWHERE, GEORGE HAD MADE A MISTAKE.

His Catalan opening had been flawless. Yet, somehow, his opponent had forced his retreat and now held him in check. With his only remaining rook lured out of position and pinned, the situation appeared hopeless. This isn't Chessmaster; he thought, there is no replay option in this game. His mind raced back to the magnificent chess sets of Chessmaster. The gambits and endgame strategies. The Chessmaster opponents against whom he had matched wits and sharpened his game, as he progressed through trials in various levels. The voice of the Chessmaster, coaching him. And suddenly, in his hour of need, he heard the voice again: "Counterrattack in the center... N-g4." Why hadn't he seen it before?



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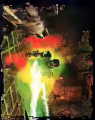
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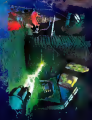
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TIPS

CHEAT CODES • HINTS • WALKTHROUGHS

Action

STAR WARS EPISODE I:
THE PHANTOM MENACE

During the game, press **Backspace**; then enter any of the following cheat codes:

Code	Effect
brenando	gain tech bonus
domtttt	instant death
drop a beat	turns display wavy
fps	toggles frame-rate counter
lanobi	you play as Obi-Wan Kenobi
lanpanaka	you play as Captain Panaka
lanqueen	you play as Queen Amidala
lanquigon	you play as Qui-Gon Jinn
i really sink	sets game on easy level
kill me now	just what it sounds like
rxw	toggles red outline on menu boxes
where is gushick	runs credits

Sports/Racing

MIDTOWN MADNESS

These cheats must be entered in the command line where you installed **MIDTOWN MADNESS** (don't forget the hyphen!):

Code	Effect
-allcars	gives you access to all cars
-allrace	gives you access to all races



Simulation/Space

F-22 LIGHTNING 3

The F-22 design team betrays its interest in a certain pair of fictional FBI agents with the following cheat codes. To use these codes, hit **Ctrl-Enter**; then type in the appropriate phrase, and hit **Enter** again.

Code	Effect
black oil	refuels aircraft
fight the future	refuelishes cannot arm
ghostit	tanks plane invisible
i want to believe	you won't crash
the truth is out there	gives estimated arms
this isn't happening	repairs damage
trust no one	tanks aircraft invincible

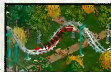


Strategy/Wargames

ROLLER COASTER
TYCOON

Want to add a little extra something to spice up your roller-coaster designs? Here are a few suggestions, courtesy of designer Chris Sawyer.

How about positioning a corkscrew so that it twists over a footpath? Nearby guests will be fascinated by it, and riders will get an extra thrill.



Building a pair of racing roller coasters is an obvious idea, but there are many ways to make it a bit more interesting. Here, the two tracks twist over and around each other by using a pair of parallel corkscrews. Perhaps an even better variation of this would be to have the tracks running in opposite directions, and timing the trains so they pass each other on the corkscrews.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

Armoron

- 1 Scout early and often. While you might be able to stop an early attack with Eln alone, you still have to see it coming.
- 2 Use defensive structures sparingly. They are very expensive, and cheaper mobile units do the same job.
- 3 Don't build a trebuchet until you're ready. It's a big investment, so create defenses first, a trebuchet later.
- 4 Remember the titan's armor radius. One titan in a group of mage archers will make a big difference.
- 5 Resurrect everything possible. And grab every corpse you see.

Taros

- 1 Play defensively. Taros is the slowest race, and picking fights is usually a bad idea.
- 2 Use only caged demons on hilltops. They will stand a better chance of hitting air targets.
- 3 Build walls around the mage tower. One layer of walls around a mage tower will stop all melee attacks and many ballistic attacks.
- 4 Build either a cabal or an abyss. Rarely will you need both factories at once.
- 5 Baby-sit your powerful magic users. The weather witch, the fire mage, and the mind mage are weak, but very effective. Try adding one of these to a group of blade demons.

