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OCTOBER 2000 • ISSUE 195 • [www.gamespot.com](http://www.gamespot.com)



# HOMEWORLD CATAclysm

A new stand-alone episode in  
the Homeworld saga





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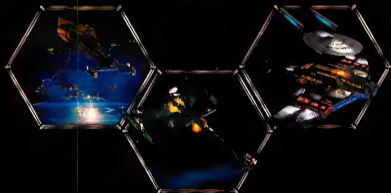
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**FEATURES**

**FALLOUT TACTICS**

64

The gaming world is aglow with the news of **FALLOUT TACTICS**, a 100-megaton blend of **FALLOUT** role-playing and the man-on-mutant combat of **X-COM**. Accept your fate: radiate!

**STRATEGY SPECIAL**  
**ALL THE RIGHT MOVES**

73

Put the juke on your opponents with these tips and tactics for over a dozen games, including **DIABLO 2**, **COMBAT MISSION**, **DARK REIGN 2**, **MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2**, **EVERQUEST**, and more.

**PREVIEWS**



**Escape From Monkey Island** .....54

Adventure games dead? Not if LucasArts has anything to say about it. Check out the latest game in one of the most beloved series in gaming.

**Midtown Madness 2** .....57

Live out those road rage fantasies without the harsh side effects.

**Anne McCaffrey's Freedom: First Resistance** .....59

When it comes to creating a thrilling third person shooter, the best man for the job may be a woman.

**INSIDE GAMING** 152

**Multiplayer Games**  
by Thomas L. McDonald .....152  
Tired of the Massively Medieval? Sample the Sci-Fi style of **Attraxx**

**Homebrew Games**  
by I. Byrd Baker .....155  
Homespun Add-ons for **THIEF** and **COMBAT MISSION**

**Racing Games**  
by Tom Price .....157  
Behind the Wheel of **MASCAR HEAT** and **GRAND PRIX 3**

**Role-Playing Games**  
by Dosslock .....159  
The Summer of the RPG

**Strategy Games**  
by Robert Coffey .....161  
Get Out of My Interface!

**Action Games**  
by Thierry "Scezer" Nguyen...163  
Behind the Scenes at Raven Software

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CAN GIANTS GET BACK ON ITS FEET?

AND IF THE BATTLE.NET IS BROKE, FIX IT, DAMMIT!

## 92 REVIEWS

Deus Ex ..... 104

Enemy Engaged:

Comanche vs. Hokum ..... 112

Dark Reign 2 ..... 114

Warlords: Battlecry ..... 120

Icewind Dale ..... 124

KISS: Psycho Circus ..... 130

F1 Grand Prix ..... 132

Panzer Campaigns '44 ..... 134

Backyard Baseball ..... 136

Beachhead 2000 ..... 136

Start-up ..... 136

Star Trek Conquest

Online ..... 136



## 124 HARDWARE

138 Full-Screen Anti-Aliasing

Does this new tech make a bit of difference?

142 Under the Hood

Force-feedback has lost the vibe.

144 Tech Medics

Our get-fixed-quick scheme.

148 Killer Rigs

Build a gaming beast!

150 Hardware Reviews

ATI Radeon Graphic Accelerator

Logitech WingMan Force 3D

GameCommander MX

PolkAudio AMR70 Speakers



## THE USUALS

21 **George Jones**  
It's the gameplay, stooopid.

25 **Letters**  
Gamers go postal.

166 **Index of Advertisers**  
The phrase that pays.

168 **Greenspeak**  
What you did during Jeff's summer vacation (and why we're sad to see him return).



34

104

114

130

136

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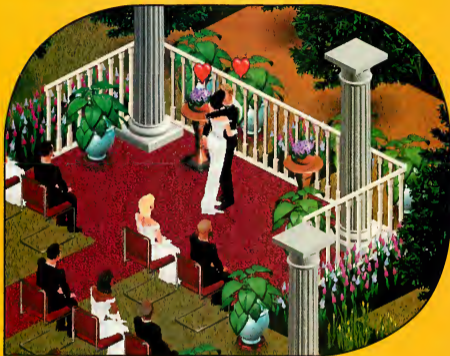
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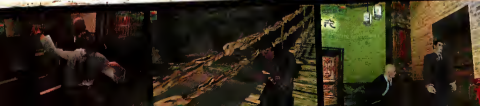
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## The Tale of Icarus

**A**midst all the clamor about the fate of the PC gaming industry in the face of competition from PlayStation 2 and the Xbox, an important fact has been overlooked: We haven't even seen the big Fall releases yet, and it's already been a banner year for PC gaming in terms of quality. The PC games market isn't going to swallow Sony's PlayStation 2 whole—or even touch it at all—but it is kicking ass and taking names where it counts the most—gameplay.

I bring this up for two reasons. First, we usually present our big giant strategy guide at the beginning of the year. That's the time when all the big titles come out, so it's always made the most sense to do this feature in the January or February issue. This year, though, things are a little different. Check out page 73 for our strategy guide to the best dozen games released this summer.

Second—and most importantly—the number of good games available for the PC makes me wonder what exactly is going to happen when the PlayStation 2 comes out next month. Clearly, it's going to be initially successful. With



**1** The PC games market is kicking ass and taking names where it counts the most—gameplay. **1**

all the clout the original PlayStation had, how can it not be?

But with the exception of impressive sports titles like EA's *MAJESTY 2001*, I didn't see a whole lot of innovation on the new platform at this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo. That has me concerned. Is Sony, in pursuit of the mainstream masses, missing the mark with a launch catalog of rehashed games? Maybe I'm just jaded. Or maybe they were showing all the amazing games behind closed doors.

I wonder, because only three or four years ago, PC game makers were clamoring about gaming becoming mainstream, about games becoming the dominant form of entertainment. And then we proceeded to get washed out with a slew of redundant, unoriginal games—real-time strategy and first-person shooter clones.

By December, of course, we'll know for sure. But be careful, Sony. Undoubtedly, the PlayStation 2 will sell millions of units at the start. But quality games—not DVD discs or eliminating the need for a personal computer—are going to be what takes you to the top.

P.S. Online gaming is picking up a full bead of steam, with several new massively-multiplayer gaming projects launched every month. To keep us all abreast of these developments, we've enlisted hardened gaming vet Thomas L. McDonald to edit the new *Massively Multiplayer* section of Inside Gaming. Check it out on page 162.

*George Jones*

In the ancient land of Yamato,  
an aging and power-hungry warlord turned to  
darkness in his mad quest for eternal life.

His soul ravaged by the demon Raien,  
the warlord released hordes of undead  
warriors and hellspawn to crush all life from  
his kingdom and the four houses of power  
who swore fealty to his throne. As bodies  
feasted from the warlord's assault,  
seven samurai stand ready for their  
final mission —  
revenge.

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huge environments of fast-paced  
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◆ Get ready for intense multiplayer  
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people can play online and vie for  
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commands for you to lead  
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of the single-player game.

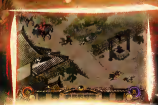


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# LETTERS

## Reviewing The Reviewers

I am curious if gaming companies care what you rate their games. You give a very fair and descriptive review of the games, and, for the most part, my choice on buying a game depends on whether you think it blows cheese or rocks the house. Do the big-time companies actually read what you guys have to say? If not, then they need to get off their asses and read a little bit.

**Damian Knecht**

Boy do they. We catch hell sometimes for our reviews, and it's safe to say that every major publisher has been infuriated with us at least once. But we don't play favorites; we strive to be fair, honest, and accurate; and we rate everything in a staff meeting to ensure no one editor's biases color the rating. Of course, not everyone agrees with us...

## Vampire Review: The Condemnation

Brett Todd's review of VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE is a step in the wrong direction. The point is not whether the review is negative or positive — the point is it contains zero information, unlike Robert Coffey's great SOLDIER OF FORTUNE analysis (#191). What you printed is an opinion piece written with first-boy denier and self-serving explosives, better suited to the back pages. Todd despises the setting, hates the game and proceeds to rip it to shreds. I expect this from teenager-run Web pages, not from Ziff Davis.

Do us and game designers a favor: give Brett Todd a back page where he can rant and let's see more of Bruce Genyk's incisive, fact-based writing.

**Vincent Langlois**

Brett Todd's review was unduly harsh. Every once in a while a game will come out that gives a breath of fresh air to the genre. VAMPIRE is one such game. Although I was very frustrated with the lack of a "pause" feature, save game anywhere feature, long dialog and often choppy performance, I found a way to work around each of those and still enjoy the exceptional qualities of the game.

The true virtues of the game are its beautiful imagery, great programming, and exceptional audio. I went through the entire game and really enjoyed being able to see disciplines for different things. This variation from the common RPG hack-and-slash — "a fighter is a fighter/a mage is a mage" — really makes the game intriguing.

I think a game with all these virtues deserves at least three stars, and possibly as much as four stars after installing the patch.

**R. Shawn Davis**

You make some good points. Keep in mind that while the patch may have improved many of the game's features, it is our policy to review games as originally released.

I just read John Talcott's letter in issue 194, and he seriously needs to lay off the crack! No story in VAMPIRE? What? I'd like to know what version he has, because the one I'm playing has a tremendous engrossing story, excellent voice acting, and great cut-scenes.

I hate it when people badmouth good games — it is just their opinion.

**R.C. "FangsFirst" Killian**

## What Would Blizzard Do?

That's simple: They would take their time, work carefully, and then release a buggy game after three years of development, with outdated graphics, uninspiring early levels and a "let's go beyond crap" saving system!

Sound familiar? Well, it is exactly the same thing Ion Storm has done, except for the "bitch" part. And I am not the only DIABLO II player to think so.

It's appalling to see how many reviews of DIABLO II fail to address the ridiculous saving feature, and instead praise the improvements of the interface (as if that shouldn't be expected in the first place). Everyone who had to backtrack hours of play because the damn thing crashed to the desktop just after you finished a tiresome and repetitive dungeon knows what I am talking about.

**Vidal Costa**  
Curitiba, Brazil

RACE WITH THE PROS at

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Go wheel to wheel with the Pros! Net Race Live is at the track, capturing the actual event and racecar telemetry to stream down the Internet directly onto your computer. We bombard you with lap after lap of white-knuckle action at 200+ MPH where your competition is professional drivers in real events.

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# LETTERS

## Honorary Blondes

Incredible as it may seem, some readers actually believed Jeff Green when he said he was working on a game called *Topless Tam's Sex Gun Orgy* (#103). Here are a couple of the more coherent, printable examples.

I would like to participate in the *Topless Tam's* beta testing.

Matthew K.

Could you please send me a copy of the game *Topless Tam's*?

Nicholas G.

## Console Yourself

I just read the stupidest article (in the "best selling" PC gaming mag) about the invulnerability of the PC as a gaming platform. This poorly thought nonsense has reinforced my fondness for your fine publication, but I have begun to think seriously about the future of PC gaming magazines, in particular CGW.

Over the next two years the battle of the new console systems will be resolved. Two of the competitors have hard drives. For years the only thing separating a large segment of the PC gaming crowd from console systems was the lack of secondary storage.

Watch game designers to see where the future of PC gaming is going. It is cheaper, easier, and faster to develop a game for a console system. Add to this the fact that console games make more money, and the question becomes, "Why would a sane person develop games for the PC?" It's a dollars and cents decision.

I am selling my sights on NEVERWINTER NIGHTS; if this game comes out on consoles as well as PC, I'm going to switch.

The point of this e-mail is to be prepared. I would be very depressed if quality gaming

moved to consoles and your fine publication did not.

Glenn Douglas

While the console game-playing experience (on a TV, in the living room, using gamepads) is still different from playing on a PC, we're certainly paying attention to the Xbox, and, to a lesser extent, other consoles, to see how they might affect PC gaming. You are right to suggest following developers; many have announced their intention to develop for next-gen consoles. We are entering a boom phase for consoles, but we don't think it spells the end of PC games. We've seen this pattern before with every major launch of a new platform. Admittedly, Xbox blows the lines more than ever, so we're covering it where we believe it makes sense.

#194) had unusual and deviant ideas about what to do with it (a codpiece for Halloween?), but most just wanted to scare their wives or girlfriends. And then there was this:

I have a spot on the wall next to my children's pictures reserved for the Tigger. Before even reading the contest blurb, the picture gave me serious "caesarian section" flashbacks. It looks eerily like the dreams I still suffer from of the doctor hauling my wife's guts onto her chest ("Here's your uterus, and these little guys are your ovaries").

Nurse: "Here, cut the cord!"

Nouseous Father: "No."

N: "It's very easy."

NF: "No."

N: "Look, you just..."

## 200th Edition!

### Your Favorite Gaming Moment

We're hard at work preparing our special 200th Anniversary issue, coming in March, 2001. To help us pay tribute to the best of gaming, and to recognize the readers who have been with us all these years (20!), we'd like to hear your stories about your absolute favorite moments in gaming. Please, try to pick just one or two, and try to keep the words below 200 (or we'll never get through them all in time). Then we'll print the best responses in our 200th Collector's Edition. [Cgwletters@ziffdavis.com](mailto:Cgwletters@ziffdavis.com).

