

AND THE GAME OF THE YEAR IS...?



COMPUTER GAMING

20
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INSIDE

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1157 ammeccan
1158 lenehtrangerpyle
1159 expulsiocan_buried
1160 lafernalidomine
1161 man_up
1162 jampaper2
1163 Esterica's_vilze
1164 laboratory_of_Dr_John
1165 arrows_30
1166 skeletalidolca
1167 vestromerth_mid
1168 vestromerth
1169 freewind02
1170 ch00panglady_chest
1171 metalight_00_metal
1172 hiberco
1173 plibberclack4
1174 freewood
1175 Prince Radoff
1176 Anaxia
1177 dinnerhall_dreadgaze_1
1178 Gargyle
1179 femur
1180 ammeccan3

Storyteller Conversations enabled.
Possessing items.
Total number of items: 1181

Wilhelm says 'Sevize our wrath'
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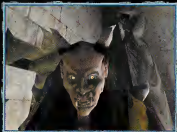


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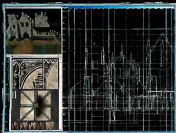
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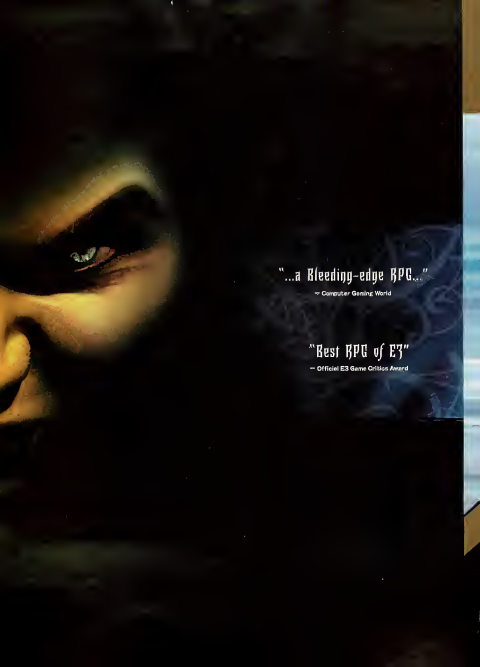
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1



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2



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Served: Battle of Yavin (wounded), Battle of Hoth, Battle of Abridon, Battle of Coruscant, Battle of Endor, *Battle of Tatooine (killed)*.

3



Sergeant Krung

Served: Battle of Hoth, Battle of Abridon, Battle of Coruscant, Battle of Endor, *Battle of Tatooine (missing in action)*.

4



Sergeant Major Corillon

Served: Battle of Yavin (wounded), Battle of Sarapin (wounded), Battle of Coruscant, Battle of Endor, *Battle of Tatooine (killed)*.

5



Lieutenant Major Antilles

Served: Battle of Yavin, Battle of Sarapin, Battle of Ruul (wounded), Battle of Coruscant, Battle of Endor, *Battle of Tatooine (wounded)*.

6



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COVER STORY

Crimson Skies 62

Those magnificent men in their flying machines take to the air and shoot everything in sight in Microsoft's fanciful Swing Era air-combat game. We've got the inside scoop on the prop planes, the movie stars, and the big old zeppelins just begging to be shot down. Oh, the humanity!

FEATURES

The 2000 Premier Awards 69

Through a process more shrouded in secrecy than a Masenec ritual, the cabal of misfits and gentle psychopaths that are the CGW editors engaged in their annual orgy of self-important opinions, personal insult, and ritualistic "Amek Thro" combat to determine what were the best games of 1999. Scooter may never walk again, but it was worth it. Here they are, the final Premier Awards of the Millennium.

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We take an exclusive first look at the FALLOUT team's next RPG, an exciting blend of traditional fantasy elements set in a world that's undergone an Industrial revolution. Dwarves with guns? Who wouldn't want to play this game?

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Forget about conspiracy theories—in ten Storm's upcoming action/RPG hybrid everything is a conspiracy, everyone's out to get you, and the world is teetering on the edge of chaos. Hmmm... sounds like our kind of fun.

The 2000 Premier Awards

The Very Best of a Great Year in Gaming

69



48



52



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94



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ON THE CDDemos, demos,
demos!

10Six

Close Combat: Battle of the Bulge

Crusaders of Might & Magic

FIFA 2000

Football Playmaker

Gabriel Knight 3

Indiana Jones & the Infernal

Machine

Messiah

Quake III Arena

Sid Meier's Antietam!

SWAT 3: Close Quarters Battle

Plus add-on for Myth II, MIG Alley, and

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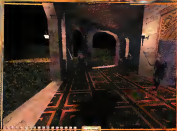
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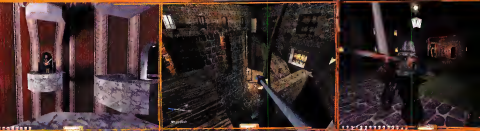
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Why It's Worth the Pain

The reason you may have a sore fingertip that usually reads my column is because I am writing it on my Palm Pilot. You see, I was struck by inspiration while sitting on a sand dune on a Los Angeles beach.

Luckily, I had a Palm Pilot to pour words into; inspiration never waits for me to catch up to it, that's for sure. Unfortunately, the Palm Pilot still has quite a way to evolve before it will be a truly functional device. An automatic spell-checker would be a good start.

As a gamer, it is easy to get frustrated and occasionally fed up with PC games along these same lines...because of the technical or human limitations of this rapidly evolving medium. Sloppy interfaces, incompatibility bugs, and features that don't quite do what we expect all conspire to turn our littlest love into a war pain in the ass.

Often, and this is where gaming can get far more annoying than using a Palm Pilot, we have to overcome major technological hurdles simply to play. A 20-minute-long installation, followed by reformatting your



As a gamer, it is easy to get frustrated and occasionally fed up with PC games...because of the technical or human limitations of this rapidly evolving medium.

system, followed by 3d configuration weariness doesn't make for much fun. At least on my Pain, I can just turn it on and start playing.

But we keep on playing games, in spite of the hassles, because of the great experiences they provide: experiences that, at their best, are capable of transporting us out of this world in a way that no other medium can. It's with these moments in mind that the CGW staff gathered this year, just like each of the last 15, to choose the best games of the year and heap lavish praise upon them. Given the constant technological progress in PC technology, and the constant desire to innovate, building a game has never been easy. So when those rare gems come along—and there are always a few each year—that fully deliver on PC gaming's potential, there's cause to celebrate. It's these games that make it all worthwhile.

And so like how being able to write an editorial on a beach is worth your trouble of its own, **CGW**

George Jones

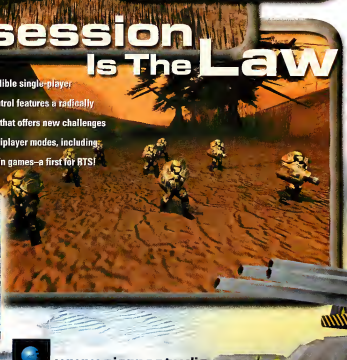
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Computer
ARTWORKS



LETTERS

I have officially gone over the edge. I cannot stop playing the HALF-LIFE mod, COUNTERSTRIKE. I was up last night until 5 a.m. blasting terrorists and counter-terrorists (which is not that hard, except I have done the same thing every night since New Year's Eve).

I thought I was old enough to resist addictive gaming... you know... game until a reasonable hour, sleep, work, eat, than game for a while. Not just game, game, game. I am actually considering going home for lunch just to sneak in a few more rounds. This is terrible. I have not been this addicted in years.

Michael Hawash
Houston, TX

Action games columnist Thierry Nguyen chose COUNTERSTRIKE as his mod of the year (see page 161). Get it at www.counter-strike.net.



A STUPOR IDEA

Come on, Pokémon? Good? Is it common practice at CGW to snuff White Out? (Sigh)

OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR fan who occupies a lot above Pokémon players,
S.R. Krol

LOSING BY SAVING

George Jones' Editorial, "Losing by Saving" (#187) has got to be the laziest piece I've read since I had to get online by using text terminals on my Commodore 64. Games themselves are NOT the real world, so of course there are "save game" features. If you could isolate yourself in a chamber, where the telephone never rang, the kids never wanted something to eat, no one ever rang the doorbell, and you had a port-a-potty under the chair, then the "save game" feature might indeed be a detriment. But your suggestions are so far off-base concerning this feature, I can only assume that you really had nothing to write about, so you tossed some words on the grill before the big office party, neglecting to note that the grill wasn't even lit.

David Tracy
Meridian, MS

George Jones responds: I agree that we need save games. My point was that convenient saves can weaken a game's intensity. I was proposing that we consider new ways of saving in order to maintain the immersion, not get rid of the save game entirely. After all, not everyone has a port-a-potty under their chair.

THERE ARE PENALTIES FOR THAT KINDA BEHAVIOR

I agree with George Jones' Editorial regarding the save-game feature and the lack of tension that it brings. BALDUR'S GATE had a penalty built-in that discouraged reloading: if you reload a saved game, the creatures on that screen would be tougher and more numerous. The manual didn't really say that it would happen, so I found out the hard way.

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After playing it for a while, I found that it was too easy to cheat and reload saved games. My new approach was to play the game from start to finish (in self-multiplayer mode) with six characters without reloading unnecessarily. It made the game much more exciting.

Greg Hand

AS OPPOSED TO FAKE ROLE-PLAYING

Look at the ULTIMA emulators springing up all over the world. Three words, Player-Run Shards: Worlds created for nothing more than the sheer enjoyment of a real role-playing experience. Worlds where there is life, and story, and meaning. Where "kewl doodz" and powergamers are scorned and banned. If anyone needs a refresher on what real role-playing is, I can recommend a brush-up course. Stop by Mytharra, Dawn's Rising at dreamswave.dyn-dns.com. Here there be role-players!

Paul Mosher

ATHLON VS. PENTIUM III

I've been following your coverage of the new AMD Athlon CPU and how it stacks up against Intel's P-III. I have also been following Gamespot, and I noticed inconsistencies which perhaps you could explain. The latest issue of CGW says that Athlon continues to maintain a performance edge over the Pentium III, and cites the scarcity of compatible motherboards as well as some instability as the only things keeping AMD's powerhouse off the Ultimate Gaming Machine list. Yet ever since Coppermine, Gamespot has maintained that Intel now holds the advantage in all but a handful of synthetic tests. How is this possible? You are both using the exact same benchmarks, and I thought Loyd Case was working for both stiffs. What gives?

Jason Rubin

Loyd Case responds: The apparent inconsistency is a result of working on those stories at different times. When we wrote about Athlon in CGW, it was indeed the performance leader, because Intel hadn't shipped Coppermine. And even now, although the Coppermine CPUs are faster (when using RDRAM), finding CPUs and RDRAM is a challenge about as tough as playing UNREAL TOURNAMENT without a mouse.

For our latest component recommendations, check out Killer Rigs on page 154. For the latest updates, see Gamespot's component lists in the Gamer's Guide to Hardware, at www.gamespot.com.



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val Tomb Raider...”

-Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine

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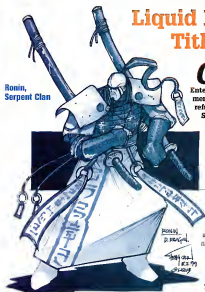
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The Latest News From Around the Computer Gaming World edited by jeff_green@zd.com

Kung Fu Fighting in BATTLE REALMS

Liquid Entertainment's First Title Is Asian-Styled RTS

Ronin,
Serpent Clan



CGW just got an exclusive look at the first game from Liquid

Entertainment—a new development house made up largely of refugees from Westwood

Studios. It's highly intriguing, and if successful could change a lot of the conventions of the real-time strategy genre.

BATTLE REALMS, which will be published by Crave, is a 3D strategy game heavily influenced by Asian cultures.

The designers, especially Liquid founder Ed Del Castillo (who produced C&C: RED ALERT while at

Westwood), are big fans of Kung-fu movies, and they plan on incorporating some of the genre's more outlandish concepts—like ninjas who vanish in puffs of smoke, gravity-defying monks, and flying quiltoines—into the game.

You'll play as Kenji, the exiled prince of the once-glorious Serpent Empire, who has returned to lead his people against the feral Wolf Clan and the sinister, mystical Lotus Clan. Depending on your choices, your Serpent Clan can evolve into the Dragon Clan, which has more advanced units and capabilities.

Some interesting innovations are in store for the units themselves: Instead of producing specific units with different buildings, units will be spawned by your civilization at a rate according to your prosperity. So if your town's economy is healthy, your birthrate will increase and you'll have more peasants. You can assign them to peasant duties, like resource collection, or you can reclassify them by sending them to a building—the keep, for example—to turn them into fighters. Unit abilities can also be upgraded by sending them to more than one training center.

The designers are trying to break from a few other strategy game conventions by overhauling the resource management and combat systems. The "living resource system," as Liquid calls it, will attempt to create a more realistic model for your civilization's interaction with its environment by making the actions of supplying and storing resources more like the real world. Combat will be enhanced by prepared battle plans, both default and user-created.

BATTLE REALMS is still a long way off—2001, at least—but its originality, coupled with some of the coolest art direction we've seen in a while, make this a game we'll be keeping our eye on. Look for a follow-up preview in a future issue of CGW. —Tom Price

Cannoneer,
Wolf
Clan



Druidess,
Wolf Clan



Infested
One,
Lotus
Clan



5, 10, 15 Years Ago in CGW

Shogun Sharpens Its Steel

Epic Strategy Game Set in Feudal Japan Nears Completion

It's not every day a game will let you play as a 16th-Century Japanese warlord. But if you're into strategy or wargames, that's exactly what you might be doing this spring.

The ambitious design of SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR features vast real-time tactical battles, where over a thousand troops maneuver in formations across beautifully rendered terrain. They can be played in either full-screen or wide-screen mode—the latter giving the game the proper Kurosawa-look. Weather effects and atmospherics like smoke from gunfire help paint a realistic scene.

The game can be played on a number of levels: one-scenario real-time battles; strategic campaigns where you build up troops and invade other territories as in *Risk*; or historic campaigns where you attempt to recreate the successes of actual Japanese warlords. The goal of the campaigns is to become the Shogun—the military ruler of all of Japan.

You play the strategic game from a zoomable map overview. Each area produces a fixed amount of koku—rice—the resource that allows you to build fortifications and create units. The more territories you have, the more units you can create—which range from simple ashigaru spearmen to ninja assassins. There are also spies, which let you infiltrate an army to assess its strength or murder a



general to demoralize it. The enemy AI is coming along nicely. It was also encouraging to see the AI choosing to put spearmen in front to stop a cavalry charge, and using archers to soften up infantry from a distance.

Get ready to get medieval later this spring. —Alan Dykes and Ken Brown



15

March 1985

In addition to being a special designer issue (with articles by Don Barnes, Bruce Webster, and Jon Freeman), we had a feature article on the viability of gaming on the IBM PC. As of 1985, we had covered only the "most popular personal/home computers: the Apple, Atari, and Commodore 64," and stated that "As long as the significant IBM side are relatively few in number...we do not feel the need to add a fourth machine to our coverage." Ah, vision...



10

March 1990

Johnny Wilson's editorial this month was a call for more recognition of game designers. It was a rousing editorial that called for publishers, gamers, and press to acknowledge the men and women designing our games. A fine idea. Alas, 10 years later, most designers still go largely unrecognized (with a few glummy exceptions, of course). How do you write an e-mail to the designers of your favorite games lately? If you haven't, maybe you should.



5

March 1995

CD-ROMs were still big news in 1995, and people were still easily trying to make the getting/movie horror that is "Blizzard." No one can complain about reviewing *TEKUN* or *NOCTURNE* when games like *VOYEUR* or *HELL* greeted our pages this issue. Not all is bad though; we had the preview of the original *COMMAND & CONQUER* (with the tagline "the strategic equal of *WING COMMANDER 317*") and a review of the five-star *HERETIC*. Finally, we had our annual preview feature listing games such as *MEDAWARION II*, *HEROES OF MOHT & MAGIC*, *FUGHT UNLIMITED*, and *FULL THROTTLE*.



Reality Check

As expected, many publishers waited for the holidays to bring out their big guns, and it shows—there's a lot of Editors' Choices all around, and no universally-panned game. The clearest winner here is *UNREAL TOURNAMENT*, with *Freespace 2* providing a strong presence as well. Here's our 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 (out of five)	PC Gamer (out of 100%)	IGN (out of five)	PC Accelerator (out of 10)	GameSpot (out of 10)	Demoreactor (out of 10)
<i>Freespace 2</i>	4.5	84%	4.5	8	9.4	7
<i>Half-Life: Opposing Force</i>	3	84%	3.5	*	8.0	8
<i>Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine</i>	3	76%	2	*	6.3	5
<i>NBA Live 2000</i>	5	90%	4	8	8.1	8
<i>Nocturne</i>	1.5	56%	2	6	7.0	6
<i>Sid Meier's Antietam!</i>	4.5	75%	4	*	8.5	*
<i>Sim Theme Park</i>	4.5	73%	4	*	8.0	*
<i>Ultima IX: Ascension</i>	2.5	30%	3	*	6.3	6
<i>Unreal Tournament</i>	5	90%	5	*	9.4	10
<i>Witcher 01: Time</i>	3.5	90%	*	8	8.7	7

* indicates game has not been rated ● red = editor's choice game

The End of Lag?

Valve and Cisco Team Up to Revolutionize Internet Gaming

If your email arrives 500 milliseconds late, do you care? No, if you lose a couple of frames playing **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** or **TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC** online, do you care? Well, considering that some 12-year-old creep in Poughkeepsie called **BLUD_DRINKER** probably killed you as a result, not only do you care, but you're also very, very angry. The fact is, the Internet wasn't designed as a gaming platform: It was designed as a way for NASA, university researchers, and evil geniuses around the globe to exchange simple, text-based information. Frame-rate-dependent shooters and real-time strategy games have pretty much moved on from ASCII graphics, and your phone line is simply choking on the huge amount of information it's being asked to fire back and forth between you and that annoying pre-adolescent.

But now, God willing, that's all going to change.

What Valve's **HALF-LIFE** did for the shooter, so does Valve hope that their **PowerPlay** project—started in conjunction with Cisco—will do for online gaming. Their goal is simple: to bring LAN-quality gaming performance to the online arena, so that the Internet becomes the dominant entertainment platform of the near future. That's so, in Valve co-founder Gabe Newell's words, "TEAM FORTRESS 2 can compete with a rerun of *Friends*."

You Down With UDP?

So what the heck is **PowerPlay**, and how is it going to revolutionize online gaming? It's a set of protocols and deployment standards, involving such popular cocktail-party topics as UDP header compression and basic infrastructure—including router and access concentrator issues—that should create LAN-type performance for dial-up users, as well as for those gamers languishing away on overcrowded cable modem and DSL subnets. **PowerPlay** is more than just some sort of elaborate TCP/IP patch; it's a suite of technological improvements that will impact the whole experience of Internet gaming.

Think of it in terms of the sound you hear in a movie theatre: The sharp Dolby audio is an encoding standard that ensures high-quality sound recording, while the THX that brings the sound to life is a deployment stan-

dard that ensures that the quality recording is played back in the best possible way. The analogy here with **PowerPlay** is that it does the same sort of thing—efficiently encoding data and maximizing its performance and play-back. There's also one other way to look at it: It should be unbelievably fast. And it will be demonstrably fast, shipping with a simple benchmarking tool so that gamers can compare online game performance between a game's **PowerPlay** and non-**PowerPlay**-enhanced versions.

A comparison to **OpenGL** is also appropriate since Valve, working closely with Cisco—the 800-pound gorilla of the Internet router business—won't be charging any licensing fees or turning a profit on the technology. The initial **PowerPlay** release schedule is planned in two separate phases for this year. Currently, Cisco and Valve are focusing on industry initiative; asking ISPs to check it and support it; putting the infrastructure in place; making it available to application developers; and reaching out to the online community and convincing them to support **PowerPlay**-certified networks.

To that end, **PowerPlay 1.0** will make its big debut in conjunction with a major—but as yet unnamed—national

The GOOD...

BLACK ISLE STUDIOS

With the Role-Playing Game *Of The Year* award going to **FLAESCAP: TORMENT** in this issue, that makes it a phenomenal three-in-a-row for Interplay's RPG

group, with **BALDUR'S GATE** and **FALLOUT** winning in the previous two years. And there's no sign of them slowing down, either, with **BALDUR'S GATE II**, **NEVERWINTER NIGHTS**, and **ICEWING DALE** all scheduled for release this year. This is a group on an amazing roll (with **Baldur's Gate II**, producing games that are both popular and intelligent. They should be extremely proud.



the BAD...

RPG ANXIETY

Although Black Isle's success makes us very happy, it also, in a way, hurts us out. Why? Because—after breaching the death of the genre two years ago—there are now so many good RPGs about to come out, we can't fathom how we'll have time to play them all. Along with all the Black Isle titles, we're also excitedly awaiting **DEUS EX**, **ARCANUM**, **NIGHT AND MIGHT VII**, **POOL OF RADIANCE 2**, ...and **DIABLO II**, all due for release this year. First there were no RPGs to play, now there's way too many. Life is bad.



Power players

So, will your favorite game embrace **PowerPlay**? Probably. As of press time, the following developers had already signed on to the project:

- Epic (**UNREAL UNREAL TOURNAMENT**)
- BioWare (**MDK 2**, **BALDUR'S GATE**, **NEVERWINTER NIGHTS**)
- Looking Glass (**SYSTEM SHOCK 2**, **THIEF 2**, **FLIGHT UNLIMITED**)
- Outrage Entertainment (**DESCENT 3**)
- Red Storm Entertainment (**RAINBOW SIX**, **ROGUE SPEAR**)
- Volition (**IRRESISTIBLE 2**)
- Ritual (**HEAVY METAL F.A.K.K.2**, **SIN**)
- Shiny Entertainment (**MESSIAH**, **SACRIFICE**, **R/C STUN COPTER**)
- Rific Entertainment (**HOMEWORLD**)
- Ensemble Studios (**AGE OF EMPIRES I & II**)
- Captivation Digital Laboratories (**QUAKE**, **DA BOMB** mod, **LOSE YOUR MARBLES**)
- Gearbox Software (**HALF-LIFE**, **OPPOSING FORCE**)

and the UGLY...

TIM SCHAFFER LEAVES LUCASARTS

The creative brain drain at LucasArts continues with the loss of one of its biggest guns, Tim Schafer, the genius behind the adventure game classics **GRIM FANTASIES**, **FULL THROTTLER**, and **DAY OF THE TENTACLE**, has resigned after 10 years with the company. His former boss at LucasArts, who's seen tons of talent depart for storage (like **Nihilistic** and **Infinite Machine**, and it's really bad news for fans of LucasArts' adventure games. Good-bye, Tim...and please start your own startup soon. Gaming needs you.



ISP, offering both a free month of service and a free, non-HALF-LIFE-dependent version of TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC. That should happen by March.

Newell expects other game companies to jump onboard later this year with 2.0, since it will be focused on even lower client latency, bandwidth reservation, and voice integration.

At that point, the modular nature of the technology will allow developers to patch existing games easily, making them PowerPlay-compliant within weeks. By releasing the code specifications to all participants at that point, Valve expects to focus on developing its own games and letting a growing PowerPlay project take care of itself.

Seeing Is Believing

Granted, it was just a "Before and After PowerPlay" MPED of TFC, but the demonstration we saw was impressive. The weird skipping, dancing movement of characters in the game-world was replaced with seamless animation, and aiming a weapon was a revelation—you could actually aim at an enemy with a sniper rifle instead of guessing where he'd be in 1.3 seconds. Every type of game would benefit, from shooters to the new breed of 3D real-time strat games to the overcrowded realms of massively-multiplayer RPGs to finally allowing sports gamers to play—and not just manage games online.

Count on CGW to keep you up to the minute on this potentially momentous technology in future issues.

—Robert Coffey

Flip This 'Bird

Ever watch the Thunderbirds or Blue Angels doing their incredible maneuvers and wonder, slack-jawed, "How the *&#! do they do that?" Well, find out. A free add-on patch to USAF lets you wrap your F-16 in a Thunderbird skin and learn three aerial maneuvers from a real Thunderbird pilot. The 9MB download includes instructional voice-overs and an ardent audience to perform for. For extra fun, try equipping your Bud with a few air-to-ground missiles and see if you can hit the grandstand.



You can find the patch at www.janes-aa.com, and while you're there, check out what it's like to take off from and land on a carrier by former F/A-18C pilot Jim "Hornt" Campas.

PIPE LINE

Send updates to: cgwpipeline@zd.com

	America McGee's <i>Mice</i> Age EA	04 00	CGW	Need for Speed: Motor City EA	01 00
	Atlixence Microsoft	02 00		Neverwinter Nights Interplay	04 00
	Avetronix Edios	02 00		Hex Westwood	01 00
NEW	Ascension Sierra Studios	03 00		Del Dangle	01 00
	Baldur's Gate II: Shadows Of Amn Interplay	03 00		Pool Of Radiance II SSI	04 00
	Battle Isle IV Blue Byte	03 00		Rush for the Stars SSI	01 00
	Black & White EA	02 00		Rising Sun Ubisoft	01 00
NEW	Blair Witch Project GGI	03 00		Risk II Hasbro	01 00
CGW	Comanche 4 Novologic	02 00		Rock of Interactive	03 00
	Comanche/Helios Empire	02 00	CGW	Sandy MossBth	02 00
	Codemasters: Eagle Ubisoft	01 00		Settlers IV Blue Byte	04 00
	Crashout: Frontier West Microsoft	02 00		Shadow Witch Red Storm Entertainment	01 00
	Crashout Skies Microsoft	02 00		Shogun: Total War EA	01 00
	Dark Reign 2 Activision	04 00		Sid Meier's Civilization III Firaxis/MicroProse	04 00
	Deas Ex Ion Storm	02 00		Street Hunter SSI	01 00
CGW	Delta II Blizzard	02 00		SimSims Maxis	03 00
CGW	Duke Hammer Forever 3D Realms	04 00	NEW	Simza The Sorcerer 3D Southpeak Interactive	02 00
NEW	Duresson Siege Microsoft	04 00		Soldier of Fortune Activision	01 00
	Eye Dead: Ashes 2 Ashes THQ	03 00		Sovereign Scary Games	04 00
	Felony Parade THQ	02 00		Starliner Microsoft	01 00
	Feral Fartney VIII SquaresEA	01 00		Star Trek Armada Activision	01 00
	Feral Commander LucasArts	01 00	NEW	Star Trek Deep Space 9: The Fallen Savage & Schuster	02 00
	Firebreac Microsoft	04 00		Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force Activision	02 00
	Flants: Citize Kabuto Interplay	01 00		Summer THQ	03 00
	God A Fall GT Interactive	03 00		Techyae: The Fringe Novologic	01 00
	Grand Central Sierra Studios	01 00		Team Fortress 2 Sierra Studios	02 00
	Half Beasts	04 00	NEW	The Legend of Jeremy FeedEm	02 00
	Harpaze 4 SSI	02 00	NEW	The Real Newsreading Story Secret Monsters	02 00
	Heavy Metal E.A.K.K. 2 GGI	02 00		The Sims Maxis	01 00
	Indiana & Gagevans: Devil's Bridge Ubisoft	01 00	NEW	Time & The Metal Age Edios	02 00
	High Heat 2001 GGI	02 00		Throne Of Darkness Sierra Studios	03 00
NEW	Iconicad Gate Interplay	02 00		Tribes 2 Sierra Studios	02 00
	ISS: Psycho Circus GGI	02 00	NEW	Tzer: Bardia Of The Crown Ubisoft	01 00
	Iron Siege Microsoft	02 00		Manoia: The Metalcore Activision	01 00
NEW	Might and Magic: Day Of The Destroyer GGI	03 00		WarCraft III Blizzard	04 00
	MultiCross Madness 2 Microsoft	01 00		Warfare: Bellwary SSI/SSI	01 00

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The madman behind UNREAL TOURNAMENT spills his guts

Cliff Bleszinski

How do your relatives react to you making a living designing games? It's like working in the pornography business. Your parents don't really understand what you do, but they strive to accept it. You may make good money, but your relatives remain unsure of your career choice and try to discourage the youngsters from growing up to be like you.

UT's getting a great reception. Anything about it you wish you'd done differently?

I wish we had more time to include more Assault maps. Oh, and a Nali play-mode. We're adding that into post-release. There's nothing in the world like firing a rocket up a Nali ass while hearing him scream "Ha Boo GEE!" What's the relationship between id and Epic like?

We frequently mail-bomb them and hire Dallas-area hoodlums to key their cars and pour sugar in their gas tanks.

Who would win? Q3's bots or UT's?

I'd have to say QUAKE's bots because of their perfect aim!

Will CGW readers get farther by getting A's in geography or by boning up on UnrealEd?

Seeing as I'm having a hell of a time finding any talent to hire for our upcoming game I'd have to say the best strategy is to learn UnrealEd, PhotoShop, and 3DStudio Max and pimp your work online while waiting to drop out of college.

What's that wimpy Desloch bot in UT? He's modeled after CGW's fairy-tale columnist—er, I mean RPG columnist—Desloch, isn't he?

We were considering having Desloch's original bio be "Fresh from BALDUR'S GATE, Desloch is wet behind the ears when it comes to First-Person Shooters" but we figured it would be a bit too obvious.

I'll just toss this pearl at ya—brwna psl gual! How do you think?

Seeing people slip and slide around an arena like lava idiots would be highly amusing.

I'll be fixing over an NDA immediately so you can help work on our next title.

Coel! How about a seltzer-bottle weapon?

Now that one sucks. Don't quit your day job.

Kilzrek will be appearing in *Playboy* soon. Is this an ongoing developer trend?

I don't anticipate *Playgirl* calling me unless Heroin Chic becomes the look they're looking for.

You've been known to wear some, uh, interesting outfits and accessories to previous gaming events. From Marilyn Manson type contacts lenses to pants with blinking lights, we think we've seen it all. How can you top that? I'm thinking about streaking the Nintendo booth this year at E3.

—Interview by Mark Asher



Subtitles: The CGW Challenge

Shakespeare did it. Movies (especially sequels) do it all the time. And nowadays, game companies seem utterly compelled to do it. What are we talking about? Subtitles, those undifferentiable nuggets of prose tacked onto game titles in an effort to clear up just what the hell a game named OMIKRON could possibly be about. Even while these marketing-department-spawned stabs at profundity generally fail as abysmally as *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*, there seems to be no end in sight. See if you can match up the games on the left with their grandeur-bestowing subtitles on the right. Have fun, dude

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. OMIKRON | A. THE DARK PROJECT |
| 2. TURCK 2 | B. MOBILE ARMOR DIVISION |
| 3. MIGHT & MAGIC VI | C. GUARDIANS OF DESTINY |
| 4. SHOGO | D. PULL BURN |
| 5. DOMINION | E. THE CHOSEN |
| 6. ULTIMA VII | F. THE NOMAD SOUL |
| 7. WIZARDRY VI | G. OPERATION DESERT HAMMER |
| 8. LANDS OF LORE | H. ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GO YONDER |
| 9. DRAKAN | I. FACE THE UNKNOWN |
| 10. SEVEN KINGDOMS II | J. SINS OF THE FATHER |
| 11. WARCRAFT II | K. THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN |
| 12. THIEF | L. STORM OVER GIFT 3 |
| 13. BLOOD II | M. THE BLACK GATE |
| 14. JETFIGHTER | N. ORDER OF THE FLAME |
| 15. JEWELS II | O. TIDES OF DARKNESS |
| 16. GULF WAR | P. SEEDS OF EVIL |
| 17. REAR | O. THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE |
| 18. MYTH | R. THE FRYHTAN WARS |
| 19. GABRIEL KNIGHT | S. THE FALLEN LORDS |
| 20. KING'S QUEST V | T. BANE OF THE COSMIC FORGE |

ANSWERS: 1-B, 2-D, 3-C, 4-E, 5-F, 6-G, 7-H, 8-I, 9-J, 10-K, 11-L, 12-M, 13-N, 14-O, 15-P, 16-Q, 17-R, 18-S, 19-T, 20-U

Tchotchke of the Month



Tchotchke (chotch/ke). Slang, from Yiddish: a cheap, showy trinket.