Zhan

- 1 Combine your stone giants and shamans. This makes for one of the most effective Zhan assault forces.
- 2 Rush to build a few harpies. Then concentrate on building your infrastructure. While your units are building, micromanage those harpies and capture enemy units. Harass the enemy with his own forces and maybe secure an enemy build.
- 3 Zhan are mobile, so think dynamically. Queue up your builders to build toward your enemy. This allows your troops to get to the front lines faster.
- 4 Stone giants and death totems can take out enemy air assaults. But they must be concentrated, so use them around divine lodestones.
- 5 In the early game, use thirsha to claim manasites. As the game progresses and you lose thirsha, attack other enemy positions and gain their manasites.

Veruna

- 1 If a map has water, control it. The Veruna have incredible power at sea, so utilize it to augment your land-based forces.
- 2 Amazon knights are weak in small numbers. But they can be devastating in groups of 10 to 20.
- 3 When taking on enemy flying units, use the cannon tower. This unit will survive a third-weapon attack and cause tremendous damage to thirsha and dragons.

- 4 Mortars are great for base and wall defense.

Build a wall and place a mortar behind it. This will give you wall bonuses, good protection, and force your enemy to either fly over or breach your wall.

- 5 In the endgame, create a circle of pillar-of-light structures. Then land your dragon in the middle of the circle to heal, while his mana recharges.

— Courtesy of Cawdrey



Here's a rather strange idea to try if space is limited (left). These two roller coasters are built directly above and below each other, and could perhaps even be designed to race each other.



Don't be afraid to use the same area of land for several different rides. Here's a selection of rides (right) all built through, under, and over each other. Some of them also dive underground, providing even more excitement for the riders.



Here (left), a large upward helix leads into a tighter downward helix inside the first one.

Who says all roller coasters have to start with a lift hill? Here's a design (right) that cleverly uses a cliff face to allow the train to go straight out of the station into a steep, twisted drop. The lift hill on this design is actually underground, at the end of the ride.

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"Assault 'em!" yells Warhawk. "Get close and use grenades!" Heart pounding, you hesitate. The next of your team to die could be you...

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(Game of the
Year)

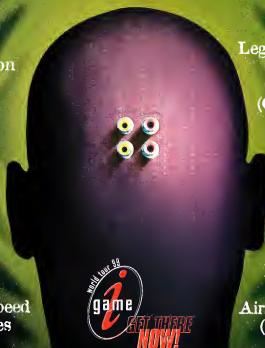
Croc 2

StarSiege

Descent 3

Dark Stone

AirForce Delta
(Dreamcast)



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This monthly poll represents our readers' choices for their favorite games. *Bronn Was*, *Half-Life* and *NHL Hockey* continue to dominate the chart, but *Heroes III* is coming on strong.