We'd like to hear from more of you on this issue. Should CGW cover Xbox a lot, or just those games that will also be coming to the PC? Send your comments to [cgwletters@ziffdavis.com](mailto:cgwletters@ziffdavis.com).

NF: "Lady, there's a reason you are a medical professional and I studied electronics. They don't bleed!"

Jon Cramer

The Tigger's winging it way out to you now, Jon. May its plush tentacles provide the lasting comfort you so richly deserve.

## Alien Contest Winner

Never underestimate the power of the *Beavis & Butt-Head*, even if it looks like an Alien face-hugger. Some of those who wrote in response to our giveaway offer (Read me,

Write to us at:  
[Cgwletters@ziffdavis.com](mailto:Cgwletters@ziffdavis.com)  
For help with subscriptions:  
[Cgw@noodata.com](mailto:Cgw@noodata.com)

# Win a Monster Gaming System!

Valued at almost \$5,000!



## Falcon Northwest MACH V

- 1GHZ AMD THUNDERBIRD PROCESSOR
  - 512MB RAM, 80GB HARD DRIVE
  - 19-INCH VIEWSONIC MONITOR
  - HERCULES BAMB GeForce 2 VIDEO CARD
  - 400 WATT KLIPSCH PROMEDIA SPEAKERS
- PLUS ZIP DRIVE, MOUSE, KEYBOARD, AND MORE!

FOR MORE  
DETAILS  
AND  
CONTEST  
RULES,  
SEE PAGE 166.

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter, log on to [www.contest.computergamingworld.com](http://www.contest.computergamingworld.com), and fill in your name and address, Internet or other e-mail address, and daytime and evening phone numbers. One entry per person. Entries must be received by December 5, 2000.

Full System Details: AMD Thunderbird 1000MHz, 386K L2 cache, 312MB SDRAM, ATX Midtower, IBM Driveter 80GB ATA 100 hard drive, Viewsonic PF792 19 inch 2040 16bit monitor, Hercules 3D Pigglet II G15 60Hz G4500 2, 16.1MHz, 101 Key, Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer Optical mouse, Creative Labs SoundBlaster Live! 7 (5mm sound card), Klipsch ProMedia 400 Watt speakers, 3Com 10/100 Windows PC1100 modem, Inogen ZIP 100 meg drive, internal, with one disk, Windows 98 Second Edition Plus on CD, full version, 16MB 1.44mb floppy drive, 300 Watt power supply, 2 extra fans, MSB K7T Pro 6395, 6 PCI, 0 ISA, ATA 100 motherboard.





Real squads don't pass notes.

Scream. Howl. Heckle. The voice, man's primal form of communication, will once again revolutionize the way battles are won. With SideWinder® Game Voice you'll talk to and hear your squad without losing a step in an online firefight. Set up six different channels so you can plot with your teammates. Or broadcast abuse across the entire warzone. Taunt 'em. Scare 'em out of hiding. Because with the power of speech, your team's more like a real squad—focusing on the hunt and kill. Instead of the hunt and peck.



MICROSOFT  
**SIDEWINDER**  
GAME VOICE

For a free demo, check out [www.gamevoice.com](http://www.gamevoice.com)

# 16 TERRORISTS



## NEW MISSIONS & MULTIPLAYER

COMING FALL 2000



[www.sierrastudios.com](http://www.sierrastudios.com)

SWAT 3 owners can upgrade their software to include the Beta's multiplayer feature and toolkit free of charge. See [www.sierrastudios.com](http://www.sierrastudios.com) for more details. © 2000 Sierra On-Line, Inc. All rights reserved. Sierra, Sierra Studios, SWAT and Close Quarters Battle are trademarks of Sierra On-Line, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

**11 HOSTAGES.  
NO SECOND CHANCES.**

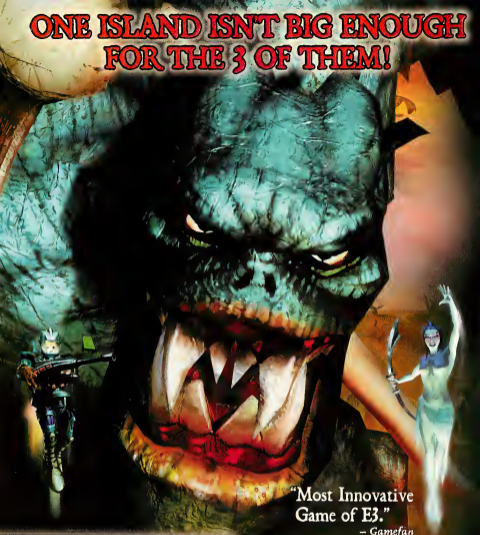


**ELITE EDITION**

**SWAT 3**

**CLOSE QUARTERS BATTLE**

# ONE ISLAND ISN'T BIG ENOUGH FOR THE 3 OF THEM!



"Most Innovative  
Game of E3."

- Gamefan

## THE SPECIES -



### KABUTO

A huge ferocious beast capable of performing wrestling style moves on poor victims <sup>with</sup> his size, sending out attacking offspring or pounding, crunching and munching pretty much anything in his way.



### MECCARYNS

A high-tech and crafty race who rule the sky with ingenious military formations, awesome fire power and the ability to construct a massive land base.



Three of the most remarkable and unique species ever pitted against each other on a computer screen collide to form

### *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*

combining action, strategic thinking, twisted humor and incredible 3D graphics for the most frenzied single and multiplayer battle ever staged!

- Eat, burn, drown, crush, kidnap and bury your victims!
- Play as each of 3 different species: the Meccaryns, the Sea Reapers and the Giant Kabuto in intriguing story-driven single player missions with multiple cut scenes.
- Battle on over 25 strikingly beautiful 3D islands utilizing a vibrant color scheme unlike anything ever seen before.
- Multiplayer mayhem! Choose your favorite species or divide up teams for cooperative play and let the frenzied battle begin with up to 8 people via LAN, modem-to-modem or TCP/IP.
- Choose from 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person perspectives in addition to the revolutionary "Kabuto Mouth-Cam" and "Foot Crunch".
- "Smarties" (island natives) work as a source of power-ups for you by providing weapons, vehicles, shops, spells and even a big base!

[www.interplay.com/giants](http://www.interplay.com/giants)



## SEA REAPERS

A species of lovely, ethereal females who can decimate enemies with the cast of a spell or construct a magical base protected by fearsome creatures and yet still retain their vixen charm.



Developed by



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## Giant Strides

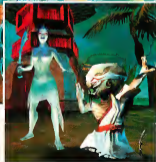
Planet Moon rises from dark times to continue work on GIANTS

### INSIDE

- Battle.net woes
- Mr. Sneaky
- Quake 3 Team Arena
- Phil Steinmeyer talks Tropico



**TIME OUT** The Sea Reaper's time spell reduces the Giant Kabuto to a slow-moving jumbo.



**BRAINS AND BEAUTY** The Seary at right can be put to use building things. Let's hope he doesn't build a bra factory.

■■■ After bursting onto the scene at last year's E3 and stunning the press with its entrancing, imaginative design, *GIANTS*: CITIZEN KABUTO seemed to vanish as quickly as it appeared. Why the long lull in the action? This was no "normal" three-year development cycle. When lead programmer Andy Astor contracted cancer midway through the project, his long-time colleagues were devastated, says Nick Bruty, president of developer Planet Moon. They had to come to grips with his illness and absence, and find new programmers to get back on track.

Planet Moon (creators of MDK) has since hired two new programmers, and for the last nine months *GIANTS* has been getting back on its feet.



# EMBATTLED BATTLE.NET

Blizzard belatedly beefs up bandwidth for booming DIABLO II popularity

■■■ "DIABLO 2 sales have been unprecedented," Blizzard's Bill Roper told CGW. Unfortunately, that's not all that's unprecedented about DIABLO 2. More than any other Blizzard game, DIABLO 2 has been plagued by problems, and it's taken some of the bloom off Blizzard's rosy relationship with its fans.

Battle.net, Blizzard's gaming network, has been overwhelmed with DIABLO 2 players since the game's release, and many players have experienced lengthy delays before starting a game. As one frustrated fan wrote, "Starting a game online takes about 10 to 15 minutes of CONSTANT typing and retyping the game name and password until the game finally gets to the load screen. At this point, you have a 40 percent chance of actually starting and a 60 percent chance of getting the 'Failed to Join Game' screen." Unfortunately, this experience unfortunately has not been isolated. According to Roper, the explanation for the problems is simple.

"Nothing could have prepared us for the incredible sales level of this game. In our first full month of STARCRAFT,

we sold something like 187,000 units. With DIABLO 2, we sold 148,000 in one day, and in one weekend we had surpassed STARCRAFT's sales," he says.

In other words, Battle.net has been a victim of DIABLO 2's success. "We went in with what we thought was an aggressive amount of bandwidth and servers for the release of DIABLO 2—56 servers for the U.S. alone. In one week, all our copies of the game were gone. Our warehouse was empty and we had to reorder."

Roper says that Blizzard is doing everything it can to fix the situation. "We're in 'hair-on-fire-got-to-get-some-stuff-out-there' mode. We will probably double the number of servers we currently have," he said. "In the next week, we'll be deploying an additional 36, bringing the total to 92 for the U.S."

Roper noted that it's not as simple as going to the store and buying some new computers and installing them. "It is not a trivial matter to add servers; it takes considerable time and money to make the increases in capacity and bandwidth. We have four Realm servers: US West in Los Angeles, US East in New York, the European Realm in Norway, and the Asian Realm in Seoul. It will take a week or two to get everything online, since we have to go through customs, coordinate with phone companies, and so on."

It's not just a capacity issue that fans are complaining about, though. There are other issues with the game and the way the multiplayer service is being run. Some servers have been taken down during prime-time playing hours for upgrades. Why then? "It depends on when we have to make a change," Roper says.

"Sometimes we try to get upgrades and updates installed as quickly as possible, and sometimes we've had emergency situations where we had to fix something immediately." He added that DIABLO 2 is Blizzard's first client-server game. "We're kind of learning as we go, and at the same time, we have the challenge of doing it in a public arena."

To compound the issue, the Macintosh version is now shipping. Will that cause even more overcrowding? "We don't expect it to have much of an impact," he says. What about the misleading "Servers down" message players get when the servers are full? "We're changing that in the 1.03 patch." Finally, what about publishing a known list





The Latest Heaping Pile of Rumors, Innuendo, and Gossip

# STEALTHMODE

■■■ It pays to lose money! Mattel's Jill Barad somehow walked away with \$50 million in severance pay after losing hundreds of millions, mostly from her acquisition of The Learning Company. Following her lead, several top dogs at Eidos are lunging for bonuses, despite the company losing so much money—nearly \$50 million—that it's been put up for sale. Nearly \$18 million in bonuses have been paid to the CEO and six other top executives. I guess the "Hey, let's make more TOMB RAIDERS games!" business model is good for manufacturing some nice golden parachutes. Too bad it didn't manufacture profits.

The French have leaked the fifth race in WARCRRAFT 3. We already knew about humans, orcs, demons, and the undead, but a flyer included in the French version of DIABLO 2 mentions "Elves of the Night" as being the fifth race—that's Dark Elves to us English speakers.

The game concept that Brian Reynolds and Big Huge Games are shopping around to publishers is an AGE OF EMPIRES-like strategy game. They want to add greater complexity and detail to give it even more of a CIVILIZATION flavor, however.

Texas is fast becoming a center for massively-multiplayer games, with ex-Origin employees Rich Vogel and Raph "Designer Dragon" Koster now working as employees for Verant Interactive. Vogel and Koster were instrumental in developing ULTIMA ONLINE and had worked on PRIVATEER ONLINE, the cancellation of which helped push them over the edge with Origin. They're rumored to be working on the STAR WARS ONLINE game for Sony.

Speaking of massively multiplayer, it's not exactly a secret but Square Co. announced that they are going to do an online-only, persistent world game based on their FINAL FANTASY series. They hope to attract a whopping two million players. Meanwhile, Maxis is seriously considering an online, multiplayer version of THE SIMS.

You may have seen that a lot of Dynamix

employees have left that division of Sierra, including some important TRIBES 2 team members. What I'm hearing is that they're waiting on a contract from Mattel Interactive to begin work on a game for them. What game?



Some Dynamix developers may have left TRIBES 2 to work on a Robotfish game.

Probably something to do with the Robotfish license that Mattel snatched up last month.

Hasbro Interactive seems to be of several minds about X-COM games. You may remember that they killed an unannounced X-COM GENESIS project that much work had gone into when they went through corporate-wide layoffs. Now, a Hasbro employee let it slip out that they are again working on more X-COM titles. Besides X-COM ALLIANCE, they are also planning something called X-COM 7 (a return to the roots of X-COM), and X-COM ENFORCER, a fast-playing action game.