This fancy, silver clock and picture frame from Activision is quite the tchotchke. It's so nice, in fact, that Jeff Green actually considered giving it to his mother for a present—if only he could have figured out a way to scratch off the Activision logo on the front. Jeff's decided to keep it for himself, and gives thanks that Activision sent it to him before they read his scathing review of INTERSTATE '82 last month. Ha ha!

CGW's Monthly Readers' Poll

1

Half-Life
 Havas Interactive
 5 stars



Top 40

This Month → Last Month → Games' PUBLISHER → CGW Rating

2	3	Baldur's Gate Interplay	4
3	2	StarCraft Havas Interactive	5
4	4	Age of Empires II Microsoft	5
5	20	Unreal Tournament GT Interactive	5
6	5	StarCraft: Brood War Havas Interactive	5
7	9	Heroes of Might & Magic III 300	4.5
NEW	8	Quake III Arena Activision	3.5
9	14	Thief: The Dark Project Eidos	4.5
10	9	Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri Firaxis	5
11	15	System Shock 2 Electronic Arts	4.5
12	8	Fallout 2 Interplay	4
13	11	Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear Red Storm	4.5
14	6	Quake II Activision	4.5
15	13	Grim Fandango LucasArts	4.5
16	7	Final Fantasy VII Eidos	4.5
17	16	Half-Life: Opposing Force Havas Interactive	3.5
18	25	Battlecoster Tycoon Hasbro Interactive	4
19	22	Baldur's Gate: Tales of the Sword Coast Interplay	4
20	12	Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun Electronic Arts	4
21	17	Dungeon Keeper II Electronic Arts	4.5
22	28	Need for Speed 4 Electronic Arts	5
NEW	22	FreeSpace 2 Interplay	4.5
24	21	MechWarrior 3 Hasbro	3
25	-	Worms Armageddon Hasbro	4
26	27	Myth 2 Bungie	4.5
27	18	SimCity 3000 Electronic Arts	4
28	24	EverQuest Sony	4
29	-	Aliens vs. Predator Fox	3
30	18	Caesar III Havas Interactive	4.5
31	37	Might and Magic VII 300	4.5
32	-	Heroes III: Armageddon's Blade 300	4.5
33	-	Jagged Alliance 2 TalonSoft	4.5
34	33	Battlezone Activision	5
35	23	FIFA 2000 Electronic Arts	4.5
36	-	Total Annihilation: Core Contingency Cavedog	4.5
37	34	Gabriel Knight 3 Havas Interactive	n/r
38	26	NHL 2000 Electronic Arts	3.5
39	-	Wing Commander: Prophecy Gold Origin/EA	4
40	-	Ultima Online Origin/EA	1.5

NEW POLLING PLACE!

Vote in the Top 40 Games poll at www.computergaming.com. The more people vote, the better the results, but please only vote once per month.

The new action legs **QUAKE III** and **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** shot onto the Top 40 this month, with the challenger handily beating **ARENA** by three places. The former champion, **QUAKE II**, got kicked down to #14. **ULTIMA ONLINE** also makes an appearance for the first time in a CGW poll. Looks like after a year the game is finally enjoyable, but it's still way behind **EVERQUEST** in votes. **HOMEWORLD** doesn't appear this month because of the, uh, Y2K bug, but we'll fix that for the next poll.

This Month → Last Month → Games' PUBLISHER → CGW Rating

Top Action Games

1	1	Half-Life Havas Interactive	5
2	-	Unreal Tournament Epic/EA	5
NEW	3	Quake III Arena id/Activision	4.5
4	4	Thief: The Dark Project Eidos	4.5
5	3	Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear Red Storm	4.5

Top Adventure/RPG Games

1	1	Baldur's Gate Interplay	4.5
2	5	System Shock 2 Electronic Arts	4.5
3	3	Fallout 2 Interplay	4
4	4	Grim Fandango LucasArts	4.5
5	2	Final Fantasy VII Eidos	4.5

Top Simulations Games

NEW	1	FreeSpace 2 Interplay	4.5
2	1	MechWarrior 3 Hasbro Interactive	3
3	4	Wing Commander: Prophecy Gold Electronic Arts	4
4	5	Heavy Gear II Activision	4.5
5	2	Falcon 4.0 Hasbro Interactive	3.5

Top Sports/Racing Games

1	2	Need For Speed: High Stakes Electronic Arts	5
2	1	FIFA 2000 EA Sports	4.5
3	4	NHL 2000 EA Sports	3
NEW	4	NBA Live 2000 EA Sports	5
5	5	Midtown Madness Microsoft	4

Top Strategy/War Games

1	1	StarCraft Havas Interactive	5
2	2	Age of Empires II: Age of Kings Microsoft	5
3	3	StarCraft: Brood War Havas Interactive	5
4	4	Heroes Of Might And Magic III 300	4.5
5	1	Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri Firaxis	5



****CONFIDENTIAL****

III. BREAKING THE OATH:
TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES ~~XCONSEQUENCES~~

1. A verbal warning accompanied by a review of security oath.
2. A stronger warning, sometimes accompanied by browbeating ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ and intimidation.
3. Psychologically working on an individual to bring on depression that will lead to suicide.
4. Elimination of the individual that has been made to appear as an accident, suicide or heart attack

Sources say Deus Ex was created by Ion Storm to uncover the truth. Some say it's merely the latest conspiracy fueled by a madman. And some say it's a future training tool made to look like a hyperrealistic 3-D roleplaying computer game. Whatever it is, proceed with caution. They know you want it.

[SECTOR 1]

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No. 34561

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← TRUTH

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as ordered by UNATCO,
to maintain control over
- Survive constant attack
and/or incarceration
as you establish ties
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o Send any and all information to www.unatco.com. It could be the difference between life and death.

o Establish a new base of operations with **Advanced Technology** and forge alliances.

o Find a way to build your own capabilities to the point where you have a chance of defeating the one with **God-like powers**.









01992219013-1
1525 6862

Item No. 14428 562

CONSEQUENCES:

Diagram B2 Situational Missions (Fig's 2.1-2.6)

<p>Fig. 2.1 build your own capabilities</p> 	<p>Fig. 2.2 establish base of operations</p> 	<p>Fig. 2.3 maintain control over Adhocracy</p> 
<p>Fig. 2.4 Survive incarceration</p> 	<p>Fig. 2.5 establish ties to ally base</p> 	<p>Fig. 2.6 Expand your pool of allies</p> 



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- 3D volumetric fog, rain, snow, night and day simulation, wall-hugging shadows and real-time simulation of crashes enhance the atmosphere and action of the game.





quanticdream

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A First Look at the FALLOUT Team's Stunning New RPG World
by Jeff Green

Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura

ZEPPELIN ROCKS! All worries that you're playing a generic fantasy RPG will vanish when you see the opening movie's airborne zeppelin.

Way back in the 20th Century, three humble game designers at Interplay got together and created a masterpiece called FALLOUT. Brimming with creative energy and imagination, the 1997 post-apocalyptic RPG helped reignite the then-smoldering role-playing genre with a killer combination of deep gameplay and bold artistic design. Three years later, the game still looks and plays great.

After completing the initial design on FALLOUT 2 almost two years ago, the three designers pecked their things and set out on a quest of their own—to found their own game company. And so it was that Tim Cain, Leonard Boyarsky, and Jason Anderson started up Troika Games. Their first RPG is on its way later this year—and if you thought that FALLOUT was ambitious and cool, wait until you see ARCANUM.

Dwarves With Guns

For their first project, Troika's desire was to move away from FALLOUT's futuristic setting and to create a classic fantasy RPG instead. But, just as they did with FALLOUT, they've added a twist. It's a fantasy world that's gone through an industrial revolution. Thus, though you'll still see all of your favorite Tolkienesque characters—gnomes, elves, ogres, halflings, and so on—you'll now have industrial-age weapons and machinery along with your sorrows and spells. Now, dragons must share airspace with World War I-style zeppelins.

ARCANUM: OF STEAMWORKS AND MAGICK OBSCURA (the game's full title) retains FALLOUT's isometric perspective, but the team created a brand-new engine for the game, with 800x600 graphics and 16-bit color. Just as FALLOUT's graphic design mixed a futuristic setting with kitschy 1940s-style art, ARCANUM features an eclectic melding of fanta-

FALLOUT | **ARCANUM** | **THE SIMS** | **DESTINY** | **DESTINY 2**

GENRE: Role Playing • **RELEASE:** Q2 03

PUBLISHER: Sierra

DEVELOPER: Troika Games

sy elements with a late-1800s, Jules Verne-style industrial look. And this dual imagery—fantasy versus technology, magic versus machinery—forms the core conflict and the essence of ARCANUM's story and gameplay.

You can play one of eight races—human, dwarf, halfling, elf, half-elf, gnome, half-orc, or half-ogre. Stats are divided into four mental stats (intelligence, willpower, perception, and charisma), and four physical stats (strength, constitution, dexterity, and beauty). Most are standard RPG fare, but beauty is quite cool, determining a person's initial reaction to you before you ever speak. Create a butt-ugly gnome, for example, and people may completely blow you off. (As in FALLOUT, you'll be able to recruit party members along the way.) The system is completely open for you to create any statistical combination—and the game will play out differently depending on your choices.

Similar to FALLOUT's peeks, ARCANUM features

20,000 LEAGUES ARCANUM retains FALLOUT's isometric perspective, but the interface has an industrialized "steampunk" look to it befitting the game's theme.



optional "backgrounds." If your character were "Raised By Snake Handlers," for instance, you would get a 20 percent resistance to poison. You can edit the background text, so the more creative role-players can make up their own back-story. Similarly, you can easily import portraits into the game, allowing you to customize your character's look.

THANK YOU GOD This standard RPG inventory screen has one truly exciting feature: as you pack bottles on the right side that automatically sorts your inventory items.



SPELL ORGY This panel shows icons representing the game's 16 schools of magic, each with five spells. Are they enough to satisfy the game's gas-bling gamers?



BLUEPRINT FOR DEATH Those who follow a technological path will gain access to schematics such as this, which will let you create all sorts of weapons — and dinosaurs — mechanical objects.



TALK TALK TALK In an *FALLOUT* dialogue in *ARCANUM*, how you behave toward others will go a long way in determining how the game plays out.



Spellcasting Vs. Technology

The heart of the game, and your biggest character decision, is determining where you stand in the great magic-versus-technology dichotomy now enveloping the land. It's been about 70 years since the Industrial Revolution, and the land's magic users now must contend with those pursuing technological disciplines instead. Are you an old-school magic guy, a new-school engineer—or a dabbler in both schools? *ARCANUM* will monitor your decisions with a balance meter, and how well you succeed in casting a spell—to give one simple example—will be determined by how strong your magical aptitude is. The more you commit to one particular school, the stronger you'll be in that school, but the more vulnerable and ineffective you'll be in the other.

Arcanum's magic and technological systems are extremely deep—providing ample rewards for devotees of either one. Magic is divided into 16 colleges, with five increasingly powerful spells in each. There are eight disci-

HEAVY METAL Robo-child exiles roam an environment filled with giant machinery. Which side of the technology curve will you be on?



plines of technology, with seven degrees in each. As you earn degrees, you'll gain the ability to read increasingly complex schematic diagrams, which in turn will enable you to use found objects to create powerful technological weaponry, such as folding guns and a gun, mechanized arachnid that can fight for you.

Speaking of fighting, the game will use both a real-time and turn-based combat system—you can play it either way. Both systems are essentially based on speed. In real-time, the faster your character, the quicker you'll be able to strike. In turn-based mode, faster characters will have more action points to spend per turn (a la *FALLOUT*). The designers figure

that most players will actually use both systems—and you can switch dynamically throughout the game.

ARCANUM's interface is a state-of-the-art marvel that accounts for things RPG fans have been clamoring for for years. Most notable is the "auto-pack" feature, which will automatically rearrange your inventory

items to use slots at maximum efficiency. The game's deep logbook will keep track of all quests completed, failed, or still open; your reputation in various towns; any blessings or curses you have; and your total number of kills (as well as what you've killed).

Finally, the game will include a completely separate multiplayer mode, with its own set of maps that will let about 2-8 gamers play either cooperatively or competitively over LANs or the Internet. Troika is including an editor in the box, so players will be able to create their own detailed maps and quests to distribute. Expect a huge community to swell up around this game.

ROGUE'S GALLERY

Concept sketches of *ARCANUM*'s many character types.

Quest For Glory

With *FALLOUT* under their belts, the Troika team really had nothing else to prove. But with *ARCANUM*, they are taking one of computer gaming's oldest genres—the fantasy RPG—and turning it on its head with something completely new. Dwarves with guns? Magics on steam trains? We'll see how well they pull this off later this year. Stay tuned. **EGW**



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Digital Anvil



DEUS EX

GENRE: RPG • RELEASE DATE: Q2 00

PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive • DEVELOPER: Ion Storm

CONTACT: www.ionstorm.com

It's a cold, cruel world, a world ragged with pain in the wake of a sweeping plague called the Grey Death, a world drowning in a vicious whirlpool of riots and barbaric acts of terrorism. Gliding silent and unseen through the muck are the agents of UNATCO, their shadowy lives a daily maelstrom of deceit, treachery, and violence. As a member of this global anti-terrorist organization, it is your duty to silence the forces of chaos; but slowly the accusations of the supposedly murderous thugs you're battling begin making sense, and your crystal-clear perception of morality is fogged by uncertainty. Who can you trust? Who are the Judases? The true believers? And what is your role in it all?

Welcome to the conspiracy-steeped world of DEUS EX, a world where the only thing you can trust is that you can trust no one.

Secret Agent Man

Overseeing the development of this next-generation RPG is Warren Spector, the designer behind ULTIMA

UNDERWORLD and SYSTEM SHOCK. The game's overarching goal in Spector's mind "[is to] put power back into the player's hands To confront them not with puzzles, but with problems." To that end, every facet of gameplay is being crafted to present the gamer with multiple possibilities and choices, giving the player the ability to shape their playing experience their own way.

This begins with the player character's initial

stats. Rated in eleven abilities including computer skills, medicine, lockpicking, demolitions, general tech-ability, and four types of weapons skills, your avatar starts off untrained in all. As you gain experience, you can increase your abilities to Trained, Advanced, and Master skills, but experience points are going to be so stingily won that you'll only be able to master two skills at most, with the rest left primarily at the Untrained level (unless you go the "generalist" route, training a little in all skills).

But while these tough decisions will significantly impact your game, you aren't going to be forced to play just one way. You'll still be able to use a sniper rifle even if you're untrained; you just won't have sufficiently-steady aim to be effective. And while anyone can hack a security system, only the trained won't set off an alarm in mere seconds. Dialogue with NPCs focuses on simple either/or responses, forgoing convoluted conversation trees, yet still playing a part in sculpting the overall course of the game.

Six-Trillion Dollar Man

But the biggest – and easily the coolest – device defining your character is the nanotechnology augmentation you acquire. DEUS EX takes place in a not-too-distant future where high-tech personal enhancements allow you to upgrade your body like so much hardware. When you get the opportunity to install an augmentation, it will typically come in the form of yet another choice: Do you enhance your legs for better speed and jumping ability, or upgrade



It Isn't Paranoia if They're Really Out To Get You by Robert Coffey

DEUS EX

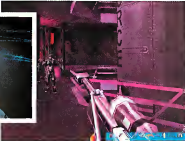
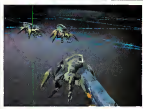
your eyes so you can see in the dark? The augmentations will work hand in hand with the other characteristics to create unique, specialized characters. Expect to see sniper players augment their eyes to the point that they can see their foes at great distances, what weapon they're carrying, and even how many hit points each of their body parts has left.

The goal is to create a game that equally rewards different play styles. To that end, experience is rewarded for solving problems, not for killing enemies. It's atypical of most RPGs, but if you're encouraging some players to sneak around, break into installations, and hack computer systems, why would you want to negate their special attributes by forcing them to shoot anything that moves?

But rewarding all those different play styles makes balancing and designing the game that much thornier. Every obstacle needs multiple solutions. For example, an early mission asks you to infiltrate a sealed-off Statue of Liberty in order to neutralize some terrorists. How do you get in? You can kill every terrorist in sight and storm in, take security offline, get a key from an informant, plant demolition charges to blast in, or hide in a security camera's blind spot while you pick a lock. It doesn't matter how you get in, just that you do. You could kill every terrorist and kitten in sight, but you're not getting any experience until you get in that statue.

So don't let the first-person, UNREAL engine-driven look of the game fool you into dismissing DEUS EX as another moody shooter. A compelling, twisting storyline and honest-to-God unique character generation make this a game to watch for in 2000. **CGW**

MILITARY SURPLUS While you won't see any mutants in DEUS EX, there will be plenty of imaginative but plausible military combat robots to deal with.



BOWFINGER Looking to be a slightly kind of spy? You won't want to stop this creechaw for your fingers and "retired" with your username.



DOCTOR FEELGOOD Among the NPCs you'll meet are technology sergeants who will cybernetically enhance you...but at what cost?



STAR CHAMBER Much of DEUS EX's action takes place in top-secret facilities like this.



5 THINGS...

...From the Real World Affecting the Artificial World of DEUS EX

1) Usable, Interactive Objects

Wending machines will dispense drinks and snacks for restoring minimal amounts of health. Hanging pots and sides of beef in a kitchen will move when brushed up against - perfect for tracking escaping enemies.

2) Blueprints and Maps

Actual blueprints and maps of the Statue of Liberty, Hong Kong, New York's Battery Park, and more underscore the game's realistic feel.

3) Localized Damage

Damage will be tracked separately for arms, legs, torso, and head. Head shots will kill quickly, leg shots will slow or cripple, damage to the arm will affect aim.

4) No Monsters

Instead of a constant, tedious stream of human enemies, very plausible near-future military combat robots will fill up the adversarial mix.

5) Everyone Can Hear

You can hear security cameras and guards at a distance, as well as the sound of guns drawn by bad guys you've already heard you.

"This game rocks, you



First step on any mission is the pre-assault briefing. Here you'll receive the latest updates on the current crisis, configure your team's arsenal, and determine your entry point and tactical approach to the target location.



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EA GAMES
SERRA

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The image features two SWAT officers in full tactical gear, including helmets with visors and body armor. The officer on the left is holding a rifle with a flashlight attached, which is turned on, casting a beam of light. The officer on the right is also in full gear. The background is a dark, blue-tinted scene, possibly a city at night. The overall tone is serious and action-oriented.

feel like you're actually
the leader of a
SWAT team."

-Extreme 3D.com

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— Games Domain

9/10

“Jane Jensen is the best story-teller of the interactive medium.”

— Gamesmania



blood of the sacred
GABRIEL KNIGHT3
blood of the damned.

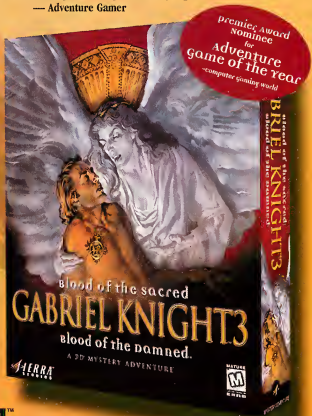
series to ever grace a PC"

— Next Generation Online

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— Adventure Gamer



"Here is everything you want in an adventure game."

— Time Digital

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and excellent mission design kept
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many nights, a rare occasion after
ten years of writing game reviews..."

- IGN/PC
9 out of 10



"... one of the best real-time strategy
games I have ever seen!"

- Gamecrops
5 out of 5



"This is what immersion is all about."

- Daily Radar
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BROADCAST NEWS

GENRE: Action • RELEASE: Summer, 2000

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

CONTACT: www.crimsonskies.com

SWING

COMMANDER

Check Six, Daddy-D! In a 1930s That Could Have Been, You Have To Bank Hard and Fire True, or You're History

by Chris Lombardi

Every once in a great while, a fresh game concept comes along that grabs ahold of a gamer's heart, sinks its nails in, and won't let go. Even before you know who's developing the game, before you know what "engine" it will use, or how many jillion polygons it will push. Before you read the bullet-point list of features, or know which washed-up actor will do the voice-overs in the cut-scenes....you're in love. Your first thought: "This is a game that I must play." Your second: "I hope to God the game developers don't screw it up."

Such was my response when I caught wind of Microsoft's upcoming *CRIMSON SKIES*. All I had to hear before I started pining away with love sickness was this: It's an air-combat game set in a speculative 1930s. It's got slick, tricked-out prop aircraft; aircraft-carrier zeppelins; and a nutty pulp-fiction storyline. And—and this was the clincher for me—a 30s-era Big Band/swing soundtrack. What a relief it was, after visiting Microsoft to uncover the rest of the story, to find that this great concept might actually deliver on its promise.

The universe of *CRIMSON SKIES* is the brain child of Jordan Weisman and his pals at the FASA Corporation, the tabletop-gaming folks who brought the *BATTLETECH* and

BALLOONS OF FURY A strafing pass on an enemy appetite leaves one of its steward engines in flames. The game engine's "particle system" capably recreates burning destructibles.



SHADOWRUN gaming universes to the world. According to Weisman—founder of FASA and now the Creative Director of Microsoft Games—CRIMSON SKIES was a labor of love, a project he and the FASA crew developed in long, after-hours gaming sessions. The game began as a tactical boardgame of air-to-air combat, similar in style and mechanics to the classic CAR WARS boardgame. Players chose an aircraft, outfitted it with weapons, and dueted on hex-grid maps using an elegant set of rules for fire and movement. The boardgame was published in 1998 and has since sold over 30,000 copies—a decent showing in the aging tabletop-gaming biz.

When FASA was purchased by Microsoft in January of 1999, Weisman saw an opportunity to free the CRIMSON SKIES universe from the limitations of text and cardboard, and make it more fully realized in the multimedia realm. When Microsoft gave the go on the project, Weisman joined his band of designers and artists with veteran flight-simulation developers Zipper Interactive, and the digital incarnation of CRIMSON SKIES began its taxi for take-off.

THE UNITED STATE OF AMERICA

The CRIMSON SKIES universe starts with historical U.S. events of the 1920s and suggests a few fascinating and reasonably plausible "what if?" changes. What if, the CRIMSON SKIES universe asks, the push for Prohibition had become a violent fight over state versus federal power and had failed—resulting in a weakened union and a heightened spirit of regionalism? What if some states then became "Prohibition states," outlawing alcohol and closing their borders to stop alcohol trafficking, getting into squabbles with neighboring non-Prohibition states? What if the flu epidemic of 1918 had returned in 1927 in a nastier form, and the resulting plague mania had bolstered the spirit of isolationism? Finally, what if the stock market crash of '29 was right on schedule?

From this point, the history of CRIMSON SKIES takes a sharp left turn from plausibility and spins off, out of control, into the realm of wacky pulp fiction. The union shatters into 20-some independent nations, among them the Nations of Dixie, Hollywood, Appalachia, and Free Colorado. The great public-works projects of the Depression-era are never completed, so that the system of interstate highways that paved the way for the age of the automobile is never realized. The result is a greater reliance upon—and thus a speedier development of—aircraft. Zeppelins and aerobuses become the primary means of interstate trade, and aircraft militias the means of waging wars and combating the air piracy that thrives in the chaos.

In steps the hero of our tale, Nathan Zachary, the leader of a band of aerial pirates with a Robin Hood morality. CRIMSON SKIES will tell the story of Nathan and his colorful adventures in this vivid milieu in classic WING COMMANDER-style: a series of air combat scenarios interspersed with narrative. True to the era, the narrative will be delivered via voice-acted "radio dramas" and news reports, as well as stylish black & white photography.

It's Good To Be (Minions of) the King!

During our visit to the legendary Microsoft campus (where we got lost and narrowly avoided absorption into a Powerpoint project team), we had a chance to talk off-the-cuff with the game's developers about their experience working for the Big M. After the obligatory jokes about corporate mind-control implants—and a comment from Jordan Weisman about how his title "Creative Director at Microsoft" was an oxymoron (he was kidding, Bill...)—they had several interesting, and positive, things to say about some of the advantages of working for the up-and-coming gaming giant.

The largest advantage is, of course, resources. This doesn't necessarily mean cash, however. It means, for instance, the luxury of taking the time needed to get a game right. The relatively tiny Games Division, the revenues of which are a pittance in the larger Microsoft scheme, doesn't suffer the same overwhelming pressures to ship games as does a smaller company that lives from release to release. If a game has drifted off track, Microsoft can take the time to fix it. Or—in the extreme case—if a project is just not working out, they can kill it (although a project manager in the group quickly commented that this would be "strongly discouraged").

Perhaps the most impressive example of "resources" was the Microsoft quality-assurance infrastructure, the largest and most sophisticated in the business. Not only do game designers get access to a huge team of professional testers available to hammer away at Microsoft games, but they have an active playtesting program that brings in gamers from the surrounding community to play and comment on works in progress. And they don't just test Microsoft games. I, say, the designer of MECHWARRIOR 4 (another FASA/Microsoft project) is trying to hash out details of the MECH interface, he can have the testers play Sierra's EARTHSEIGE in order to find out what they did and didn't like about its interface! The obvious danger of this approach is the "design-by-focus-group" syndrome, but the developers seemed well aware of that risk.

Finally, they were delighted to find that the halls of Microsoft are teeming with talented people. It was common, they said, to run into a legendary programming god who, for the price of steak fajitas at the Campus food court, might help them hash through a particularly hairy engineering problem.

Sounds just peachy, don't it? Of course, they may not have been joking about those brainimplants.


SIMPLE, HOT, DEEP

The CRIMSON SKIES approach to air combat is also similar to WING COMMANDER. While the underlying game engine is capable of delivering a "serious" flight-simulation experience (the engine is a descendant of that used for MicroProse's TOP GUN F-16 sim and MECHWARRIOR 3), the designers are dialing back the realism to the "gmp it and rip it" level. While each of the aircraft will have unique flight dynamics, and while you can still stall a plane (if you really, really work at it), CRIMSON SKIES makes no claims of being a simulation. The designers are going for the feel of flight—not its reality.


If it were a simulation, there'd be no way in hell you could pull off the kinds of aerial acrobatics Nathan Zachary will be asked to pull off in the course of an average mission. The designers are shooting for loads of Indiana Jones-styia high adventure, where achieving the impossible is an every-mission affair. In one mission, Nathan Zachary decides he needs to steal the Spruce Goose, the enormous experimental aircraft developed by millionaire/aviator Howard Hughes, from its Long Beach, CA hangar. In Zachary's way are the Hollywood Knights, the nation of Hollywood's air militia led by the famous film star/air-combat pilot, Charlotte "Charlie" Steele. First, Zachary must engage a wave of Knights over the fully-realized lot of a Hollywood film studio, his guns sending enemy pilots careening into the faux Martian landscape of a Sci-Fi set. Then, he must fly through the Spruce Goose's hangar, deposit the agent who will steal the craft, and protect the Goose from more Knights and armed battle-zeppelins during its painfully long taxi, take-off, and escape. In other scenarios, Zachary is picking people up from moving trains with rope ladders extended from his plane, and parachuting out of it in order to land and steal another plane.

As if these stunts weren't enough for one day's work, each scenario has a number of side objectives. These "Danger Zones," as the designers are calling them, offer even more stunt-flying challenges above and beyond the central mission. The Danger Zones include lots of Star Wars-like "trench runs" and maneuvers under bridges and through canyons, skyscrapers, and train tunnels, as well as suicide runs against heavily-armed zeppelins and anti-aircraft positions.

The reward for surviving a Danger Zone—and the incentive for seeking them out—is Zachary's scrapbook, a novel and clever design twist for a scenario-based game. The idea is that after each mission, Zachary will compose a scrapbook of photos, stories, mission statistics, newspaper clippings, and personal mementos related to the mission. The collection of items will differ depending on how the player went about completing the mission's objective, and if he succeeded with any side objectives in Danger Zones. The designers hope to have several hundred different items that can make it into the scrapbook so that each player ends up with a unique composition at the end of the game. The designers are even making it easy to snap screenshots of scrapbook pages for uploading to the Web, so that players can compare and contrast.



WHAT'S A "LEARNING CURVE"? This sure ain't FALCON 4.0. Six gauges are all you'll need, if you even need these.



ISLAND KA-POWA-POWA Your first task in this odd one is to deposit the bottle again. Next, you go after the aircraft-carrier submarine.

THE LITTLE TRAIN THAT WON'T

A Medusa-Lethal Firebird flies off a rail-car that will surely stall if the pluck and cunning from this little chie-o-chie.





GUIDE TRAINING The red-lasered HUD, at 50% resolution, is at the bottom corner. Note the "spyglass" at the top of the screen indicating the location of the player's next mission objective.

HEY GOOD LOOKIN'

The emphasis of the CRIMSON SKIES design is on constant action and loads of pyrotechnics, and the Zipper graphics engine seems well suited to the pixel-pumping task. The plane models are gorgeous, the action fast and fluid, and the weapon and damage effects look very cool—thanks to a "particle system" that renders minute particulate smoke, fire, dust, and exhaust. Clouds have layers of depth, so you can fly within canyons of fluff. The generic terrain below is not particularly impressive—a conscious design decision in order to get more detail on the planes and to keep the minimum system requirements at a P-200 with 32MB RAM—but the terrain that matters, like cities, bases, suburbs, and movie sets are populated with lots of structures and atmospheric details.

Over the course of his career, Zachary will have the pleasure of flying a number of different aircraft, the airframes of which seem to have been born of a collision between the experimental aircraft of the late-war Luftwaffe and the oaterfolds of Hot Rod magazine. Each airframe will have unique flight dynamics, and the player can modify each before every mission. Guns and ammo, armor placement, engine, paint scheme, and nose art (which players can design and import into the game) can all be tweaked for maximum performance given the demands of a particular mission. Need burning magnesium rounds or drilling rockets to eat through tough enemy armor? Load 'em up. Or maybe you need "sonic blast" or "flesh" rockets to temporarily incapacitate crack enemy pilots? There's even something of a guided missile that requires you to hit an enemy with a dumb "beacon rocket" before firing the homing rocket that will track and smack the marked enemy.

Once in the air, the gameplay is as streamlined as the aircraft. Again, the designers have chosen to promote unmitigated action over all else. The cockpit sports but a couple dials indicating speed, altitude, direction, and ammo status. There's no radar (historical accuracy, you see...), but there is a "spyglass" that appears on the edge of your screen displaying your closest target or mission objective. You'll fly with wingmen, but there are no wing-

man commands; however, your wingmen will chatter constantly to help you maintain your situational awareness.

This emphasis on simplification is the only point I can see where the design could stumble. How will gamers accustomed to "power systems management" in games like FREESPACE and WING COMMANDER feel about the lightened workload? Or the lack of damage modeling in the aircraft's flight dynamics? Or the lack of control over wingmen? The designers are consciously bucking against entrenched conventions here. Will they buck too hard?

I don't know. But my hunch is that we'll be too enthralled with this game's overwhelming coolness quotient to really care. We may be too busy begging boogies while circling the Empire State building, and sinking aircraft-carrier submarines in their secret Hawaiian cove. We may be grooving too hard on the Count Basie sound (I know it sounds weird, but believe me, the music works!), and so caught up in the storyline to even notice.

All I can say for sure is that CRIMSON SKIES is the hippest, most colorful action game to come around since the muscle cars and funk of INTERSTATE '76. This alone will ensure that when this baby flies this summer, I'm going for the ride. **CGW**



THE BLACK SWAN Beautiful, deadly. And in no way Zachary's inevitable love-interest. Nope. No way. Not at all.

Cool Links

www.crimsonskies.com if you're itching to know more about the CRIMSON SKIES universe, check out the official site where you'll find Spicy Air Tales, short stories based upon the CS world written by known fantasy authors.

www.teleport.com/~skylech/Alkore.html Aircraft-carrier zeppelins? The CRIMSON SKIES designers aren't making this one up. Check out this site to learn more about the U.S.S. Alkore and Mesco, two ships designed to carry the lighter/soot planes.