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME TITLE	GENRE	POLL SCORE	CGW RATING
★	1	StarCraft: Brood War Blizzard	SI	8.28	5
★	2	Half-Life Sierra	AC	8.16	5
★	3	NHL Hockey 99 EA Sports	SP	8.02	5
	4	Lords II 1999 Access Software	SP	8.06	4.5
	5	Heroes II: Price of Loyalty 3DO/New World	ST	8.04	5
	6	StarCraft Blizzard	SI	8.06	5
	7	Total Annihilation: Core Contingency Cavedog	SP	8.73	4.5
	8	Heroes of Might & Magic III 3DO	ST	8.72	4.5
	9	NBA 99 EA Sports	SP	8.70	4.5
★	10	Baldur's Gate Interplay	RP	8.69	4
★	11	Genes Fandango LucasArts	AD	8.68	4.5
	12	Might and Magic VI 3DO/New World	RP	8.67	4.5
	13	Total Annihilation: Battle Tactics Cavedog	ST	8.66	3.5
	14	NHL 98 EA Sports	SP	8.50	4
★	15	X-Wing Alliance LucasArts	S	8.49	3.5
	16	Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II LucasArts	AC	8.42	4.5
	17	Quake II Activision	AC	8.39	4.5
	18	Wing Commander: Prophecy Gold Origin	SI	8.37	4
	19	Longbow 2 EMIline's	SI	8.35	3
	20	World Cup 98 EA Sports	SP	8.34	4.5
	21	Fallout II Interplay	RP	8.30	4
	22	Trife: The Dark Project Fidos	AC	8.29	4.5
★	23	You Don't Know Jack: The Ride Berkeley Systems	CP	8.28	4.5
	24	NBA 98: Road to the World Cup EA Sports	SP	8.27	4.5
	25	Need for Speed III EA	SP	8.26	3
	26	Wing Commander: Prophecy Origin	SI	8.21	4.5
	27	Fallout: Inquest	RP	8.20	4.5
	—	Jedi Knight: Mysteries of the Sith LucasArts	AC	8.20	4
	29	Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft	ST	8.19	4
	30	Total Annihilation GT Interactive	ST	8.18	4.5
	31	Curse of Monkey Island LucasArts	AD	8.15	5
	32	European Air War MicroProse	SI	8.14	4
★	33	The Operational Art of War TalonSoft	WG	8.13	4.5
	34	Pioneer General III SI	WG	8.11	5
	35	NBA Live 98 EA Sports	SP	8.09	4.5
	36	Rainbow 6 Eaglewatch Red Storm	AC	8.08	4.5
	37	Falcon 4.0 MicroProse/Harbo	SI	8.07	3.5
	—	Viper Sierra Sports	SP	8.07	N/A
	39	Moonopolis Madness Microsoft	SP	8.06	4.5
	40	F-15 EA/Origin	SI	8.05	4.5
	41	Unreal GT Interactive	AC	8.04	4
	42	West Front TalonSoft	AC	8.03	4
	43	Otoko II Pock: The Reckoning © Software/Activision	AC	8.02	3.5
	44	Shogun: Mobile Armor Division Novotek	AC	8.01	3.5
	45	Stratige Tribes Sierra	SI	7.97	4.5
	46	Redwood Tycoon II Gathering of Developers	ST	7.96	4.5
	47	Sid Meier's Gettysburg EA/Frands	WG	7.95	4.5
	48	You Don't Know Jack 3 Berkeley Systems	CP	7.94	4
	49	Quake II Pack 2: Ground Zero Activision	AC	7.92	3.5
	50	Jack Nicklaus 5 Accolade	SP	7.90	5

RANK	LAST MONTH	GAME TITLE	GENRE	POLL SCORE	CGW RATING
	51	Final Fantasy VII Edios Interactive	RP	7.88	4
	52	50 Age of Empires Microsoft	ST	7.87	4.5
	—	44 You Don't Know Jack Movies Berkeley Systems	CP	7.87	4.5
	54	51 Rogue Squadron LucasArts	AC	7.86	3.5
	—	65 WWII Fighters (A)line's	SI	7.86	4.5
	56	66 SamRazin ASC Games	AD	7.85	4.5
	57	47 StarCity 3000 MaxisEA	ST	7.84	4
	58	61 Smart Games Challenge 2 Smart Games/Harbo	CP	7.83	5
	59	60 HellFire Sierra	RP	7.82	4
	60	72 Worms 2 MicroProse	CP	7.81	4
	61	71 Battleground: Full Run TalonSoft	WG	7.80	4
	62	53 FreeSpace: Silent Threat Interplay	SI	7.79	3
	63	63 Battleground: Napoleon in Russia TalonSoft	WG	7.78	4.5
	64	63 Smart Games Challenge 3 Smart Games/Harbo	CP	7.77	4
	65	62 StarCraft: Inspection Aztech New Media	ST	7.75	3.5
	66	66 NFL Blitz Midway	SP	7.73	3.5
	67	75 Hecite II Activision	AC	7.72	4.5
	64	73 Warlords III: Darklords Rising Red Orb/SSG	ST	7.71	4.5
	68	76 You Don't Know Jack TV Berkeley Systems	CP	7.69	2.5
	70	78 Independence War Ocean	SI	7.68	3
	71	68 Warhammer 40,000: Chaos Gate SI	SI	7.66	4
	72	33 Resident Evil 2 Capcom	AC	7.65	3.5
	73	77 Civilization II: Fantastic Worlds MicroProse	ST	7.66	4
	74	76 Caesar III Sierra	SI	7.63	4.5
	75	80 Moto Racer EA	AC	7.61	4
	76	64 Diamond Mind Baseball 7.0 Diamond Mind	SP	7.59	3.5
	77	84 Twinnen's Odyssey Activision	AD	7.58	5
	78	61 Desert: Freespace Interplay	SI	7.57	4
	79	86 Zork: Grand Inquisitor Activision	AD	7.56	N/A
	80	82 People's General SS	WG	7.55	3
	—	90 Madden NFL 99 EA Sports	SP	7.55	4.5
	82	82 F22 ADF Infogames/DID	SI	7.54	4.5
	—	86 GothicArts Activision	AC	7.56	5
	84	89 Fighters Anthology EA	SI	7.53	3.5
	85	60 Front Office Football Selectasic Software	SP	7.52	4.5
	86	91 Flight Unlimited 2 Looking Glass	SI	7.51	4.5
	87	87 Dungeon Keeper Expansion EA/Bullfinch	SI	7.47	4.5
	88	82 Slide Runner Westwood/Higen	AD	7.46	4.5
	89	94 Triple Play 99 EA Sports	SP	7.45	2.5
	90	— Civilization Call to Power Activision	ST	7.43	3.5
	91	93 Baseball Mogul Infinite Monkey	SP	7.42	4
	92	— StarSiege Sierra	SI	7.41	4.5
	—	100 Delta Force Novologic	AC	7.41	4
	94	98 Myth Bunge	SI	7.40	4.5
	—	74 Close Combat II Atari/Microsoft	WG	7.40	3
	96	96 50th Raider II Edios Interactive	AC	7.39	4
	97	98 Multiplayer Civilization II Gold MicroProse/Harbo	ST	7.37	3
	98	— Virtual Pool 2 Interplay	SP	7.36	4.5
	99	96 MechCommander MicroProse	SI	7.35	4
	100	— Great Battles of Julius Caesar Interactive Magic	WG	7.34	4