Finally, some intriguing news from Interplay's Black Isle, the RPG stalwarts responsible for the FALLOUT series, PLANESCAPE: TORMENT, and ICEWIND DALE. They are using the LithTech 2.0 engine to create a new game, and here's their vague yet teasing allusions to what they are creating: "The majority of the team who created PLANESCAPE:TORMENT is onboard...The game will be a Black Isle-style role-playing game. This project is not FALLOUT 3 or TORMENT 2. It is real-time. We will have single and multiplayer modes." Hmm...most sneaky-sneaky of them!

Roper did say that DIABLO 2 was up to snuff as far as Blizzard is concerned. "It does meet our exacting standards as far as having bugs. The first patch took about as long as any of our other patches. It was ready right before the game shipped, due to the added delays of doing a simultaneous worldwide release. DIABLO 2 is a more complex game with a more complex client-server model than we've ever done before. We're extremely dedicated to getting the problems fixed. I just hope that people hang with us for the next couple of weeks while we get the new hardware out."

—Mark Asher

By Generalissimo Franceknie France

## BATTLETEN

of bugs?

"That would be a long list. We have our staff working on it and we're very aware of what the issues are," Roper says. "We have 200 bugs listed in our database but only four are Type 1 bugs now.

These crash the game. We have 12 Type 2 bugs that cause severe problems. The rest are minor. We're very anal-retentive about logging bugs, even if they can't be reproduced."

# 15

## October 1985

The issue featured a hot report from the Chicago Consumer

Electronics Show. So hot, in fact, that we dedicated our

full page to it!

The last new games previewed included the original GUNSHIP, LORD RUMBLE'S RESCUE, CAPTAIN GOODHART, and WINTER GAMES. The most interesting fact reported: A company named Nintendo was going to release an entirely new game system.



# 10

## October 1990

Forget the promise of future Roll-of-Famous RED BARON. Forget the annotated "paleography" of pre-15th Century wargames. Forget—!

you can—the detailed and/or medical analysis of units in the game EMPIRE, including seven charts and two graphs. The big news this issue: The unveiling of the CGW computer spreadsheet. Can you believe we gave away this article of technology to the first 500 subscribers, stamped envelopes? Gosh, were we staid.



# 5

## October 1995

Fight site rats were selling their flight suits over the news that publisher Jenks was teasing up with Electronic Arts on a series of new sims. The two had quite a run over the past five years, releasing some of the best products ever in the category.

Also, the run appears to be over, as EA has nabbed the Jesse's line. Time to fly WWN FIGHTERS one last time—in a mining man formation.



Prepare yourself for Rune, a brutal new third person action-adventure game steeped in the history of Norse mythology and Viking lore, built on the Unreal Tournament engine, and coming soon from Human Head Studios.

- WIELDING THIRD PERSON BATTLE ACTION
- OVER 20 LEVELS AND OVER 15 DIFFERENT WEAPONS - UNLOCK IN-GAME
- PLAYER ENVIRONMENTS INCLUDING DEATHMARCH, CAPTURE THE FLAG, AND UNIQUE NEW BELIEF-BASED LEVELS.

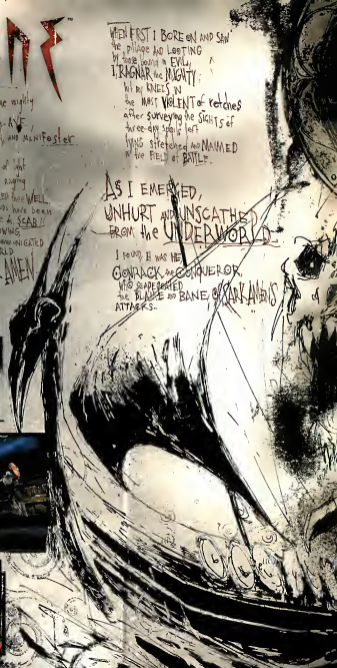
# RUNE

THE GREAT THUNDERER the mighty  
 A wielder of battle-axe  
 SHIVER of sword, and MANIFESTER  
 of MAGIC.  
 It has been said of him  
 his DECADENCE rising  
 since I last faced him WELL.  
 THE VIKING WARS have been  
 ripped open like a SCAB!!  
 THE WARROW FLOWING  
 DARK SHADOWS ENLIGHTENED  
 FROM THE UNDERWORLD  
 is by the  
 BESHAL SARK AMEN

WHEN FIRST I BORE ON AND SAW  
 the PILLAGE AND LOOTING  
 by those bound in EVIL,  
 I, THUNDERER the MIGHTY;  
 hit my KNEES IN  
 the MOST VIOLENT of retches  
 after surveying the SIGHTS of  
 three-day spoils left  
 WINGS stretched and NAMED  
 in the FIELD of BATTLE.

AS I EMERGED,  
 UNHURT AND UNSCATHED  
 FROM the UNDERWORLD.

I FOUND HE WAS THE  
 CONQUEROR the CONQUEROR,  
 WHO SCARIFIED  
 the BLAZE AND BANE OF SARK AMENS  
 ATTACKS..



"Its melee-intensive combat and absolutely evil visuals should put it a cut above the rest" - IGN

"Prepare to be knocked flat on your ass by Rune from Human Head Studios" - Inuite

HIS city, torn and MANGLED,  
it was here I MET  
AND LOOPED the HEAD  
of MY FIRST  
DARK WARRIOR AND LEARNED  
that MY VILLAGE AND PEOPLE  
WERE to be the next Spoils  
of

SARKAMEN'S WAR.

IT IS HERE  
MY QUEST took FORM.

MATURE (17+)

MILD ANIMATED VIOLENCE

MATURE

M

AGES 17+

ESRB RATING

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INTERNET

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Judging by the similarity of QUAKE 3 TEAM ARENA (left) to UNREAL TOURNAMENT (right), it's easy to see the inspiration for id's latest effort.

QUAKE 3 TEAM ARENA offers team-based play, for a price

## Id's Answer to UT

■ ■ ■ Id Software invented the first-person shooter, and for years they dominated deathmatch. But that ended abruptly with the release of UNREAL TOURNAMENT, whose team-based game options and more creative level design took id by surprise.

QUAKE III TEAM ARENA strikes a blow back for the Texas originals. Our half-day, late-stage playtest at id's offices convinced us that the QUAKE boys are serious about recapturing their crown. Unfortunately, it won't be a free add-on, but here's why you'll want it anyway:

**Team play:** Team Arena features four game types—the typical Capture The Flag and One-Flag games, plus two new ones. In Overload, you must destroy the skull-artifact in the enemy base to score. Destroying the artifact takes a lot of damage, so you're vulnerable during the attack. In Harvester, you have to retrieve the souls of your slain comrades from a central point, and carry them to your opponents' base.

**New Power-ups:** The scout booster increases your speed and jumping ability—perfect when you have the enemy flag. The Guard power-up gives you 200 armor and

health points. Invulnerability makes you impervious, but also freezes your position. The teleporter is also nifty: In some maps, it transports you into a nether region containing the BFG and access to both bases.

**New weapons:** An improved nail gun shoots a shotgun blast of nails, each of which does 30 points of damage. A new proximity mine will help with base defense, and a chain gun spits out shells and bullets at an obscene rate.

**New level designs:** Emphasizing wide-open, hyper-speed action, Team Arena's new maps create some amazing moments. The bases will be symmetrically designed with arrows pointing the way to the enemy base, so newcomers will have an easier time learning the level.

**New tournament single-player mode:** You can play TEAM ARENA in single-player mode with bots, like UT. As in QUAKE 3: ARENA, there's a mission in solo play: You have to win a series of multiplayer maps with your teammates, and then face bigger baddies in one-on-one arena combat.

QUAKE III TEAM ARENA should be on store shelves in late September. —George Jones

**FEATURE SHOOTOUT: Q3 TEAM ARENA vs. UT** Too late, too late? Not quite. UT still has the edge over Q3 TEAM ARENA in some key areas, but TA should add enough to level the playing field (and stop UT from looking dust in its face). Since neither game completely dominates the team-based playing field, the internet debates over which is better will rage on.

### QUAKE III TEAM ARENA

**Team-based scenarios:** CTF, One Flag, Overload, Harvester

**Power-ups:** Scout, Guard, Invulnerability, Teleporter

**Weapons:** Shotgun, Proximity Mine, Chaingun, in addition to traditional Q3A Arsenal

**New level design:** Wide-open, symmetrical levels

**New tournament:** Tweaked single-player allows you to play team-scenarios with bots

### UNREAL TOURNAMENT

**Team-based scenarios:** CTF, Domination, Assault

**Power-ups:** Damage Amplifier, Shield's belt, Invis'city, Runes (from UT Bonus Pack)

**Weapons:** Standard UT Arsenal

**Level design:** Too varied to describe

**Same tournament:** You already played with team bots in this.

### EDGE

It's a tie. Both have CTF; Overload and Harvester sound good, but Assault alone makes UT stand out

Possibly Q3TA. Runs enhanced UT's conventional power-ups, but the new TA ones sound even better

UT still has the edge. There's no equivalent to TA's Proximity Mine, but the UT arsenal is still more interesting

UT's matches a mix of symmetrical and non-symmetrical levels raised the bar incredibly high.

UT. If Q3 had team-based gameplay built in, id wouldn't be playing catch up right now.

## CGW PROFILE

# Phil Steinmeyer

Why is the engineer of **RAILROAD TYCOON II** and **HEROES OF MIGHT & MAGIC** acting like a dictator?



**Topic.** Is that a game or a nightclub where **Ricky Martin** performs?

**Tropico** is a strategy game where you play a Castro-ish figure running a Caribbean island, jilting your opponents, oppressing your people, and filling up your Swiss bank account, as the case may be. I think you're confusing it with **Tropico 2**, the sequel, where you're a Menudo-ish figure running a salsa band, trying to shake your bon-bon, impress your 13-year old groupies, and score a second hit to revive your flagging fortunes.

**You grabbed the Railroad Tycoon license from Microsoft, somewhat to Sid Meier's surprise. Will we see any discourses in Tropico?**

**Tropico** and **Jurassic Park** are both set on remote islands in the Caribbean. The leaders in **Tropico** and **Jurassic Park** both try to draw American tourists and their hefty wallets. Both games climax with everybody being eaten by... whoops I've said too much, you'll just have to buy the game and find out for yourself.

**What's your favorite game?**

My favorite relatively recent games are **Total Annihilation** and **Fallout 1 & 2**. I loved the early Sid Meier games.

**PopTop** was just acquired by **Take 2**. What's the stupidest thing about running your own company?

Lawyers. I'm married to a lawyer. Most of my college buddies turned into lawyers. My brother's a lawyer. It can't stand 'em [the lawyering part]—they're all quite honorable and nice people, otherwise.

**Are you worried about offending Fidel Castro with Tropico, a thinly-veiled look at Cuba?**

At least Castro doesn't put death sentences on the heads of those who poke fun at him. There's

a reason we went after Cuba, rather than say, Iran. Salman, buddy, I feel for ya.

**Castro's kind of ugly—the beard and all... What if gamers don't want to play a Castro-like guy?** You can play the game however you want. You can even be [gasp!] a democratic leader, treat your people well, and implement all the latest plans for your people's welfare that the United Nations happens to be pushing at the moment. Of course, there aren't too many democratically-elected leaders who've managed to stay in power for 40 years.

**Your people's welfare...you mean there's more to running a country than a luxurious presidential palace and a fat Swiss bank account?**

The peasants can be so annoying—they want good housing, adequate food, churches for the spirit, sports arenas for entertainment...the list is endless. Sometimes, though, it's easier to fulfill their wishes than to declare martial law.

**Does your wife understand games, or does she just roll her eyes a lot?**

More eye-rolling than anything else. Of course, I roll my eyes when she starts talking about lawyer stuff.

**Seen the Kilbreck photos? What do you think?**

[It's okay, Phil—your wife won't read this!] She had a talented surgeon. But I only have eyes for my lovely wife. Yes, she will read this.

**How do you celebrate finishing a game?**

One long 12-14 hour sleep-in, followed by going right back into the office to work on the German version, French version, demo version, etc.  
—Interview by Mark Aster

## PopTop Hops On Take 2 Train

■ ■ ■ **Take 2** recently acquired **PopTop Studios**, developer of last year's **RAILROAD TYCOON 2** and next year's **TROPICO**. **PopTop**, formerly owned by **Phil Steinmeyer**, will remain in St. Louis and continue to operate much like an independent development group for **Take 2**.

**Steinmeyer** says he initiated the sale because, "I got really burned out spending time on the business side of things. This deal will allow us to focus on developing games, which is our strength. If we continued as an independent, I'd end up working almost solely on business issues. That's not what I wanted."