How Does a Klingon Feel at the Helm of a Capital Ship?

With more than 2 years of development refinement, *Star Trek®: Klingon Academy™* provides the most realistic capital ship experience available.

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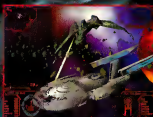
- Ships move and feel like true capital ships – not fighters.
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- Fire weapons simultaneously across multiple firing arcs.
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Command your warship with skill and daring, or you'll find yourself caught defenseless in the Tholian Web.



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STAR TREK
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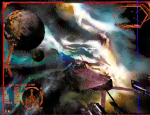


"This game looked hot, and is easily the best looking space combat game we have seen on the PC to date."

- GameFan Online



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The 2000 Premier Awards

The Very Best
of a Great Year
in Gaming

Ask anyone who's worked at *Computer Gaming World* about the secret (and reportedly bizarre) ritual that goes on during the first week of the first month of every new year, and you're likely to get an evasive reply. No one will talk about the process...only the results.

This much is known: On the first Monday of any new year, the *CGW* editors disappear for a day. When they return from their top-secret location, they solemnly declare in their next issue the names of the finest computer games in each of the major genres (and some of the smaller ones). They also identify the game that transcended everything else, and is worthy of the title Best Game Of The Year.

Prepare to sing, laugh, and cry. We present to you the finest games of 1999.





GAME OF THE YEAR

Unreal Tournament

PUBLISHER: GT Interactive • DEVELOPER: Epic Megagames • www.unrealtournament.com



Last year, **HALF-LIFE** took the next step for single-player action games. This year, **UNREAL TOURNAMENT (UT)** proved itself to be the herald of the multiplayer experience, not just for action, but for all of gaming.

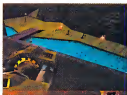
UT manages to capture the puny and fun of the first-person shooter, and then extends this to the online world with tremendous polish, permanently increasing our expectations of how rich and varied multiplayer gaming can be.

Out of the box, UT has a slew of gameplay options, from straight-ahead fragfests to the team-oriented Capture-The-Flag to the more strategic Domination, or even the cooler, mission-based Assault games. And, in addition to the core games, you can also engage several quirky game variants that will spice up your experience, such as

Fatboy or Invisibility Arenas. And if you can't find any friends at all, you can always play against the Bots, one of the game's other surprises.

Last year, **HALF-LIFE** demonstrated perhaps the best computer opponents of any 3D shooter. Until now, UT's Bots go much farther, so much so that, in a frightening analogue to the Terminator films, they act a little too human sometimes. They know their way around levels and they know how to use the various weapons. But the best testament to UT's AI comes in team-based scenarios. While **HALF-LIFE**'s marines will scout and attack, UT's Bots will divide into teams that will scout, attack, defend, feint, and even hit you from multiple entry points.

On many occasions, great games are released that only diehard fans can fully appreciate. UT breaks through by being accessible to anyone. While multiplayer action gaming has been around since the **DOOM** days, its long-hyped potential is finally being realized. True multiplayer gaming is undoubtedly the future of gaming, and UT has become the standard by which that future will be judged.



“On many occasions, great games are released that only diehard fans can fully appreciate. UT breaks through by being accessible to anyone.”



Inside the Smoke-Filled Offices of CGW

Now has picking a Game Of The Year been so hard. In recent years, it always seemed that we were blessed with one clear-cut choice for the most outstanding game. No such luck this time.

The voting came down to three candidates: **UNREAL TOURNAMENT**, **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT**, and **HIGH HEAT: BASEBALL 2000**. Talk about competing apples, oranges, and fish. Each one of these titles took huge leaps in its genre. **PLANESCAPE** was a masterpiece of mature storytelling that riveted as like no RPG in recent memory. As for **UNREAL** and **HIGH HEAT 2000**, no two games were played more frequently or more obsessively in the CGW offices this year. So do we give the nod to the way **HIGH HEAT 2000** merged console-style sports excitement with PC gaming depth? Do we acknowledge the wholly original world and superb artistry that **PLANESCAPE** gave us? Or do we go with the adrenaline rush of the first great multiplayer-only shooter?

After hours of arguing (and the looking up of voracious **HIGH HEAT 2000** advocate Robert Colley into a tiny, unventilated cupboard), we went with **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** for the reasons you've just read. Ultimately, our advice to you is this: All three of these titles are must-plays - make sure you play them.

Past Winners of CGW's Game Of The Year

1988	Half-Life (Sierra)
1997	Jedi Knight (LucasArts)
1996	Diablo (Blizzard)
1995	Gabriel Knight 2 (Sierra)
1994	X-COM (Microprose)
1993	Doom (id Software)
1992	Civilization (Microprose)
1991	Wing Commander (Origin)
1989	Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
1988	SimCity (Maxis)
1988	Empire (Interstel)
1987	Earl Weaver Baseball (EA)
1986	Ultima IV (Origin)
1985	Kampfgruppe (SSI)

ACTION GAME OF THE YEAR

Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear

PUBLISHER/ DEVELOPER: Red Storm • www.redstorm.com



Like a good Clancy novel, **RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR** is equal parts showmanship and technical tour de force, and the story is mere framework for the intense action. Like its predecessor, **ROGUE SPEAR** is based on the elite team of terrorist-killing commandos from Tom

Clancy's **Rainbow Six**. Players equip their operatives with specialized weapons and equipment, plan their team's movement in exacting detail, and – if all goes well – hag the bad guys.

The genius of the game lies in its immersiveness. Most of this is done through masterful graphics in imaginative settings such as a hijacked 747, snowy military bases, bomb-blasted cityscapes in Kosovo, and even a 400-year-old Persian fortress. Picking your way through these perilous environments, you issue orders to operatives who are so life-like that they breathe and blink. The intelligence of the tangles lying in wait presents challenges rival-

ing a good strategy game: Should you deploy the sniper and risk

announcing your presence, or try sneaking up on a hostile to drop him with a silenced weapon? Do you have time for a stealthy approach, or will you sacrifice the hostages if you don't hit the building? These gripping scenarios distinguish games like **RAINBOW SIX** and **SWAT 3** from "run-and-gun" shooters, but **ROGUE SPEAR** goes far beyond its peers with a

wider variety of missions, dramatic audio, demanding AI, and gut-wrenching suspense.

If the action is riveting in single-player, it's even better against human opponents. There are a huge number of multiplayer scenarios and user mods for **ROGUE SPEAR** on the Net, which add unlimited replayability to this outstanding combat experience. Red Storm's aim is right on target.

Runners Up

Quake 3: Arena
(id Software)
Battlezone II
(Activision)
S.W.A.T. 3 (Sierra)

So what do we anticipate seeing nominated next year? Well, no one at **CGW** can wait to dive into the team-based action of **TEAM FORTRESS 2** and **TRIBES 2**. **ONI's** combination of high-kicking martial arts action and shooter combat should land it a nomination, as should the high-flying daredevil of this month's cover subject, **CRIMSON SKIES**. And if we're all really, really lucky we could see **OSI WAN**, **HALO**, and **HALF-LIFE 2** gracing the **2000 Premier Awards** – if they come out.

LOOKING AHEAD



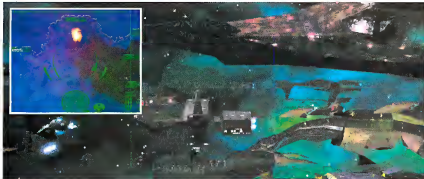
The Year's Guilty Pleasures

Nintendo, Sega, and the 1990s played pivotal roles in the lives of the **CGW** editor in 1999...all three distracted us to the point of destruction. At the top of the list sits the travelling analgesic, the Game Boy Color, through which we discovered the

POKEMON way, and lost many, many hours of our lives in the surprisingly excellent, old-school, role-playing gameplay within. Thanks, Nintendo. No, really – we like having people smirk at us on airplanes, buses and trains.

Another major distraction of the year

included Hencho's awesome classic video-game PC system, which included a slew of classic coin-op arcade games; and the Sega Dreamcast, which got us hooked for hours at a time on games like **SOUL CALIBUR** and **NFL 2000**.



SCIENCE FICTION SIMULATION OF THE YEAR

Freespace 2

PUBLISHER: Interplay • DEVELOPER: Volition Inc. • www.interplay.com

While last year's winner — INDEPENDENCE WAR — was based on innovation, this year we're giving the award to the best traditional space sim since TIE FIGHTER. While LucasArts and Origin usually dominate the domain of the dogfight, Interplay brought us a space sim with the frantic fun of the sci-fi gun duel combined with exceptional polish and refreshing newness.

It's often said that this genre attempts to capture the flavor of WWII dogfights.

Freespace 2 embodies this notion. It manages to inject the WWII flavor without sacrificing the sci-fi angle, bombing runs against capital ships are met with flair, and ship-to-ship combat lacks only gravity. While many other space sims do a great job of providing the sensation of dueling with other craft, Freespace 2 ups this by adding massive, epic battles between carriers and destroyers.

Freespace 2 should also get credit for its stunning visuals. OUAKE IN ARENA and UT look good, but can you see four beam-weapons cut a massive enemy carrier in half in a 3D shooter?

Watching a fleet battle in FREESPACE 2 is akin to watching the very best special-effect scenes in Star Wars, Star Trek, or Babylon 5.

All in all, FREESPACE 2 takes many of the conventions of the great space sims before it, adds some new twists and tweaks, and emerges to be the best there was for 1998.

Runners Up

Heavy Gear 2

(Adrenalin)

Mechwarrior 3

(Halo)

T-Wing Alliance

(LucasArts)

LOOKING AHEAD

We put our prediction for next year's Game Of The Year squarely on Chris Robert's upcoming magnum opus, **FREELANCER**. Anyone who's been itching to experience **PRIVATEER** in the massively-multiplayer arena will want to watch out for this title (assuming it makes its end-of-2000 ship date).



SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT

★ Tchotchke of the Year ★

The CDV Gnome

The CGW offices are swash in promotional crap. Or, as we call it in politz company, *tchotchkes*. T-shirts, mugs, tote bags, and toys — all this stuff sent by game companies to make sure we have their games at the forefront of our

mind. Of course, the scheme doesn't work, because everyone does it, and they usually send boring stuff.

This year's number-one exception to the mundane rule is the Garden Gnome given to us by CDV Softworks, a small German game publisher. The gnome has nothing to do with their game — a WWII strategy

RTS — it's just "Geman." Thank you CDV, for this little gift of love, and congratulations on besting a horde of highly-paid marketing professionalist!

Haiku on a Gnome
Red lips, bright eyes, cap.
You beckon, I run to love.
Sit in my garden.



STRATEGY GAME OF THE YEAR

Homeworld

PUBLISHER: Sierra Studios • DEVELOPER: Relic Entertainment • www.sierrastudios.com



The word "immersive" is a term that most gaming journalists have expelled from their vocabulary, but there really is no better word to describe **HOMEWORLD**. Utilizing gorgeous deep-space imagery, dramatic music (including a well-placed "Adagio for Strings" by Samuel Barber), and short but informative cut scenes, the designers at Relic created an almost cinematic game around their Battlestar Galactica-inspired space opera. You can't help but feel a little bit lost and alone yourself as you gingerly escort the remnants of your civilization through uncharted space in search of a new (or possibly old) home.

A real-time strategy game that explodes the ground-bound, top-down, tech-tree conventions of the genre in ways destined to be imitated again and again, **HOMEWORLD** offers a truly unique

gaming experience. The incredible 3D spatial design, coupled with an easy-to-use camera system, really gave gamers the sense of commanding a huge fleet of craft moving realistically through space.

In many ways, **HOMEWORLD** is reminiscent of last year's **HALF-LIFE** - which set a mood and maintained it until the end. **HALF-LIFE** had a compelling, well-told story at its core and so does **HOMEWORLD**. Interestingly, both games were debates from new developers and both were published by Sierra.

HOMEWORLD follows a very simple recipe for making a great game: an original concept executed to near perfection. The result is a title that deserves CGW's Strategy Game Of The Year award, as well as serious kudos for each of its distinctive design elements.

Runners Up

Alpha Centauri

(Frost)

Age of Empires 2

(Microsoft)

Dungeon Keeper 2

(Bullfrog)

Jagged Alliance 2

(Sir-Tech Canada)

LOOKING AHEAD

We expect that Maxis' **THE SIMS** will pretty much grind our magazine production to a halt next year. Then again, Peter Molyneux and Lionhead Studios' visionary **BLACK & WHITE** has just as much of a chance of killing CGW as



any title. And now that we think of it, **FORCE COMBANGER**'s real-time *Star Wars* strategy action and **DARK REIGN 2**'s gorgeous 3D world should pretty much be the final nail in our coffin.

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT

★ Best Weapons ★

The Trebuchet from Age of Empires 2

A weapon is the gamer's bread and butter. And a great weapon is his pride and joy. This year, our joyful cup runneth over, as a number of games sported weapons that went above and beyond the call of doleful duty.

Take the nasty Chem Missile from **COMMAND**

WARGAME OF THE YEAR

Sid Meier's Antietam!

PUBLISHER: Firaxis • www.firaxis.com

1999 marks the first year that one of our Premier Award winners could only be purchased online. While some games can only be played online, they've always been available in stores or distributed as shareware. SID MEIER'S ANTIETAM is a grand experiment by Firaxis to test the popularity of online-only distribution for commercial releases.

Apart from its distribution, there's nothing revolutionary about ANTIETAM. It's a carefully refined update of SID MEIER'S GETTYSBURG, the real-time Civil War game that earned our Premier Wargame Award in 1997. ANTIETAM uses the same 2D engine – so the graphics aren't stunning – but the units are finely detailed and the soldiers now bear a variety of uniform styles. You'll hardly notice those touches during a game, however, because ANTIETAM is the epitome of a Sid Meier design: intensely absorbing and wickedly punishing. Whether you play the whole battle (an 11-hour marathon) or the individual scenarios from either the Confederate or Union side, you'll be faced with an opponent who makes rapid use of terrain and exploits any weakness in your line. You could spend hundreds of hours with the single-player game, and the random-scenario generator and online play offer hours of unlimited replayability.

ANTIETAM has been criticized for small things – including its graphics, occasionally choppy frame-rate, and the fact that it's not a big leap from GETTYSBURG. But it does offer every feature a serious Civil War gamer could want, in an interface that's accessible to casual strategists. In a year when few wargames were released – and when those that did come out were inferior to their predecessors (OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR II, PANZER GENERAL 3D) – ANTIETAM takes the high ground. Only CLOSE COMBAT: BATTLE OF THE BULGE offered serious competition, but AI quits and mysteriously reincarnating units head it back



Returners Up

Battle of Britain

(TalonSoft)

Close Combat:

Battle of the Bulge

(SSI)

The Operational Art of War

Volume II: 1936-2000

(TalonSoft)

Panzer General 3D Assault

(SSI)



LOOKING AHEAD

If ANTIETAM sells well, next year we can expect a series of new wargames from Firaxis under the Sid Meier name. But the wargame we're looking forward to right now is TalonSoft's **RIISING SUN**, a platoon-level slugfest set in the Pacific Theater of WW II. Get ready to storm Guadalcanal in 2000.



Rising Sun

& CONQUER 2. Nothing said "screw you" like this noxious blast, which destroyed buildings and sent out a nasty cloud of vapor that turned the victim's units against him.

For sheer power, nothing beat the UNREAL TOURNAMENT Fink Cannon, which not only could decimate an opponent with one shot at close range, but could take out a weakened opponent

around corners with its ricocheting shrapnel.

But it's not all about raw power. Finesse counts, too. Pedro Martinez was a devastating force in HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2000 when he combined his overpowering fastball, wicked slider, and psychologically debilitating change-up.

Finely, though, nothing merried destructive force with grace

like the trebuchet in AGE OF EMPIRES 2. This wonder of ancient engineering hurled boulders that could, in seconds, destroy the wonder of a rival empire that took hundreds of years to build. The graceful arc of its swing was a kinetic poem to the creative and destructive forces that battle within the human soul.



"...resistance is futile."

- PC Accelerator



"A virtually flawless masterpiece"

- Future Gamer

"... will shake up the gaming landscape"

- CNET

" a next-generation game in every sense..."

- The Adrenaline Vault

"The 3D shooter for the next millennium."

- gamesmania.com

"...I have to tell you, it's pretty damn cool"

- IGN.com



UNREAL™

TOURNAMENT™



ROLE-PLAYING GAME OF THE YEAR

Planescape: Torment

PUBLISHER: Interplay • DEVELOPER: Black Isle Studios • www.interplay.com



Last year's **BALDUR'S GATE** may have been an excellent AD&D role-player, but it was still classic AD&D – broadswords and magic missiles, fieries and elves. Contrast this with **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT**'s singing maces and floating skulls. PT is Selvadec Dahl to **BALDUR'S GATE**'s Edward Hopper; it's new, it's surreal, it's fresh, and while the other is a fine example of tradition, ultimately, this is the one that's more intriguing.

What is it about **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT** that made it RPG Of The Year? Sheer originality and willingness to be thought-provoking. The design team took many of the issues gamers have with RPGs, and devised completely new twists to address them. The main character's immortal nature means that death is no longer a reason to reload; in fact, death is often needed to get new memories or to bypass puzzles. Combat isn't the only solution to a given problem, using your brain or charisma can solve many quests. This sword-winner also manages to parody some dungeon RPG traditions: A side quest takes you to a grand experiment in randomly-generated mazes filled with Foozles and loot,

Runners Up

EverQuest
(989 Studios)
System Shock 2
(Looking Glass)
Night & Magic VII
(GDQ)
Ashere's Call
(Merced)

LOOKING AHEAD



There are so many huge RPGs coming out in 2000 that it's exhausting us already to think about which one might win an award. Looming over the genre, and over gaming in general, is Blizzard's long-awaited **DIABLO II** – the monster release of the year. But posing extremely tough competition are these heavy hitters: Ion Storm's **DEUS EX**, Interplay's **BALDUR'S GATE II** and **NEVERWINTER NIGHTS**, Sierra's **ARCANUM**, andSSI's **POOL OF RADIANCE: RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR**. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. This is your moment, RPG fans. Enjoy it.

all to "discover what is the appeal behind the dungeon."

The quality of writing in **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT** also elevates it over other RPGs. Not only did the design team create a compelling story behind the most tired of clichés (waking up with amnesia), they also wrote dialogue that never insults your intelligence. Oftentimes, the dialogue stops being filler and starts being philosophical debates on topics like entropy or the will to live. At times, the writing surpasses even the mighty **ULTIMA IV** in dealing with ethical dilemmas.

While there were many contenders – most notably **EVERQUEST** and **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** – **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT** excels at combining all of its design elements, and hence this imaginative game is our RPG Of The Year.



ADVENTURE GAME OF THE YEAR

Outcast

PUBLISHER: Inlogames • DEVELOPER: Appeal • www.outcast-thegame.com



One good thing about living in Belgium – other than the waffles – is that they apparently haven't heard about the supposed "death of adventure games" over there. Thank goodness, because if Belgian game-developer Appeal had been as down

on the game as the rest of the industry, they might never have made *OUTCAST*, our choice for 1999's Adventure Game Of The Year.

It's an unusual choice, we know. For one thing, *OUTCAST* is more like an adventure/action hybrid than a "pure" adventure. But what we love about *OUTCAST* – especially in comparison to its only competitor, Sierra's much higher-profile *GABRIEL KNIGHT 3* – and what ultimately gave it the edge in our minds, is that this game always stays true to its vision, however goofy that may be. Fundamentally, adventure games tell stories, and *OUTCAST* told a great one, about a Schwarzeneggerian

Runner Up

Gabriel Knight 3

(Sierra)

commando sent to a parallel world to fix a black hole, where he is promptly mistaken for a god by the local alien population. As you play the game, the plot expands as you go forward, surrounding you with a large cast of colorful characters and personalities to interact with and engaging you in dialogue that is surprisingly and refreshingly funny throughout.

The game's art direction is equally compelling. No one will mistake *OUTCAST*'S voxel-based engine for *UNREAL TOURNAMENT*, but Appeal proved it could create some wondrous outdoor environments this way – without making gamers buy a 3D card. The cinematic camera angles and truly great musical score (performed by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra) both add greatly to the game's epic feel.

It was a slim year for adventure games, to be sure, but that in no way should diminish the achievement of *OUTCAST*, a game that told a great story in a confident, compelling and entertaining way – something that all the great adventure games do.

The biggest question in the adventure game genre is not what might win the award in 2000, but whether we'll even be handing one out. It's that grim. You can pretty much count on one hand the adventure games in development. The coolest ones we've seen both hail from Europe – *THE LONGEST JOURNEY* from Norway's Funcom, and *THE REAL NEVERENDING STORY* from Germany's Discreet Monsters.



The Real Neverending Story

LOOKING AHEAD



SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT

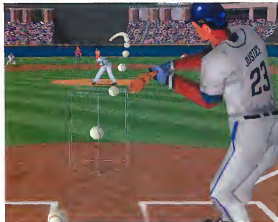
★ Best Character ★

Morte from Planescape: Torment

In a year with memorable characters like the villainous SHOGAN in *SYSTEM SHOCK 2* and the nosening Guardian of *ULTIMA 7*, the best character of the year turns out to be Morte, the floating-skull sidekick in

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT. At first, Morte's wit and sarcasm make him merely a comedian, a Jo Murray (another disembodied skull, this time from *CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND*). Yet, the moment Morte tells the story of why he's with you, he elevates himself from mere comic relief to become one of those characters you truly care about. Not since Floyd (from the

ancient *PLANETFALL*) has comedy and tragedy mixed itself so well within a single character, much less a sidekick. We applaud the design team of *PLANESCAPE: TORMENT* for writing such a rich, memorable character.



SPORTS GAME OF THE YEAR

High Heat 2000

PUBLISHER: 3DO • DEVELOPER: Team 3DO • www.3do.com

From the moment we installed HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2000, we knew there really wouldn't be much of a contest for Sports Game Of The Year. While our other nominees were content to incrementally advance the state of their respective sports, HIGH HEAT 2000 revolutionized its sport, snatching the "Best Computer Baseball Game Of All Time" crown from CGW Hall of Famer EARL.

WEAVER BASEBALL II redefines what a baseball game – and maybe even a sports game – should be.

Runners Up

John Madden Football

2000 (EA Sports)

Jack Nicklaus G:

Golden Bear Challenge

(Activision)

NFL Fever 2000

(Nanosoft)

NBA Live 2000

(EA Sports)

something unexpected in almost every game, from heart-breaking final-pitch losses to exhilarating, fluke hit victories. Teams grew from just a roster of names into a collection of players with personalities and character: the always disappointing all-star, the clutch pinch-batter, the unflinchingly unpredictable middle reliever, and the number-five starter that heroically gutted through eight groaning innings to pitch a key victory.

It all managed to recreate perfectly the highs and lows a fan experiences—the sunny promise of Opening Day; the nail-biting final games of a pennant race – making HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2000 not only the Best Sports Game Of The Year, but simply one of the best games of the year. Period.



pure gaming satisfaction, no game this year could match the feeling of striking out another human player with HIGH HEAT's beautifully modeled, cruelly devastating change-up.

That HIGH HEAT could keep you hooked throughout the grind of a long season is only further testament to the beauty of the game. As in real life, the game managed to show you something new,

Like no other game before it, HIGH HEAT 2000 captured the intangible essence of baseball. The pitcher/batter confrontation – the soul of baseball – was just about perfect, with every at-bat a struggle complete with subtle mind games that blossomed pitch by pitch. And for

LOOKING AHEAD

Considering what 3DO accomplished last year – and what we've seen in the early alpha builds of HIGH HEAT 2001 – this franchise is definitely a front runner for the best game of 2000. But there could be some surprises in store. Keep an eye on

Microsoft's follow-up to this year's strong NFL FEVER 2000. And TIGER WOODS 2001 will allow virtual cuffers to play against the pros in major tournaments, an innovation that could net it some accolades.

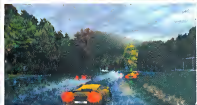


High Heat 2001

RACING GAME OF THE YEAR

Need For Speed: High Stakes

PUBLISHER/DEVELOPER: Electronic Arts • www.needforspeed.com



Runners Up

Midtown Madness

(Microsoft)

Star Wars Episode One: Racer

(LucasArts)

Re*Volt (Acceler)

Superbike World Championship

(EA Sports)

LOOKING
AHEAD

We've been lucky enough to get some sneak peeks at racing titles slated for next year that, if they fulfill their early promise, could be contenders for next year's awards. **MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2** from Microsoft is boasting a slick graphics engine and myriad gameplay options, while **NFS: MOTOR CITY** will be the first racing-oriented persistent online universe.

SPECIAL
ACHIEVEMENT

* Sleeper Hit of the Year *

Re*Volt

Sometimes a game flies under our radar – under everyone's radar – that turns out to not only be really good, but insanely addictive. **RE*VOLT** surprised the hell out of us when it was released this past Fall. The concept – racing remote-controlled toy cars –

we've seen before, but never with such style. The engine was one of the best 3D engines we saw all year, and the real-world environments (like supermarkets in our favorite) gave a great sense of scale for these tiny vehicles.

RE*VOLT's cars sound like the real RC thing...and handle like them too. Add in great weapons – from bottle rockets to oil slicks, and you've got *Mad Max* for the Toygickins set.

For a lesson in how to make a sequel and build a successful franchise, you needn't look any further than the **NEED FOR SPEED** series from Electronic Arts.

NEED FOR SPEED III won CGW's 1998 Premier award for driving games because it skirted the line between a hard-core racing sim and an arcade racer. Its follow-up, **NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES**, wins the award this year for maintaining the awesome gameplay of its predecessor, while adding so much more. **HIGH STAKES** offered over a dozen tracks that can be raced backwards, mirrored, or both. Following a trend set by the superb PlayStation title **GRAN TURISMO**, **HIGH STAKES** also included a career mode with a detailed financial model that allowed you to earn money by winning races, and then spend it on upgrades and repairs for your car. And the hot-pantsed play mode introduced in **NFSIII** was expanded to let you play as the police, or as a member of a pack of scallions.

Technically the game is masterful, with improved graphics and a more realistic physics model that includes some early realistic force-feedback effects. The cars are lovingly rendered with 3D interiors and animated drivers. In essence, **NFSIII** builds upon the greatness of **NFSIII** by giving us more, more, more. Next year's installment, **NEED FOR SPEED: MOTOR CITY** looks to take the series to the next level once again.

While we enjoyed the novelty of **RE*VOLT**, the setting of **MIDTOWN MADNESS**, and the blinding speed of **EPISODE I: RACER**, the sublime qualities of **NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES** set it head and hubcaps above the rest.



KANE IS DEAD A NEW ENEMY

PJHMH
F L KFDJW BX.EKJ L
FDLKI
00F:KAWERK:EX



ESRB RATING
RP
RATING PENDING
ESRB

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HAS EMERGED

COMMAND & CONQUER TIBERIAN SUN

FIRESTORM

EXPANSION PACK



NEW GDI & NOD UNITS

NEW MULTIPLAYER MAPS
ALL NEW WORLD DOMINATION TOURNAMENTS
ENHANCED BATTLEFIELD RANDOMIZER

NEW UNIT UPGRADES
INDIGENOUS LIFE FORMS

Westwood
STUDIOS

for the inside scoop, www.westwood.com

SIMULATION OF THE YEAR

MiG Alley

PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive • DEVELOPER: Rowan Software • www.empire-ig.com

In a down year for flight simulations, one shone as brightly as a ray of light piercing through a thunderhead. **MIG ALLEY** covered an era that has been long-overlooked (the Korean War), but which offers a fascinating prospect for virtual pilots: the first jet-versus-jet air war. While configurable enough to give novices a good ride, the game's highest realism levels yield an experience the most discriminating of flight fanatics will relish. You can hear every creak and groan of these first-generation jets as you push them to the edge of their capabilities. The aircraft all have their own idiosyncrasies, and every graphic detail of these jets – beautiful

in an ugly way that only a military aviation fan can appreciate – is perfectly modeled.

Back then, cannons were the weapon of the day, so lightning-fast jousts were the typical engagement. **MIG ALLEY** ably captures this dynamic, and may in fact feature

Runners Up**Jazz's USAF**

(Electronic Arts)

Flight Unlimited 3

(Looking Glass)

Apache Mass

(Empire)



the best pure dogfighting in any sim until now. The AI is also surprisingly human: A veteran computer pilot may fly to the edge of his plane's capabilities and sometimes beyond, while a rookie pilot may panic and bail out of his plane as soon as you pepper him with cannon fire. Attack a pair of opposing aircraft, and one plane might draw you off while his wingman sneaks behind you and stitches your six. Add to this a dynamic campaign that is a strategic game in and of itself, allowing you to prioritize enemy assets, target them, and then set up – in great detail – all of the strike packages, and you have a sim that will be flown for years to come.

LOOKING AHEAD

1999 was a tough year for digital fly-boys, with the cancellation of several high-profile titles, and the dismantling of MicroProse's august FALCON team. But despite these setbacks, 2000 still has some very promising titles in the works including MicroProse's **B-17 FLYING FORTRESS II**, HiTech Creation's **ACES HIGH**, and

Looking Glass Studio's first stab at a combat sim: **FLIGHT COMBAT: THUNDER OVER EUROPE**.



B-17 Flying fortress II

PUZZLES/CLASSICS GAME OF THE YEAR

Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey

PUBLISHER: Empire Interactive • DEVELOPER: Cunning Developments • www.empire-us.com

Nobody does quick-fix classic gaming like Cuning Developments and Empire Interactive. Last year's **BIG RACE U.S.A.** was perhaps the best pinball game – digital or physical – we've ever played. This year's **FANTASTIC JOURNEY** is not quite up to **BIG RACE**, but it's still far and away the best game in its category.

The ball physics in these games are practically virtual reality, and the table designs are clever and deep, with dozens of special shots and mini "quests" that must be fulfilled on your journey towards a high score. **FANTASTIC JOURNEY**'s Jules Verne theme is developed through myriad sounds and animations that play out on the overhead display.

The only drawbacks: The music is annoying as hell, and the gameplay is so addictive that you'll never get a thing done if you're fool enough to load the game on your work computer. Hands down, **FANTASTIC JOURNEY** offers the best 10-minute servings of gaming you'll find.

**Runners Up****Mid Eye**

(Stern & Schuster)

Pardons's Box

(Microsoft)

Chessmaster 7000

(Midway)



The Destroyer Walks Again

GAMING TECHNOLOGY OF THE YEAR

AMD Athlon CPU

DEVELOPER: AMD • www.amd.com



jects in mirror are larger than they appear."

Intel's CEO, Craig Barrett, no doubt sees an AMD logo in his rear view mirror — and it's looming larger all the time.

Most challenges to Intel are still licking their wounds, unable to keep up

with Intel's clock speeds and floating-point performance. But when AMD shipped the Athlon in 1999, the market for high performance, x86-compatible CPUs was no longer a near-monopoly. Gamers quickly discovered that Athlon's fast, three-issue floating point unit (FPU) was as fast or faster than the equivalent Intel FPU. This made for superb 3D-gaming performance. For months, Intel trailed AMD, until Intel's Coppermine CPUs shipped. Even then, they only subalternately exceeded Athlon in gaming performance by using fairly exotic RDRAM memory. What AMD accomplished in 1999 was a major coup. Their new CPU completely reshaped the performance PC marketplace, and AMD is now slugging it out toe-to-toe with Intel's best.

PC makers hungry for an alternative quickly began shipping Athlon-based systems. Gamers, always looking for great performance at low prices, snapped up the new systems. All-in-all, it's been a rosy success story for Santa Clara-based AMD. If there's any dark lining in this silver cloud, it's been the lagging technology in the motherboard chipsets and L2 cache. That is quickly changing, however, as AMD embeds L2 cache, and as chipset makers introduce new technology like AGP 4x and DDR SDRAM. Make no mistake: Athlon systems are fast, and can make for superb gaming. All you need is sound, fast video, and an ATA/66 hard drive. Competition is sweet indeed.