★ = Top game of genre. Red = New Game. AD = Adventure. RP = Role-Playing. SI = Simulation/Space Combat. ST = Strategy. WG = Wargame. AC = Action. SP = Sports. CP = Classic/Puzzle

Who Owns Online Games?

Virtual Property and Online Community Define the Future

For me, the most exciting aspect of this year's Electronic Entertainment Exposition (E3) was seeing that I might not have been as crazy with regard to the future of online gaming as I was beginning to think I was. For years, I've been saying that online gaming will create new communities where gamers will have a larger stake in "owning" and "customizing" a part of the game. I even coined a word for such communities. I called them "cyburbs." The support for not using this neologism is overwhelming. Yet, we're beginning to see a glimpse of what I believed they would become—virtual refuges where individuals would find kindred souls.

Ironically, it seems to have been *ULTIMA ONLINE*, the persistent world that many of us castigated from its initial launch, that turned the tide. Enough fans of the great role-playing series were willing to turn cold hard cash into virtual gold that UD not only defined a profitable business model to a company (Electronic Arts) which left online profits were many years away, but also created a gold rush in virtual property. Recent sales of UD accounts on eBay for hundreds and, in at least one case, over a thousand dollars indicates that there is perceived value in owning property, prestige and privilege in a virtual world. Why? It was largely because Lord British and the UD team understood the value of letting people build what they wanted to build and do what they wanted to do. They also understood the value of not taking those custom artifacts away from the gamers once they'd worked for them. From the improved first age through the much improved *ULTIMA ONLINE: THE SECOND AGE*, the world became very real to a lot of people.