**Steinmeyer** said the sale should have no impact on the development of **TROPICO**, a tongue-in-cheek strategy game where players assume the role of dictator of a banana republic. **TROPICO** is slated for a Q1 2001 release.

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# Top 40

CGW's Monthly Readers' Poll

NEW  
TOP 40

Rank	Game	CGW Rating
1	1 Half-Life Havoc.....	5
2	2 Age of Empires II: Age of Kings Microsoft.....	5
3	4 Unreal Tournament Epic/GT.....	5
4	3 Baldur's Gate Intergalaxy.....	4
5	8 Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear Red Storm.....	4.5
6	5 StarCraft: Brood War Havoc.....	5
7	9 Quake III Arena Activision.....	3.5
8	6 The Sims Electronic Arts.....	5
9	10 Half-Life: Opposing Force Havoc.....	3.5
10	7 Homeworld Havoc.....	4.5
11	— Diablo II Havoc.....	5
12	12 Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri Firaxis.....	5
13	16 System Shock 2 Electronic Arts.....	4.5
14	14 Thief: The Dark Project Eidos.....	4.5
15	11 Planescape: Torment Intergalaxy.....	5
16	24 Need for Speed: Porsche Unleashed Electronic Arts.....	4.5
17	15 Final Fantasy VII Eidos.....	4.5
18	13 Heroes of Might & Magic III 3DO.....	4.5
19	28 Soldier of Fortune Activision.....	2.5
20	17 Fallout 2 Intergalaxy.....	4
21	18 Brian Fardango LucasArts.....	4.5
22	19 SimCity 3000 Electronic Arts.....	4
23	22 Roller Coaster Tycoon Hasbro.....	4
24	27 Thief 2 Eidos.....	4.5
25	20 Command & Conquer: Tiberian Sun Electronic Arts.....	4
26	25 Freespace 2 Intergalaxy.....	4.5
27	21 Final Fantasy VIII Eidos.....	2
28	26 MechWarrior 3 Hasbro.....	3
29	23 Baldur's Gate: Tales of the Sword Coast Intergalaxy.....	4
30	33 FIFA 2000 Electronic Arts.....	4.5
31	29 Age of Empires: Rise of Rome Microsoft.....	4
32	34 Total Annihilation: Core Contingency Corecap.....	4.5
33	30 Warms Armageddon Hasbro.....	4
34	— Combat Mission Big Time Software.....	5
35	— Shogun: Total War Electronic Arts.....	4.5
36	35 NHL 2000 Electronic Arts.....	3.5
37	31 Dungeon Keeper II Electronic Arts.....	4.5
38	32 EverQuest Sany.....	4
39	— Vampire: The Masquerade Activision.....	1.5
40	40 Jagged Alliance 2 TalonSoft.....	4.5

## NEW POLLING PLACE!

Vote in the Top 40 Games poll at [www.computergaming.com](http://www.computergaming.com). The more people who vote, the better the results, but please vote only once per month.

Welcome, DIABLO II, we're so glad you could finally join us. We're also glad to see the twin poster children for new age wargames—COMBAT MISSION and SHOGUN—debut side by side. It's particularly noteworthy that CM landed on the Top 40 so quickly given no marketing whatsoever and online-only distribution. Chalk one up for an indie. VAMPIRE also made a surprisingly strong showing—let's see how long it can stand being in the spotlight.

### Top Action Games

Top Month	Game/Publisher	CGW Rating
1	1 Half-Life Havoc.....	5
2	2 Unreal Tournament Epic/GT.....	5
3	3 Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear Red Storm.....	4.5
4	4 Quake III Arena Activision.....	4.5
5	5 Half-Life: Opposing Force Havoc.....	3.5

### Top Adventure/RPG Games

Top Month	Game/Publisher	CGW Rating
1	1 Baldur's Gate Intergalaxy.....	4.5
2	2 Diablo II Havoc.....	5
3	3 System Shock 2 Electronic Arts.....	4.5
4	4 Planescape: Torment Intergalaxy.....	5
5	5 Final Fantasy VII Eidos.....	4.5

### Top Simulations Games

Top Month	Game/Publisher	CGW Rating
1	1 Freespace 2 Intergalaxy.....	4.5
2	2 MechWarrior 3 Hasbro.....	3
3	3 Falcon 4.0 Hasbro.....	3.5
4	4 Eurogreen Air War Hasbro.....	4
5	5 World War II Fighters Electronic Arts.....	4.5

### Top Sports/Racing Games

Top Month	Game/Publisher	CGW Rating
1	1 Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed Electronic Arts.....	4.5
2	2 FIFA 2000 EA Sports.....	4.5
3	3 NHL 2000 EA Sports.....	3
4	4 Motocross Madness 2 Microsoft.....	4.5
5	5 Midtown Madness Microsoft.....	5

### Top Strategy/War Games

Top Month	Game/Publisher	CGW Rating
1	1 Age of Empires II: Age of Kings Microsoft.....	5
2	2 StarCraft: Brood War Havoc.....	5
3	3 The Sims Maxis.....	5
4	4 Homeworld Havoc.....	4.5
5	5 Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri Firaxis.....	5

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- ▶ Cinematic movies accentuate each hard-won battle and brief you for your next mission.
- ▶ Will you lead an American victory parade in the streets of New York or host a Soviet victory celebration in the White House?



# PREVIEW

## ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

GENRE: Adventure • RELEASE DATE: Q3 03

PUBLISHER: LucasArts

DEVELOPER: LucasArts

CONTACT: [www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com)

DOUBLE DECAF FRAPPE. GUYBRUSH THREEWOOD battles the evils of gerbilification in **ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND**.

# Escape From Monkey Island

**G**ood news, mateys! One of the world's great action heroes is back. Not Stallone or Schwarzenegger. Those guys are finished, washed up. I'm talking about a cooler hero than those guys ever were. I'm talking about Threepwood—Guybrush Threepwood. Yes, the legendary hero of three of the best adventure games ever made, LucasArts' classic **MONKEY ISLAND** games, is back for more—and this time, he's in full 3D.

When LucasArts announced **ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND** earlier this year, it came as more than a pleasant surprise to many gamers; it was a downright shock. Wasn't LucasArts' previous adventure game—the stupendous **GRIM FANDANGO**—a sales fiasco? Wasn't this the final proof that the adventure game genre was (as we know-it-all game journalists have been saying) dead?

This was my big question when I went to LucasArts to see the game, and when I asked it, the room filled with groans and laughter.

"You owe me five bucks," said co-producer Mike Stemmle to his partner, Sean Clark.

I guess I had it coming. The fact is, LucasArts adventure games have always occupied a universe of their own—far removed from the **MYSTs**, the **GABRIEL KNIGHTs**, the **TEMUJINS**. And while the rest of the genre has slowly collapsed under the weight of its own mediocrity, LucasArts has quietly gone ahead



**WHERE'S THE CANNIBAL HEAD?** Remember getting lost in the cave in **MONKEY ISLAND**? Get ready to get lost again, this time in 3D.

and produced one great game after another—garnering a worldwide fan base that keeps buying the games, no matter what the pundits say (though **GRIM FANDANGO** really didn't sell as well as it should have).

So, yeah, the adventure game genre may be dead, but Guybrush Threepwood, like all great heroes, lives on. Let's see what he's up to this time...

### Who Is Charles I. Charles?

Here's the basic setup: Doofus pirate Guybrush Threepwood

Guybrush Threepwood is alive and well—and now in 3D! by Jeff Green

and his true love Elaine Marley, married at the end of the previous game (1997's *CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND*), are returning to Melee Island from their honeymoon as ESCAPE opens. Elaine has been gone for so long, however, that she has been declared dead, her mansion is slated for demolition, and the island is on the verge of an election to have her replaced as governor. One of the main candidates: the foppish Charles L. Charles, a man with an uncanny resemblance to a certain ghost pirate of games' past.

To clear up the problem of Elaine's greatly exaggerated death, Guybrush must travel to Lucre Island, where the game's main plot kicks in. It appears that one Ozzie Mandrill, an evil Australian land developer, has launched a sinister scheme to gentrify the entire Tri-Island area, complete with such monstrosities as Starbuccaneers, Planet Threepwood, and a microgogery. Can Guybrush stop the evil entrepreneur from turning the islands into a tacky tourist magnet? What is *The Ultimate Insult*, and why are both Mandrill and Charles L. Charles after it? And whatever happened to all the monkeys on Monkey Island, anyway? These mysteries and more will keep you occupied (and laughing) throughout the three-act story.

The big news about *ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND* is that the series is making the transition from 2D to 3D, using a modified version of the GRIM FANDANGO engine. Those worried that the switch to 3D will sacrifice the series' colorful, cartoony feel should fear not: The team heeds you. According to Stemmle and Clark, the team's artists spent four months sketching the game's locations and characters on paper (real

paper) before any artwork was done on computer—specifically to ensure that that “cartoon look” (bright colors, rounded edges, slightly-distorted camera angles) made the transition intact.

If you're concerned that the 3D will drain the game's characters of personality—turning the skinny, loopy Guybrush into a bulky, blank-eyed CHAIKE mame, for example—again, fear not. Along with using an improved animation system that appears much smoother than in *GRIM FANDANGO*, the artists have also heavily ramped up the polygon count, with each character comprising roughly 1,100-1,600 polygons (compared to the roughly 300-400 polygons for Manny Calavera and the other characters in *GRIM*). If that means nothing to you, just know that you are not being betrayed. Yes, they're polygonal now, but Guybrush, Elaine, LeChuck (whoops—I mean Charles), and the rest will be the same lovable gang of idiots we've known for 10 years now.



**ISLAND HOPPING** Guybrush's adventures take him to Lucre Island, Melee Island, Jambajays, and, of course, Monkey Island

### The Second Biggest Monkey Head

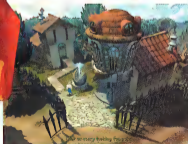
Gameplay will remain similar to the previous games with some of GRIM's 3D innovations (And, no, we don't mean platform jumping—this is a real adventure game.) You'll maneuver Guybrush the same way you did Manny, with a keyboard (or controller), and his head will swivel and point to items of interest. The user interface has been completely revamped, with Manny's open overcoat traded in for a rotating, 3D inventory system.

But, really, it's all about the jokes. Like the *Airplane!* or *Austin Powers* movies, the *MONKEY ISLAND* games have always been exercises in absurdity, never taking themselves too seriously. The games never miss an opportunity to tell a joke, no matter how ridiculous, no matter how irrelevant to the story. The long, branching dialogue trees (over 3,000 spoken lines in this game) are as much about joke-telling as they are puzzle-solving. The puzzles, too, are played for laughs—and yet they always manage to make logical sense.

Co-producers Stemmle and Clark know something about joke telling—their previous adventure game for LucasArts was the classic *SAM AND MAX HIT THE ROAD*, one of the funniest games ever made. The designers are reaching back to the first game for some nice cameos for longtime fans, including Herman Toothtop and original “crew members” Carla the Swordmaster and Otsu—and we'll even get to revisit some of the first game's locations, like the SCUMM bar.

So though it's a brave new 3D world for Guybrush Threepwood, his legions of fans should feel right at home in *ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND*. It's the best news for adventure game fans in years. **GW**

**GROG NAZI** The highlight of the game, so always, is going to be Threepwood's encounters with the game's boy of balloons.



**LOOPY TOONS** The design team storyboarded all the sets on paper first to ensure the game stayed true to its cartoony roots.



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# Midtown Madness 2

ON A WARM SAN FRANCISCO NIGHT, you'll be able to drive through the city at four different times of day, morning, noon, evening, and night.



It is beyond madness  
by Tom Price

**B**lame it on Steve McQueen. Our national obsession with fast cars careening around city streets at stomach-churning speeds, that is. McQueen's movie *Bullitt* began the car-chase craze that lives on to this day in movies like *Gone in 60 Seconds*, plus computer and videogames like *DRIVER*, *CARMAGEDDON*, and *CRAZY TAXI*. Microsoft looks to inject some more of that white-knuckle intensity into its burgeoning *MADNESS* franchise with *MIDTOWN*.

Last year's *MIDTOWN MADNESS* allowed us to have about as much fun with an arcade racer as we're willing to admit. It offered a lot more than your typical racing experience, thanks to a variety of good single- and multiplayer modes, and a scaled-down but accurate map of Chicago to tool around in.

This time around, you'll have two cities to explore, San Francisco and London. In single-player mode, you'll have all the same options as in *MM1*—including *Blitz*, *Checkpoint*, and *Circuit* race modes, plus a stunt-driving campaign in S.F. and a *CRAZY TAXI*-esque romp through London.

Multiplayer modes remain relatively

unchanged feature-wise, but have undergone significant optimization improvements.