Doorstop of the Year

Thrustmaster
Fragmaster

We have seen some poor attempts to solve the "first-person-shooter problem," that supposed affliction that prevents gamers from using the mouse/keyboard combination in 3D shooters. But Thrustmaster's Fragmaster has got to be one of the worst. Thrusty's ill-fated attempt brought together a so-so design with bad execution to produce this year's Doorstop Of The Year.

The Fragmaster was marred by serious driver problems and poor performance that had most buyers fuming, not to mention that Thrustmaster was slow to pull the product off store shelves after realizing there were problems. For a company that's been such a friend to gamers over the year, this was a dark chapter in its history. Here's hoping that under Guillemot's ownership, Thrusty will rediscover their commitment to quality gaming peripherals.

★ Best Sound Design ★

System Shock 2

Considering the almost complete lack of interaction with any other character in the game, the way SYSTEM SHOCK 2 hooked you with a compelling



story told almost solely through audio is testament to the game's stellar sound design. The best voice-acting in recent memory created a pervasive sense of menace through the haunting words

of the dead in recorded logs and emails. The other sounds were just as compelling, specifically the tortured laments of the Hybrids, the perverted maternal cooing of the vicious Midwives, and the chillingly evil directives of the steely queen-bitch herself, Shodan. Echoing voices throughout the derelict spacehips promised that a violent death forever lurked just around the next corner.

MULTIPLAYER GAME OF THE YEAR

Team Fortress Classic

PUBLISHER: Sierra • DEVELOPER: Valve • www.sierrastudios.com



The TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC mod for HALF-LIFE engrossed us so thoroughly that, for a while, this free multiplayer add-on received serious consideration for Game Of The Year. Valve should be commended for this instant classic, which has spawned hundreds of clans around the world. One of the very few titles to combine class- and character-based gaming with an action environment and the type of objective-laced missions that are now becoming standard fare for 3D-shooters, TFC upped the ante to the point that it's just now being approached by the competition.

Once we played the Hunted scenario - in which one team protects a president trying to reach an SUV before being assassinated by the other team - we realized two things. First, Valve is way ahead of the game. Second, we absolutely cannot wait to get our hands on TEAM FORTRESS 2.

Runners Up

- Quake 3 (3d Software)
- Unreal Tournament
- DOT Interactive)
- EverQuest (BBG Studios)
- Age of Empires 2
- (Microsoft)



It's Time to Gather Your Champions

★ Best Level Design ★

Unreal Tournament

Too many times, action games stick to a strict theme, such as gothic castles or space stations. **UNREAL TOURNAMENT**'s only theme is "fun combined with looks." With levels on pirate ships, mountainous monasteries, WWII-style beachheads, and runaway trains, **UNREAL TOURNAMENT** gets the nod for providing levels with a good mix of gameplay and aesthetics.



TO INFINITY AND BEYOND The translucent Hyperblast (shown here) proves that levels can both look good and make for fun tugging.

★ Best Voice Acting ★

The Keeper From Dungeon Keeper 2

Indulgently wallowing in the deliciousness of all that is evil, the silky baritone of the Keeper from **DUNGEON KEEPER 2** did more to set the mood of the game than any of the other sounds or graphics. Every tantalizing word that dripped from his mouth was like a drop of rancid honey, conspiratorially speaking to your dark side and drawing you deeper into the game until you too could gleefully chorale at the misfortunes of heroes, delight in the suffering of the good, and relish the torment of your enemies. Being bad never sounded so good.

★ Best Manual ★

Homeworld



What's the deal with...game manuals? Too many companies skimp on their written support, cramming barebones info onto a CD booklet or, worse, burying all you need to know in a half-assed online manual that hurts you while saving them paper costs. Not so the manual for **HEMOWORLD**. Composed by Montgomery E. Crabapple, this game's manual not only concisely and expertly gave players all the information they need to play, but

enriched and informed the game's outstanding story. Well done, Monty.

★ Interface Design ★

Age of Empires II

If you want to really appreciate the dozens of interface enhancements made in **AGE OF EMPIRES 2**, go back and try to play the original **AGE OF EMPIRES**. It's like stepping back a couple hundred years in history. How did we ever live without the unit formations? Or the right-click way-point interface? Or the idle peasant key? Well, at least we won't have to live without them again, for **AGE 2** is the new standard in real-time strategy interfaces.



WE CLICKED WITH AGE 2 (actually, we clicked that in AGE2 due to most RTS, thanks to the elegant interface design).

★ Best Soundtrack ★

NBA Live 2000

EA Sports knows that hip-hop is the unofficial music of professional basketball, so with **NBA LIVE 2000**, they included some of the best rap, funk, and hip-hop music to ever grace a computer game. Original cuts by Rahael are bolstered by classics from Naughty by Nature, Run D.M.C., and George Clinton. To quote a wise old sage (or maybe it was Bootsy Collins), "they got the funk."

The **CGW** staff would like to thank Gordon Berg, Loyd Case, Desslock, Marc Dultz, Bruce Geryk, Kenneth Johnson, Jason Kapalka, and Jeff Lackey for their contribution of words and ideas to this story.

★ Art Direction ★

Planescape: Torment

It's not the graphics, it's the gameplay – this has been the mantra of gamers for decades. But while the intention of that mantra is a good one, we know it's not altogether true. Graphics have a huge impact on our gaming experiences, with the capability of transforming a good game into a great one.

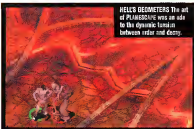
Witness PLANESCAPE: TORMENT, a masterfully designed RPG that, when combined with superb art direction, becomes one of the best RPGs we've ever played. The artists of Black Isle Studios took the philosophy of the PLANESCAPE universe and gave it life in pixels. The visual theme of the game – the perfection of geometric forms laid over with the chaos of a hellish, decaying world – is consistent throughout. The result is one of the most affecting visual environments ever created for a computer game.

Art matters. And this year, the Black Isle artists mattered the most.

★ Best Playgrounds of the Year ★

Bullfrog Productions Ltd.

As seemingly disparate as DUNGEON KEEPER 2 and SIM THEME PARK may appear to be, we loved them for the same reason – never has so much life been packed into a computer monitor. DK2's self-torturing Mistresses and flintant, chicken-pobbling Bile Demons; the hallucinogenic carnivals teeming with



HELL'S DEGMETERS The art of PLANESCAPE was an ode to the dynamic tension between order and chaos.



misbehaving kids lining up to race around in a giant jet-mobile – these were the tremendously entertaining and wholly original sights and sounds Bullfrog so richly, rewardingly, brought to life for gamers this year.



A New Adventure Beckons

2000 HALL of SHAME

Where there is sunshine, there is shadow. For every good, a bad. With so many good games released this year, the necessity of balance in the universe required that there be a peck of stinkers. Here are some of the uglier moments in gaming this year.

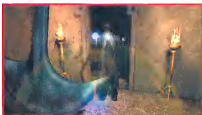
Coaster Of The Year

Nocturne

(Gathering of Developers)

Forsaking gameplay at the expense of technological achievement, designer Terminal Reality utterly squandered its promising pulp-horror premise as it pinched off this steaming load of werewolf cap: tedious cutscenes where characters literally stood around; controls that actively hampered play; camera angles that squazely focused on the asses of NPCs instead of the action; painfully bad voice-acting; Artificial Imbecility in lieu of Artificial Intelligence, ludicrously-high system requirements; and some of the most maddening god-awful key-hunting garbage to ever masquerade as play. Man alive, every moment playing this game physically hurt.

Playing NOCTURNE was about as enjoyable as gargling fishhooks. And that, friends, makes it the Coaster Of The Year.



Worst Game Concept

SKYDIVE: 'Nuf said.

Truth in Advertising Awards

It's nice to see marketing folks with a sense of integrity in the gaming industry. Three cheers to the people who accurately entitled **ODDUM** and **ABOMINATION**. And to Sierra, who provided a warning label on the front of **PROFESSIONAL BULL RIDERS**:

"The Longest 6 Seconds of Your Life."

"Licensed to Kill" Award

How long will TV, book, and movie licenses have to suffer mistreatment from misguided game publishers? This year's victims included Braveheart, clumsily manhandled by Eidos, and South Park, which was butchered in not one, but three games. Ah, well. Blame Canada.



Adrian Miles Kasey!

The Outpost Memorial Award

OUTPOST, a game that will live in infamy. A game with so much promise, with such big dreams, all of which was wasted because the game was released too soon - incomplete, buggy, unplayable. This year's OUTPOST memorial reward goes to...ULTIMA IX: ASCENSION! Origin just had to ship it by Christmas. And now they'll have to live with the fact that they topped off the longest running and most beloved gaming universe with a great big slop-py turd.



The Game We Thought Would Suck The Most, But Actually Sucked The Least

We try not to judge a game by its cover, but the box of Simon & Schuster's **MINDGYM**, which featured a Woody Allen look-alike in nothing but his tighty-whities, was so repulsive that it sat on our shelves for weeks because we couldn't bear to touch it. But once a CGW editor (out of a nagging sense of duty to gamer-kind) finally installed the game, we found a lot to like - particularly the Monty-Pythonesque sense of humor that enlivens this inventive collection of brain benders. Check it out, if you can bear the humiliation of being seen holding the box.



Might and Magic

Day of the Destroyer

9 New character classes and races
26 new skills, spells, and special abilities
New lands of heroic fantasy and adventure
Good. Evil. The choice is yours.



In the four corners of Judeima, gates to the planes of Fire, Air, Earth and Water have opened and
demons of those realms are sweeping across the lands devastating all in their path.
You must lead a band of rugged adventurers on a perilous mission to save the kingdoms from ruin.

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NEW WORLD COMPUTING

3DO

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From the creators of F-15

And
you
thought
landing on the green
from the fairway
was hard.



Animated Violence
Mild Realistic Violence



www.janes.com

F/A-18
SIMULATOR

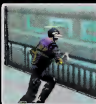
MESSIAH { EXORCISE YOUR RIGHT OF POSSESSION



How does a pudgy Messiah with only a diaper for defense find out the source of evil on earth?



Possession... Naked and defenseless, Bob uses his only weapon and takes possession of the first character he sees, a worker.



Sound goods.

If you're searching for the best possible 3D audio experience, you can spend a lot of time listening to the claims of imitators. Or you can get the ultimate experience with A3D on a Vortex card from Aureal, the folks who invented 3D audio for the PC.

The Vortex SQ1500 delivers award-winning A3D on two or four speaker systems, or on headphones, and is the ideal choice for gamers on a budget.

The Vortex SQ2500 provides A3D 2.0 positional audio with geometry-based Aureal



Wavetracing, also on two or four speaker systems, and is the ultimate PC audio experience.

Aureal has always provided the best 3D audio technology for the industry, and now we can offer you our own sound cards, built from the ground-up by Aureal engineers. Get the goods that sound good...sound cards from Aureal.

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3D

www.aureal.com
www.a3d.com

MARCH REVIEWS

We expected a flood of email in response to our X-men star ratings issue #186, figuring some Gambi fan club would want to have words with us. But we got a grand total of zero responses. Zzz, zzzz, nada, bubba. What's with you people anyway? Can you ire no longer be raised by some opinionated ignoramus game editor with a bully pulpit and some whack attitudes towards pop culture? Do you no longer wish to debate the merits of Dantooz Cool Ranch vs. Tostitos Q-Doritos? CCCC? Or even better fact for us know what a bunch of stupid jerks we are for giving Herbie the Love Bug only one star by dropping us a line at cgwletters@zd.com.

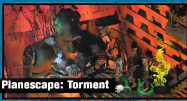
CGW EDITORS' CHOICE GAMES IN RED

GAME	RATING	PRICE
12 O'Clock High	3	144
Abomination	2	128
Close Combat: Battle of the Bulge	4	117
Jane's FIA-10	4.5	106
King of Dragon Pass	2.5	126
NASCAR Legends	3.5	133
NASCAR Racing 3	4	132
Nations: WWII Fighter Command	1	145
NHL Championship 2000	3	145
Odium	2	138
Omikron	2	143
Planescape: Torment	5	88
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“...just enough of the occasional random rant from your host, evil wind-up toy Regis Philbin, to capture that special, fifth circle of Hell ambiance peculiar to ‘The Reg.’”

—Robert Coffey, reviewing WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE



Planescape: Torment



Nations: WWII Fighter Command

HOW DO WE RATE?

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Outstanding The core 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.



SPOTLIGHT REVIEW PLANESCAPE: TORMENT



YOU GOT ME UNDER A SPELL Spell effects are amazing, drawing from either well-entitled in-game effects, or pulling away to movies that portray their raw power.

PLANESCAPE Is a Game To Die for, Again and Again

Immortal Beloved



The nature of death, the true essence of things, the value of suffering, the balance of the cosmic order...wait, is this Computer Gaming World or Philosophy Today? While most computer games are comfortable following the archetypal "valiant hero saves forth and slays Evil Foodie Supreme" style, Interplay's newest role-playing game, PLANESCAPE: TORMENT, dares you to question your own beliefs. Half game, half mythic poetic meditation, PLANESCAPE is a role-playing game without peer.

Hell Is a Frame of Mind

Don't make the mistake of equating PLANESCAPE with elves and faeries just because the *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* logo is on the box. While the many rules and conventions of AD&D are present, PLANESCAPE is as far from traditional AD&D as you can get. The easiest way to describe the setting is to ask Salvador Dalí to paint an interpretation of Buddha's words: imagine Sigil (the city in which

most of the game takes place) as an inter-dimensional crossroads of the imagination, a place where reality takes on the shape of one's beliefs, and every bounded space is a potential portal to another frame of mind—whether it be Hell, Heaven, Limbo, or Wisconsin. Into this weird and wild world you are dropped, nameless and without memory.

The Planes are depicted with the BALDUR'S GATE Infinity engine, so combat is real-time with the option of pausing, and the screen resolution stays fixed at 640x480. It is different from BALDUR'S GATE in that the view is full-screen and the perspective is closer to the ground, making both the characters and locales larger and more detailed. The interface is significantly streamlined; many commands are now either context-sensitive, or selected by a menu activated with the right mouse-button. Some people may not like the additional

streamlining over BALDUR'S GATE; I get used to it.

This Builds Character, Really

Unlike other AD&D games, you begin by creating a totally new hero. Character generation consists of tweaking the stats of the Nameless One—and he is ultimately defined by your actions. Alignment, traditionally something you pre-select and use as a guide for your in-game behavior, is now determined by your behavior in the world. You start as True Neutral, and depending on how much lying, vowing, killing, or altruistic action you exhibit, you will move between the various alignments.

This is only one example of the "shaped by action, not by creation" design that PLANESCAPE allows. Most quests and conversations present different options based upon your character's statistics; intelligence affects both the information gleaned from conversation

Reviewed by Thierry Nguyen

CGW RATED

PROS

Beautifully written story; masterful art direction; true role-playing; solid design; spat-on voices and music.

CONS

Minor technical glitches; becomes fairly linear near the end; text-heavy.

JUST THE FACTIONS, MA'AM You can join factions with varying belief structures. Aside from the beliefs, each faction will have individual benefits and special items for its members.



Requirements: Pentium 200MHz, 32MB RAM, CD-ROM, hard drive space
3D Support: None **Multiplayer Support:** None

Recommended Requirements: Pentium 600MHz, 64MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space

Publisher: Interplay • Developer: Black Isle Studios • \$59 • www.interplay.com • ESRB Rating: Teen (13+) • unrated blood and violence, suggestive themes.

and puzzle-solving options; charisma determines how well you lie, dexterity determines whether you're fast enough to grab someone, and strength determines whether you can snap your victim's neck. This results in some of the most effective role-playing possible without other humans. Every single dialogue or quest has multiple solutions based on your abilities. Combat is only absolutely necessary a few times; I talked/brained my way through three quarters of the game the first time I played it.

As for class goes, you start the game as a level-three fighter, and from then on, you can opt to be a fighter, thief, or mage. All you need is a trainer willing to switch your profession, and you're free to switch from clubbing people with your own hand to weaving spells like Celestial Host. All experience points you gain apply only to your current class, so you should pick one class in which to specialize rather than attempt to equalize them all simultaneously (unless you like the idea of trying to finish as level five in all three, rather than as a level-22 mage). The game does seem heavily slanted toward mages, however, as they get the most impressive spells and have better defensive items.

Death Takes a Holiday

The most clever design element — is a game site with brilliant design elements — is the handling of death. Guess what? You're immortal. Except for a few extraordinary circumstances, death is no longer a reason to reload a game. Every time you "die," you will wake up in a designated area, with all inventory and experience intact. Death is the central theme in the game, in fact, you must die in order to trigger memories that advance the plot and to solve certain puzzles. The fact of your immortality presents some situations that you've never seen in a game before, such as having someone open you up and search your intestines for hidden goodies, or biting your own finger off and replacing it with another.

The design team seemed to have looked at every major annoyance of past RPGs, and either fixed or satirized them. For example, quests are still inherently FedEx runs, but their staging and execution makes up for it — such as a ticking time bomb type of quest, which finds you trying to return a box to a series of people who don't want it. Rats, the most mundane of RPG creatures, suddenly become deadly when a group of them uses its Hive-mind to coat brutal spells on you. Mazes, the universal torture device of gamers, are parodied in a sequence where Higher Beings create a maze complete with identical-looking rooms, random loot, and Passkeys to research "the appeal that mazes hold for adventurers."

PLANESCAPE's best feature is its terrific writing. Be warned, this is a text-heavy game (circa 800,000 words), so be prepared to slow down, take your time, and read. The team took Clicked Plot Device #1 — waking up with amnesia — and weaved an extremely dark and mature story that mixes in elements of myths/classics like *The Ramayana* and *Paradise Lost*. Conversations never insult your intelligence, often times

TIME TO PARTY Your journal does a good job of tracking quests and giving info on the impressive NPC you can recruit.



HO HO HO, JOLLY GRAY GIANT

Spill is so smart, we can live yourself talking to a giant golem created by Ecology in order to create weapons against the forces of Order.



CRITICAL SUCCESS AD&D effects like critical hits are illustrated with animations appropriate to your character, like Nardon's gas. Note that since the focus is clear, there's not as much ranged combat as in BALEWIG'S GATE.



Making the Most Out of Life?

PLANESCAPE contains a number of plot-critical moments found only in optional quests. Here's a checklist of sly things you don't want to miss, but might if you're not thorough. **WARNING:** there be PLOT SPOILERS below.

▲ Before going to the Fortress of Regrets, make sure to retrieve the Bronze Sphere. Once inside, you will get a chance to talk to some people, and learn what the Sphere truly is. This is probably the most important revelation in the entire game.

▲ If you recruit Fell-From-Groce, be sure to talk to her about Morte; then talk with Morte afterwards, to learn his full story. Delonara isn't the only person from a previous life in the Mortuary. If you have a severed-arm from a previous life, go to Fell's Tattoo Parlor, and ask Dak'kon to transmit your conversation about the tattoos on that arm. Once you learn Dak'kon's story, search the first floor of the Mortuary to find this new person.

▲ Be sure to buy a Modron Toy at the Curiosity Shop. Toy with it until you get into Rubicon Maze, and find Nardom. He is one of the funniest and most powerful NPCs you can recruit. For the other NPC, be sure to walk past the portal before leaving Cust.

LIVING IN A VAN DOWN BY THE RIVER

You can improve your ether party members by either discussing philosophical prompts, or by simply motivating them.





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"A single-player extravaganza and a multiplayer tour de force. If you're looking for 'the next big thing' in computer gaming, stop your search."



Asheron's Call

"A stunningly beautiful epic role-playing game that draws you and thousands of other players into a dynamic, 3D online world."



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"Follow Lara back to Egypt where she returns to her roots, both in gameplay and story line."



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"Opposing Force has more twists and turns than the lines to see Phantoms Menace and more horrifying moments than a high school dance."



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"Infernal Machine is gorgeous, seemingly well-paced, and filled with interesting foes."



Serpentia Core

"Those who enjoyed Final Fantasy VII or Return to Koroed should look out for Serpentia Core."



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"The best traditional space sim to come along in some time isn't from LucasArts or Origin, it's the sequel to the well-done Freespace."



Mesiah

"It was foretold that the messiah would return after 2000 years. Apparently, he caught an earlier flight."



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PC CD-ROM

Jane's F/A-18 Delivers Its Payload on Target

One Super Hornet Sim



Jane's latest hardcore simulation, featuring the U.S. Navy's brand-new F/A-18E Super Hornet, carries on the fine tradition established by the **LOCKHAW** series and F-15E flight sims. As with its predecessors, F/A-18 combines an authentic flight environment and highly-detailed avionics modeling to create a superb sense of flight.

Most gamers reserve reading a game's manual as a final act of desperation. Indeed, the quality (or lack thereof) of many game manuals may well have tainted their readers to behave this way. F/A-18's manual, however, is a welcome exception to the norm. Although it appears a little small, weighing in at 200

pages, it is absolutely packed with information, especially regarding avionics. The serious military-aviation fan will want to read every page; it includes as much unclassified information on avionics, electronic warfare, and target recognition as I have seen in a single source, let alone a game manual. And there are some real gems of information that aren't usually available to the public.

ic warfare, and target recognition as I have seen in a single source, let alone a game manual. And there are some real gems of information that aren't usually available to the public.

The Big Picture

F/A-18 features numerous other improvements over previous Jane's titles. Compared to F-15E, F/A-18 contains roughly twice as many campaign videos and 60 percent more digitized speech, with some 39 voice actors.

You'll find the usual variety of gameplay modes: instant action, narrated training missions, single missions, and campaign play (including multiplayer campaigns). Training debriefings are particularly interesting, providing "did you know?" tidbits about each mission. The campaign engine uses the usual method of reasonably random missions, interlinked to form an overall war. While not truly dynamic, mission elements provide some level of replayability. The mission editor, of course, allows players to create missions to their hearts' content.

Under the Microscope

The flight model may well be the most heavily scrutinized, heavily criticized aspect of any flight sim. For a \$40 computer game, F/A-18 holds up remarkably well when compared to real-world flight parameters. The real F/A-18 is an outstanding fighter, but bleeds speed rather fast. Sim jocks, thanks to the flight-control system, can hold the stick fully aft all day without departing. Doing so, however, will bleed the speed and leave the simulated jet an easy, wallowing target. The flight-control system is no replacement for old-fashioned energy-management skills. At the same time, the E model's larger engines (delivering 30 percent

PUNCH OUT | MG-21 pilot has some time to contemplate the concept of air regularity.



more thrust than previous models) can accelerate the jet rather quickly. It's very easy to overshoot a slow enemy or to come in too fast to land on the carrier.

As the manual indicates, available G-load varies based on weight and flight profile. The jet has a tendency to pitch up at transonic speeds, which is normally corrected by the flight-control system. Still, available G-load drops below 6g at transonic speed to prevent accidental overload.

The avionics suite introduces many features never seen before in a flight sim. For example, F/A-18 takes non-cooperative target recognition (NCTR) a step beyond FALCON 4.0, providing more details about operation and usage. F/A-18 features decoys, which saved more than one Hornet in operations Desert Storm and Allied Force (and probably account for more than a few bogus enemy-kill claims).

The weapons model breaks new ground as well. The AIM-120 AMRAAM (medium-range missile) goes beyond the one in FALCON 4 by providing a "LOST" cue when it is unlikely to hit its target. The AGM 88 HARM (anti-radar missile) also has advanced modeling, allowing multiple modes of operation. Besides targeting and attacking an emitting site, the missile may also be fired at pre-set coordinates or even fired "blindly" ahead, where it will search for and engage emitters.

For those who want to experience Navy-style probe-and-drogue aerial refueling, F/A-18 will show you why it requires a steady hand. After making a correction, allow the plane to settle on its new course before yanking the stick around more. This prevents over-controlling (don't forget: Wiggle your toes!).

Call the Ball

As we can rightfully expect, F/A-18 features the absolute best aircraft carrier environment found in a sim. The carrier moves forward, pitching and rolling with the waves. This effect is particularly noticeable when waiting for a cat launch during bad weather, as the horizon appears to rise and fall. Reliable ATC calls will get the player airborne and back on the deck, although I found the "radio stack" (which causes multiple calls on multiple channels to continually step on each other) annoying, even if realistic.

JANE'S F/A-18

Reviewed by Tom "KC" Boshart

CGW RATED

PROS

Solid flight modeling; highly detailed avionics; well-modeled carrier ops.

CONS

Cockpit graphics are a bit blocky; frame rate suffers with rendering features dialed up.

Requirements: Pentium-III 200MHz or higher; 64MB RAM; 3D-capable graphics accelerator; CD-ROM. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-III 250MHz or higher;

64MB RAM; 64MB 3D-capable graphics accelerator; CD-ROM. **Support:** Direct3D Multiplayer Support; Intel, Nvidia, FX, 128MB

Publisher: Electronic Arts • **Developer:** Jane's Combat Simulations • \$40 • www.janes.us.com • ESRB Rating: Teen

BRUISING ALTITUDE A mid-air collision sends two planes down in flames.



TAILHOOK, DON'T FAIL ME NOW Carrier tops are always tricky, but you can wuss out with the automatic landing feature.



UGLY ON THE INSIDE The cockpit graphics aren't up to the standards of other sims.



KILLING BY THE NUMBERS The air-to-air master-mode quickly selects air-to-air weapons and radar.



Particularly interesting is the treatment of the carrier's "meatball" loss system. Located along the left edge of the deck, the meatball helps the pilot line up during the final seconds of a carrier trip. The limited resolution of computer monitors, however, makes realistic placement of the meatball on the deck very difficult to see until after one has already landed. Jane's broke with this less-than-useful tradition, placing a meatball "window" over a non-critical part of the instrument panel. When the pilot "calls the ball" during approach (indicating he has visual contact), the meatball appears over a central control panel. Although technically unrealistic, the feature offers a much more realistic landing experience by providing a fully usable meatball. It's a worthwhile tradeoff to let you experience what a real pilot experiences, rather than to see what he sees.

Sometimes combat provides enough white-knuckle tension for the player, and the thought of repeated bailouts during a bad-weather night landing isn't appealing. Consequently, FIA-18 also simulates the real-world Automatic Carrier Landing System (ACLS), which brings the jet back aboard the ship "hands free."

Any Downside?

Perhaps FIA-18's weakest category is the cockpit graphics. While featuring higher resolution than Jane's F-15, the cockpit is rather blocky compared with sims like Falcon 4.0. But the terrain looks reasonable and features some great weather and shading effects. Most importantly, the opponent's wings are clearly visible at dogfight ranges. Damage effects during combat, especially burning planes falling from the sky, are rendered quite well. Long, streaming smoke trails from missiles and wounded planes highlight the sky. Graphics detail, though, has always devoured CPU cycles, and FIA-18 is no exception. If you want maximum graphics detail, be prepared to sacrifice frame rate (and vice versa).

In the end, FIA-18 is a truly remarkable game, and clearly an evolutionary step in the Jane's line. This title gives an excellent glimpse at the workload of an F/A-18 pilot, and provides a very authentic — as well as entertaining — flight experience. **CW**

NEED FOR SPEED

PORSCHE UNLEASHED

Flight 911



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1

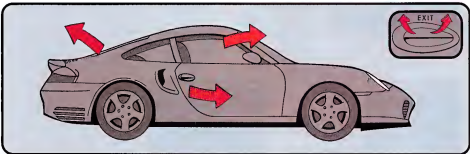


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EXIT OPERATION:
OBSERVE SURROUNDINGS. IF SCENERY IS MOVING—REMAIN IN VEHICLE. IF STATIONARY, PROCEED WITH CAUTION TO NEAREST EXIT.



QUAKE III ARENA Is Good Pure Deathmatch, but That's It

Barely A Tremor



ULTIMATE FIGHTING CHAMPION

Tournament mode adds three extra special, medal-style trophies to the end of each match.

ZEUS' FURY The lightning gun makes a less-than-bangful return. It can frag like, as seen here, but there's no water damage this time.



ed. It's not as perfect as, say, *QUAKE II*'s or even *QUAKEWORLD*'s network code, but I'm sure it'll be tightened up. Out of the box, it's still very reliable.

Utilized properly, Q3A has some of the best graphics in any action game. Techheads will note the heavy use of curved surfaces and volumetric fog, while visualists will appreciate their excellent use with levels. Alas, while these elements help make the levels look beautiful, it has yet to grow out of an extremely limited color palette. They've merely added red and purple to their now-familiar collection of browns and grays.

While the limited color palette makes the levels a bit drab, their design is often entirely towards gameplay. The levels are generally divided up into themes; some are gothic arenas, others are twisted hybrids of organic and metallic form, and the last few are free-floating space platforms. There are hardly any "hot damn, that's pretty" feats of architecture in Q3A; all the walls and ceilings and arches are built

from a deathmatch gameplay perspective. Paths are laid down in such a way that maps are easy to navigate, yet they aren't bone-numbingly simplistic. Every level is laid out to give the perfect balance between finding someone else quickly and having the time and space to gather your items. Many items and secrets have multiple methods of reaching them (i.e., doors or pads or rocket-jumping) in order to prevent the "only one way to get there" syndrome. Some levels emphasize close, tight combat (the one-on-one tourney maps) while others (any of the ten-six maps) have wide-open areas perfect for sprawling indiscriminate fire. All in all, id is still untouched when it

comes to designing pure deathmatch levels.

Bots and Their Guns

Traditionally, most DM modes in other games have had a limited variety of characters to play; they were all basically different colors

QUAKE III ARENA

Reviewed by Thierry Aruyen

I confess: *DOOM* nearly killed my Computer Graphics course grade. While *WOLFENSTEIN 3D* was a great at-home diversion, *DOOM* sucked up my lab time during class.

When I should have been creating Bezier curves and fiddling with CorelDraw, I was either thumping Imps or watching a classmate's little mermaid clutch his throat in agony before crumpling onto the floor. When I joined CGW, I joined a

House Of *QUAKE*. It ended our days, it soothed our nerves; it sometimes delayed the magazine. I thought the proud House Of *QUAKE* would still stand with the release of *QUAKE III ARENA* (Q3A), but, alas, it fell.

Engines of Destruction

Before I got to The Fall, let me say this: Nobody — and I mean nobody — can code engines like John Carmack. Q3A proves that. Necrocode-wise, Q3A is very solid, though the few times it stumbles, it falls flat on its face. A couple times, I've had timeouts on the office T1, and while it's very playable on my piddly 56K connection at home, that peppy network socket flashes on my screen a lot more often than want-

TRIANGLE MAN In team-based games, your friends are the allies with the triangles above their heads; note the informative team-fucker in the corner.



CGW RATED

PROS

Beautiful graphics; solid network code; wide variety of player models; great deathmatch maps; has the "purity" and feel of old-school id Deathmatch.

CONS

Uweven AI; limited color palette; barely passable interface; lockout single-player; is pretty much deathmatch-or-bust out-of-the-box.

Requirements: Pentium 233 MHz, 8MB RAM, 25MB free disk space. **Optional:** supporting 3D card, mouse. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-4 500 MHz, 64MB RAM, 500MB free disk space, two network cards. **3D Support:** OpenGL. **Multiplayer Support:** LAN, Internet (2-32 players). CD needed only to single-play a game online.

Publisher: id Software • **Developer:** id Software • **ESRB Rating:** Mature, oriented blood, gore, and violence.