At E3, the principle is being extended. Electronic Arts has proved that they understand the value of such a community and such custom ownership of virtual property with an upcoming release from the *NEED FOR SPEED* team. *MOTOR CITY* takes the hot rods of the '50s, '60s and '70s and allows you to buy, sell, and customize your own virtual street machines. You can join virtual car clubs and spend a good deal of time betting virtual cash or racing for prizes (therein giving up possession of your virtual hot rod to another player). You can paint your car with a custom paint job or sell a custom paint job to another player via an online auction a la eBay. In short, the team has wisely given hot rod fans a reason to keep coming back to the online world. As in UD, the *MOTOR CITY* designers understand what it takes to get you emotionally and economically committed to a game world. EA isn't the only big

company to see the light, however. Microsoft is building persistent worlds. We've talked about *ASHERON'S CALL* before. It is a 3D fantasy role-playing game that enables you to dabble in politics and recruit vassals. It has the basic appeal of a UD with a lot of extra nuances with regard to the social system and prestige system. If fantasy isn't your thing, they've got a science-fiction



angle on the persistent world/alternate universe gambit. Chris Roberts, designer of the *WING COMMANDER* series, has struck gold again (and

lectible card games gamer in the real world.

Even the traditional shooter genre is taking a cue from the success of UD. The good folks at Valve are creating league play for *TEAM FORTRESS*. Imagine if your clan could be nationally ranked and could schedule sanctioned matches with ease, and also schedule practice sessions that wouldn't count against their reputation. Suddenly, cooperative play becomes more compelling, gamers become more interested in competing with the same folks, and death-matching becomes about as interesting as an exhibition game for major league baseball. An exhibition game shows off all of the mechanics and may feature both great plays and players, but it doesn't count in any overarching framework. The same is true of death matches, but the future is

Recent sales of **ULTIMA ONLINE** accounts on eBay for hundreds of dollars indicates that there is perceived value in **owning property, prestige and privilege** in a virtual world.

no consents about the movie, either). In *FREELANCER*, you have all the freedom you once wished for in *PRIVATEER*. You'll be able to steal ships and cargoes from other players, but you'll also be able to buy, sell, upgrade and customize. I can easily imagine auction traffic in terms of custom ships, just like the auction traffic in UD accounts. It doesn't take a large company to see the potential, however. Watch for a game called *TERMINUS*. This is a group of young developers who have developed a persistent science-fiction universe where you can build your own ships according to a few basic rules and then test them via their physics model. A small utility program checks out the ships and either tells you what may be wrong with your design or vets them for entry into the *TERMINUS* universe. These virtual space ships might generate as much real cash in the future as col-

much more exciting.

I'm looking forward to the implementation of new ways to customize games, innovative new virtual economies, and new communities. Community, customization and continuity are the keys to more robust, interesting and lucrative games in the future. I just wonder what will happen to our "real" lives when the "cyburbs" (some people never give up!) seem both more real and satisfying than our everyday lives.

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Long Live Sims

A Look Forward and a Farewell

I received a lot of feedback about my "Sims Are Dead" column in the July issue of CGW. To those who decided not to upgrade their systems out of fear that there would be no sims coming down the pike, go ahead and soup up that PC. As you'll see from our feature section this month, there are actually quite a few coming down the pike during the rest of '99 and into Y2K. The drought will come later in 2000 and probably continue into 2001. But even then there will be a number of sims to choose from, just not in the quantities we've grown used to over the past couple of years.

I did receive a response from a respected flight sim developer. "Read your column. Dead-on," he said, "especially the observation on the cyclical nature of this biz. Success breeds imitation and competition, which breeds cannibalization, which breeds bad business, which breeds drop-out, which breeds opportunity, which breeds renewed success." Sometimes it sucks to be right.

The Niche Syndrome

According to the industry insider quoted above, the coming drought is in many ways a result of the success of simulations. Back around 1995, after the last dry spell, a few sims hit the market and enjoyed great success. "Then came everyone," he said. "Now the pie has been sliced so thin that no one can make money. There's a shake-out and people are dropping like flies. Guess what comes next?"

The problem is that the market is oversaturated—while flight sims are popular, there's not a big enough market for seven different WW II Europe flight sims to all make money. Like it or not, the flight-sim audience is a niche market—with rare exceptions, a successful sim can be expected to sell about 150,000

copies. And that's in a market that's not overcrowded with games. In current conditions, we find award-winning simulations such as EUROPEAN AIR WAR end up as commercial failures.