The two new city maps are presented in much the same way the Chicago map was in the first *MIDTOWN*. They are geographically correct, but scaled down and simplified to a great extent. Still, if you are familiar with either of the cities, you should have no trouble finding all of your favorite landmarks. I've never been to London, so I can't really comment on the accuracy of that city's representation in the game, but San Fran is like my own backyard. For the most part, the basic layout of the city is pretty faithful, with a lot of the western part of the city—including Golden Gate Park—compressed down. Most of the landmarks you would expect to see (Golden Gate Bridge, Coit Tower, Transamerica Pyramid, etc.) are mostly reindented and easy to find. The only glaring omission is Pac Bell Park, the new home of the Giants.

Control-wise, the overall feel is still one of arcadey forgiveness—a game meant more for a gamepad than a racing wheel. But the physics engine has been upgraded to a certain



**GATECRASHER** Not the recommended way to meet *Dr. Queen*.



**THANK GOD IT'S A RENTAL** Now you can do what every San Francisco driver has always wanted to do: take California Street at 90 MPH.

degree. Cars can now drive on two wheels or flip over completely. Damage modeling has been improved, with higher-res damage textures and breakaway car parts.

As for cars, a lot of your favorites from the first game will be back, including the *Parrot* roadster, the city bus, and the new Beetle. This year's new models include Mini Coopers, double-decker buses, and Jaguars. More cars and paintjobs are unlocked as you progress through the game.

All told, *MIDTOWN MADNESS 2* looks to be at least as fun as its predecessor, if not a lot more. Considering how much we liked the first game, *MM2* should be even better than actually ramming your car into that cell-phone-yanking-dot-commer-in-a-land-yacht crawling down Market Street. **CGW**

#### MIDTOWN MADNESS 2

GENRE: Driving • RELEASE DATE: 04/00

PUBLISHER: Microsoft

DEVELOPER: Angel Studios

CONTACT: [www.angelstudios.com/midtown2.html](http://www.angelstudios.com/midtown2.html)

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Anne McCaffrey's

# Freedom: First Resistance

Red Storm gets up close and third-person **by Robert Coffey**

**O**h God, we're fighting alien invaders again. Oh God, Red Storm is trying to break out of the RAINBOW SIX mold again.

Oh God, it's another third-person action/adventure game with another plucky heroine. Again.

So, God, why should we care about the clumsily-titled ANNE MCCAFFREY'S FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE? Maybe because this time, for the first time, Red Storm may be on the right track as it tries to prove it's not a one-trick-pony developer.

## Ragtag Bland?

At first glance, *FIRST RESISTANCE* looks like every other spilly 3D *TOMB RAIDER* wannabe. What makes it different is its character, five characters actually, all with involved backstories and all of which can be controlled by the player. Though the focus of the game is squarely centered on Angel Sanchez—the leader of a small cell of human freedom-fighters struggling to overthrow their alien enslavers—the mission-based, puzzle-driven nature of the gameplay will dictate that you take other characters along in order to succeed. Every character has a specialty: For Angel, it's firearms; for lumbering Jimmy, it's sheer brute strength; for crafty Leo, it's his hacking ability, and so on. While you can't command your little squad *per se*, you can direct them to follow you, or with a simple key-press, you can take control of them directly.

Once you control a character, your former avatar assumes

**MEAN STREETS** The game environments are huge, and easy — like the downtown area here — will be revisited through the course of the game and reflect the increasing destruction of the Gallian allies.



a defensive posture, so you won't have to worry about belittling him/her in case bad guys come calling. While it's tempting to keep your group together, you'll need to separate in order to solve many of the puzzles. For instance, halfway through the game Jimmy will need to rescue his brother, inconveniently hiding behind an electronically locked door. You'll need to have Leo hack into the electrical system while

Angel flips a remote switch, so that Jimmy can seize this small window of opportunity to dart through the door.

**ANNE MCCAFFREY'S FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE**  
GENRE: Action/Adventure • RELEASE DATE: Q4 06  
PUBLISHER: Red Storm Entertainment  
DEVELOPER: Red Storm Entertainment  
CONTACT: [www.redstorm.com](http://www.redstorm.com)

Such multi-part puzzles are indicative of *FIRST RESISTANCE*'s more thoughtful gameplay focus. While there will be gunplay and hand-to-hand combat, you'll spend more time sneaking past the much stronger aliens, throwing pebbles to distract them with sound, hiding in shadows to avoid being seen, and shutting doors behind you so they don't realize you've entered their safehouses. Mindless running and gunning will leave you run over and gunned down.

## Concessions for Anne Fans

Red Storm is hoping that *FIRST RESISTANCE* will reach a broader, more casual audience, so they're wisely devoting a lot of time to story and character—don't want to piss off the Anne McCaffrey fans by shortchanging the characters. If

**WHEN GIRLS ATTACK** Angel takes it out with an alien sympathizer.



there's a potential misstep in their approach,

however, it'll likely be the combat. Gamers will have relatively little control in the melee grappling, with fighting moves dictated by how long the attack button is held down, and the range between your current avatar and their attacker. This is all well and good for newbies, but I can't help but think that the more experienced gamers who play at higher difficulty levels would want the option of determining whether and

when they unleash that round-house kick, or let loose with an uppercut.

Still, *FIRST RESISTANCE* is promising, even at this early alpha stage. Will it escape the ignominy or irrelevance suffered by Red Storm's other, "branch-out" games (*FORCE 21*, *SHADOW WATCH*, or *DOMINANT SPECIES*)? We'll know this Fall when it hits store shelves. **EW**

# MIDWAY

A blue Wildcat fighter plane is shown in flight, viewed from a low angle. The plane has a white star on its wing and a propeller with 'P-40' markings. In the background, a tropical island with palm trees is visible in the distance over a blue ocean.

STRAP INTO A

*Wildcat*

AND YOU'LL DETERMINE

GET BEHIND THE CONTROLS OF ONE OF SEVEN WWII AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING THE F4F-4 WILDCAT, F4U-7A CORSAIR AND A6M ZERO, AND FLY A CAMPAIGN IN THE PACIFIC. MAYBE YOU CAN'T CHANGE HISTORY, BUT YOUR MISSIONS WILL BE BASED ON YOUR PERFORMANCE. YOU'LL FEEL LIKE YOU'RE RIGHT IN THE ACTION WITH AIRCRAFT EXQUISITELY DETAILED RIGHT DOWN TO THE COCKPIT. SPECTACULAR DAMAGE EFFECTS AND REALISTIC WEATHER OPTIONS ADD TO THE REALISM. AND CARRIER LAUNCHES AND LANDINGS ADD TO THE CHALLENGE. WITH IMPROVED 3-D SCENERY AND A.I., IT'S AN AERIAL COMBAT EXPERIENCE LIKE YOU'VE NEVER HAD BEFORE. SO GET UP THERE AND HOLD ON.



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## THE COURSE OF MIDWAY.



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A character in dark, heavy armor with a dragon emblem on the shoulder is the central focus, looking towards the viewer. The background is a snowy, mountainous landscape with a large tree trunk in the foreground. Various magical effects are visible: a large fireball in the upper left, a glowing blue dragon-like creature in the upper right, and a fire-breathing dragon in the middle ground. Small figures of soldiers and creatures are scattered across the terrain.

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seventy unique characters.

# KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

Genre: Strategy • Publisher: Interplay • Developer: Microforte • Contact: [www.interplay.com](http://www.interplay.com) • Release Date: Q1 01

# A FE GOO Muta



# W

Welcome to the  
America of tomorrow!  
Try not to die!

by Robert Coffey

# d, Hideously ted Men

**A**tomics holocausts have a way of ruining everyone's day. No one—with the possible exception of the ghouls, mutants, and bands of murdering scum—is having a very good time in the post-nuclear America of Interplay's **FALLOUT TACTICS**.

Living in a wasteland aglow with persistent radiation, humankind has been all but wiped out, reduced to a smattering of decrepit shantytowns populated by desperate survivors. With the human species about three baby steps from the edge of oblivion, the cult of the heavily-armed known as the Brotherhood of Steel works to keep the remnants of humanity safe.

Do you have what it takes to survive the torturous rigors of this hard new world? Are you man enough to succeed as a member of the Brotherhood?

## Can You Go Home Again?

Set in same horrific retro-future of Interplay's great **FALLOUT** role-playing games, **FALLOUT TACTICS: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL** strips away most of the interactive character and story elements to focus on the terse heavy-weapon combat. The game takes place sometime between the storylines of the two RPGs, casting the player as a fresh initiate into the gritty Brotherhood of Steel. A small band of Brothers—cut off from the main body after chasing the Super Mutants out of what's left of the country—is beginning the long journey home. In an attempt to supplement their numbers, they begin recruiting from local vil-

lages. That's where you come in.

Your recruit is a fresh character to whom you assign statistic points (in familiar categories like luck, endurance, and strength), character perks, and skills. While your basic statistics won't change over the course of the game, the Tag Skills you choose at the beginning of the game will—so you'll need to be sure to pick skills that suit your style of play. Are you going to be a big bruiser blasting gigantic guns? Then tag your Big Guns skill and enjoy an immediate 20% bonus when using the larger weapons. Want to wield a plasma gun? Be sure to tag Energy Weapons. As you gain experience, you can improve upon and add new skills.

As in **FALLOUT**, you'll also have the option of picking Perks for your character. The double-edged sword of character creation, perks will give you playing



## CHARACTER QUIRKS

A slew of Perks icons which to choose will allow you to customize your entire squad, not just your primary character.

I face my darkest chapter,  
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My knife will slice your heart in half,  
And send you straight to hell.



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American McGee's  
**ALICE**

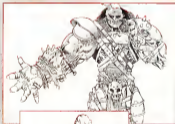
**Y**ou emerge from the rabbit hole to a decaying and sinister Wonderland. With toys as weapons, you must destroy the evil Queen of Hearts to survive. Do you have what it takes to defeat her sadistic minions and outwit her mind-numbing puzzles? Conceived and designed by American McGee, lead level designer for Quake® and Quake II®, this 3rd person action/adventure combines lethal shooter gameplay with fluid character animation. Using an enhanced version of the Quake III Arena® engine, explore the most detailed 3D action environments yet created.

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**OH THE HUMANITY!** Almost cut-scenes like this one set up the story of how your Brotherhood of Steel unit was lost in the wasteland for several years.

increases, but at the expense of something else. So, while Fast Shot means you'll use fewer action points to get your attacks off, you won't get the luxury of a targeted shot. Again, with experience comes the option for new perks, and with characters maxing out at around level 15 or 20, you'll get lots of opportunity for further character customization.

All of this should be familiar to veterans of the FALLOUT games, right down to the happy-go-lucky Bob's Big Boy-style spokesman (and CGV cover model, PIP Boy) But with new perks and traits, you can expect a nice, hefty manual to make sure all your decisions are informed ones.



### Route 666

Once you create your character, the game proper begins. As part of the Brotherhood, you'll fight your way across the highted landscape via a large world map, battling ghosts, mutants, and evil humans in roughly 25 missions, along with a few random encounters. In between missions,

you'll be able to move about a Brotherhood bunker, bartering for better weapons, picking and equipping your squad, and talking with NPCs to flesh out the six-chapter story.

Again, FALLOUT veterans should be pretty familiar with the combat system, though there have been some significant changes. The most obvious is in scale—unlike the smaller, more confined battles of the RPGs, FALLOUT TACTICS takes place on large maps with more combat-

ants. Your squad will be composed of two to six members, including your primary character as well as other Brotherhood members you selected and equipped prior to the mission. Your NPC teammates are chosen from a pool of around 30 and are fully-fledged characters, complete with skills, perks, and so on. While you don't create these characters, you will be able to shape them as they gain experience from successful battles, guiding their skill development and choosing new skills and perks. Unlike your primary character, these guys can die in a battle without your losing. But with the limited pool and amount of time and development you'll invest in them, you're going to want to keep them around as long as possible.

Unlike previous FALLOUT games, you'll actually be able to control the NPCs fighting alongside you; in fact, skillfully deploying your forces will be absolutely essential for success. You'll determine if, when, and where they shoot, if they try for the head or and potentially more damaging targeted shot, or if they go for the higher percentage (if less brutal) straight shot. You'll have total control, ordering your sharpshooter to duck behind cover while your heavy-weapons guy flashes enemies out of a crumbling building; directing your hand-to-hand guy to quietly slit the throats of unsuspecting sentries, or just ordering your squad to let bullets fly when confronted by an enemy on the vast, coverless expanse of the wasteland or in an enormous underground cavern.

**RADIATION BURNS** Mannequin super mutants and radioactive ghosts are just a couple of the enemies you'll have to battle as you make your way home.





## Tick, Tick, Tick...

Perhaps the biggest change to the venerable *FALLOUT* system is in the combat. The classic turn-based model is still in place, allowing for painstaking micro-management where every step and shot is methodically dictated. It worked great in *FALLOUT*, and it still works in the early build of *TACTICS* we've been fiddling with.