The Real Deathmatch

QUAKE III Arena vs. UNREAL TOURNAMENT

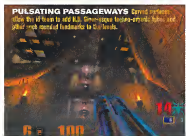
For the record, we at CGW like UT better, heads down. UT simply has more: more gameplay thanks to the various play modes; more interesting levels that seem more like environments, rather than just meps some guy made; way more colors; and more simple mods out-of-the-box. While UT's bot AI is imperfect, it doesn't outright cheat as much as Q3A's, and it also handles teamwork much better. Sure, Q3A will undoubtedly be the subject of many user-designed mods that will expend its playability, but UT already has a solid foundation out-of-the-box for future user-designed mods to stand on. Considering the variety, the gameplay, the AI, the polish, the overall sense of character, and the way the game is just so intoxicatingly fun - we have to give the nod to UT. The CGW House Of Quake has been toppled.

and outfits on the same model. Q3A ups that by providing 30 different players, most of which are entirely new models. Some models are there for nostalgia's sake - such as the DOOM Marine earned, well, Doom, or the QUAKE Marine called Ranger. Others are wholly new creations, such as Ordo the giant-eye-with-fangs, or Uriel the wingless gargoyle. It's a refreshing change to be able to play as something other than a male human, female human, ugly human, or humanoid robot. Not surprisingly in this steroid-packed game, the majority of the female models tend to look like supermodels packing enormous...um...guns.

About those guns: Q3A's weapons exhibit extreme More-Of-The-Same syndrome. You've seen all of these weapons before, and with the exception of the BFG, they've been only slightly tweaked. The rocket launcher is still the dominant weapon; the shotgun still has two barrels and thumps people up close; the plasma gun fires the same blue balls of death, and the railgun is still the sniper's choice. Sadly, the lightning gun no longer discharges pure death in the water like it did in QUAKE, and the BFG went from blasting an all-consuming deathball to a rapid-fire quad-rocket rifle (it wanted a bit more skill to be used in BFGing people). Sure, they're well-balanced - man alive, they should be after having been used in four games.

(Very) Artificial Intelligence

One of the big marketing points for Q3A is the bot-play, but bots are a hit-or-miss affair, with more misses than hits. On the default set

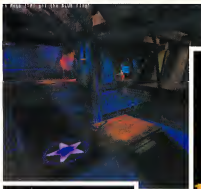


ARMY MEN
WORLD WAR

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WATCHING THE WATCHMEN Before joining any big game, you can always scope out the territory as a spectator.



DO AS I SAY Issuing orders requires either using this menu, typing in the commands, or calling out (as in loud commands to keys). None of these options is as effective as UNREAL TOURNAMENT's command interface.

MAKE HASTE Q3A's list of power-ups includes Ninja (phobed), Good Damage, BattleSuit, Flight, and Regeneration.



OLD MAN MURRAY Leave it to id to place little references to, er, issues of the online community.



ing (Bring It On), they're complete pushovers; playing on I Can Win is akin to playing with brain-damaged monkeys. Crank up the AI a bit, and they start getting better. They don't follow strict patterns, and in fact, they almost have personalities (some bots prefer being railgun snipers, while others have different levels of aggression/cowardice). Their personalities extend to the goofy text messages they often type to each other. These range from pure trash talk to compliments to utterly bizarre comments (while it's funny to see Bones quote a Dickinson poem, it reinforces the fact that it's a bot – since I've never seen a player who'd type in an excerpt of a 19th-century American poet). They even have full conversations with each other (and you, if you type something to them), which sometimes has the side effect of making the game feel so surreal, I half-expected some giant, smiling tiger-elephant from a Da! painting to suddenly swim by and tip its hat at me.

BFG? BFD! The BFG is basically a super-beasty rifle now, so you'll need to actively aim if this line in order to reduce your opponents to a cloud of pulp.



It would be nice if id had stopped there, but alas, on the higher levels, the bots cheat – plain and simple. On difficulty modes such as Nightmare, bots are merely decent slayers with godlike aim; Xeroo ably navigates a level and picks up good loot, but when he fires, he never misses. How else can one explain him hitting me on the other side of a map as soon as I respawn? Or how one hit from his shotgun while I had full health and armor kills me, while he can take two, maybe three hits with the same conditions? Good players sometimes fall into patterns that may take a long time to detect, but they rarely have precise-enough aim to hit a rapidly-moving target weaving through the air – in one shot with a railgun – while flying through the air themselves. In Q3A, cheaters always prosper, and it sucks.

Singularity Failure

In addition to skirmishes with the bots, Q3A has a tournament mode. What this means is that the 26 deathmatch levels have been divided up into tiers, each tier having three normal deathmatches, and ending with a one-on-one touney map. Within each tier is a fixed number of bots, with the best bot of that tier being the opponent for the final touney. On the default setting, I finished this in four hours. Pump up the bot AI, and that became, well, about six-to-eight hours. Yawn. You don't even

THIS IS WHY COLLEGE IS IMPORTANT

So you can remember which just the bits are quality which fraggly dum.

get a tangible award or marker for completing it; you just get a goopy cinematic. With the combination of a simply decent slamsih mode and a mediocre tournament, don't be looking for a fulfilling single-player experience. CTF is locked on as an afterthought, it's nice, but having just four maps out of the box - even if they are by the Godfather of CTF Dave "Zeal" Kirsch - just isn't enough.

Also, there is quite an unfriendly interface to power the game. While the maps and the bots are there to assist newbies, the interface sure as hell isn't. The browser barely passes muster; it's a hassle to refresh, sort, or add servers to favorite lists. It's so barebones that GameSpy or PingTool is pretty much required to find a good server. When setting it up, you have to make a .ctg file that will cycle through the maps, which is pretty weird in an age where every other game has a simple "rotate map" button on their interfaces. Finally, giving orders in CTF requires one to either type them out, or to press Escape and use some arcane menu system. Granted, most of the Q3A audiences are hardcore deathmatchers, but why make the claim of "helping to ease newbies in" with such a lacking interface?

It's extremely difficult to slap a rating on Q3A, especially in light of UNREAL TOURNAMENT. On one hand, it ended up with what it set out to make: a solid, pure deathmatch game. But in light of UT, that doesn't seem to be enough; I just want more. I know that deathmatch purists are already eating this game up, and if you crave morderbly fast deathmatch in the realm of DOOM or QUAKE, then Q3A is your game. Those of you who want a bit more depth - and a decent single-player mode - should either pass, or buy this title and wait for the online community to make mods for you. **CGM**

www.gamespy.com Go here to spare yourself from the cumbersome server browser.

www.bluesmaw.com/quake3 The never-sleeping blue man has a good central resource here for Q3A players everywhere.

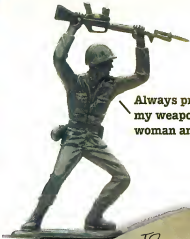
www.pingquake3.net A good resource for servers, mods, and levels.

Over Links

FATALITY!

Particular feats, such as well-placed shots or multiple frags, are signalled by flags above players' heads. The yellow icon here is accompanied by a hearty "impressive" voiceover.

'ou fragged SKY2
6th place with



Always preferred
my weapon to my
woman anyway.



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CLOSE COMBAT IV Tautly Reenacts the Battle of the Bulge

Mayhem in Miniature

Fifty-five years after the actual battle, **CLOSE COMBAT: BATTLE OF THE BULGE** takes gamers back to the desperate, hand-to-hand fighting in the latter stages of World War II. Like its three predecessors, **BATTLE OF THE BULGE** gives you an eye in the sky, far enough away to monitor the battle, yet close enough to hear your men shouting, shouting, and dying.

CLOSE COMBAT: BATTLE OF THE BULGE adds a number of new features to the award-winning, real-time, tactical combat system that have a dramatic impact on play. For starters, the game incorporates an all-new strategic layer that lets you plot the movement of battle groups and monitor the location of the front lines throughout the course of the campaign. This is an important advancement for the series, because it gives players a better sense of the battlefield and where they can best employ their assets. Second, the designers have

finely added air-to-ground support to the system — something critics have been clamoring for since the release of the first game — and they've even managed

to include off-map artillery fire and parachute drops. These are certainly long-overdue improvements, and they help put the game on an entirely different level from its earlier chapters.

Familiar Terrain

BATTLE OF THE BULGE is not without its problems, however. While playing the Grand Campaign, I noticed that my German assault groups were fighting for the same piece of ground again and again, even though I had gained a Total Victory earlier in the campaign. To make matters worse, I was oftentimes commanding the same forces I had led earlier, and in some instances, I was fighting with units that had been destroyed in earlier engagements.

I also found the computer opponent and strategic layer to be a bit troubling. At the tactical level, the computer-controlled American forces would often launch feeble counter-attacks along narrow avenues of attack when they had absolutely no hope of achieving suc-

NICE BULGE The new strategic layer gives players a better sense of their overall objectives and how each battle fits within the grand scheme.



cess. In fact, on several occasions my units were able to flank the enemy's axis of advance, smash their assault, and gain a Total Victory while remaining on the defensive — all without the loss of a single *Anders*. Meanwhile, at the strategic level, the computer's forces would put up only token resistance at critical road junctures, especially along the key approach routes to the River Meuse. As a result, I was able to crush past the enemy's defenses, seize my objectives, and advance toward Antwerp well ahead of schedule and without suffering grievous casualties.

So what's my assessment? Well, even though the strategic layer adds a welcome new dimension to the system, and the AI has been tweaked to provide a bit more challenging play, I'm of the opinion that the tactical and strategic layers could have been better integrated to offer a more cohesive plan of action. And while **BATTLE OF THE BULGE** is certainly an important step forward for the war-gaming community — and, in particular, the **CLOSE COMBAT** series — it still has several miles to journey before it has indeed reached its final objective. **CGW**

CGW RATED

PROS

Expressing game-play, new off-map artillery, air support, and strategic layer.

CONS

Battles sometimes need to be refought unnecessarily; dead units reappear in later scenarios; AI is erratic.

AUF WIEDERSEHEN The interface makes it easy to draw a load on enemy units. The green line indicates a clear line of sight; the cyan line shows how far the day for the Americans.



Requirements: Pentium 200MHz or better; 25MB RAM; 64MB hard drive space; 4x CD-ROM; 4MS video card. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium 400MHz; 64MB RAM; 1GB hard drive space; 2x CD-ROM; 3D Support: New Multiplayer Support: 2-player LAN, modem, internet, serial, and ISP connections.

Publisher: GSI • **Developer:** Atomic Games • **S/E:** www.sionline.com • **E/R/S Rating:** Everyone

SWAT 3 Bursts Onto the Tactical Combat Scene, Armed to the Teeth

COPS 3.0

Like the heavily-armed precision team it models, **SWAT 3** kicks in the door of tactical combat games, bristling with innovation and an all-business attitude. The game introduces several new features such as dynamic orders and communication, randomly placed suspects and objectives, and uncannily human artificial intelligence. It's the most convincing first-person simulation of close-quarters battle since **RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR**, and in many respects is more realistic and demanding. In fact, the simulation is so complete, it underscores once again why you never want to be a cop.

Welcome to SWAT, Please Train Yourself

One of the biggest hurdles to enjoying **SWAT 3** is teaching yourself how to play it. Without a tutorial and with the sparest of manuals, you are thrown into your first mission without so much as knowing how to open a door. You'll learn the ropes, but the overnight is especially unfortunate considering how some training

SWAT3: CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE

reviewed by Ken Brown

could have deepened the game's realism.

The game unfolds through 16 missions in locations throughout Los Angeles in 2005. As commander of a SWAT team, you'll be called to rescue hostages, escort dignitaries, serve warrants, or "bring order to chaos" in many elaborate and unusual scenarios. The art direction and design of these locations are superb, and the objectives are interesting and varied. More importantly, the scenarios are different every time you play them, because the threats are randomly placed. (The game's producer, Rod Fung, says the team created 500 different starting locations for hostiles. That sounds right, because I've died in at least that many ways.) The random-threat assignment is one of the game's best features and gives it serious replay value, crucial in a game with no multiplayer support.

A story emerges after a few missions about a Russian terrorist group intent on vaporizing downtown LA

HOME SENTRIES Red team moves in a unit to clear a house. They look and move realistically, right down to their blinking eyes.



Requirements: Intel® Pentium® 333MHz, 32MB RAM, 40MB free disk space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 1MB video card. **Recommended Requirements:** Intel® Pentium® 4 or better, 64MB RAM, DirectX compatible 3D card, 20 Support: DirectX Multiplayer Support: Yes

Publisher: Sierra On-Line • Developer: Sierra Studios • \$50 • www.sierraonline.com • ESRB Rating: M:15+

OKAY, YOU GO FIRST Random suspect assignments mean you never know what to expect, even in the briefings.



HAVE SOME SHOTS If you tell your team it's over, they will.



with a tactical eureka, right before the signing of the Nuclear Abolishment Treaty. The story is interesting, but not as detailed or dramatically enacted as the one in **ROGUE SPEAR**.

Each mission is preceded by a convincing briefing that lays out the mission objectives. In most cases you'll learn what kind of threat you're facing and who to look out for. The narratives are crisp and well acted, and they do a great job of creating urgency. At the end of the briefing, you select your weapons (Benelli shotgun or silenced MP5 if the suspects don't seem to have body armor, M4 assault rifle if they do) and head out on the hunt.

Watch My Back

Once the mission starts, you're in command. You must instruct your officers as to what to do as you enter buildings and clear these of threats. Rather than take point and try to be a hero as in **ROGUE SPEAR**, you issue orders to your team from behind them with a menu of commands such as "Enter and Clear" or "Cover for threat." It's a bit awkward at first, but after a while it becomes natural – and essential – for survival.

Rarely do a game's elements synthesize so perfectly as in this one. The detail of your men, the design of the locations, the intelligence of the suspects, and the erratic behavior of hostages all come together to create a chaotic, thoroughly realistic simulation of what you'd

CGW RATED

PROS

Interesting scenarios; challenging AI; random objectives; innovative command design.

CONS

No tutorial; no multiplayer; officers lured to their deaths too easily; stuttering audio.



ESTES' BFG You'll face unusual challenges, like finding and disabling missile launchers being used to fire on inbound airliners.



expect a SWAT operation to be. When your men encounter threats, they'll yell, "Drop your weapon, moron! Get down on the ground! Do it!" Sometimes the suspects will cooperate, other times they'll start firing and you'll hear, "Officer down! Officer down!" Many times you'll lose half your team if you overlook a door or a terrorist hiding spot. In the heat of the moment, it's easy to shoot a hostage or even a member of your own team because he stepped into your field of fire or you confused him for a terrorist. Thankfully, your own team will never play you the same way, but if you shoot one of them, watch out.

This illustrates another of SWAT 3's advancements in the tactical shooter genre: You have to discriminate in your choice of targets. You're a police officer, not a member of an elite military group like

KID AND KIDNAPPER Finding children right after a fire-fight triggers an unusual rescue unusual for computer games.



Rainbow or Delta Force, so you have to ensure hostage safety or you'll lose the mission. The game includes a number of tactical aids based on real SWAT equipment to help you. These range from non-lethal shotgun rounds to tear gas, flashbangs, and a very useful remote video camera. All of these make it possible to identify and disable threats without firing a shot. Of course, if you want to execute terrorists in retribution for wounding your officers, you can do that, too. But you have a leadership rating in the campaign based on your effectiveness and the proper use of deadly force. If officers lose respect for you because people are getting injured and killed, they won't be so quick to follow orders.

Fires in the Driveway

Most of the time, SWAT 3 is a suspenseful, immersive, action-

packed simulation that succeeds in what it sets out to do. But there are several things that hold it back, and I don't mean the minimal manual or the lack of multiplayer support. First, I wouldn't expect 10-year SWAT veterans to go plunging off into dangerous locations without cover at the first sign of threat. The officer AI isn't bad, but you'll need to control your teams and tell them to cover far more often than you should have to. If not, they'll die.

Second, despite the fact that you may be ordered to rescue the president of Russia from a hotel, escort dignitaries at the Convention Center, or disarm a nuke at City Hall, you never have more than a four-man team. Imagine being a SWAT commander facing a barricaded force three times your size—and not being able to call in backup.

In the tedious-but-not-ridiculous category, the necessity of calling in every hostage, suspect, and downed officer bogs down the game with busy work. It would have been

nice for fellow officers to be able to assist with calling in trailers.

Finally, even though there are only 16 missions, a lot of people will never finish the game either because it's too hard or because the last mission is a

HEADACHE Here's a good terrorist. See guys, by the way, don't all look the same—some are disguised as service workers.



maze. With such fascinating scenarios earlier in the game, I was disappointed that the last level is a timed maze with seven devices, randomly located throughout a vast sewer system. If I wanted to feel desperate and under the gun, I'd work for a newspaper.

Debrief

Despite these issues, I still recommend SWAT 3 for those interested in a challenging and deep tactical-combat game. It gives ROGUE SPEAR serious competition; but even though they both have strong replayability, I'd give a slight edge to ROGUE SPEAR for its greater sense of drama, additional replay options, multiplayer capability, and just plain fun. **CGW**


Waving the Magic Opti-Wand

One of the best tactical aids in SWAT 3 is the Opti-Wand, a slender video camera with a 180-degree field of view, mounted on a flexible tube.

The device lets you peer around corners to see who might be lurking there. You can order your Element to use the Opti-Wand and report back what they see, or you can use it yourself. By using the Opti-Wand to "mirror" for threats, tossing in tear gas, and yelling "Police! Come out with your hands up!" most suspects will surrender without a fight.



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Lara Croft Returns For Her Last(?), and Perhaps Best, Adventure

Her Roots Are Showing

Love her or loathe her, Lara Croft is back, and for the last time if we can believe Eidos' promise to kick their Lara habit. **TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION** is the game that fans of the series have been waiting for since the original. Everything that was good about the first game has been revived, and everything wrong with the sequels has been either fixed or minimized, making **THE LAST REVELATION** as good as the first **TOMB RAIDER** game – and in many ways even better.

The story this time has something to do with mystical amulets, awakening ancient Egyptian gods, and a mentor-turned-evil-nemesis who looks and sounds a lot like Tot from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. In fact, the first level flashes back to Angkor Wat in 1984, and follows teenybopper Lara and her friend-teacher as he trains her in basic

maneuvers. It's a rather boring level, and a poor substitute for Lara's mansion, which served the same purpose but contained a lot of secret goodies and was way more fun. The rest of the

game takes place entirely in Egypt where you will actually raid tombs, something that the previous sequels had moved away from.

Gameplay hasn't changed in any fundamental way. You're still doing the same running-jumping-climbing-swimming moves, but with a few new additions. Lara can now use poles to climb up and down as well as swing from ropes. The ropes are a nice nod to realism, but are very difficult to use, especially when you have to swing from one rope to the next. Thankfully, the number of base-pushing puzzles has been reduced considerably, and the new variations on switch-pulling (hanging switches, chain switches, upside-down switches, etc.) refresh that tumbly-tired element of puzzle-solving. On the whole, the puzzles are truly unique and intelligently placed around the levels.

Lara's arsenal has been pumped up to include a scope that fits on several weapons, and sever-

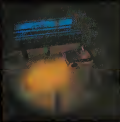
I HEAR THE TRAIN A COMIN' Level design goes beyond the normal style rooms of past games. If you fall off this wooden train level, you'll see out what happens to those pesky people from in the tracks.



I'M LOOKING THROUGH YOU Thanks to some improvements to the graphics engine, Lara becomes transparent when she gets in the way of the player's view.



EYE IN THE SKY With the help of a laser scope, you can use certain weapons (in this case a crossbow) in sniper mode. A tripping mine now that shoots exploding bolts. Why does that seem familiar?



al new types of ammunition. The crossbow, for instance, can fire normal bolts in addition to explosive and poison-tipped bolts. And when outfitted with the scope, a weapon is fired from a first-person sniping mode.

The game's dated graphics engine may be its biggest weakness, but the serious effort the designers put into making the levels look beautiful and exotic pays off so well that I can't fault them for raising it. The texture work is some of the best I've ever seen, and the addition of bump-mapping really makes a difference. The level design is quite varied and skillfully done. Believability and atmosphere seem to be the focus over homogenous, overly-popular rooms. The elegance and diversity of the layout in the Lost Library of Alexandria level make it one of the best levels in the series.

It seems that the designers at Core finally listened to all the complaints about the various **TOMB RAIDER** games and put out a game that finally does the series some justice. They went back to what made the first one good – elegant level design, a continuous sense of discovery, and a mood that strikes a perfect balance between tension and satisfaction.

If you're like me and were enraptured by the first game in the series, but consistently disappointed by the sequels, then **THE LAST REVELATION** will renew your faith. If you've never played a **TOMB RAIDER** game, then there's never been a better time to start. **CGW**

TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION

reviewed by Tom Price

CGW RATED

PROS

Excellent art direction; good puzzle design; a return to the series' earlier style.

CONS

Tired engine; gets tedious in places.

Requirements: Pentium 200MHz, 1GB RAM Recommended Requirements: Pentium 300MHz, 2GB RAM, 2D Support: DirectX 9.0c
Multiplayer Support: On

Publisher: Eidos • Developer: Core • S&S • www.eidos.com • E3 is calling: Tom, increased violence and blood.

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What's in a Name? In the Case of ABOMINATION, Lots

As Advertised

ABOMINATION is almost a good game. With its RPG-style background and depth, the game offers action-packed strategy similar to a real-time JAGGED ALLIANCE or X-COM...until your team gets into a scrap. Then all hell breaks loose and you're stuck playing a game that shoots, fails in the foot again and again with its inadequacies and shortcomings.

A terrible virus, mutants, cultists, a top-secret government facility, a team of biologically-engineered special agents — can't anyone come up with an original post-apocalyptic game premise? Oh well, if you can muster the energy, it's your job to outfit and lead a group of 16 commandos, each possessing the standard skills — in addition to the standard cybernetic attributes — as you struggle to stop the carnage and save mankind.

After choosing and equipping your team of four agents, you pick a mission via the files screen, then head off to the overview map where you try to figure out your team's immediate objectives — be it

destroying a facility, doing some recon, uncovering a special item, or a combination of goals. ABOMINATION randomizes over 1.2 million tactical sites on 25 different maps, so you'll really never do the same thing twice in the same area. The interface, however, is so messy that you'll spend considerable time just figuring out how to launch your team into action. Once you do, the game moves into a colorful and graphically appealing tactical 3D environment — even at the 640x480 resolution you're forced to employ.

The real problems surface in combat. For a game touting strategy and tactical elements, a variety of squad formations would have been a blessing — especially when the enemy is tossing grenades and other explosives into your bunched-up group. And your cybernetically enhanced and utterly useless squad will make your blood boil.

There's a Detonate, a demo agent whose grenades injure team members. Pyro, who can psychically firebomb monsters but does more damage with a submachine gun, and the worthless Doc, a medic with

low combat abilities rendered obsolete by the abundant medical supplies strewn about the maps. Changing equipment and weapons during the thick of battle is also more of a hassle than what it's worth, since it forces your agents to waste precious seconds of combat, without offering any real advantages.

The combat AI focuses too much on artificial and not enough on intelligence, reducing fights to sloppy street brawls. So much for tactics. Fortunately, when the combat really gets frantic, you can pause the game and reissue orders. When combat is over, your team spends too much time scavenging the city rather than saving the world, though the scavenger hunts are necessary since the weapons you'll find are essential later in the game.

Requirements: Pentium 55MHz; MMX; 32MB RAM; CDROM; but the spec 1MB graphics card. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium 200MHz; 64MB RAM; 1MB graphics card; 3D card; cd-rom. **3D Support:** DirectX Multiplayer Support; dual monitor and 2 players; lowest LAN (2-8 players); or CD play.

Publisher: Eidos Interactive • **Developer:** Rebellion Develops • **EIC:** • **www.eidos.com**
ESRB Rating: Mature; oriented blood, gore, and violence.

FLU SHOTS Group your agents together and concentrate their fire as one target at a time. Otherwise, they'll get picked off one by one.



EQUIPMENT CHECK There's over 150 different weapons and equipment types with which you can equip your agents. You'll have to research the technology tree to make them available.



Missions are gathered into clumps called chapters, and the last two chapters of the game are almost impossible to finish unless you complete the right tasks early in the game — yet!

ABOMINATION bitingly lets you progress to its impossible end. Saving games is also a problem, since you can't save in the middle of combat, and

even worse, you can almost never dump one agent in favor of another after starting a chapter — at least without killing them first. Why can't you choose a four-man team prior to every mission?

What won't drive you nuts in ABOMINATION? Well, as the game progresses, your once-common agents become wrecking machines as they gain experience and skills. Short missions keep the game moving along at a nice pace. And the multiplayer options are good, allowing up to eight players for Capture the Flag, Hold Position, Deathmatch, and other games.

ABOMINATION has potential, but squanders it. To enjoy it, you must have the patience to endure the extremely tough missions, clumsy equipment-management systems, worthless cybernetic attributes, crappy AI, and chaotic battles. And if you can manage that, you're not a gamer, but a saint. **CZW**

CARNAGE-A-COPIA It may not have the fastest, most compelling gameplay, but ABOMINATION does come up plenty of meat.



ABOMINATION: THE NEMESIS PROJECT

r.v.w.d. by Raphael Jib.rators

CGW RATED

PROS

Fast-paced missions; character skill enhancements; multiplayer options.

CONS

Mediocre combat; unintuitive menus; predictable AI; cumbersome equipment management; overly difficult missions.



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SEPTERRA CORE Is a Treat for Serious Anime Fans Only

Prophecy Unfulfilled

Maya is having a bad day. If life weren't tough enough already — living on the second of the planet Septerra's floating World Shell continents, living off the garbage tossed from the elite Chosen up above — she now has to deal with an invasion, a legendary prophecy, and the discovery of the man who murdered her mother years ago.

That, in a nutshell, is the complicated saga that awaits gamers in SEPTERRA CORE: LEGACY OF THE CREATOR, a Japanese anime-inspired RPG designed by Volkyne Studios and published by Monolith. Although SEPTERRA CORE isn't a bad game, it owes a lot to Square's FINAL FANTASY console games and seems rather uninspired on its own. That — plus a number of serious design flaws — drag it down to mediocre status, despite a captivating story.

SEPTERRA CORE: LEGACY OF THE CREATOR

Reviewed by Brett Todd

Dull, Voyager

Gameplay takes the form of a lengthy quest through Septerra's World Shells. Maya and her pale party up to journey from Shell 2, all the way to the mysterious planetary Core, before calling it a day. Characters are well-delineated, featuring obvious and simplistic personality traits (Maya is plucky, Grubb is a geek,

Comgan is noble, and so on), they have traditional RPG statistics for categories like Strength and Agility, along with health points, armor ratings, and the like.

Weapons and other items can be purchased from stores on each Shell. These vary from fantasy role-playing standards such as swords and magic runes to electronic games and automatic rifles.

Mechanical weapons are powered by Core Engines that can be upgraded at various stores. Magic is performed with Core Energy — mana drawn from the powerful bio-computer that sits at the center of Septerra — and Fate Cards found along the way. If your Core Energy is high enough, you can use these cards to heal or resurrect party members, blast monsters with the elements, flee combat, and so on. They can also be combined for more varied effects.

DANCIN' AT THE ZOMBIE ZOO See Pally's numbers in sight, but there's plenty of undead in SEPTERRA CORE. Monsters run the gamut from typical fantasy fare like the zombies shown here, to more interesting enemies like great metal crabs and angle-waddling spiders.



SEPTERRA CORE is extremely combat-intensive. Many locales are straightforward dungeon crawls without the dungeon. You simply follow an obvious path, wiping out unrepentant groups of bedees along the way. And since combat is handled in a phased, turn-based style where you must wait for an Encurance bar to be filled up before performing an action, it can be slow and dull. Even though I was always interested in the storyline, the continuous, repetitive battles wore on my nerves. Playing more than three or four hours at a time proved to be impossible, no matter how much I wanted to go on.

Although there's a lot of interaction with the game's many characters, it's all FINAL FANTASY style — meaning that you simply click your mouse and listen to a lot of long-winded conversations. This gets dreary at times, with all these mini-lectures blending into each other. Modeling all the characters on just a few facial templates doesn't help matters.

Try Before You Buy

Many years in development, SEPTERRA CORE looks and sounds dated. While attractive, the visuals are locked at a maximum 640x480 resolution. Characters are fuzzy around the edges, and there is never enough of the game on-screen at any given moment. I often walked right into enemies before realizing they were there. Audio is similarly limited. There doesn't seem to be more than two bad pieces of grinding music to accompany battles, and the weapon effects occasionally sound like something my Sega Genesis would have produced.

Those tired of waiting for SquareSoft to port FINAL FANTASY VIII to the PC may find SEPTERRA CORE to be a decent enough temporary fix. All of the conventions of that long-running series are present, from the never-ending combat to the tangled affairs of big-eyed lovers. For anyone else, though, this is a definite "try before you buy" game. **CGW**

CGW RATED

PROS

Rich storyline and characters; 80+ hours of play; female lead has neither sword ring nor divisible-sized breasts.

CONS

Tedious combat sequences; crash bugs; too derivative of FINAL FANTASY games.

WOOF, WOOF Grubb's mechanical dog, Rover, can make short work of enemies. Even those barbed needles with the Predator-like face masks and the pathogen protection spalls don't stand a chance against the fully-powered circumlance.



Requirements: Pentium 200MHz, MMX, 32MB RAM, 1MB hard drive space. Recommended Requirements: Pentium 333MHz or better, 150MB hard drive space. CD Support: Yes. Multiplayer Support: Yes.

Publisher: Monolith • Developer: Volkyne Studios • \$40 • www.lhb.com • ESRB Rating: Teen

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NASCAR Racing 3 Is All the Simulation You'll Need

You Couldn't Ask for Anything More

This won't be a surprise to those of you paying attention, but **NASCAR RACING 3** is another huge success for Papyrus Design Group. The wizards at the Sierra subsidiary have produced another racing game that walks the fine line between uncompromising accuracy and a fervent rush to the finish line. If you lean toward precise sims such as **GRAND PRIX LEGENDS**, you'll find everything you need here. If you favor arcade racers in the **NEED FOR SPEED** vein, this one will convert you.

Those who've played previous NASCAR titles will be familiar with what this game has to offer. Aside from a few concessions to modernity—like 3D support—there isn't much that's new here. Options remain very similar to what was offered in **NASCAR RACING 2**. You can take part in single races against computer-controlled pros of your choosing, go into Championship mode and drive a full NASCAR season, or hit the online offroad and take on other human racers in Internet and LAN multiplayer. A total of 28 tracks are included, from Atlanta Motor Speedway through

Watkins Glen International, as well as all the top NASCAR drivers, including Jeff Gordon, Dale Earnhardt, and Bobby Wallace.

NASCAR RACING 3

reviewed by Brett Todd

Bound Up

All of this is bound together in a customizable design that's friendly to newbies and veterans alike. To start playing, simply dumb-down the options. Turn the driving mode to Arcade and switch off Damage and Player Breakdowns. To really get going as a NASCAR pro, read through the helpful manual and take advantage of advanced garage settings that let you tweak the weight and pressure, gear ratios, stocks, weight distribution, and just about everything else.

This flexibility is the best thing that **NASCAR RACING 3** has to offer over its predecessors. Where I found that the previous games overwhelmed me with their depth right from the starting line, this one drew me in slowly. Instead of feeling like I'd been ordered to learn esoteric details like gear ratios off the bat, I could go at my own pace. This is thanks to both the adaptable design and an excellent manual,

IN THE COCKPIT The in-car camera view offers the most realistic angle on the action, though it reliably cuts the terror of speed. For a change of pace—and to check your velocity when hitting those turns—try a few laps using the external camera.



Requirements: Pentium 100MHz MMX, 32MB RAM, 15MB free disk space, 2X CD-ROM drive, SVGA video card (supporting 640x480 at 60Hz refresh).

Recommended Requirements: Pentium-II, 64MB RAM, 30MB free disk space, 4X CD-ROM drive, SVGA video card (supporting 640x480 at 60Hz refresh).

OS: Multiplatform Support: Up to 40 players via Area Network connections, 20 LAN, 10K, or modem (all players require CD).

Publisher: Sierra Sports • Developer: Papyrus • 326 • www.sierra.com • ESNB rating: A

SORRY 'BOUT THAT It's in real NASCAR races, not only accurate but a part of virtually every event in **NASCAR RACING 3**. I'd like to say that John Andretti went into the wall of his own accord here, but I'm afraid I have to accept a little responsibility over the carnal state of his ride. On the sunny side of things, I accepted excellent.