So are we doomed to endlessly repeat this boom/bust cycle? If things don't change, we are. And to



ducing newbies to the genre. If you have game-playing friends who haven't flown a sim, no matter how good FLANKER 2.0 is, all that game is going to do is send them scurrying back to the simplicity of QUAKE III. Embrace the simple sims, and promote them to friends. Start your friends in a World War II sim, or one of the simpler jet sims, and help bring them up to speed. Share the love, people.

Responsibility also rests with game developers. It's time to step back and rethink the typical simulation design model. Today we have the "starter" sims, such as the entertaining, if fluffy, Novologic games: JETFIGHTER III, one of the best into sim designs of recent years; and the

these missions good enough to justify buying the game. The mainstream missions will bring in the novices, and if they have enough fun, they'll move on to the realistic campaign. All it will take is a mainstream hit to show folks they don't need to be afraid of sims and perhaps we won't be a niche anymore.

This isn't an unreasonable pipedream, either. JANE'S A-10 WARTHOG has a romp-up campaign much like that described above. Sims' upcoming KASZ TEAM ALLIGATOR defaults to an easy-to-fly mode no more challenging than COMMANDER 3, but has a wide variety of realism options that can be cranked up to appeal to all but the most anal of hard-core sim fans

It's time for an attitude adjustment, hard-core sim fans.

some degree, it's our own fault:

Go to your local computer store and watch casual gamers peruse the sims. Listen to their questions. You'll find that the features we've spent years demanding from sims are scaring off the newbies. The happier we experienced players are with the realism of a sim, the more intimidating it is to a new player. So we end up with a static segment of the gaming audience in an industry that's overly dependent on constant growth.

The solution is twofold. Part of it lies with us, the players. It's time for an attitude adjustment among hard-core sim fans: If a simulation comes out that's aimed at beginning users, don't jump on the internet and flame the game and its developers. Instead, accept the fact that even though you may be too knowledgeable to enjoy, say, F-22 LIGHTNING 3, the game may be perfect for intro-

ducing TOP GUN: HOBNET'S NEST.

Then we have the "serious" sims, realistic efforts such as LONGBOW II, JANE'S F-15, and FLANKER 2.0. While most of these hard-core games are scalable to a degree, they don't have what it takes to reach a mass audience.

I'm not suggesting dumbing down simulations by any means. But to support the continued development of hard-core sims, perhaps it's time for developers to pause at the Idol of Entertainment before proceeding to the Altar of Realism. The instant-action modes in virtually all sims are boring; developers of serious sims need to include a mode that concentrates on fun as well, and to make this mode more than an afterthought. Put the dynamic and historical campaigns in for the experienced users, but drop in a set of scripted missions with emphasis on gameplay for the newbies. And make

Flying Into the Sunset

One sim-related thing you won't see in the future is my lightning-rod large forehead gracing the pages of CGW. My last and a half year, this is my first column for the magazine, as I'm moving on to an exciting opportunity elsewhere. But I'll always remain close to CGW. After all, it's a great group of guys who really know their stuff—kinds as well as co-workers. That, and Jeff Green still owes me \$19.99.

So, sim fans, keep the faith, and spread the word: The future of sims is in your hands. **CGW**

Denny may be flying off into the sunset, but you can still write him at dennyatkin@hotmail.com. And anyone jealous of Denny's cable modem can share our vicarious glee in knowing he's moving to a snowy land of 56K connections.

Your Ultimate Strategy Guide

How to Win Every Game, Every Time, No Matter What

People often ask me, as I roam the Earth, how I can be so amazingly great at computer games. I'm afraid I have no definitive answer. It's kind of like asking Mozart how he was able to compose all that phat music.

Call it genetics; call it natural selection; call it Fate itself. But someone like me comes along only once in a generation. Such is the nature of life, and better for you not to question, lest you lose the will—understandably—so proceed with your own more mortal existence.

Though I can't teach you how to be like me, I can at least set you on the path toward better gaming. No, it won't put you anywhere near my league—any more than studying music theory would make you the next Ricky Martin—but it can help to make you at least somewhat more worthy fodder for true players such as myself.