But this time around, gamers will have a second combat option: Continuous Turn-Based (CTB). Basically, CTB is a sort of phased turn system based on the action-point-ruled combat of the turn-based system. Instead of ticking off discrete action points with every action as in turn-based, CTB depletes a constantly-regenerating action bar reflecting available action points. This means that a character can stay in almost constant motion, as long as his action bar is never depleted. However, you'll still have to take care in managing action points in order to ensure your characters have enough time and energy to take their shots or drop behind cover.

Frankly, we were skeptical about how well this would work—games like *X-COM* and *JAGGED ALLIANCE* thrived in a classic turn-based format. However, after a few multiplayer contests, we found that CTB introduced a ticking bomb flavor to the action, with battles blossoming into tense attack and counterattack duels as each player walked the time-management tightrope, hoping to catch the other without enough time left to respond to a hit-and-run attack. The option of combat styles will be available in both single- and multiplayer, though you'll have to select one or the other before a mission, since you won't be able to switch on the fly.

Other significant game changes include new weapons, including chemical weapons and a lot of vicious melee hardware. (What better way to underscore a brutal existence than in a priming battle with rusty knives?) For the first time, vehicles will be available in the *FALLOUT* world. Current plans include three or four different tactical vehicles, useable for movement, combat (some will come equipped with guns while others will let passengers take shots), and item storage.

The graphics have already been sharpened up, but haven't lost any of that signature *FALLOUT* flavor—a critical shot to the head will blow a good chunk out of the back of a character's skull before they drop to the ground.

We confess: When we first saw this game at E3, we wondered, "Why?" After spending more time with the game, we unapologetically have to admit that Microforge and Interplay may be on to something—with a robust multiplayer mode (you can even pick Deathclaws and ghouls for your squad), deep RPG elements, and a personality all its own, *FALLOUT TACTICS* could capture that chronically obsessive part of our brains that had us playing *X-COM* for months and months and months. We'll let you know if they've pulled it off when the game ships early next year. **GG**



**HITCHING A RIDE** For the first time in the *FALLOUT* universe, vehicles will be usable. Here, a squadmate breaks into a Hummer while the rest of the unit provides cover.



**DEATH—GAAH, DOES IT HURT** Firefights in *TACTICS* will be brutal affairs, punctuated by severed limbs, twisting corpses, and the constant sound of gunfire and anguished screams.



**HOUSES OF THE UNHOLY** Whether exploring a creepy church or seizing control of a derelict building, the updated graphics and sharp character models in *FALLOUT TACTICS* help create an immense sense of dread and constant threat.



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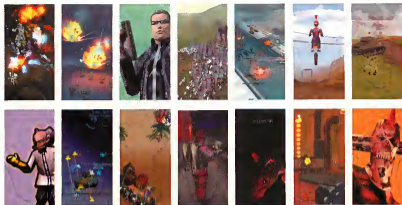
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Combat Mission .....	94	KISS: Psycho Circus .....	98
Dark Reign 2 .....	90	MDK 2 .....	91
Diablo 2 .....	74	Motocross Madness 2 .....	92
Deus Ex .....	80	Shogun: Total War .....	84
EverQuest .....	98	Team Fortress v1.5 .....	96
Ground Control .....	77	Warlords: Battlecry .....	97

# DIABLO II

by Mark Asher and Thierry Nguyen

■■■ So you took our advice last issue and managed to beat Diablo with some spiffy character of yours. Now, it's time to go farther, whether that's taking him down with some buddies, or even using a hardcore character. Fighting him alone is one thing, but fighting him with other gamers requires more coordination and finesse. You'll get better loot and more experience if you function as a lean, disciplined strike team rather than a bunch of yahoos who agree to not fight each other.

## RESOURCEFUL NECROMANCY

■■■ The Necromancer and the Sorceress make for a powerful boss-killer combo. The Sorceress can use Static Field to quickly knock off about two-thirds of an enemy's hitpoints, and the Necromancer can follow up with an Amplify Damage Curse. The remaining third of life combined with the additional damage translates into easy deathblows from other party members or the Necromancer's cronies. With a full party, you can pretty much dispatch of any unique monster with ease.



## SILENCE OF THE COWS

■■■ A recent GGW foray into the Secret Cow Level yielded a perfect example of the teamwork, buzzed, and skill initiative that makes for a successful party.

1. First off, we just ran into the portal, with little regard for what lurked behind the other side. The malicious Hell Bovine Horde surrounded both of us, and proceeded to pummel the hell out of each of us simultaneously.

2. Pissed and humiliated, we ran back into the fray, but decided to actually strategize this time. Scooter (the Paladin) had quite an Aura of Holy Freeze; it was able to freeze things up to ten yards away. Lil Cindy the Amazon dealt great damage, but from a distance. So, Scooter activated his Holy Freeze to keep the Hell Bovine Horde at bay, while Lil Cindy safely plugged at them with her arrows.

3. Moments later, the number of dead Hell Bovines was outnumbered only by the gold, gems, and various loot they left behind. We didn't even notice the Cow King coming by; he was frozen and slaughtered by a slew of arrows, just like the others.



## SILENCE OF THE COWS

■■■ The Barbarian is typically a simple task: He runs up to the frontline and both dies out and absorbs damage. This is the easiest way to play him. But, he can also make a great defender for your support characters (Sorceresses, Necromancers, and Assassins). Unlike the Paladin, you can stack Defensive Warriors; the best way to stack them is the following order: Battle Command, Battle Orders, and then Shout. You'll be able to

keep all of your party's ability tremendously with that order. Also, don't neglect Leap. If some tactical game message to close in on your buddies, nothing helps faster than Leaping into the fray and thumping them left and right. Develop your Leap skill in order to become a quick-response defense mechanism.



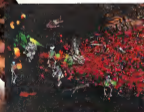
## RATIONING THE DEAD

■■■ Necromancers, Barbarians, and later on, Paladins, will all compete for the dead. Necromancers will need corpses for either Corpse Explosion or Summoning various skeletons; Barbarians will need the bodies for Find Potion, and Paladins may want to use Redemption. Beforehand, either work out some sort of rotation order for every encounter (i.e., Necromancer gets the first batch, then Barbarian, then back to the Necromancer), or just ask. Whatever you do, be organized enough to the point where the Necromancer can either get fresh soldiers, or the Barbarian can forage for more potions and goods. Only when no bodies are needed should the Paladin use Redemption, since Redemption only benefits him. Additionally, if a Necromancer wants to use Corpse Explosion, remember that the damage is related to the hit points of the creature, so use the corpse of a big, tough guy for maximum effect.

## GRAB IT

■■■ Sorceresses should be designated as looters. Why? Telekinesis.

Using only a few mana at a time, the Sorceress can stop in one place, and snatch all the goods, rather than run around like a beheaded chicken. The dynamics of who gets what can be worked out later, but with the Sorceress in charge of snagging stuff, everyone can focus on either exploring or finishing off any living poons. Also, Sorceresses can use Telekinesis to stun enemies from a distance, allowing the rest of the party to close in for the kill.



## DIABLO II

## HARDEST OF THE HARDCORE

■ ■ ■ You've defanged Andriel, exterminated Duriel, coerced Mephisto, and even dropped the hammer on the Big D himself. You're feeling pretty good about yourself? Bah. You haven't even begun to play **DIABLO 2** until you've played on hardcore mode. It's a brand new game.

Hardcore mode becomes available after you've successfully played through the entire game. You can play with either an "open" character or a "realm" character, depending on which mode you played to finish the game. You create a new hardcore character, and you only get one crack at finishing the game. If your character dies even once, it's game over. Permanently. You can never play that character again.

Hardcore mode is difficult, nerve-racking, frustrating, and...exciting! We've got some timely tips to help you become a real **DIABLO 2** player—one of the elite who have completed the game in hardcore mode.

## SURVIVAL FIRST

First, you're going to fashion your character for survival rather than maximizing destructive ferocity. Put more points than you might otherwise into Vitality when you gain a level. You need those hitpoints. You'll also want to pad your strength stats as well, so you can wear better armor.

## RESISTANCES

Your life bubble will drop dramatically when you become the victim of ranged attacks, and the worst ones are magical attacks—fire, lightning, or poison. Without resistances, these attacks—which often come from off your viewable screen—can kill you before you react. Hold onto items that boost resistances.

## KEY HOTKEYS

Always keep rejuvenation potions and Town Portal spells hot-keyed. Rejuv potions restore life instantly, unlike healing potions. Use healing potions when you begin to take damage in normal situations. Save your rejuvenation potions for emergen-



**THIS THIS MAKE ME LOOK FORTY?** Fun bit (summary and lightning resistances) make for a nice hardcore survival item.



**POINT & SHOOT** Use ranged attacks when you can.



**BUCK OUT GET UP** Avoid monsters like this if you can—constant and substantial.



**SLOWLY, SLOWLY** Put gears into gears slowly if you're a non-warrior (to make him a better target/bonus sucker).



**AN OLD FRIEND BY OTHERS** Though, if you don't follow my advice, you'll end up like him.

cies. You can use the Hardice cube to create rejuvenation potions. Take three mana potions and three health potions of any size, and combine them in the cube to produce one partial rejuvenation potion. Add in a crappy chipped gem, and get a full rejuv potion! Be ready to hit the Town Portal hotkey when things get too intense.

## YOUR WORST ENEMY IS...

...You! You've already played through the game once, and now you're playing it again in hardcore mode. You're cruising along, say, in Act 2, a natural-bore killing machine. You've killed thousands of creatures by now, and it's easy to relax your guard. **DIABLO 2** is a game of hypoxic repetition at times. Thing is, when things go wrong, they go wrong fast! You open a door, step in, and before you know it, you find yourself swarmed and backed into a corner with your life dropping rapidly. You try to get a Town Portal off but you're constantly being hit, and the spell is interrupted. You don't get a second chance. Survive, or it'll be time to think up a name for your new character.

So what's the best way to survive these situations? Avoid them. Creep along. Be wary. Don't rush. Make sure your health bubble is always full, instead of half full. Know what kind of enemies you're likely to encounter and juggle your rings and amulets to get the best resistance to their attacks. Be especially cautious when you're likely to encounter attackers with powerful ranged-attacks, and be respectably fearful of bosses and mini-bosses.

By the latter stages of Act 2 in hardcore mode, it's a good idea to only play for brief stretches at a time so you can keep mentally sharp. Set small goals, such as completing one leg of a quest or even just finding the Waypoint marker in a given zone; don't rush through the levels. It's easy to be killed by the constant monster bashing and forget how quickly you can be killed.

## CHEATING DEATH

Finally, the ultimate way to cheat death is to cheat, sort of. If you're about to die and you're quick enough, instead of Town Portaling, just hit the ESC key and then select the save and quit option. Do it quickly, before your character is dead, and your hardcore hero will survive to restart in town the next time you play.



# GROUND CONTROL

by Tom Price

■■■ Soldiers are people too. This becomes quite clear in **GROUND CONTROL**, where you are denied the ability to simply crank out endless hordes of doomed units and must find a path to victory with a select few of your comrades. You're going to need to help your squads survive—if you want them at your side at the final battle. So establishing a strong defense from various kinds of attacks is an important task in **GROUND CONTROL**, especially for more vulnerable units like artillery. Here are a few tips on how to defend yourself.

## DEATH FROM ABOVE

■■■ Attacking airborne units can inflict a lot of damage on your units very quickly, but they are also fairly fragile themselves. Make sure one of your support squads is configured for Anti-Aircraft work, and then set them to guard your artillery or whatever other unit is particularly vulnerable to direct attack. Better yet, bring along some Rocket Terradynes (if you're playing as Crayven) that can target both air and ground units. If you don't have those vehicles available, then bring along some Light Terradynes equipped with deployable anti-air sentries, and set up a net around your main force. Keep in mind that units with less powerful machine-guns usually can target aircraft, while the main guns of the bigger tanks cannot.



## HEAL THYSELF

■■■ Maintaining the health of your units is one of the most important tasks you have, if you want their continued service. Keep your APC near important units by putting it in Ground mode. It will replenish the health of the unit it is protecting, as well as any of your other units that come by. Medical Terradynes can be equipped with a deployable repair station that can come in very handy in beleaguered situations. If your units are slipping to the red in hard positions, simply fire directly in front of the repair station, and they'll be constantly healed as they take fire.

## INCOMING!

■■■ One of the biggest hazards in **GROUND CONTROL** is artillery. One barrage can decimate your units, and leave the rest in serious need of recharging. The most obvious defense against arty is of course avoidance, but some times you need to get in close and exchange some rounds, raining shells be damned. The Order of the New Dawn has the best defense against enemy artillery (both shell- and rocket-type) in the deployable defender gun carried by Medium Hoverdynes and Scout Bikes. Set one of these next to the unit you wish to defend, and watch it take out all incoming flying ordnance like a frog's tongue taking out flies.