SPINNIN' Race collisions like this spin-out that Jay Jewell and his team faced forced me to provide a great look at the debilitated car in **NASCAR RACING 2**.



which clearly details what can be done to your car and why.

Service, Please!

NASCAR RACING 3 is only average in terms of visuals and sound. Graphics are crisp, yet oddly undistinguished. Part of this might be due to the rather bland subject matter; aside from the cars themselves, there's not a lot of color to be found surrounding the grey asphalt ovals in Phoenix and Myrtle Beach. The artists didn't go out of their way to jazz things up, either; the pit crew is inanimate, and not even a wheel shows up in the in-car view. Audio is also merely serviceable, with a number of ups and downs. Spotters sound good and walkie-talkie-ish, though the high-revving NASCAR engines aren't as throaty as they should be.

Despite these minor shortcomings, **NASCAR RACING 3** is a must-buy for any serious racing-game fan. We couldn't ask for anything more than this invigorating mix of the thinking person's sim and a arcade fan's thrill ride. Just don't expect a radical evolution over its predecessor. If you're a happy owner of **NASCAR RACING 2**, you might want to pass. Of course, that says more good things about the earlier game than bad things about the current one. Just make sure that you've got one of them on your hard drive. **GGV**

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CGW RATED

PROS

Flexible engine friendly to both newcomers and vets; successfully walks the fine line between rigid simulation and an oil-burning rush.

CONS

Few advances over the previous games in the series.



Grow Out Those 'Burns and Take a Trip to Racing's Past

Doing the Time Warp, NASCAR-Style

In a nutshell, *Papyrus' NASCAR LEGENDS* is *NASCAR RACING 3* set during the 1970 season. All of the drivers, cars, and tracks from that era are present for your simulated pleasure. So if you want to sip by A.J. Foyt in his Ford Torino at the Charlotte Motor Speedway, leave the Dodge Charger Daytona of Bobby Allison in the dust at the Atlanta International Speedway, or blow the doors off Cale Yarborough's Merc at Richmond Fairground Raceway, this is the title for you.

Other options are identical to those in *NASCAR RACING 3*. You can play arcade-style by turning off such things as vehicle damage, and turning on steering and shift assist. Races can be run as one-offs, or played through in a Championship mode that recreates the entire season. Full Internet multiplayer races are supported. Cars can be tweaked to your heart's content. Playing in full-simulation mode

means actually dealing with the dirty details, so be sure to read through the slick manual for tips on regulating the temperature, manipulating cambers, playing with suspensions, and so on.

NASCAR LEGENDS

Reviewed by Brett Todd

Legendary Driving

Befitting its name, *NASCAR LEGENDS* is closer to last year's *GRAND PRIX LEGENDS* than *NASCAR RACING 3* in terms of feel. While the uniquely-American *NASCAR* atmosphere remains, it's off-set by a more rigorous driving model, comparable to that seen in *Papyrus'* more European titles. Don't expect today's technologically advanced wonder cars to save you on the turns; you're driving your father's Plymouth, remember, and the entire setting is less forgiving. As someone who used to drive a '76 Dodge Monaco that handled like a school bus stuck in wet cement, this is exactly what I expected. Let's face it, these behemoths were tough to handle.

Also, some aspects of the game aren't as refined as modern racers have come to expect. Pit stops can be incredibly hazardous. More than once I pulled out and found myself unable to avoid traffic, resulting in some incredible pile-ups. Stops were more frequent than I expected, too, as I burned through tires like they were going out of style (which, of course, they really did, about 25 years ago).

Personally, I appreciated both the time warp and the extra challenges. Other gamers might not. Even those with plenty of *NASCAR* sim experience might find the game slightly off-putting. There's a lot to learn, and your experience with previous *NASCAR* games won't apply here. So be warned: If you find *NASCAR RACING 3* tough already, the journey back to 1970 will be a frustrating one.

A less-welcome "challenge" for me was the wacky control setup. No matter how hard I tried, the game wouldn't recognize the D-pad on my Microsoft Sidewinder gamepad. I could use the buttons, but never the X or Y-axis. This didn't bother me too much, as I prefer my Sprint wheel and pedal-set anyhow, but pad drivers should take heed of this problem. I also

TAKE YOUR PLACE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT
The most authentic camera angle in *NASCAR LEGENDS* is right behind the steering wheel.



SIDEBURNS AND SPEEDY CARS Yes, kiddies, people actually used to go out in public with hair and sideburns like this. Of course, not too many people laughed at folks like Cale Yarborough. First of all, they drove really cool cars like the Mercury Cyclone, and second, everyone else had motorcycle hair. Even the women. Look it up.



experienced a number of fatal crashes that booted me back to the desktop, and a flashing mouse cursor on occasion. All in all, the file just didn't feel stable on my system.

High Value... With One Reservation

Presentation values in *NASCAR LEGENDS* are exactly the same as in *NASCAR RACING 3*. Graphics are good, with sharp visual quality and 3D support that goes to a crisp 1024x768. The cars look nice and feature the special gloss that vehicles seemed to possess back in the '70s. Tracks are drawn well, although there is a minimum of special effects and surrounding terrain. Audio is great, with rumbling engine bass deep enough to shake windows all over the top floor of my house.

My main reservation about *NASCAR LEGENDS* is that it's not really necessary. It seems more like a really good add-on to *NASCAR RACING 3* than a stand-alone, full-prod product. This might cause some serious qualms at the cash register, especially for those who plunked down 50 bones for the original game a couple of months back. Judged wholly on its own merits, however, *NASCAR LEGENDS* is a game worthy of recommendation, even with the few bugs noted above. **C237**

CGW RATED

PROS

Excellent recreation of the 1970 *NASCAR* season; authentic cars, drivers, physics.

CONS

More of a great *NASCAR RACING 3* mod than a game in its own right; buggy control system; some crashes and glitches.

Requirements: Pentium 100MHz MMX, 32MB RAM, 70MB hard drive space, CD-ROM drive, CD-ROM (supporting CD-ROM) and CD-ROM (audio).

Recommended Requirements: Pentium-II, 64MB RAM, DirectX or Glide video, steering wheel and pedals or joystick, hard-disk 2GB space. 3D Support: DirectX.

Site: Multiplayer Support: Up to 64 players via direct Internet connection, WinAOL, IPX, or modem (all players require CD).

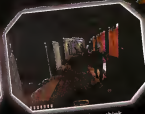
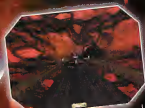
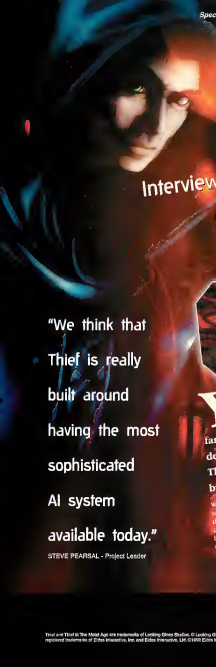
Publisher: Sierra Sports • Developer: Papyrus • CEO • www.sierra.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

Interview with the Team of

Thief II: The

"We think that Thief is really built around having the most sophisticated AI system available today."

STEVE PEARISAL - Project Leader



You have a pretty hard act to follow, with fans expecting a great deal of the sequel to Thief. Are you daunted by the task at all?

When we did Thief: The Dark Project we were really exploring a new genre, the first person sneaker, as we like to call it. Since no one else had really built a first person game around a stealth concept before, we had to do a lot of trial and error experimenting to find out what was fun and what didn't work so well. Now with the benefit of our experience from Thief 1, as well as a lot of really good feedback from Thief 1 players, we are confident that we can take this whole concept of a "first person sneaker" to a higher level with a better tuned, more focused

design and execution which we think will lead to an even more fun and immersive game.

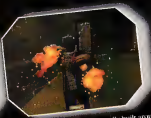
In terms of gameplay, you've made no secret of the fact that you consider the stealth element of the concept to be the factor that ensured success for the original. How will you keep all those stealth addicts happy with Thief 2? What do you have planned in terms of interface innovation?

Well a lot of the new powerups or tools that we have planned are centered around making Garrett a better thief. We want to give the player more opportunity to scout out the mission areas so that they can create up with a more thought out plan instead of just reacting to what they run into. So you'll see some sort of Thiefly tool that allows you to see into an area without expusing yourself to being discovered by the AI's.

THIEF III

THE METAL AGE

Metal Age



Can you detail the story of Thief 2? You mentioned Garrett was going to be involved in far more human-based missions. Can you elaborate on this? How important do you consider plot to be to this type of game?

We've got some great plot twists planned for Thief 2 and I certainly don't want to ruin anyone's surprise and enjoyment of how the story unfolds but basically you can think of Thief 2 as a three act play. In the first act Garrett is just trying to make a living as a master thief but he runs into increasing interference from the city sheriff. In act two Garrett discovers why the Sheriff is hassling him so much more than in the past. In act three, Garrett uncovers the plans of the bad guys, leading him into a big confrontation with the boss bad guy. Garrett will be operating mostly in the city itself and so the missions will be set in more of a city setting. You'll see missions set in places you'd expect to find in a city, like rich people's

mansions, banks, churches, and city streets.

How do you think Thief affected the FPS genre? Do you think Thief succeeded on the 'stealth factor' due to a stagnation in the genre?

The FPS genre has been moving towards games with more immersive gameplay set in deep, believable worlds. Thief succeeded because we were able to create a believable compelling world that supported our core gameplay concept that you become a master thief. A big part of that was that our AI's had to be good enough to convince the player that hiding from them was a believable and fun challenge.

Finally, what is it about Thief 2 that you hope will make it stand out from a considerable crowd? What are your plans after the completion of the game?

We think that Thief is really built around having the most sophisticated AI system available today. Thief's success is based on being able to simulate believable opponents to steal and hide from. No one else has AI good enough to really pull this off and we think it will be awhile before any one else can catch up to us - especially because we don't plan to sit still so there will be a moving target to catch up with.

Not only will the AI system in Thief 2 be the best you can get in any game engine available today, but because of our experience developing Thief 1 along with the feedback we've received from our fans we will be able to craft a better focused, more sophisticated stealth experience. In other words, we can take the whole core stealth experience to the next level.

Probably the first thing we will do is take three or four weeks off and recuperate from the inevitable crunch time it takes to get a good game out the door. Seriously though, we will be working on taking the Thief franchise to a new level.





WS = Warren Spector,
Project Director

AY = Al Yarusso,
Programmer

SM = Scott Martin,
Programmer

Interview with Deus Ex team



What made you choose Latin?

WS The phrase "Deus Ex" is a shortened version of "Deus Ex machina," a literary term I've always liked. Here's the dictionary definition (courtesy of the WWW Webster online dictionary):

Main Entry: deus ex ma-chi-na

Pronunciation: 'dā-ēs-'ōs-'mā-kī-nā, -'mā-, 'nē-, mē-'shē-nā

Function: noun

Etymology: New Latin, a god from a machine, translation of Greek theos ek mēchanēs

Date: 1697

1: A god introduced by means of a crane in ancient Greek and Roman drama to decide the final outcome.

2: A person or thing (as in fiction or drama) that appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly and provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble difficulty.

But that's probably not what you were looking for...

The fact that "deus ex" is Latin, translated from Greek, didn't really enter into the decision. We settled on the name because it actually rewarded knowledge – if you know what "deus ex machina" means, you know a little something about the game that other people won't know until they've played for a while.

Mostly, though, we chose "Deus Ex" because I thought it sounded cool and mysterious.



Storyline in games has become paramount nowadays. Can you give us a brief description of the story behind Deus Ex and why the story is important to Deus Ex's gameplay?

WS Well, we don't want to reveal too much about the story – have to leave some mysteries for players to solve! What we can say is that Deus Ex is the story of J.C. Denton – the player character – a guy who works for an international agency called the UN Anti-Terrorist Coalition. His job in our near future



world is to fight terrorists hellbent on hijacking priceless shipments of the only known treatment for a killer virus called the Gray Death. Little by little J.C. discovers that the terrorists may not be as bad as they seem. In fact, they make a lot of sense, once you start paying attention. And UMATCO? They seem a little bloodthirsty but they make some sense, too. It's all a little confusing.

As for why story is important, well, it provides context – meaning – for all of the player's choices. Plenty of games get by without much of a plot but they seem kind of empty and tend to devolve fairly quickly into kill-everything-that-moves or experiences are limited to solve-the-next-goofy-puzzle. In Deus Ex we want players thinking constantly about why they're doing what they're doing. We want them thinking how their actions might affect the people who live in our gameworld. A story filled with interesting characters with interesting lives has a chance of giving each player's actions some meaning.



Everyone and their mother is talking about genre blending. What is genre blending to you and do you feel Deus Ex blends genres? If so which genres and how?

WS: I don't know that we set out to blur the lines between genres. There's just something in the air these days, a sense that people – developers and players – are bored with the Same Old Thing. They've played traditional roleplaying games and adventure games and shooters and they're looking for something new. Combining elements from a variety of genres is one way to try to do something different, which keeps us interested, as developers, and (we hope!) will appeal to players, too.

We just wanted to make a game that didn't railroad players into guessing what the designers wanted them to do minute-to-minute. That pretty much dictated that we'd have real-time action, skill use and conversation – and that right there pushed us into the "uncategorizable" category. More to the point, it means some people look at Deus Ex and see a shooter; others see a roleplaying game and still others see an adventure game. In the end, they're all right.

Does the blurring of genre lines make it easier or harder to balance and tweak gameplay? Is it possible to make a single game that pleases fans of several radically different genres? In other words, will Joe Shooter, Jane Roleplayer and Jackie Adventure-Gamer all find ways to enjoy their time in the world of Deus Ex?

WS: Certainly, our goal is to ensure that fans of a variety of genres find something to like in Deus Ex. It's really for gamers to tell us how close we come to achieving that goal. I'll tell you, it's a heck of a tough goal! Balancing the gameplay so no one path or character choice is overpoweringly better than any other is a real challenge. The guy who blasts his way through every situation and the person who talks to everyone and kills no one must both have fun and must both have a chance of success. Tough, tough, tough...

Given that Deus Ex blurs the lines separating a variety of genres, how would you describe this game so Joe (or Jane) Consumer can make an informed decision about whether he or she is likely to enjoy it?

WS: The easy answer (at least for game geeks) is that I hope people can look back at some earlier games and say, "I liked those. Deus Ex is the next step in the evolution of games like that. I'll probably like Deus Ex." And what earlier games would I cite as our predecessors? Ultima Underworld... System Shock... Thief... Half-Life. I'm not saying we'll be as great as those games – though I hope we will – but they're the games we took the most inspiration from.

For non-game geeks, I'd guess I'd say Deus Ex is for you if you want a game that really immerses you in an alternate world and lets you decide how to interact with the people you meet there and the situations you encounter.

What one message would you want to convey to gamers about Deus Ex?

WS: Deus Ex is a game about character development in which all of your character choices are expressible, minute-to-minute, in gameplay and every choice you make has a price – everything has consequences and nothing comes for free...



What features have been added to the Unreal engine that will set Deus Ex apart from other first-person 3D games?

AY: Most of the features we've added to the engine have been RPG-centric. Since Unreal is a straightforward shooter, it doesn't have support for a sophisticated inventory system or the skills and augmentation systems your character has in Deus Ex. We've added blended animations, real-time lip syncing, advanced AI, a powerful conversation system (complete with a standalone editor), a traveling flag system to save the game state between maps, a sophisticated user-interface library that's used heavily by the many UI screens in the game, and countless other improvements.

You've mentioned AI and physics as things you've enhanced in the Deus Ex version of the Unreal engine. Has this led to any unexpected behavior on the part of characters or objects in the game world? Are you seeing any "emergent behavior" – things the designers didn't plan or anticipate? And, if so, is that a problem or a feature? Can you plan fun that's based on the unexpected?



SM: Here's my favorite example of emergent behavior: I was standing on top of a three-story building with a pistol. Guards were patrolling below me, oblivious to my presence. I fired off a couple of rounds, which the guards should have heard because the pistol was silenced. But one of the guards drew his weapon, turned, and started looking around for me, because the shell casing from my pistol had fallen three stories and landed next to him, and he heard it. From my perspective as the AI programmer for Deus Ex, emergent behavior is a feature, not a bug. There's nothing cooler than doing something unexpected in a game and seeing it work the same way it would in our world. It makes the game world feel immersive and real.

You've said that character development is the heart of roleplaying. How important is character development to the Deus Ex experience?

WS: All game problems in Deus Ex can be solved in more than one way and the choices you make about your character make certain kinds of problem solutions more viable FOR YOU than other kinds of solutions. In other words, if you're the guy who says, "I want to develop my weapon skills" you're likely to get through the game byging around lots of weapons and creating all sorts of carnage. Conversely, if you're the guy who says, "I want to develop my computer skill" you're going to look for computers and AIs and security systems to hack and probably avoid combat whenever possible. Character choices expressible in gameplay are what Deus Ex is all about. But the important part of that is "expressible in gameplay" as opposed to the bit about "character choices." Character development in and of itself isn't the point, really.

The Aptly Named ODIUM is Boredom-in-a-Box

Odious

What made *X-COM* and *FALLOUT* great games was a fine balance of turn-based RPG strategy, adventure, and combat action. Clones, of course, followed. You can now add *ODIUM* to the list of badly stumbling pretenders, bogged down by a painfully slow and repetitive combat system and a meagred tendency to tell you a story rather than to let you discover it yourself. This makes for a very boring game.

As the leader of a three-member team of NATO commandos, your mission is simple: Find out what happened to another commando team lost in a city called Gorky 17. Your team enters the city under equipped and under-qualified (wait, aren't these guys supposed to be the "best of the best"?), thus beginning the wheezing story of science gone-wrong in combination with deadly government secrets, as you battle through a city swamped by voracious mutants. You'll also run into a few helpful characters along the way.

Gameplay in this third-person game is divided into Adventure and Battle Modes. You search for clues in the real-time Adventure Mode, interacting with objects and both human and mutant characters.

While the interface is fairly simple, a camera control for reaching obscure areas would have prevented an occasional inability to see vital objects and areas. Since characters do pick up a decent variety of weapons and useful items during the adventure—it'd be nice to be able to find them more easily.

And Now for Something Completely Different...

Once mutants appear, the game shifts into the turn-based Battle Mode. The combat sequences take place on a grid system, with team members attacking or defending within a specified range depending on their weapons, movement allowance, and level. Characters can only attack once per turn, but can heal each other or loads items without penalty. Combat can get dreadfully slow—each attack elogs through a scripted pre-combat ritual, like bringing the weapon to bear before performing the attack. The limitations of the combat system are very apparent in the way it forces you to frequently get within a monster's attack range, a rifle that unloads 800 rounds a minute at a maximum effective range of over 800 meters isn't particularly useful unless it's

CITY OF THE ALMOST DEAD *ODIUM's* dark and sinister 3D environments set the mood for its near-passable storylines. If only the combat was this good....



TOUGH HOMBRE As the adventure moves deeper into the city, you'll find tougher enemies with higher armor and hit-point values. Make sure you save the great weapons for later.



crammed down the mutant's throat—and it still fires only once per turn. In addition, the combat is boring—even though there's a variety of monster types, each monster attacks and behaves similarly.

Game strategy principally involves placing your characters for the best possible attack and defense. This placement becomes very important when your team is guarding an unarmed character they picked up along the way.

Learn While You Earn

On a positive note, *ODIUM* allows characters to receive instant experience for their actions during combat. Simply hitting a monster in combat rewards you with experience points. As a result, a character's range and damage ability steadily improve as they fight. When a squad member does increase a level, a character screen instantly appears and holds combat, allowing you to distribute their newly-acquired skill points where you deem appropriate. This is one of the more enjoyable parts of the game, but a lack of real RPG depth makes this a pretty limited source of fun.

ODIUM's sound effects and background music help establish a grim and creepy mood, until the campy dialogue and limp voice-acting kneecap it. *ODIUM's* game environments possess a gritty war-torn feel with some cool shadow effects, making Gorky 17 feel like some mally bad acid trip set in industrial Transylvania.

ODIUM is easy enough to finish in one weekend, and with its scripted—yet predictable—adventure story, this game has little to no replay value. Add some boring monsters and the poorly designed combat grid system, and *ODIUM* smells almost as bad as its title would suggest. **C-+**

ODIUM

Reviewed by **Stephen KIBERTON**

CGW RATED

PROS

Next 3D environments; classic RPG elements; easy to learn interface; rock-solid engine.

CONS

Boring monsters; campy dialogue; endless, repetitive combat; pitiful weapons ranges.

HI-DIDDLY-NO, NEIGH-BOR! *ODIUM* breaks a little bit from the *X-COM* mold by letting you interact with various characters, like this aging thief.



Requires: Pentium 200MHz; 32MB RAM; 250MB hard drive space; graphics card with 2MB RAM. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium 4, 64MB RAM, 3D Support; DirectX 9; Multiplayer Support: None

Publisher: Moxlab • Developer: Mirogala Software House • \$40 • www.ith.com
E.U.S. Rating: Mature, advised 17 and older.

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Screen shot of Slave Run courtesy of Accuade

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Ubisoft Offers a Cross-Platform Fix for Your Gamepad Jones

Need Consoling?

Make no mistake: from game design to graphic styling, **RAYMAN 2** is a console game. One could even argue that it's a great console game. But does a great console game make a great computer game? In the case of **RAYMAN 2**, the answer is...almost.

You play the part of Rayman, an affable creature lacking arms, legs, and neck. Having your feet, head, and hands floating free may sound strange, but it works well visually. And, although **RAYMAN 2** is not as graphically complex as some current PC titles, it looks very good, the clean, simple graphics create the atmosphere of a 3D cartoon. Adding to the cartoon-feel are sound effects reminiscent of a Warner Brothers production. This design approach, combined with amusing cut scenes and tempo-controlling background music, keep the mood of the game light and fun.

The generic "collect the shattered power crystals and defeat the evil forces" plot is more than offset by the level design. Although each level has the obligatory platform jumping, switch flipping, and "toadstool" collecting, all the main levels offer something new.

Before finishing the game, you'll have flown a pirate ship, water-skied behind a serpent, rolled on rotten logs, and piloted a rocket strapped between your non-existent legs.

Unfortunately, **RAYMAN 2** suffers from three common cross-platform flaws: compatibility, control, and save-game problems. I tried installing the game on three different systems, and had problems on each. To be fair, two of

the systems (both PII 400s) had weak video chips, but they are representative of what many people have purchased recently. After a few calls to Ubisoft's excellent tech line, I put a spare Voodoo1 in one of the systems and the game ran fine.

RAYMAN 2 won't let you re-map controls, although the defaults seem logical. Movement controls may frustrate some players, as they are applied relative to the game camera instead of to Rayman. This means that when Rayman is running toward you, his right is your left; his backward is your forward; his death is your ejection. It also means that when the camera pans, Rayman does a boofleg maneuver without any change to your input.

Winning the "most annoying feature" category, **RAYMAN 2** requires you to complete a level before you can save the game, although there are "soft saves" during the level. Because of this feature, you will sometimes find yourself playing just to make it to the next save-point. Yeah, that's fun.

Despite its shortcomings, **RAYMAN 2** manages to get a lot of things right. If you are a fan of console games, or are looking for a light, fun action game, **RAYMAN 2** may be the armless, legless, neckless man for the job. **CGW**



INTERROGATION

MARCH 2000.

The World Falls Into SHADOW.



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RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE

Reviewed by Joe "Bitin'" Bily

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Despite its shortcomings, **RAYMAN 2** manages to get a lot of things right. If you are a fan of console games, or are looking for a light, fun action game, **RAYMAN 2** may be the armless, legless, neckless man for the job. **CGW**

CGW RATED

PROS

Gameplay variations keep levels interesting; good graphics and sound.

CONS

Some compatibility problems; movement control issues; minimal save-game opportunities.

KEG PARTY Whoever said "what you can't see can't hurt you" never get blindsided by a powder keg.



Requirements: Pentium 133 32MB RAM, Win95 or 4MB ESD video card
Recommended Requirements: Pentium 200, 64MB RAM, Win95 or 16 MB ESD video card, OpenGL 3D Support: Onix, 330 Multiplayer Support: None

Publisher: Ubisoft - Developer: Ubisoft - \$30 - www.ubisoft.com
ESRB Rating: Everyone



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We Could Be Coasters, Just for One Day

Omikron

As a music CD, **OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL** is a *tour de force*; as a computer game, it is a big disappointment. The concept of wrapping an adventure game around a David Bowie album is a cool one — the problem here is with the execution. And your own execution will look more and more desirable, the longer you attempt to play this game.

I had high hopes for **OMIKRON**. With a gigantic, living world full of characters, interactive environments, and so-far coolness, it could've been everything we wanted **BLADE RUNNER** to be, with elements of fighting games and first-person shooters thrown in. David Bowie — ever on the cutting edge — not only composed all the music, but also appears as two characters and "performs" in secret concerts that take place in the game world. This is by far the only redeeming quality of the whole experience.

OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL

reviewed by Jesse Hiatt

OMIKRON's attempt to cross genres fails on all counts. The adventure component is huge — but linear and boring. You quickly learn that there's nothing alive about the world. You can walk around all day, and talk to whomever you want, but absolutely nothing is going to happen to you, and you're not going to learn anything important until you do that one little obscure thing the designers wanted you to do next. Add to the mix a hundred more useless errands, terrible voice-acting, and a paper-thin plot that takes itself way too seriously, and you've got a recipe for crap soup.

The adventure would have been tolerable if the action sequences were cool enough to function as rewards for your perseverance. No such luck. The worst PlayStation fighting games look good next to **OMIKRON**. It's practically all combo-based, with none of the art or graceful flow of a **SOUL EDGE** or **TEKKEN**. First it's too hard, then it's too easy, rarely is it fun.

The first-person-shooter mode is even worse. Every time you get into a gunfight, it's a complete game-stopper. It's hard to aim, and if you do hit something, often times nothing happens. Enemies pop up out of thin air right in front of you, and the movement is clunky and barely manageable.

The only good thing that could come out of this game is if it inspires others to do it right the next time. There was a good idea here, but it was completely squandered. For Bowie completists only. **CGW**

CGW RATED

PROS

A valiant effort by Bowie to break new ground; he does all the music and appears in the game.

CONS

Terrific gameplay wastes Bowie's effort.

DOES THIS DRESS MAKE ME LOOK FAT?

One of the cooler ideas in **OMIKRON** is the ability to reincarnate after death into the bodies of a variety of different characters. Here, we've scanned the body of a fetching mini-skirt-clad lass.



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT, BUDDY?

Although you can talk to almost anyone in the game — which makes it seem that the game is highly interactive at first — you soon find that most conversations are useless.



ATTACK OF THE GUY IN THE TOWEL

The game's fighting mode is unrealistic at best, and doesn't even close to the action found in a real fighting game.



Requirements: PC: Win 95/98/NT; 2MB RAM; 25MB free disk space
Recommended Requirements: PC: Win 95/98/NT; 4MB RAM; 1GB free disk space; 3D Support; DVD 3D; Multiplayer Support; Net

Publisher: Eden • Developer: Quantum3 • \$45 • www.edenonline.com • ESRB Rating: Your favorite blood and violence, mature sexual themes.



CONVERSATION

MARCH 2000.

The World Falls Into SHADOW.



www.redstore.com

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QUICK HITS

PRO PINBALL: FANTASTIC JOURNEY

In rock-n-roll, it was *The King*. In baseball, the *Babe*. And in the chic, high-flying world of computer pinball simulations, it's *Empire Interactive* and *Cunning Developments*, a team that has brought gamers not only the best pinball simulations, but some of the best games, period. **PRO PINBALL: FANTASTIC JOURNEY** is *Cunning Developments'* latest (and as rumor has it, last) game in a series of pinball sims that included last year's award-winning pinball masterpiece, *BIG RACE U.S.A.*

The magic formula for these games is equal parts amazing ball physics, clever table design, and a tight package of sights and sounds that gives each game a unique personality. Playing the Jules Verne-themed **FANTASTIC JOURNEY** is a lot like playing an adventure game; you slowly figure out the table's "puzzles," then coax your ball on its way through a series of quests involving a submarine, river boat, hot air balloon, and subterranean drill machines, all played out visually on the overhead scoring display.

★★★★★

While generally on par with previous efforts in the line, **FANTASTIC JOURNEY** is a much less accessible design than the previous releases. The wide-open board emphasizes sequences of long, precision shots at drop targets and ball sinks, and the ball tends to "gutter" frequently. And it does take a while for the personality of the board to unfold; you'll have to play a few dozen games before you figure out the basic high-scoring plays. Thankfully, the array of difficulty settings grant some mercy to pinball wimps.

If you have any interest at all in pinball, give your inner-addict some loving and check this game out. —Chris Lombardi

Genre: Puzzles and Classics • Publisher: Empire Interactive • Developer: Cunning Developments • \$20 • www.empire-interactive.com/propinball/ • ESRB Rating: Everyone

WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE

Genre: Puzzles & Classics • Publisher: Disney Interactive • Developer: Jellyvision • \$20 • www.disneyinteractive.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

The real millionaires here are the corporate jackals at ABC and parent company Disney who have turned a simple little quiz show into a license to print money.

But if you're having as much trouble as I am just getting through to the show's toll-free contestant phone number, this bargain-priced game might tide you over.

Everything you know and cherish from the TV show — with the exception of real money — is here: fifteen multiple-choice questions of increasing difficulty, the three Helmses, and just enough of the occasional random rant from your host, evil wind-up toy Regis Phibes, to capture that special, fifth-circle-of-Hell ambience partic-

★★★



ular to "The Reg" Essentially a solo game, it's no surprise the "fastest finger" multiplayer elimination-round falls terribly flat here; unexpectedly, the Phone A Friend lifeline option is carried off very well, with Regis casting a host of his equally disturbed pals who'll let you know that they just tore off a thumbnail rotating tree before giving you their answer. Sadly, the game's biggest drawback is the way it starts repeating scads of questions after merely an hour or so of play. It's fun while it lasts, but it doesn't last long. Final answer. —Robert Colby



12 O'CLOCK HIGH: BOMBING THE REICH

Genre: Warfare • Publisher: TalonSoft • Developer: Gary Briggley and Keith Barr • \$30 • www.talonsoft.com • RSCM Rating: Teen, 1

If its predecessor, *BATTLE OF BRITAIN*, was a novel, then **12 O'CLOCK HIGH: BOMBING THE REICH** is an epic. The gameplay is the same, but

★★★★

12 O'CLOCK HIGH expands

the scope of this strategic WWII air-combat game from operations in Southeast Britain to the entire Western Theater: The Allies plan bombing runs, and lighter-sweep missions by micro-managing each attack or by allowing your staff to fulfill broad orders. The Germans react to raids as the Allies watch the combat. Victory is a function of Allied air superiority, industry, and civilian damage points. Both sides must consider aircraft type, weather, altitude, attack doctrine, the timing between raids, pilot fatigue, morale, and experience.

The similarities between the two games end there: Instead of concentrating on air forces, **12 O'CLOCK HIGH** has eight campaigns on specific target types; two campaigns covering the war from 1943 and 1944; and a hypothetical campaign with jets. It also has three ground campaigns, where success is measured by Allied advances. In longer campaigns, the German player chooses which targets to defend and sets production priorities for new aircraft types. Switching production is risky; no older aircraft will be available for replacements, allowing the Allies a chance to ruin the German economy before the new aircraft deploy. The Allies have resource limits, too, and must balance strategic targets against losses. The initial version has flaws in flank and replacements, which have already been patched.

This game is not for the casual gamer: It's not hard to learn the mechanics, but there are a lot of details, and watching raids may be boring for the Allies. The graphics are serviceable — but pixelated and unimpressive. Yet, students of air warfare and fans of *BATTLE OF BRITAIN* will find it very rewarding. —Jim Cobb

TANKTICS

Gremkin's **TANKTICS** is a cartoon strategy game with a sense of humor. You assemble tanks from parts produced by your Part-O-Matic, which can be accelerated by sheep. Supply the POM with anything — boulders, tank parts, crates and even sheep — and out come parts for your tanks and the occasional power-up.