Hence then, are just a few of my most successful techniques. Note that these and much more will also be available in my upcoming series of inspirational videotapes and interactive CD-ROMs, available through my Web site at a reasonable price. (And while you're at it, be sure to check out my *Too-Bo Sweeney*™ to the *Glades* workout video as well.)

my ongoing *Age of Empires* battles against my friend Juliet. For a full year now, I have cleverly managed to lose every single game we've played, in a variety of "dumb" ways, all on purpose, so that she thinks I suck, all as part of my plan to beat her badly in the coming year. Note that this is a tactic that requires patience, cunning, and creativity, as I must constantly learn new ways to pretend to be bad, such as letting lions eat my catapults, or forgetting to build any military units. Unbeknownst to her, of course, such embarrassing "tactics" are happening on purpose, so that when I do finally beat her, the victory will be that much sweeter. Sure she's



JEFF GREEN

"winning" now, but what hollow victories they are! Soon Juliet will discover what it is like to truly be beaten by a master of the long-term strategy.

cedes, you'll most likely so befuddle the other players that they'll resign and start a new game without you—thus leaving you with another default victory!

4. Play people worse than you.

If, in the worst-case scenario, you find yourself in a serious gaming slump—like, say, losing to the same person in *AGE OF EMPIRES* for a year straight—you may want to simply regroup and start playing people who, if you can find them, suck worse than you do. My most common strategy along these lines is to seek out certain types of opponents, who, barring a rare occurrence of dumb luck, will almost certainly lose. Current favorites include blind people, toddlers in the three-to-five age range (who, I've happily discovered, really suck at games like *ALPHA CENTAURI*), and small animals. Once you get a few of these victories under your belt, your ego will soar and you can once again climb the ladder as a Gaming God.

5. Disconnect when the going gets bad.

Finally, if, at that rarest of occasions, you find yourself actually losing a game (not on pur-

Nothing makes a multiplayer game more rewarding than spending the entire time in a dark corner hiding from all the other players...

1. Cowar and camp.

When playing a multiplayer deathmatch game like *QUAKE 3*, never forget the Greenspeak Golden CBC™ rule: Cowar and camp. Remember, if you're hiding, they can't find you, and if they can't find you, they can't frag you. Nothing makes a multiplayer game more rewarding than spending the entire time in a dark corner hiding from all the other players, calmly sniping at people from long distance. Not only is it personally satisfying, but other players will respect you for your wily, evasive strategy. Camping by respawn points and picking off defenseless players as they enter the game is another surefire way to up your frag count and earn a reputation as the kind of sicko-prisoner-gamer that others will fear.

2. Pretend to suck.

This is perhaps my favorite and most oft-employed strategy. Lull your opponents into a false sense of security by pretending to be incompetent. Then, when their guard is completely down, go in for the kill. I have been using this strategy to particular effectiveness in

3. Don't get bogged down by "rules."

Nothing can mess up your gaming—and winning—experience more than an overreliance on rules and instructions. Flight sims, for example, are notorious for including all sorts of extraneous, intimidating material, such as 50-pound manuals, keyboard overlays, and the like, in an attempt to "help" you. Take it from me, you can just toss that stuff out! All those controls and buttons and other doodads you see in the cockpit? Not important. Don't bother learning esoteric flying terms like *yoke* and *wingspan* and *landing gear* either. The most enjoyable way to get through these games is to simply grab the joystick, hit the throttle, and let 'er rip. True, you might not necessarily carry off some of the more advanced maneuvers such as "getting airborne" (whatever that means), but, as you zoom around the runway, out of control, in

pose—see strategy #2), there is only one real solution: Disconnect from the server. I usually find that going to the File menu and selecting Disconnect will do the trick, but to be even safer you might just want to hit the Restart button on your computer. Nothing can mess up your reputation or standings worse than actually taking a loss, so the best gamers make sure that this never happens. For added effectiveness, you may want to precede the maneuver by typing something in the chat window like, "Uh oh—tornado coming" or "I think my mother just collapsed." **GGW**

What Jeff doesn't realize is that his cat P.J. has been successfully using Strategy #2 against him in STARCRASH for the last year, in preparation for a crushing victory next month. Expire him as the bully he is or jef_green@ed.com.

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