## TAKE A STAND IN THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL



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# DEUS EX

by Thierry Nguyen

DEUS EX is all about choices. Now, you can choose to ignore this handy strategy guide, but when the Majestic-12 lock you up, plant bugs into your stomach, and start monitoring your bowel movements, don't say we didn't warn you. Here are the essential skills and augmentations you should have to get through the game.

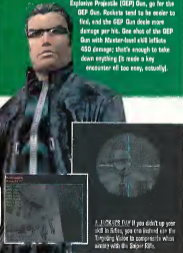
## THUNDER OF HIS GUNS

■■■ Before proceeding any further, know this: The Rifle skill is the most useful weapons skill in the entire game. If you had to pick one weapon to master in it, it's this one. For one thing, many weapons are classified as rifles, namely the assault rifle, the sniper rifle, the shotgun, and the assault shotgun. With the exception of LowTech, no other weapon skill offers as broad or diverse as Rifle. Since ammunition is on the scarce side, you might as well specialize in the skill that will give you the most bang.

As an extra bonus, being Master-level in Rifle allows you to shoot down cameras and barrels with one shot of the sniper rifle. With the exception of grenades, lockpicks, and security/military bots, a head shot on Master level will put down anyone, no matter what.

Besides that, you'll also want to develop your Heavy Weapons skill. The main benefits to upgrading this skill are increments in movement speed and inflicted damage. Between the two signature weapons, the Plasma Rifle or the Guided

Explosive Projectile (GEP) Gun, go for the GEP Gun. Rockets tend to be easier to fire, and the GEP Gun deals more damage per hit. One shot of the GEP Gun with Master-level skill inflicts 430 damage; that's enough to take down anyone (it made a key encounter all too easy, actually).



## TUNE IN KEY

Most of the puzzles involve either locked doors or security systems. With such flexibility, choosing between Lockpicking and Electronics becomes tricky. It's all a matter of preference, but you should try to Master, or at least be Advanced, in one and just stay Trained in the other.

You should at minimum be Trained in Computers, and preferably be Advanced. Trained will at least let you be able to hack into computers, but Advanced will also let you control Security Towers. You don't need to Master computers, because even Trained will give you enough time to turn off cameras or read e-mails with important passwords in them.



## THE EYES HAVE IT

Both choices for the eye augmentations are tempting. The Vision Enhancement has a bit more weight, mainly because at level three or higher, it will let you see enemies through walls. Whether you play as a shooter or a sneaker, the ability to see the enemy beyond a wall gives you a huge tactical advantage. If you do indeed go for this Augmentation, be sure to save Upgrade Containers so that you can at least upgrade to level three, where the cooler imaging kicks in.

The Targeting Vision is mediocre, for the most part, but it has one thing going for it: it compensates for your shaky hands when aiming. So, if your Rifle skill isn't high enough, but you have a couple levels put into Targeting, your eyes will steady the rifle when using the scope. But it's better to just Master Rifles and use Vision Enhancement instead.

## HEAL ME O' SAVIOR

■■■ Regeneration is the most useful out of all the augmentations. Do not pass up Regeneration. Upgraded enough, it can heal 40 hit points per second. Even at low levels, it will return between five to ten hit points per second. Since bio-electric cells are everywhere—provided you can find a quiet place for a bit—you'll never need fear death with this augmentation.

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MOHOLITH



Animated Violence

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## ROCKETING SPIES AWAY

■■■ The cranial augmentation is also a bit of a tricky choice. The question boils down to: Do you have the firepower to take down bots? If not, go for the Spy Drone, because it serves as a makeshift EMP grenade when you dispose of it. If you are packing a GEP Gun or a Plasma Rifle, opt for the Aggressive Defense System, since that will take down any incoming projectiles the bots throw at you, allowing you to pummel them.

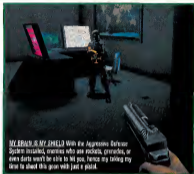
## JUMP, JUMP!

For your legs, go for Speed Enhancement. Moving Silently is a nice gimmick, but you need to have it at maximum level to benefit from it. Even a level-one addition to the Speed Enhancement helps when making certain jumps, or going down certain falls. A fully-upgraded Speed Enhancement makes you extremely difficult to hit, as you're moving way too fast and you can jump to places where the AI can't aim very well.

## EYE SPY



Use the Spy Drone to scope the area out, and then send it in for a kamikaze EMP discharge to disable any robots in the area.



MY ARM IS MY SHIELD With the Aggressive Defense System installed, enemies who use rockets, grenades, or even darts won't be able to hit you, hence my taking my time to shoot this guy with just a pistol.

## GREENPEACE SOLDIER

One of the early augmentation choices is between Environmental Resistance and Aqualung. No brainer here: Go for Environmental Resistance. Fact is, there's not that much swimming, but there're lots of radioactive/poisonous areas, and enemies will hit you with either poisonous spray or tranquilizer darts. Unless you plan to go out of your way to swim somewhere, take the Environmental Resistance.

The rest of character development is up to your own preference, but with the skills and augmentations outlined here, you'll have a much easier time making your way through a world that pretty much hates you.



THE BEST SURVEILLANCE is no protection from a Master-level sniper shading cameras left and right.



# Get to the finish line any freakin' way you can.



**8** new screaming machines are hitting the streets of San Francisco and London. Not to mention the buildings, fountains and shopping malls. The only rule in this race is: There aren't any rules.

**MADTOWN  
MADNESS 2**

[www.microsoft.com/games/madtown2](http://www.microsoft.com/games/madtown2)



Microsoft

# SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR

by Raphael Liberatore

■■■ 3D combat is the heart and soul of SHOGUN. Start by recruiting and training your army with the proper mix of unit types. Always assess the strengths and weaknesses of your provinces before building structures. It helps to know the available bonuses within each individual province.

## BATTLEFIELD TACTICS

Use adverse weather to your advantage. Snow, rain, and wind impact a unit's fatigue, morale, and overall unit performance. Study terrain and search for hills, forests, and choke points before battle. High ground adds an attack bonus to ranged units. Attacking downhill provides bonuses to melee units as well.

The Close Formation is effective for melee, but is susceptible to missile attacks. Loose Formations are best used for lessening the impact of ranged attacks. Wedge Formations are useful for penetrating enemy lines. Use "Engage at Will" for the



**SHOGUN!** Chasing down a wounded enemy keeps you from having to fight from later. Cavalry and No-Dachi units are best suited for going close.

Warrior Monks, Naginata, and No-Dachi Samurai, since their morale rating allows them to work independently of the Teicho.

Try to keep your units fresh. Maneuver units by marching; run only when you attack. Attacking the rear or flanks of the enemy will net you the highest attack bonuses. Killing the enemy Teicho lowers the enemies' morale and makes a rout more likely. Increase your troop's morale by positioning friendly units at their rear.

Early on, create lots of Archers. Using large formations of Archers supported by a few units of Yari Ashigaru or Yari Samurai is very

effective. Have your Archers "Fire at Will," since they will select the best units to attack, and will avoid attacking your own forces. Form them in two rows and keep them from firing behind an obstruction like a forest or hill to avoid wasting ammo. When attacking an enemy entrenched atop a hill, sneak Yari Cavalry to their rear. Defend when the enemy possesses a higher honor than yours.

Begin the battle using ranged attacks, and

## BRIDGE CROSSING

■■■ River crossings require careful analysis, planning, and persistence. Cross the bridge as quickly as possible using cavalry or heavily armored units like the Naginata—in a loose formation. Once they've gained a foothold, follow with cavalry and additional heavy units. Support with archers positioned atop the banks of the river near the bridge. Alternatively, try hitting with melee units to draw the enemy over the bridge so you can slauer them with arrows.



## YARI ASHIGARU

**Strength:** Inexpensive. Highly mobile. Gain honor rather quickly.

**Weaknesses:** Low armor rating and low morale.

**Tactics:** Good for cannon fodder against ranged attacks or bridge and hill assaults. Useful later in the battle if kept fresh. Yari also serves as protection for archers, and stand up well to Cavalry.

## SAMURAI ARCHERS

**Strength:** Inexpensive. Ranged attack.

**Weaknesses:** Low armor rating. Susceptible to both ranged and melee attacks. Limited supply of arrows.

**Tactics:** Susceptible to adverse weather conditions, ineffective in forests.

**Tactics:** Put them on the high ground. Useful in melee when arrows are depleted. Can easily defeat Yari Ashigaru in melee combat.

## YARI SAMURAI

**Strength:** Easy to upgrade. Useful for both attacking and defending. Above-average armor, honor, and defensive bonuses. Yari are effective against just about any unit, including Cavalry.

**Weaknesses:** Less mobile than Yari Ashigaru.

**Tactics:** Samurai are the backbone of your army. Highly effective charging heavy cavalry when supported by Archers. Useful in protecting ranged units.

## NO-DACHI SAMURAI

**Strength:** Highly mobile. Possess higher than normal honor and attack bonuses. Can operate independently of their Teicho.

**Weaknesses:** Vulnerable to ranged attacks because of low armor rating. Poor defenders.

**Tactics:** Put in a wedge formation to break lines of defense. No-Dachi make excellent scouts or flanking units since they can operate at a great distance from their Teicho. However, when taking a defensive stand, hide the No-Dachi in forests or at the rear of the army, and attack when the enemy is fatigued.

## NAGINATA

**Strength:** High armor rating. Best defensive unit in the game.

**Weaknesses:** Extremely limited mobility. Fatigue quickly.

**Tactics:** Naginata are used primarily for attacking bridges, hill positions, and castles. Naginata are also effective against enemy Cavalry. When taking the defensive, they should be used as the centerpiece of defense. Upgrading their armor makes them difficult to break in battle.





# STAR TOPIA™



*In a galaxy, far, far away...  
the ultimate spacestation sim awaits.*

# STAR TOPIA™

## BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE::

StarTopia takes gamers to a once thriving galactic network of starships, space stations and planets left lifeless with redundant scars of the apocalypse. You will lead the way in rebuilding the network of space stations that once served the commerce and communication of the old empire - reuniting the surviving alien peoples under one banner.

This simulation gives you the opportunity to rebuild and successfully maintain a series of giant donut-like Torus space stations that are scattered across the galaxy. These stations provide a suitable home for the many alien races that inhabit space, but can also provide you with a tidy profit. Of course, there are plenty of other enterprising individuals out there with the same goals, not to mention the many hazards that exist in deep space. Will you use economic or military means to force out your opponents? You decide.

### FEATURES::

- 1. Nine primary character races, each with a unique look and function. Each inhabitant is an individual character, with unique moods, desires and personal history and numerous character animations.
- 2. Fully functioning alien society and economy, with racial animosity and friendships, crime and punishment, as well as leisure and entertainment.
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## ARQUEBUSIERS

**Strengths:** Longer attack range than Archers. Unlimited supply of ammo.

**Weaknesses:** Susceptible to adverse weather conditions. Low armor and lesser, ineffective make fighters. Forests.

**Tactics:** Form Arquebusiers at the base of a hill, and concentrate their attacks on the enemy ranged units.

## MUSKETEERS

**Strengths:** Improved version of the Arquebusier. Lethal close-combat attacks. High mobility. Not affected by weather.

**Weaknesses:** Low armor. Susceptible to missile attacks. Forests.

**Tactics:** Like the Arquebusier, Musketeers are most effective at close range. Forming Musketeers at the forefront of your army, three or four ranks deep, increases their rate of fire and gives them three to four times their normal attack rating.

## WARRIOR MONKS

**Strengths:** Extremely high attack and honor ratings. Mobile. Difficult to rest.

**Weaknesses:** Expensive and difficult to recruit. No armor bonus.

**Tactics:** Warrior monks are most effective when "Engaging at will." However, since they are vulnerable to ranged attacks, Naginata or Yari Samurai should be used to protect them. Warrior Monks are most effective when employing a pincer and flanking movement, since they do not fatigue as easily as other units.

## CAVALRY ARCHERS

**Strengths:** Highly mobile. Make excellent scouts. Flexible ranged and melee fighters.

**Weaknesses:** Expensive. Not as accurate as Samurai Archers. **Tactics:** Immediately send Cavalry Archers on a scouting mission to uncover the enemy. Once located, position Cavalry Archers on an elevated vantage near the enemy to harass them while they're forming for battle. Cavalry Archers make effective melee troops and can be used to attack the enemy's rear.

## YARI CAVALRY

**Strengths:** Mobility. Balanced attack, defense, and honor.

**Weaknesses:** Expensive. Vulnerable to frontal assaults against ranged attacks, Yari Samurai, and/or Naginata charges.

**Fatigue:** easily in bad weather. Useless in forests.

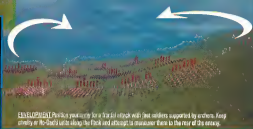
**Tactics:** Yari Cavalry make excellent scouts and are most effective against light infantry and archers. Use them to outflank units while charging from the rear! Deploy Yari Cavalry against the enemy Taisho's unit in order to lower their morale. Yari Cavalry are also useful in routing enemy units. Use Yari Cavalry to attack poorly Cavalry Archers.