In 24 missions, divided into four campaigns, you fight on perverse, miniature-golf-like battlefields going from stone-age through medieval,

modern, and future ages. You build tanks from the era you're in. The enemy tanks are drawn from the next period, so your medieval tanks will, for example, face modern opponents. In the future era you face the real enemy, the dreaded Evil Black Tanks, which are an attractive teal-color.

All this would be pleasant enough if 1) you could issue orders while paused, 2) the interface didn't seem designed to help you make mistakes, and 3) you could SAVE while playing a mission. Having spent four hours battling only to crash at the victory screen, or to watch your most experienced tank rendered nananate by an inadvertent mouse click, induces fantasies of throwing the designers into their own Part-O-Matic.

—Samuel B. Baker, II



Genre: Strategy • Publisher: Interplay • Developer: Gremkin • \$28 • www.interplay.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

NHL CHAMPIONSHIP 2000

Genre: Sports • Publisher: Fox Sports Interactive • Developer: Radical Software \$30 • www.foxsports.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone



NHl **CHAMPIONSHIP 2000** plays more like a true NHL game than its competition, with more team play and a slower pace vs. mad dashes down the ice for breakaway slapshots. The reason is a superb defensive AI that plays like the big leagues; players cover the passing lanes with intelligent positioning. You have to work for shots, and

work hard for good shots. But a couple

problems mar the gloss on defensive play. The ice is too small, the offensive zone significantly so. On the other side of the ice, weak offensive AI is the biggest obstacle to the game's goal of hockey sim sainthood.

While it's easy to point out its faults, NHL **CHAMPIONSHIP 2000** still plays a decent game of hockey, and is more like an NHL simulation than an arcade game. There's a core of a solid sim here, but the problems detract enough to prevent a solid recommendation. —Jeff Labrecq

NATIONS: FIGHTER COMMAND

Genre: Flight Simulation • Publisher: Pygmalion • \$45 • www.pygmalion.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone, simulated violence.



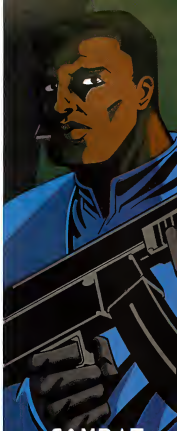
If you're going to make a historical flight sim these days, you're going to be in direct competition with something else. Unfortunately, **NATIONS: FIGHTER COMMAND** poked a fight with real heavyweights, and it's just not up to the challenge. Putting **NATIONS** in the ring with **EAW** or **JANES WWII FIGHTERS** would be like a title bout between Gary Coleman and George Foreman.

The graphics are so-so, the flight models oversimplified, the missions dull, and the controls terrible. It's almost impossible to get it to work with rudder pedals. The lack of standard sim conventions — like putting viewing controls on the function keys — makes one wonder if the designers actually played other games in the genre. If so, they've tried to fix a lot of stuff that wasn't broken.

Ultimately, this feels like an arcade game, but even there it wouldn't pull in many quarters. —Jesse Hlat

★★★★☆

★★★★☆



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Falls Into
SHADOW.



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3D CARD ROUNDUP

3D in the 21st Century

by Loyd Case

Winter brings with it crisp, cold air, snow in the mountains; and new 3D-graphics accelerators. I really wanted to go skiing, but instead I holed up with a Pentium-III and a horde of new graphics accelerators.

On top is a brood of boards using nVidia's GeForce 256 chip, including three that use the new DDR memory. DDR is a new type of RAM that allows two chunks of information to be transmitted in a single-memory clock cycle, speeding up the process considerably. Standard SDRAM (often termed SDR, or single data-rate memory) hobbled the high fill rate of the GeForce 256 card, but DDR memory alleviates that problem. The chip itself has four pixel pipelines and full acceleration for transform and lighting in hardware (see below for definitions of these techie terms).

Also up this month is S3's new Viper II, the first packaged product born from the merger of S3 and Diamond Multimedia. Viper II uses S3's new Savage 2000 accelerator, which accelerates transform and lighting (similar to the GeForce 256). However, the Savage 2000 only has two pixel pipelines, though they can both do dual texturing in a single pass.

Rounding out the roundup is the Matrox Marvel G400, which has robust video-capture features, a flexible TV-tuner, and the capable G400 graphics chip.

Another Century, Another Batch of 3D Accelerator Cards. Which Have the Power To Handle Your Gaming Demands? Here's the Hard Data You Need To Decide.

How To Choose the Right 3D Card

Choosing a graphics card can be a frustrating exercise. And the huge feature lists and marketing gibberish printed on the side of the boxes don't make it any easier. Here's our short list for choosing a graphics card:

1. Look at the games you're playing.

A light-sim buff may have different requirements from the hardcore first-person shooter fan. And if you spend all your time playing turn-based strategy games like ALPHA CENTAURI, then spending top-dollar for the latest 3D technology may be a waste.

2. Look at your system.

A new high-powered 3D card may not be well matched to a 266MHz Pentium-III, which won't be able to really feed the card enough polygons to fully utilize its features. If you do have an older system, consider stepping back a generation. Or, consider spending your money on a CPU/motherboard upgrade.

3. Consider other features as well.

Raw performance is great, but if you need TV-out, video capture, or digital flat-panel support, factor those in as well. As always, consider your budget, too.

DICTIONARY OF 3D JABBERWOCKY

ATI's AFR (alternate frame rendering)

Rage Fury MAXX has two Rage 128 Pro chips, and they "take turns" rendering frames. In essence, one chip handles the front buffer, and the other chip takes care of the back buffer.

S3's T-Buffer

S3's technology for enabling features like non-intrusive, full-screen anti-aliasing; and cinematic effects, such as motion blur, soft shadows, or depth-of-field effects.

Stencil Buffer

Used to create realistic, volumetric shadows and fog, instead of the more visually distracting "fog plane."

3D CARD ROUNDUP

The Winners

Prophet DDR-DVI

WinFast GeForce 256

product photos by Raylan Hooper

Erazor X2

All-Out Performance Winner

There were two clear performance leaders in the bunch. Unsurprisingly, both used Nvidia's GeForce 256 chip, coupled with 32MB of DDR SDRAM.

Hercules rises like the Phoenix to tie for the top spot. Now owned by Guillemot, the Prophet DDR-DVI resurrects the Hercules name as a performance leader. The surprise was Leadtek's WinFast GeForce 256, which essentially tied for first. You can't go wrong with either card - both are fast, have TV-out, and support the emerging DVI digital monitor interface. The Leadtek card might be harder to find, however, since it's not as widely distributed.

All of the DDR RAM-equipped GeForce boards fared very well in the testing. The Creative Labs Annihilator Pro will no doubt be very widely distributed and therefore may be the easiest to find. The

GADGETS
FOR GAMERSMartinLogan
Electrostatic
Speakers

OK, so these behemoths won't be reducing your PC any time soon, but if you're looking for serious sound for your living room, then give these things a listen. MartinLogan's offerings range in size from tiny Inps to stickin' huge, and the pricing scales accordingly. These puppies aren't for the faint of pocketbook, with smaller units starting at around \$2000 a pair.

www.martinlogan.com



ELSA Erazor X² offers solid performance, a superb control-panel setup, and the excellent 3D-revelator LCD stereoscopic glasses.

Best Bang for the Buck

With street prices from some mail-order sources under \$170, the Viper II is a decent card that can only get better when future drivers add support for the onboard T&L engine. In fact, considering the relatively low clock-rate and slow memory on the card, the Viper II performed quite well.

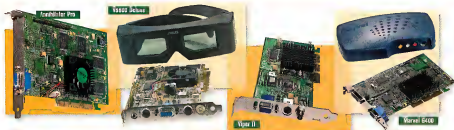
The Asus V6600 GeForce-based card is an interesting alternative with its robust TV input and output; a DDR version should be shipping by the time you read this. However, the Matrox Marvel G400, despite its low 3D performance, wins kudos for incredibly flexible TV features, hardware-assisted video capture, and excellent video-editing capability.

Anisotropic Filtering

A type of texture filtering where the degree of filtering varies, depending upon the relative angle of the object being filtered. Can seriously slow down frame-rates depending on the game and/or card.

Accelerated T/L (transform and lighting)

Cards based on nVidia's GeForce 256 and S3's Savage 2000 can take on T/L processing, relieving the CPU of those duties. Transforms involve the moving of polygons from scene to scene, and lighting in this case refers to geometric lights that can have different behaviors.



3D CARD ROUNDUP

Product Price	3D GameGauge Score	Rating With Address	The Skinny
Hercules 3D Prophet DDR \$299 (for retail)	61.5	★★★★ www.gulfemot.com	Pricy card with superb performance and an excellent feature set. It marks the rebirth of the Hercules name.
Leadtek WinFast GeForce \$289	61.7	★★★★ www.leadtek.com	The WinFast offers a nearly-identical feature set to the Prophet, at a slightly lower price.
ELSA Erazor X² \$299	58.6	★★★★ www.elsa.com	Good controls, good performance, terrific stereoscopic glasses as an option.
Creative Labs Annihilator Pro \$248	58.2	★★★★ www.creativelabs.com	Cheaper, but with fewer features; good control panel and decent performance; easy to find.
Asus V6600 Deluxe \$299	55.6	★★★★ www.asus.com	It's only an SDR board, but 3D glasses and good video-input capability make it an interesting choice for multimedia fans.
S3 Viper II \$188 (SRP) \$168 street	46.8	★★★★ www.s3.com	Not as fast as the GeForce boards, but good performance at a decent price.
Matrox Marvel G400 \$279 street	33.3	★★★★ www.matrox.com	Last year's 3D performance, but offers the best multimedia capabilities of the bunch, including superb TV-out and excellent video-editing capabilities.

GAMING

EDITOR'S CHOICE

GAMING

EDITOR'S CHOICE

HOW WE TESTED

3D GameGauge 2.5

This month marks the debut of 3D GameGauge 2.5, CGW's testing metric for evaluating 3D graphics cards. GameGauge averages the frame rates of seven high-end 3D games to yield a single performance score to help you compare 3D cards. 3D GameGauge 2.5 runs the gamut of game genres, including arcade action (EXPONABLE), first-person shooters (UNREAL TOURNAMENT, QUAKE 3 ARENA), sports (NFL FEVER 2000), racing (RIT"VOOT), and simulations (PANZER ELITE and JANE'S USAF).

All the tests are run at 1024x768, except Jane's USAF, which had a bug that prevented us from testing at that resolution, so we ran it at 600x800. You can see the latest results, and run the 3D GameGauge tests on your own rig, too, by downloading the scripts, demos, and patches from www.3dgamegauge.com.

Our test system consists of an Intel VC070 motherboard with a 733MHz Pentium-III, and 128MB of PC800 SDRAM. We chose a high-end system so we could differentiate between the cards. We'll be using this test-bed for the next few months, so you'll be able to compare subsequent reviews with this roundup.

In addition to our spiffy new GameGauge 2.5 benchmarking suite, we also use Ziv-Davis' 3D WinBench 2000, which has full support for DirectX 7.0 transform and lighting. 3D WinBench 2000 also solves the vsync problem by disabling it through the DirectX mechanism for disabling vsync. We're also replacing WinBench 98's Graphics WinMark with Business WinStone 98, which tests actual application performance.

	3D GameGauge Score	Content Creation WinStone (1024/768)	3D WinBench 2000 (1024/800)
Hercules 3D Prophet	61.5	24.0	65.1
Leadtek WinFast GeForce	61.7	25.9	66.7
Creative Labs Annihilator Pro	58.2	25.8	69.0
ELSA Erazor X ² (S-DR)	58.6	26.5	69.0
Asus V6600 Deluxe (S-DR)	55.6	28.9	53.2
S3 Viper II	46.8	27.0	36.5
Matrox Marvel G400	33.3	26.6	31.6

HOW TO INSTALL YOUR NEW 3D CARD

1 Power up the system.

Use the Display control panel to configure your system for the standard PCI-VGA adapter. Reboot. Then, if it's possible, uninstall the old graphics drivers using Add/Remove Programs on the control panel.

2 Power down. Open the case...

...making sure to ground yourself.



Disconnect the monitor, remove the bracket screw, and carefully remove the card. Put it away in an antistatic bag.



3 Carefully remove the new card from its packaging.

Slide it into the AGP slot...

...tilting the card slightly so that the rear corner of the connector slides in first, then rock the card forward as gently as possible...

Screw it down.



4

Connect the monitor, then boot the system. If you hear multiple beeps and there's no picture, the card is not all the way in the slot (or may be defective). Assuming the system boots, allow it to configure for the PCI-VGA adapter, then reboot. After the second reboot, install the new drivers with either the Display control panel or a vendor-supplied setup program.

3dfx's Voodoo 4 and Voodoo 5: Worth the Wait?

By the time you read this, 3dfx's Voodoo5 series of graphics cards are still a couple of months out. This brings up an interesting question: Should you wait? Ah, the eternal upgrading question.

Voodoo5 uses two or more 3dfx VSA-100 accelerator chips. (There's also a Woodool card that uses a single VSA-100, but it's not a very compelling card for gaming.) But the real monster is the Voodoo5/6000, which has its own power supply, uses four VSA-100s, and has 128MB of RAM (effectively 32MB, because of the SLI implementation). They'll also be expensive, with a Voodoo5/5500AGP card going for around \$300, and a 6000 weighing in at a stunning \$600. They'll have tremendous fill rate, and some interesting features — but they will not have transform and lighting acceleration.

Of course, their competition also have products waiting in the wings. You could, of course, be waiting forever for the next thing. It's your call, but our take on it is if your current graphics solution is inadequate, then our editor's choice cards will last you for quite some time.

Installation Gotchas To Avoid

- Make sure you're installing into the correct slot. The AGP slot is almost always on the right side of the motherboard, if you're looking at the board so that the keyboard and mouse connectors are facing "up." The AGP slot is usually brown, and offset slightly behind the line of PCI slots. Be wary in newer systems of the AGP retention bracket, which makes removal and installation a nuisance.
- Be careful to ground yourself, either by frequently touching the PC's chassis, or by using a grounding strap.
- Check to see if the card requires a DirectX update to work. For example, the GeForce 256 cards need DirectX 7 to make full use of their features. DirectX 7 is available at www.microsoft.com/directx.
- If you hear multiple beeps, and get no picture, re-insert the card. Multiple beeps usually mean that the system thinks that there is no graphics card installed. If you get no picture and no beeps, but the power-supply fan comes on, try removing any PCI cards right next to the AGP slot, then reboot. Always power down and unplug your system before removing any cards.

Under the Hood

BY **LOYD CASE**



Fear and Loathing of Copy Protection

We Need Copy Protection, but We Need It to Work

Okay, listen up: We're opening with a short quiz. Question #1: What do the following CD and DVD drives have in common?

Sanyo CRD-256P, Sony CDU77E, Acer CD-624a, MATSHITA UJDB110. Various Pioneer DVD models, Yamaha CD-R, Pioneer DR-A01S, Pioneer DR-A24X, Samsung SCR-1231?

Question #2: What does the TV show "Barney" and UNREAL TOURNAMENT have in common?

The answer to Question #1: These CD and DVD drives—according to Sierra technical support—may not be able to run either HOMEWORLD or HALF-LIFE OPPOSING FORCE. The answer to Question #2: Barney videos and UNREAL TOURNAMENT both use copy-protection schemes developed by Macrovision, Inc.

Swatting Mosquitoes With a Shotgun

Games have rapid turnover and short lifespans—much more so than business software. So publishers need to sell as many copies as possible in a short period of time. Software piracy can severely impact a game's sales. It's not uncommon for illegal copies to show up on the Net for download—at "Warez" sites—even before they arrive at your local store.

Certainly the plethora of cheap, recordable CD drives and media has caused many game publishers much angst as the problem has mushroomed. To combat this problem, game publishers have turned to companies like Macrovision to help them protect their intellectual property.

Now, I'm all for game companies protecting their titles. With game budgets pushing into the millions of dollars, publishers and studios need to recoup their investments and turn a profit if we want to see the stream of good game titles continue. And because CD-ROMs are much more durable than floppies, I don't even have a problem with the idea of CD-copy protection.

But what really frosts me is when copy protection punishes me for actually buying a game. And given the number of CD/DVD-ROM drives that have trouble with current copy-protection schemes, I'm not alone in this. If you've ever gotten an error message like "Please insert game CD"—even though the game CD is in the drive—you know what I mean.

Some CD drives are incapable of reading some types of copy protection. (Note that some games simply have bugs, and feel if you have multiple drives, but that's not what I'm talking about.) At other times, I've had games work, but the CD will waddy thrash with some drives and not others.

Who Ya Gonna Call?

What to do if your game doesn't seem to run? First, take your CD and wash it in warm soap and water. Some out-of-the-box, new CDs sometimes have a fine film of oil or dust over them that needs to be removed. If this doesn't do the trick, contact the game publisher. If you do get the "your CD drive may not be supported" spiel, then check the CD-ROM drive-maker's website for an updated driver—although almost none of

U What really frosts me is when copy protection punishes me for actually buying a game. And given the number of CD/DVD-ROM drives that have trouble with current copy-protection schemes, I'm not alone in this. **J**

the CD makers listed in the opening paragraph have updated drivers.

As a last resort, you can take matters into your own hands. But let's make this very clear: I do NOT advocate giving away or selling illegal copies of software. But if you have no other recourse, check websites like www.gamecopyworld.com. This is not a website for pirates—the opening message on the site tries to discourage pirates.

And be warned: If you try to modify your game program, you will not get support from the game publisher; in most cases, you will have technically violated your licensing agreement. On the other hand, if it won't run, you've paid 50 bucks for what is essentially a coffee mug coaster. The most useful solution for those "CD not detected" errors is called the "NOCD crack." This usually takes the form of a patch that changes your game so that it can run without the CD present. If you use it, you run the risk of future game updates from the publisher not working. Still, it's astonishing how fast NOCD patches appear for updates.

This really shouldn't be necessary. As hardware and software evolves over time, I hope that software intellectual property can be adequately protected without inconveniencing users. But that time, I fear, may be a ways off. **GCW**

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+ Tech Medics



You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers

by Loyd Case and Dave Salvator

Wounded on the technological front? Our medics may be able to patch you up and get you back into the action. Send your gaming-related technical questions to cgw.hardware@zd.com.

Laptop Gaming

I'm looking around for a good laptop computer that can double as a gaming system. But I'd like to put a fast 3D card in it, too. Does anyone make add-on 3D hardware for laptops?

No. You can, theoretically, drop a Voodoo2 card into a docking station that has a free PCI slot, but there's no way to replace the graphics chip in a notebook PC. 3D graphics on mobile systems have seriously lagged after desktop development, mainly because of power requirements and the lack of a business application for high-speed 3D (as if games aren't enough...). And, a GeForce 256 chip that needs 6 amps of current would suck the will-to-live out of a laptop's battery. Both 33 and ATI have started to ship fairly-decent mobile 3D chips; we'll be reviewing those systems when they ship.

Mixing Peripheral Types

I have found a good price on the Suncom F15/SFS throttle (a USB device). However, I also want rudder pedals; can USB be mixed with game controllers (i.e., rudder pedals) that use the traditional PC game port?

There's only one controller we know of that allows this - Logitech's Wingman Force Feedback joystick - and it's something of a hack. While it's theoretically possible, most USB controllers (and drives) don't take game-port controllers into consideration. However, CII Products is now shipping their USB Pro Pedals, so give these a try.

Adjusting RAM Speed

Is there any way to adjust memory speed? Say I have PC133 SDRAM. How do I adjust it to run at 100MHz?

It depends on several things. First, do you have a PC133-capable system? If so, all you may need to do is adjust a jumper on the motherboard or in the BIOS setup program.

If you're talking about running PC133 memory on a PC100 system, such as those using the 440BX chipset, then you don't have to do anything. The PC133 memory will run fine at 100MHz. Now, if you want to run it faster, you've entered the realm of over-clocking. Many 100MHz systems allow you to change the clock rate of the front-side bus (FSB). However, while

the memory itself may run fine at 133MHz, the chipset may not - or the PCI bus speed may also be raised, causing PCI cards to fail. Tread with care if you start over-clocking the front-side bus.

Scuzzy Wuzzy?

What is SCSI, and what is it used for?

SCSI (pronounced "scuzzy") stands for "small computer systems interface." It is a means of transferring data between the different components of your computer. It is most commonly used for high-end mass storage devices like hard drives. Most current generation PCI SCSI cards are compatible with a multitude of flavors of SCSI and also support up to 14 (or more) devices on one SCSI chain.

DVD Games

I've heard that I need a hardware DVD decoder to play DVD games. Is this true?

First, there aren't a lot of DVD games. Then's a special release of WING COMMANDER IV, RIVEN, JOURNEYMAN PROJECT 3, BALDUR'S GATE, and maybe a handful more. BALDUR'S GATE doesn't count, since all interplay did was to cram the CD content onto one DVD. However, the games that support high resolution, DVD-quality video do require a DVD player to play back the cut scenes, even if your system is good enough to support software DVD. This will gradually change over time, as more true DVD titles ship. Windows 98SE and DirectX now have better support for MPEG-2 and other DVD features. **CGW**



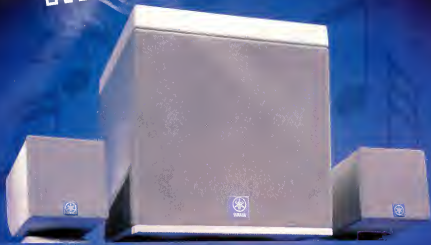
TECHTIP Free Hard Drive Speed-Up

OK, so it won't be like going from a Fiat to a Ferrari, but by tweaking a system-setting for your hard drive, the drive will cache more file names and disk information, letting it fetch data faster.

Right-click on your My Computer icon, select Properties;

and then select the Performance tab dialogue. Next, click on the File System button, and change the setting from Desktop Computer to Network Server. Click OK, then OK once more to close the System Properties sheet. You'll then need to reboot your machine for the setting to take effect.

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 CH F15 ControlStick USB
 Logitech WingMan Extreme



Action Gamepad
 Internet Gamehead FX
 Game GearPad USB

Power Rig

Component	Manufacturer	Price	The Skinny
Case	YY Minicase Case	\$212	Less of casing
Motherboard	Intel VC820	\$160	ASP 4x
CPU	Celerone T30	\$236	It's the top of the heap, for now
Memory	128MB of PC800 SDRAM	\$700	\$4M985
Disk Controller	Adaptec 2915Uw	\$38	80 megabytes per second
Primary Graphics	Creative Labs Audiodigy Pro	\$210	DDR SDRAM and T&L support
3.5" floppy drive	Teac	\$30	You still have to love one
Hard Drive	Quantum Atlas 1K	\$890	Runs warm, runs fast
Backup	Cyberlink DVD-RAM drive	\$509	2 gigs of backup
CD-ROM	Pioneer EX SCSI DVD	\$160	New Pioneer Slot Drive DVD
Monitor	Hitachi DiamondPro 2000e	\$1,290	Periodically flat, good USB support
Primary Audio	Sound Blaster Live! Platinum	\$195	For four-speaker, BlastSound, A3D and EAX
Speakers	Klipsch ProMedia	\$258	Beneficial imaging, clean sound
Modem	3Com 309L modem	\$100	DSL or not
Networking	3COM Etherlink 10/100 PCI	\$60	For lagging shy linkies
Networking Hub	Netgear 6506	\$170	Multiplexer & DSL modem support
Power Supply	PC Power and Cooling Tubular 330	\$93	More power, Scotty!
Keyboard	Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	\$50	It will be the backbone out with the Natural
Mouse/Pointing Device	Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer	\$85	No ball!
		Total w/o them: Continental	\$6,320
Flight Joystick	CH F15 ControlStick USB	\$95	It just fits right
Builder Pedals	CH Pro Pedals USB	\$100	Nearly perfect foot placement
Driving Controls	FXC1 DES 400	\$1,250	For the serious sim driver
Action Gamepad	Internet Gamehead FX	\$10	Don'tShook-like controller
		Total	\$7,775

The Fine Print: All recommendations based on actual evaluations and testing. Prices listed are averages (no taxes) from Web price search engines like www.creepinshopper.com or www.pricewatch.com. Copied by Dave Silveira and Loyd Cox

Lean Machine

Component	Manufacturer
Motherboard	Asus P3B-1
CPU	Pentium III 500
Memory	128MB PC100 SDRAM
Disk Controller	Bull-in UDMA/33
Primary Graphics	Gigabyte Xenon 22
 floppy drive	Teac
Hard Drive	IBM Deskstar 226XP 9 10GB
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer DVD-114
Monitor	24" Super VGA
Primary Audio	Asus! 50250
Speakers	Boston Acoustics BM-525
Modem	Arcnet/Asa PCI Call-Waiting Modem
Case	Elite Intel 17K-30
Power Supply	Bull-in 330W
Keyboard	Microsoft Natural Keyboard
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech 350 Wired Mouse
Joystick	Logitech WingMan Extreme
Action Gamepad	Game GearPad USB

WHICH 3D CARD SHOULD I BUY?

If there's one question readers have asked us more than any other, this would have to be it. So, you asked for it, you got it.

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

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 Voodoo3 3000 PCI board. At just under \$150, the V3 3000 delivers great price/performance, and will do a very good job with current games, and a good job with games coming out soon. And the best part is that when you swap in a new motherboard/CPU, you can migrate the Voodoo3 board to the new setup and use it there until you decide to get an AGP-based 3D card.

If your rig's motherboard has an AGP slot, choose Creative's 3D Annihilator 3D Pro, which goes for around \$270 bucks. Admittedly a somewhat-pricey bugger, this GeForce-based board uses DDR SDRAM memory to keep the GeForce's four pipelines tied and happy. If you can't stomach a \$270 investment, then consider Creative's 3D Blaster TNT2 Ultra, which is available now for around \$150.

Even if you're running a Pentium-II 233 or 266MHz CPU, when you upgrade motherboard/CPU, you can migrate either of these cards into your new setup, and they've got room to grow with whatever CPU you mate them with.

GET IT TOGETHER

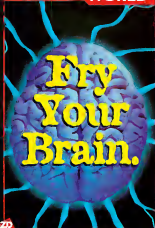
So you've got all this great gear piled high on your dining room table, and you're asking yourself, "Now what?" It's time to take all these pieces and parts and turn it into the gaming rig of your dreams. So how do you get started? Head over to Loyd's PC Workshop page on GameSpot at www.gamespot.com/features/pc_workshop6/ for step-by-step instructions on how to put your components together and get your killer rig up and running.

Price	Why Shiny
\$125	5 PCI slots, Seabreeze, 48MB - ready for 7-11
\$145	600MHz in a sub-424 spacers
\$88	128MB, unswapped in
\$0	
\$25	Went for 32-bit
\$30	Still gotta have it
\$170	IBM's low cost, best price
\$65	Got cheap 803
\$120	Sold 'til' monitor at a budget price
\$80	420 and extra audio for under a Creative
\$29	Went back to my favorite
\$60	Solid performance, good price
\$15	Back to the old favorite
\$0	
\$14	Cheap nice add-on feature
\$30	Better than the "gaming" mouse
Total w/o Game Controller: \$1,926	
\$19	Cheap decent 3D stick
\$30	Solid basic package

Total \$1,995



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TACTICAL TIPS FOR STAYING ALIVE AND BAGGING BAD GUYS BY KEN BROWN

SWAT 3 Strategies

One would hope that the real officers in SWAT are a lot smarter than the ones in *SWAT 3*. Not only will your team members do stupid things that get them killed, but the levels are deviously designed to create all sorts of hideous tactical challenges.

And the bad guys, in medium-difficulty mode, are fast and deadily sharpshooters.

To help improve your chances, we've compiled some tactics to get you through three of the most challenging levels in the game. A lot of these tips can also be applied to other levels.

General Tips

- If you've got a good dynamic, you can't order a team to Mirror for threats. But you've got an Opt-Wand to help you peek around corners. When in doubt, whip it out.

- Toss in tear gas whenever and wherever you please. Most suspects will surrender without a shot if they're blind and choking.

- When entering unfamiliar territory, tell one team to cover it, then instruct the other team to move and clear. Keep leapfrogging in this manner so that one squad covers while the other moves.

- Bang and clear closed doors ad nauseum.

- Your teams won't cover doors if there is an unsecured

PERIPHERAL VISION Here's why the Opt-Wand is worth its weight. See the bad guy in the Opt-Wand window? Because you can tear gas off the wall and bag this loco.



GUTSHOT Stay low going up stairs, and you'll have the advantage if a hostile rounds the corner.



SITTING DUCK OR DECOY?

Suspects have a tendency to cooperate in the worst places. This officer can be ambushed from three angles if he tries to call this gag, so be sure to cover for faults.



and cover. Then check for threats and make a baseline for the right side, ground-level entry. Be sure to cover the window first before entering.

THE PRIZE She'll be in psychotherapy for years to come, but at least she's alive.



TANGO IN THE WINDOW

Keep an eye on the window while your Elements are entering through the door. If you get a cooperative tango, cover him until a team can cuff him.

suspect in their field of view. Cuff them, then order your team to cover for threats.

- You can get your team to throw lightsticks, tear gas, or flashbangs wherever you want.

Tell them to deploy [F6], select the tactical aid, and point your target

reticle where you want the object thrown. Bounce them off the starwell to go upstairs.

- Right clicking the mouse speeds up your movement.

- If all else fails, switch to easy-difficulty mode.

Home Invasion

As soon as this level starts, tell the Element to fall in

BALLS TO THE HALL Keep your Element in front of you in long hallways. You'll be slower that way.



SPECIAL DELIVERY Throw the Element cover while you open the service door from the right. Toss in tear gas and get ready for a shootout.



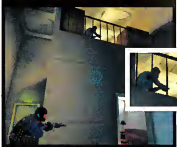
BEHIND THE CURTAIN Run one team cover each side of the partition between the dressing rooms and the studio. Then toss tear gas over the top of the window backdrop, and set up your Element to enter the studio.



DBN Television Station

The TV station is a tough level. Try entering the station from the side, clear the dressing room area and second floor, then the studio, then the garage and Monkey Bar.

HEADS UP Watch the upper level above the dressing rooms.



The Hotel Carlyle

Enter the hotel from the basement. Mirror for suspects, toss in tear gas, and then tell one team to search right while the other team searches left. You cover the doors at left and the hallway. Once you've cleared the basement, head up the stairs and down the hall, and clear from the far end back, so you don't get caught in between.

GOING DOWN? Don't forget to clear the elevator at the top of the stairs.



HALL OF DEATH Real SWAT officers will tell you that long hallways with several doors are extremely dangerous. Tell your teams to cover the doors as you move down the hallway. If a door is open, mirror for suspects and toss in tear gas if necessary. If not, go through the door at the end of the hallway, clear the balcony, and start working back. It's a big floor with a lot of nooks, but that's why you worked from the basement up — to reduce the chances of an ambush.

COVER THIS DOOR The double doors in the hotel basement will give you fits. Close them and cover them at all times.



CGW TIPS

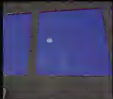
Cheats, Hacks, & Hints

System Shock 2

Tips There's a little amusing Easter Egg in SYSTEM SHOCK 2. On your third year of training in any division, do not get through the door into the skill selection area. Instead stop, and turn left, to where the cargo workers usually are. You'll get to see a Service Robot disco-dancing after about 15 to 20 seconds; not very large, but definitely worth a good laugh.

—Robert Ritter

Congratulations to our winner, who's as easily amused by dancing robots as we are. Straight from the BozoBin, Robert's getting a copy of BEATDOWN, a John Denver: The Wildlife Concert DVD, and a copy of DELUXE STAR TREK STARSHIP CREATOR. Enjoy!



Unreal Tournament

These cheats work only in the Single-Player Tournament or in Practice Sessions. Press [-] to bring down the console, then type:

Code	Effect
lanthrose	Activates cheat mode
god	God mode
loaded	All weapons
allarms	All zones
ghost	Walk through walls
fly	Fly mode
walk	Walk mode
playersonly	Freezes Time (Type again to Unfreeze)
summon [item]	Summon item (see list below)



Items list: Warhead, Launcher, Enforcer, DoubleEnforcer, Minigun2, PulseGun, Shock Rifle, Sniper Rifle, UT_Bio Rifle, UT_EightBall, UT_Flak Cannon, Chainsaw

Heroes of Might & Magic III: Armageddon's Blade

While playing, press [Tab], then type in the following codes:

Code	Effect
Nwospulgon	Level up
Nwospadme	Hero gains archwings
Nwedarthmeaf	Hero gains black knights
Nwecoruscant	Hero gains all buildings
Nwurz2d	Hero gains all battle machines
Nwewatto	Hero gains money and resources
Nwepodscrer	Hero gains massive movement
Nweprophecy	Show clock map
Nwerveveleourselves	Show terrain map
Nwemidichlorians	Hero gains 999 meat and all spells



CODES

BALDUR'S GATE

Open the file "Baldur.ini" in your BALDUR'S GATE directory and add the line "Cheats=1" under the "[Game Options]" entry. Then save the file and run the game.

Once in the game, hit [Ctrl]+[Tab] to bring up the console in which you type the cheats. [Ctrl]+[Tab] will also close this console. Type in the cheats exactly as they appear below and hit the [Enter] key to activate.

Code	Effect
------	--------

Cheats:TheBeesSwarm()	Summons 10 killer chickens who defend you.
Cheats:FirstAid()	Creates 5 healing potions, 5 neutralize poison potions, and 1 stone to flesh spell.
Cheats:500gold()	Gives you 500 gold.
Cheats:CowMilk()	Creates a CowMilk spell if you're near a cow.
Cheats:DrizzAttacks()	Creates a hostile Drizat.
Cheats:DrizzDefends()	Creates a friendly Drizat.
Cheats:CriticalItems()	Spawns all the game's critical items.
Cheats:Home()	Moves your characters to a free adjacent area.
Cheats:ExploreArea()	Marks entire area explored.

HEAVY GEAR II

Press [+] to bring up the chat interface. Then type in the following:

Code	Effect
set god	God mode
set mission	Complete level

Got a great tip for your favorite game?

Send your tips, tricks, and strategies to cgw_letters@zd.com (please put CGTIPS in the subject line) and we'll publish one submission each month. If your tip is published, we'll send you something pulled at random from the Computer Gaming World BozoBin!

CODES

NEED FOR SPEED: HIGH STAKES

Type these codes anywhere in the Main Menu:

Code	Effect
Arcade Mode:	
TR CO-15	Drive as traffic cars
GGFAST	Upgrade engine
MONKEY	Upgrade automatic transmission
MOON	Low gravity
MADLAND	Super-human opponents

Career Mode:	
BUY	Free purchase
UP0	No upgrades
UP1	First upgrade
UP2	2nd upgrade
UP3	3rd upgrade
GATES	Cash increase

Hot Pursuit Mode:	
BCOP	Bonus hot pursuit car
ECOP	Bonus hot pursuit car
FCOP	Bonus hot pursuit car

Other Codes:	
ACAR	Bonus car
BCAR	Bonus car
CCAR	Bonus car
CARS	All cars
TRACKS	All tracks
ALTIERS	Open all tiers
OUTMYWAY	Horn causes racers to crash
RESETYA	Horn causes racers to reset

STARCRAFT

Press [Enter] then type in these codes:

Code	Effect
Show me the money	Minerals and gas increased by 10,000
Whats mine is mine	+500 Minerals
breathin' deep	+500 Vespene
something for nothing	Everything upgraded
operation over	Faster building and instant upgrades
the gathering	Unlimited psionic ability
power overwhelming	Indestructible buildings and ships
war ain't what it used to be	Remove fog of war
food for thought	Ignore supply limit when building units
black sheep wool	Full map
no class	Opponent has no psionics
modify the phase variance	Build anything
medieval man	Free upgrades to units
there is no cow level	Skip mission
ooh la	Enable mission select
roman #	Jump to Roman mission #
zorg #	Jump to Zer mission #
protest #	Jump to Protest mission #
staying alive	Defuse after mission completed
man over game	Win game

Quake III Arena

All of these codes require bringing down the console (by default, hit the [~] key)

Code	Effect
Raincoaster	Unlocks all single-player tournament levels at skill one (I Can Win)
flammonkey	Unlocks all single-player tournament levels and adds 100 of every award to your record

To activate the following cheats, put the server in developer mode. Load up a map by pulling down the console and typing in "devmap map-name"

Code	Effect
fgod	God mode
give all	Gives you everything



You can also use the following codes with the /give command:

Allammo	grappling hook	lightning gun	quad damage
Armor	grenade launcher	machinegun	railgun
battle suit	er	medkit	regeneration
bfg10k	haste	personal teleporter	rocket launcher
flight	health	plasma gun	shotgun
gauntlet	Invisibility		

Note: A while back, we told you about how to make this macro that allows for precise zooming. There was a slip in the editing process, and the command to execute the .cig file is "exec", not just "exec".

Age of Wonders



Tip: Heroes are great, but they're tough to come by...even if you get the Call Hero spell, most of the time the summoned heroes don't want to work for you anyway (users). The solution? Dominate/Charm/Seduce them into your army instead, using Nymphs, Satyrs, Charistans, or what have you. Since heroes tend to have high resistance, you'll benefit from Entangling or Cold Striking (freezing) the hero to give yourself more Charm chances. —Jason Kapalka



T. Byrl's Mix

1. UNREAL TOURNAMENT
2. SW'03
3. GRAN TURISMO 2 (PS2)
4. NASCAR (Dreamcast)
5. The Little Sister by Raymond Chandler

Welcome to Homebrew Gaming

I have a lifelong relationship with Computer Gaming World. At the age of 13, I submitted an article on how to break the sound barrier in a P-51 in **CHUCK YEAGER'S ADVANCED FLIGHT TRAINER**. This resulted in my first rejection slip. Undaunted, I sent an article describing how to take the P-18 to the edge of space in the same game, thereby securing my second pink slip. Thanks to then-editor Johnny Wulce's good judgment, I was forced out of an early writing career and was able to focus my full attention on passing junior-high English. Now that my age has doubled (and I have acquired the ability to diagram a sentence), CGW has given me my big break. In this new column, I'll be covering the biggest events, best add-ons, and brightest designers in the fan community. I can think of no better way to kick off the column than to discuss The Gamers Net, a mod paradise with enough projects in development to fill this entire magazine with tales of wonder

A Spotlight on the Best in Gaming Add-Ons, Mods, and Fan Sites

Grogard Heaven
I first discovered TGN at www.thegamers.net, after I'd heard about a mod for SS's **STEEL PANTHERS 2** that used an enhanced version of that game's engine to turn it into a World War II game called—surprisingly enough—**STEEL PANTHERS 2: WORLD WAR II**. Stunned by how much more realistic this mod was than anything in the original **STEEL PANTHERS** series, I've since gone to the site regularly for upgrades and scenarios.

Grogard Heaven

Gamers who enjoyed **SP2:WW2** will be pleased to know that at least two new free **STEEL PANTHERS** "mods" are slated for release. Actually, calling these products mods doesn't do them justice. They are complete standalone games with all-new graphics, sounds, units, AI, maps, and combat routines.

The first of these games, **STEEL PANTHERS: WORLD AT WAR**, again puts the focus on World War II by modifying units and battles from 1930 to 1949. New features include a combat model with greater fidelity, off-board artillery, and reinforcement boxes. Additionally, units can capture artillery and vehicles, and crews that have abandoned vehicles can rally and re-man their mounts. This Windows-only conversion will offer Internet play and should be available by the time you read this.

The other game, **STEEL PANTHERS: THE NAM**, covers combat in Vietnam from 1960-1975. The engine will really be stretched for this one, with the introduction of tunnels for the VC,

weapons like booby traps, and other enhancements that attempt to capture the flavor of that conflict. Viet Cong casualties are never fully known to American forces until a battle is over; they won't know how effective they were until that point. You can learn more at the **Steel Lightning** site, found at slighting.thegamers.net

But Wait, There's More...

If you're not a fan of **STEEL PANTHERS** in any incarnation, take heart. David Heath, TGN's Director of Operations, somehow convinced SHI to give TGN the source code for other games, like **WARGAMES CONSTRUCTION SET III: AGE OF RIFLES**, **GARY GROSSBY'S PACIFIC WAR**, and **GARY GROSSBY'S WAR IN RUSSIA**. The staff at TGN is updating the graphics, sound, and game engines of all these titles and will release the results, as usual, for free. The older games are being ported to Windows, with added email and Internet play, and the **PACIFIC WAR** update should be available by April or May of this year.

TGN staffers obviously have enough talent to make their own games, and they have plans to do so, but it makes sense that they are using old code right now. Not having to modify large portions of the original game that actually worked means the updated games can be cranked out faster than those made from scratch. It also allows for greater ease of development for entirely new games based on the old engines. "The long-term goal," says Heath, "is to take the strategic engine in **PACIFIC WAR**, cannibalize it, and make an East Front/West Front game."

To top things off, all of the games available at TGN (along with new games from other manufacturers) are supplied with a steady stream of free campaigns and scenarios. Most of these come from "Wild" Bill Wilder and his team at the Wild Bill & the Raiders Design Headquarters (you can find them at wb.thegamers.net). That team's superb effort, along with the mods and games provided by other TGN affiliates, should keep wargamers in the trenches for a long time. "I guess basically what we're doing is becoming a body shop for games," says Heath, in what may be the biggest understatement I've ever heard.

If your mod squad is working on something the rest of the world needs to know about, send the details to me at fan-base@mail.com.

DEDICATED TO THE CAUSE Dedicated game fans — like the folks at Steel Lightning (slighting.thegamers.net) — are taking existing game engines and modifying them to create new scenarios and, in the case of **STEEL PANTHERS: WORLD AT WAR**, essentially whole new games.



INSIDE

ACTION

by Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen



Thierry_Nguyen@ol.com

Scooter Says Shut Up

If you missed it the first time, let me spell it out for you: I like UNREAL TOURNAMENT more than QUAKE III ARENA. It's not that hard to figure out. I reviewed both games; I gave one a higher score than the other. Originally, I had planned on doing a feature-by-feature comparison, followed by an overall winner. Either that, or just explaining at length why I prefer tagging Xan rather than Xaero. I don't need to do that, though. Numerically, you can already see where I stand, and at this point I'd just be adding fuel to the fire that is the UT vs. Q3A "war."

Q3A "war."

These wars of words on Usenet and web message boards perversely interest me more than the games themselves. What starts as genuinely interesting discussion often degenerates into pointless hectoring by, oh, the third post. The fact is, these wars between fans of two games are like fanatical religious debates: Both sides are way too stubborn and committed for a real discussion, so all we get is a lot of huffing and puffing. No one bothers to try leaving it at "it's just not my scene," they almost always have to get the last word in. Any intelligent commentary is usually answered with idiotic flames.

Case in point: Someone recently posted a Penny Arcade

comic strip as a good summary of the current UT vs. Q3A "debate." What happens next? Some people start posting and hectoring about which side has more loons and which side started the war in the first place.

Way to reinforce the point, guys. So I like UT more than Q3A, and someone else likes Q3A more than UT. Big deal. I don't feel compelled to write lengthy manifestos detailing why my preference is right and others' aren't. People have their own tastes; that's that. Now, if someone were to claim that, say, TRESPASSER or EXTREME PAINTERAWL is the superior game, well, I'd try to convince him otherwise, but I won't martyr myself to do it. There's a line between healthy debate and annoying argument, and right now, the UT vs. Q3A war has long gone past it. Talking about things such as gaming evolution versus revolution, or how healthy it is to have competition within the games biz is good; writing obscenity-drenched insults involving UT/Q3A gamers, their mothers, and/or livestock is just pathetic.

Think about it: The time you take to write up that lengthy post, which will ultimately go to someone as stubborn as you, and result in an even lengthier reply, to which you must answer in kind...that time is lost to you. You could have used that time to, I dunno, read a book, go outside, or even just play the game. Don't waste your time arguing with debards.

So people like game reviewer Tom Chick and I prefer UT, while QUAKE-god Dennis "Thresh" Fong and PC Accessories' Rob Smith prefer Q3A. Don't start using our opinions as an attempt to legitimize your latest manifesto. Everyone has different opinions and biases. Next time, click "next message" when you spot a thread hectoring on another pointless debate, and let people play what they want while you play what you want.

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Penny Arcade Comics, © copyright 1998, 1999
Mike Robinson and Jerry Welton

**UT vs Q3:
Enough
Already!**



In the Zone

I've got my hands on a late-but-will-go-gold-fonzcrow version of BATTLEZONE II.

Although, I've just started playing it, I can give you my first impressions. The graphics look even better this time; there are more environment types, and skimming on top of water that is reflecting mountains and bridges is a nice way to justify how much money you spent on your computer. It's also more accessible to people who have a hard time handling both command and combat at once. On one hand, you can opt to be just a pilot and hop around feeding your squad, leaving the building management to the computer. Conversely, you can hop out of your vehicle, and go to a Command Station which gives you an overhead view, and play it almost like a strategy game. Hopefully this will sell more than 11,000 copies — the horrifying sales figure of the first game.



BATTLEZONE II: Sequel to the best game we ever played.

Counter Striking

It's sword time this time, but I wanted to make a special mention here. My personal pick for Mod Of The Year: COUNTER-STRIKE. Think of it as the RAINBOW SIX mod for HALF-LIFE. It's by far the best tenmplay-based mod out there, with realistic weapon modeling, interesting maps, and even a radio-communication system. Go snag it over at www.counter-strike.net.

INSIDE

STRATEGY

by Robert Coffey

A No-Win Situation

Multiple split screens for rivaling remote areas of the map, a 3D engine that lets you gorge trenches in the earth, three separate sides with unique unit sets — it would seem that *Mindscape* really scored by picking up German developer TopWare's *EARTH 2150* for worldwide distribution outside of Germany. Not as cool as all the light-saucing poly-count goblindhook sounds, a basic flaw in the game's premise has us concerned that this game might end up infuriating gamers more than winning them over. *EARTH 2150* charges you with gathering enough resources by game's end to flee a rapidly decaying planet. Since these are the same resources you use to create units, it's possible you could beat all the missions, reach the end of the game, and still lose by having burned too many resources to build the forces that ultimately helped you win.

What's that all about?

If a game is smart and user-friendly enough to let you protect your vital base buildings by exactly mounting defenses on them, why aren't you protected from the possibility of total brain-saucing game rage caused by the digital equivalent of the endless *Legend of Zelda* Brownie football-snatching novelty play? Here's hoping part of the split-end-polish *Mindscape* is putting on this product prior to release addresses this in some way.



Who Cares?

Not too long ago, a public relations rep asked me what I thought about the use of 3D in a strategy game. More specifically, he wanted to know how best to promote a new title that had a muscular 3D engine that allowed fully-3D buildings to churn out fully-3D units to go slithering across the detailed, fully-3D terrain, lighting up the gameworld with nifty light saucing. There was also one of those free-floating, fully-controllable cameras for viewing all the 3D gaming high jinks certain to follow. How did this game, he asked, stack up against the other 3D-strategy fish swimming around in that increasingly crowded 3D pool?

It doesn't. It can't. No engine can save that game.

Not to say the game is doomed to terminal sausage. It's just that 3D engines and free-floating cameras are so ubiquitous, we'll soon find ourselves elbow-deep in a box of Frost.

Loops, fishing around for the free 3D engine that settled to the bottom of the box. Free-floating cameras and rolling terrain do not a great game make, and counting on technological crutches to prep up your game is about as prudent as counting on a Saturday Night Live sketch to carry an entire feature film.

Yeah, yeah—technology is cool. You see one of those spilly cell phones that flip open like a Star Trek communicator, and for the first twenty-or-so calls, you feel that geezy thrill of imagining yourself as Captain Kirk. But eventually, the phone's true test comes into play. Does it work, does it affect you in a positive way, and is it efficient enough that you don't have to scream into it on your computer-train-ride home?

Game companies may not want to hear it, but their games are ultimately put to the same basic, real-world test. Fifteen minutes into a good strategy game, you're more concerned with crushing your enemies than with the 3D buzzwords. And if the game stinks, if you can't get your units to go where you want them to go; if your infantry won't defend themselves; if that god-forsaken free-floating camera insists on keeping at least one monolithic visual obstacle between you and the action onscreen, well—you've just blown 40 dollars on DOMINANT SPECIES, WARZONE 2100, MACHINES, or some other bucket of slop. And don't you feel good looking at all that glittering technology?

Does it work? Does it affect your experience in a positive way? These are the questions that need to be asked. Coolness fades, good gameplay lasts forever.



robert_coffey@ed.com

Rob's Mix

1. PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
2. Waitin' for Rylee to call me
3. FREESPACE 2
4. PRO PINBALL: FANTASTIC JOURNEY
5. High Heat Baseball 2000

Wherein One Editor Rants About Developers Blinded by Science

You Can't Beat the Price

Burgie and MYTH-respawners Badlands have teamed together to create CHIMERA, a striking expansion for MYTH II: SOULBLIGHTER, offering both single- and multiplayer scenarios. MYTH fans should enthusiastically herald CHIMERA's arrival — especially considering that the entire package is a free download from burgie.net (you can also find CHIMERA in Burgie's new MYTH collection, THE TOTAL CODEX, if you're the kind of person who just can't accept something for nothing).

CHIMERA continues with MYTH's already compelling story, but adds a new interface, map environments, and a mix of old and new units like giant wasps and armored skeletons. This isn't a package for novices, however: CHIMERA's single-player game is designed for experienced MYTH players only and is quite challenging at even the easiest settings. Voice acting doesn't truly fit the characters, which is the only blemish in an otherwise well-made expansion. Still, CHIMERA is a striking example of Burgie's continued commitment to MYTH and its fans.



Chimera: Burgie, sk. MYTH II

THE QUEST FOR VICTORY WILL TAKE YOU JUST ABOUT EVERYWHERE.



ORBIT



SURFACE



UNDERGROUND

3-TIERED GAME PLAY, 3 TIMES THE STRATEGY, AND COMBATS OVER 3 STORIES HIGH

Metal Fatigue lets you build and command behemoth mechs. Armed with parts like Slicer Legs, Jet Pack Torsoes and Getting Gun Arms, you can fight for upgrades or simply sever your enemies limbs and attach them to your own forces. Best of all, you control units across 3 levels simultaneously in what has been described as part real-time strategy, part 3D action, and all together revolutionary.



ORBIT

SURFACE

UNDERGROUND

**METAL
FATIGUE**



www.metalfatigue.com

INSIDE

SIMULATIONS & SPACE by Gordon Berg



Gordon's Mix

1. UNREAL TOURNAMENT
2. UNREAL TOURNAMENT
3. UNREAL TOURNAMENT
4. UNREAL TOURNAMENT
5. UNREAL TOURNAMENT

Surfing for Sim Stuff

At the start of each month, senior editor Jeff Green asks the columnists what topic we plan to write about next. He says he needs to know this information so that he might be better informed and prepared for the editorial meetings he must attend. Each month, my response is usually the same: "Jeff, I have absolutely no idea." Personally, I think he asks so that he can steal any potentially good ideas. For example, I came up with a compelling argument as to why Pokémon should be mentioned in a simulation column and he said our readers weren't interested in Pokémon. Just thought you should know.

I thought about resuming my Chicken Little routine of how flight-sims are dying, but this column is better served when I play the role of cheerleader. It's not easy, though. One need look no further than giant-robot sim sales of PRESSPACE 2 to see that any game using a joystick will probably suffer a horrible death at the retail level. (Maybe Chris Roberts is on to something by making FREELANCER extremely mouse-friendly.)

So, when in doubt as to what to write about, always fall back on traditional column-filler material: Gordon's favorite web site haunts.

Let's start with some daily news sites. Any savvy online-sim veteran makes www.simhq.com or www.combat2sim.com part of their de rigueur surfing habit, but a few new sites are also worthy of some daily inspection. Make sure to swing by www.dogfighter.com, www.fragalsworld.com, and www.sim-arena.com for frequently updated news, quality stories, and unique material. Those of you with a predisposition toward space combat will find A Talent For War's site, atfw.intelligamer.com, equally invaluable.

The Usenet newsgroups are obviously a great resource for your sim addiction, assuming you can stomach some of the more "eccentric" types that often lurk there (then again, that's what a "kill file" is for, isn't it?). Plus, many web and fan sites now host powerful threaded-message boards, allowing them to deliver far more relevant discussion on whatever topic you're searching for. The best web alternative to Usenet that I've found is Delphi's flight sim forum at www.delphi.com/flight/start. You'll have to sign up, but membership is free.

Sites more dedicated to these focus cover only one title. Such sites not only offer equally useful message boards, but they can also hook you up with some cool add-ons as well. For example, the favorite hangout for fans of Activision's FIGHTER SQUADRON SCREAMIN' DEMONS OVER EUROPE can be found at www.fightersquadron.com. It was there that I discovered some WWI add-on links and downloaded a SE5a from www.schoolbusz.com/chickenscoop/se5a/index.htm. A few minutes with the mission editor allowed me to couple this with the Fokker Dri from www.openplane.org and I was in WWI heaven. Those of you without FS:SDOE can still get an idea of how much fun I'm having. Download the demo from www.openplane.org and you'll fly a rousing four vs. four Fokker dogfight. By the way, you can also find a link to the latest "plane pack" effort at the [fightersquadron.com](http://www.fightersquadron.com) page, a perfect example of what I was talking about in my November "Labor of Love" column.

Those of you still fond of Microsoft's COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR will find yourself in plane-download heaven at www.combat2a.com, while visitors to simcombat.com will be equally rewarded with add-ons to several other simulations, especially RED BARON 2/3D, JANE'S WORLD WAR II FIGHTER fans need to swing by members.xoom.com/vw2f for a dynamic campaign generator. EUROPEAN AIR WAR fans not quite happy with the flight models should check out ECAOnline at www.gocities.com/wesger/main.htm. Finally, if you gave up on MI TANK PLATOON II, you should

look at it again now that it's been patched. It's cheap if you can find it, and there's a really cool fan site at members.xoom.com/mltp2.

When not engaged in aerial maneuvers, Gordon Berg works as a network administrator for a non-profit social services organization.



GAMERS DO THE DARNEDEST THINGS Here are a few of the famous aircraft created by fans of COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR.

A Farewell to FALCON

Call it coincidence, but shortly after my sarcastic open letter to Hasbro appeared in the January issue of CGW, Microprose as we know it effectively became no more. Gee, I had no idea I had that much influence (either that or Hasbro's stockholders were lashing out in a jealous reaction to the appearance of Mattel's Barbie in Toy Story 2). Still, their getting rid of the premier simulation franchise was fairly disheartening. I was told the sim sold around 500,000 units worldwide, but a PR rep was quoted over at www.cgw.com as saying, "We think flight sims are great games...we just wish they had a broader audience." How much broader than 500,000 are they shooting for?

Right before the bad news hit the Alamogordo offices, the final patch (ver 1.08) was released. This version still has some problems, but not as deep, after the horses at www.falcon.com, the group responsible for the final patch's testing. Visit that site to download their own patch for version 1.08 and an extensive FAQ that details some workarounds and improvements.

A photograph of two young boys running on a paved sidewalk in a park-like setting. The boy in the foreground is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and plaid pants, running towards the camera. The boy in the background is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt with a red diagonal sash and brown pants, running away from the camera. A small, silver, four-legged robot dog is running on the sidewalk between them. The background shows green grass and trees.

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INSIDE

SPORTS

by George Jones



George_Jones@ed.com

Fame, Shame, and Innovation

Computer sports game fans, today is your lucky day. For no additional charge, with your paid purchase of Computer Gaming World, this month—and this month only—you receive free admission to the first ever CGW Sports game Hall Of Fame, Shame, And Innovation induction ceremony! (This ceremony is neither sponsored nor endorsed by the CGW editorial staff. Which is fine by me, because then they can't contribute to it.)

Let's not waste any time, shall we? Each nominee has been inducted on the basis of fame, shame, or innovation in the area of sports gaming.

One-on-One: Dr. J vs. Larry Bird: In an era when there was so EA Sports (or ESPN, for that matter), Electronic Arts foreshadowed their upcoming success with this 8-bit schoolyard hit. Featuring a three-point line, fatigue, a 24-second clock, and shattering backboards, ONE-ON-ONE kept us glued to our Commodore 64s and Apple IIs, way back in the day.

Superstar Ice Hockey: If you thought the FRONT PAGE SPORTS: FOOTBALL franchise was the first to bring career play into the PC sports arena, think again. This 1987 gem of a hockey game from Mindscape allowed you to guide your hockey team season after season, in the hopes of making the international playoffs year after year. In between seasons, you could trade for new players, or train your team in certain performance categories to make them faster skaters or better shooters. On top of it all, SUPERSTAR ICE HOCKEY was an enjoyable, fast-moving hockey game.

Gamemaster Championship Football: GFL attempted what many of us have thought would be cool at some point in our lives: a first-person-perspective football game that allowed you to control the receiver (by running pass-routes) or the running backs. Unfortunately for Gamemaster—a company that also created a fantastic full-court, two-on-two basketball game with season play—DOOM and football don't mix. Still, they gain entry on the merits of their innovative

SIERRA'S FRONT PAGE SPORT FOOTBALL: Sierra/Dynamix ruled the computer football field through most of the 1980s.



attempt. The HOFISI applauds their effort.

Front Page Sports Football: For being the first game to combine great graphics, strategic depth, real-life play-ers, and career play. Yes, Sierra ruled the pigskin roost with this title...until a tragic bug overdose in 1999 ruined its life forever (cue VH-1's Behind the Music music).

High Heat 2000: In addition to its stellar gameplay, HIGH HEAT 2000 also gains entry for somehow getting mentioned in every single one of CGW's last seven—make that eight—issues.

Hardball: This baseball legend gains entry both for its amazing gameplay in the early years...and for its absolutely abominable, unimaginative, dull gameplay in its later years.

John Madden Football: For quelling our post-TECMO BOWL- blues and bringing us the joy of action-oriented football for almost 10 years running.

Mario Golf: Hey, don't laugh. Many a sports-game designer could learn a lesson from the boys at Nintendo. They've taken a simple, enjoyable golf game and, by adding role-playing ele-

George's Mix

1. **Thin's Fall Apart** by The Roots
2. **MARIO GOLF** for the Game Boy Color
3. **PL-NEC/98: TORMENT**
4. **NBA LIVE 2000**
5. **Naked** by David Sedaris



ELECTRONIC ARTS' ONE-ON-ONE: Even as the of Apple II, EA could pull some great moves.

ments (as you play and accomplish certain tasks, you gain experience points, which improve your performance) was created one of the more compelling sports games of the last few years.

Was your favorite game left out? Email the HOFISI at gjones@ed.com. The \$200 qualifying fee will guarantee your favorite game entry through the pearly gates. (Checks not accepted.)

Hall of Fame Is People!

The HOFISI would also like to acknowledge the lifelong efforts of two real-life sports game designers, **Andrew Dolphin**, for building one of the most in-depth and enjoyable libraries of DOS-based sports games ever: COACH and COLLEGE COACH football, as well as the generically titled BASKETBALL, HOCKEY, and

BASKETBALL MANAGER—all of which featured full career modes, with retiring players, rookie drafts...and the ability to play through a full season in 15 minutes.

And along similar lines, we recognize **Mr. Lance Haffner** and his line of text-based sports simulations. For keeping it real for all those years when there was no such thing as a graphical sports game that allowed you to use your brain.

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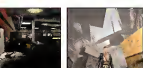
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An Open Letter to Lord British

Your Highness, ULTIMA IX Is a Royal Pain in the Ass

Dear Lord British,

Greetings, Sire. How farest thou, at the start of this glorious new millennium? I hope well. Forgive me for disturbing thee in public like this, but I have a message of the gravest importance. First, though, I beg your indulgence in allowing me to speak in my common, vulgar tongue, for I am afraid, alas, that whenever I hear this pretentious pseudo-Elizabethan talk, it always makes me want to kicketh somebody's asseth.

Lord British, you and I have never met, but I feel as though I've known you for years. Way before I ever became a scribe for this humble magazine, I was a huge fan of Your Majesty's games. Your ULTIMA role-playing games are true classics that kept me up way too many nights when I should have been sleeping, studying, or learning how to talk to girls.

As both CGW's RFG editor and as a fan, I was looking forward to your latest epic, ULTIMA IX: ASCENSION, just as much as anyone. Five years in the making! The glorious finale to the trilogy of trilogies! The grand summation of 20 years worth of ULTIMAs! Like Star Wars: Episode One, ULTIMA IX had legions of loyal fans waiting in anticipation for years, ready to plunk down their money the day it was released.

Which is why I am so pissed off.

Lord British, you have made a mistake. A big one. ULTIMA IX, you see, was not a finished product when you put it on store shelves and started raking in \$50 apiece for it. Not even close. Riddled with bugs, bogged down by horrible performance, marred by brain-dead AI, unplayable on most PCs, ULTIMA IX—rather than being the gaming event of 1999—has turned into the fiasco of 1999. The reviews are almost universally scathing; many fans are furious with you; and instead of reaping any awards, ULTIMA IX is damn lucky to escape without taking home our dubious Coaster of the Year award—an award we handed out two years ago, you may recall, to your equally buggy and unfinished ULTIMA ONLINE.

For the life of me, Sire, I can't begin to understand how you could have possibly let this happen again. Do you not play your own games anymore? Do you not care about the quality or reputation of your products? Is the desire to make money for Christmas really so much more important, at this stage of your career, than doing the right thing and delaying your products until they're done?

Don't tell me you were caught unaware. I don't believe it. The first patch has a readme file dated before the game appeared on shelves, meaning the team was scrambling to fix bugs before anyone had bought the game. But, hey, you don't need to be a detective to know how unfinished ULTIMA IX was. All you have to do is

boot it up—if you can. One CGW editor tried installing on three different state-of-the-art PCs before giving up in disgust. Me, I installed it just fine. The problems began when I tried to play it, and faced one embarrassing glitch after another. Like monsters who stand still. Like a frame-rate so slow, it looks like a slide show. Like heavy rain falling inside your castle. Inside your own castle, Lord British!

The great, sad irony of all of this is that for years the ULTIMA games have preached the gospel of ethics, and morality, and doing the right thing. Remember? According to the great Lord British, the eight virtues worth pursuing are Honesty, Compassion, Valor, Justice, Sacrifice, Honor, Spirituality, and Humility. I'm curious, Sire. Which virtues are tested when it comes to deciding whether to ship a product you know isn't ready yet? Honesty, maybe? Sacrifice? And which choice do you think the Avatar would make?

I know this is harsh, Sire. But I have been waiting to hear something, anything from you for about a month now, and, as of this writing, you have been strangely silent. It seems particularly strange, since you were so willing to take credit for the game before it shipped, what with your name at the top of the credits and all. And inside my ULTIMA IX box, there's even a certificate signed by you, which, you say, serves "as a reminder of just how much you've meant to myself, ULTIMA, and Origin."

Which virtues are tested when it comes to deciding whether to ship a product you know isn't ready yet? Honesty, maybe? Sacrifice? And which choice do you think the Avatar would make?

You say we mean a lot to you? Then try showing it. Talk to your fans. Go to your web site and tell us what happened. The sun is fading fast on the kingdom of Britannia, Sire. Are you going to let it go down in shame, in these twilight hours, or with glory and honor?

I await your reply in anticipation, and until then remain,

Thy Humble Servant,
Jeff Green

What Jeff doesn't realize is that the Guardian is alive and well and knows where he lives. Cast spells of protection his way at jeff_green@zd.com



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