## HEAVY CAVALRY

**Strengths:** Best attack rating of any unit. Highly mobile.

**Weaknesses:** Expensive. Highly susceptible to adverse weather conditions or terrain. Weak against Yari or No Dachi Samurai.

**Tactics:** Heavy Cavalry can defeat any unit on flat terrain or when fighting downhill. Heavy Cavalry in a frontal attack have additional charge bonuses. Keep them at the flanks to outmaneuver enemy shrubs. Group Heavy Cavalry with Cavalry Archers for added attack value.



**DEVELOPMENT:** Position yourselves for a final attack with foot soldiers supported by archers. Keep enemy or No-Dachi units along the flank and attempt to outmaneuver them to the rear of the enemy.

follow up with a frontal assault using spearmen first, then your special units, all the while attempting to envelope and pinch the enemy using Cavalry and No Dachi. When attacking uphill, launch missile attacks and lead the assault with No Dachi or Yari Ashigaru, while flanking with Yari Cavalry and/or Warrior Monks. If you have the high ground, concentrate your ranged attacks on the enemies' best troops. Form your troops using the "Hold Position." When the arrows run dry, charge Archers downhill supported by melee units.

If the enemy uses Cavalry Archers as skirmishers, hold them off with Yari Ashigaru or Samurai. If the enemy is using a lot of archers, then place Naginata in "Open Formation" in front of your archers to protect them while concentrating ranged attacks on them. If you move your Taisho near the battle, keep him in the rear of your army and out of reach of the enemy's archers. If the risk is warranted, attack the enemy's general. Use Yari Cavalry for scouting and envelopment maneuvers, and later, when the battle turns in your favor, they'll be in position to hunt routing troops. Don't use your Cavalry to attack Ashigaru in a frontal assault, if your enemy has only a few expensive troops, let some Yari attack them in "Hold Formation" mode.

Victory begins with knowing your troops, applying effective formations,



**CASTLE'S USE:** Use ranged troops for castle assaults. Send the castle's heavy-armed sword troops like the Righteous Army Cavalry, and plenty of infantry support.

understanding the terrain and weather effects, and assessing your enemy. Once these concepts are mastered, the proper application of force will become second nature, and soon, you will become Shogun.



**PINCHER MOVES:** Position foot units at the rear of your main force. Then, using battle, by maneuvering pairs around the enemy flank when attacking the center, or attack with your elite army.

# MAGIC - SPELLS - CREATURES WARFARE - WITH TEETH!



Actual Gameplay Screens



# Sacrifice™

Real-Time Strategic... role-playing action

## Describe Sacrifice . . .

- You enter a world where you can actually bring your enemies back to your Altar, and then Sacrifice them to pleasure your Gods. The rewards and power you receive are beyond your imagination.

## Is there more to the game?

- (1) Single Player (The Epic Strategy/RPG side of the game spread over 46 scenarios)
- (2) Multi-player (Over 20 scenarios via LAN, Modem or Internet)
- (3) World Builder (Easily design and build your own levels - we supply everything)

## What type of gamer will Sacrifice appeal to?

- Sacrifice is for the strategy gamers and action gamers that enjoy BATTLES more than the Farming.

## Do you have to be mean or can you be nice?

- You can be nice, but you could kill an entire village of innocent peasants, then mix their souls with magic to build up your army of fighting creatures. Which would you prefer?

## Can you describe some of the more powerful spells?

- There are over 100 spells in the game... One attack spell is called Death (very powerful)... It's a giant shrouded Reaper you create. He has a giant blade and cuts down your enemies like grass.
- Another spell allows you to summon all the boulders within the soil to punch high into the air and then crash down onto your enemies.
- Volcanoes, Tornadoes, Fire walls, Insect Swarms, world destruction and the list goes on...

## What are people saying about it?

"One of the 2D games that will save the PC"  
- *Next Generation Magazine*

"We were completely spellbound watching armies of fantastic creatures wander across hauntingly beautiful landscapes."  
- *PCIGN*

"Not since Halo" have I witnessed such amazing graphics in a PC game"  
- *Generation Online*

"What may be the future Real-time Strategy Game of the Year"  
- *RealPC Gaming Magazine*



Visit [www.sacrifice.net](http://www.sacrifice.net)  
or call 1-800-771-3172  
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COMING FALL 2000

[WWW.SACRIFICE.NET](http://WWW.SACRIFICE.NET)

# DARK REIGN 2

—George Jones

## MISSION SPECIFIC TIPS

### ■■■ JDA Level 3

The escape shuttle is up and to the left. Get there before the escaping masses do, and you'll have a much easier time.

### ■■■ JDA Level 4

Whatever you do, when you pick up the artifact, don't attack the Barons. They're almost impossible to kill. The way to get out of this hairy trap is to position all of your units on the far side of the room, behind the Togran artifact. As you walk your units across the room, make sure they go nowhere near the artifact—otherwise the Baron Sameds will awaken.

Once you get your units by the future escape portal, send one Guardian in to capture the artifact. The Baron Sameds will awaken, but you'll be able to hurry all your forces—and the artifact—through the portal before they get to you.

Supposedly there is a way to kill the twin beasts. Pin them to the wall by attacking them from afar, retreating as you go. If you hit them all at once, it's supposed to work.

The evac site for the Togran artifact is really hard to find. It's the exact spot where you got your reinforcements.

### ■■■ JDA Level 5

It's critical that you use your patrol boats and heavy artillery to take out the northern installation of Sky Sweepers and Gun Turrets as soon as possible. To do this, you'll have to take out the small island defenses first—this will help out with the Western shuttle approach vector. Don't worry about the Northeast approach—it's clear. You'll need to send units in to polish off the South approach route, but it's not too difficult. Be extra careful of mines on this mission...they're everywhere, particularly in the canyons of the Southern shuttle path.

### ■■■ JDA Level 6

The trick to this mission is, as stated, occupying the four choke points. Take your time—twelve minutes is more than enough. You'll need two gigantic forces—one for the northern area of the map, and one for the Eastern sector. Use your vehicles here; they're extremely effective in taking out the enemy buildings and gun turrets. Try not to use too many of the Enforcer units—they'll be too slow tracking down fleeing sensors.

Once you've destroyed the various enemy installations, keep cranking out the units. Don't go near the Senate building, though. It's almost in the lower center of the map, and if you get near it, the Senators will immediately begin their sprint for freedom, regardless of the clock.

If you've established the choke points, picking the senators off is easy money. If you don't, the mission becomes almost impossible. Rovers flanked by Castigues work best for flagging down the enemy. Just make sure that whenever you do, you don't destroy the Senate building—this will instantly cause you to lose the mission.

### ■■■ Sprawler Mission 5

To assassinate the Judas leader within 30 minutes, you have to move quickly. As fast as you can, crank out a number of Scorpion tanks, Go-Gos, and Skulks. Get your Shrine built—don't worry about upgrading it, though. All you need is Eyebitor, to blind enemy



gun towers as you move past it. Heavy artillery will help you take out some of the gun turrets, but only if you have a number of infiltrators that can serve as spotters.

If you can afford it, secure the hill to your north and build a Vehicle Factory (don't remember name—can someone check the manual) there. This way you can send in reinforcements more quickly. Don't worry about air vehicles—they're a pain on this level.

Once you're set, send in a massive frontal assault. Take them as far north as you can, destroying every gun turret and Sky Sweeper along the way. Use Eyebitor liberally, and use your group of six to eight skulls to protect your armored units from the Judas soldiers, which are tough against vehicles. While you're doing this, start building your second assault wave—these are going to be the forces that rush in and finish the job.

### ■■■ Sprawler Mission 7

The bottom line is this: You gotta have a mine-detecting unit. Scour every single step of the way, or you'll lose precious resources rebuilding your armies.

### ■■■ Sprawler Mission 9

This is one of the hardest missions in the game. Get your base up and running, but do not explore—it's just going to provoke the enemy. Once your base is moving, you're missing the Taelon from the location to the right of your base, and you've built several gun turrets and cameras, send a squadron of Judas' and a Woodun through the portal, right in your base camp. They'll appear to the north in a grassy area.

From here, move them further north along the grass until you reach the motherlode of Taelon fields. Send a Construction probe and two extra Collectors through, and get mining. Make sure you protect both ends of the Taelon field with gun turrets, cameras, and anti-air weapons. You'll need them.

The Falcon Towers aren't too hard to destroy from this point. Build a Dock on the waterfront next to the immense Taelon field, and take out the Sprawler boats and Wharf. The Falcon Tower is right on the far side of the water. Build a camera on the land nearby the Tower (it's close to the portal gate you first came through), and use your heavy artillery (which you moved to the Taelon-rich area) to destroy them.

Also mission 9: You have to send a juggernaut through the portal. The objective isn't stated clearly. —George Jones

## ITEMS

■■■■ Objects Picked up by Doc Hawke Throughout the Game

Atomic Toaster (supplied by Kerrik)  
Baguette  
Dirty Towels  
Dust Tape  
Electrical (power) Card  
Fishbowl  
Hand Dryer  
Kurt's Coordinates  
Ladder  
Lighter  
Loaf  
Magnet  
Mr. Fizzy  
Palatial Laser  
Pipes  
Plutonium  
Positronic Doo-dickies  
Pumpnickels  
The Sauce  
Toaster



## CREATIONS

■■■■ What the Doc Can Make by Combining Items  
Anti-gravity Boots (Magnets + Dust Tape)  
Atomic Toaster (created by Kerrik from the Toaster)  
Ladder (Pipes + Electrical Card)  
Leaf Blower (Pipes + Hand Dryer + Dust Tape)

■■■■ How or Combination ..... Used to Create by Effect

Atomic Toaster ..... No effect by itself, but when combined with the Loaf, creates a deadly bouncing piece of Atomic Toast  
Atomic Toaster + Baguette ..... Guided Toast Missile  
Atomic Toaster + Ladder ..... Electrical Shock  
Atomic Toaster + Loaf ..... Atomic Toast Projectile  
Atomic Toaster + Pumpnickel Dry Toast Mercator  
Dirty Towels ..... No effect by themselves  
Dust Tape ..... Used to fix a hole later in Level 3; also used with the Magnets to make Anti-gravity Boots  
Empty Fishbowl ..... Used in Level 3 to prevent choking when the atmosphere is sucked out of a room

Fishbowl ..... Used in Level 3 to start the Fish Game

Hand Dryer ..... No effect by itself

Leaf Blower (Pipes + Hand Dryer, with Dust Tape)

Blows enemies aside

Lighter ..... Lights up darkened areas

Loaf ..... No effect by itself

Magnet ..... No effect by itself

Moisture (The Sauce + Dirty Towels) ..... No effect by itself, but when combined with the Lighter, launches Moisture + Lighter

Moisture + Lighter ..... Throws Moisture

Mr. Fizzy ..... Wins 50 points

Pipes ..... No effect by itself

Plutonium (Next from Kerrik) ..... When consumed, it turns Doc into Mr. Hyde

The Sauce ..... No effect by itself

The Sauce + Lighter ..... Explosion

Toast (Loaf + Toaster) ..... No effect by itself

Toaster ..... No effect by itself

Toaster + Loaf ..... Toast

PRAY TO YOUR GOD. PRAY FOR YOUR LIFE. PRAY FOR MERCY. PRAY TILL YOUR KNEES BLEED.

# MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2

by Tom Price

## MASTERING MORENCI

Pitted with open rock quarries and full of heavy equipment traffic, the Morenci Mine level is one of the most challenging in MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2. Its three tracks—Mass Air II, Mechanized Mayhem, and Quantum Leap—all provide a series of challenges that only the best on two wheels can overcome. Here are some tips to put you ahead of the field.



**THE LAST JUMP.** The finish line is dead ahead over the hill, so if you gun it and hit the apex of that little level just past the gate at full throttle, you should sail all the way over the hill to the backside, and right through the finish gate.

### 1 Mechanized Mayhem

### 2 Mass Air II

### 3 Quantum Leap



**USE THE JUMP-A-COMY.** The jump to gate 3 is one of the most spectacular in the game. Turn your bike in a wide arc to make sure you've got enough speed to clear to the other side. When you get to the top of the jump, aim at the right side of the gate. An open quarry is just to the right, waiting to swallow you up.



**CURSE THAT BEEPING TRAIN!** Well, it's not bothering us this time. Struck right up the hill, go through the left side of the gate, and you should find yourself right on track for the next one.





**HEAVY TRAFFIC** You'll be sharing the road with some pretty massive companions. Do your best to stay out of their way by taking the outside track.



**FLYING HIGH** Hit the rim of the quarry after Moss Air it's gate 5 as fast as possible. You shouldn't have too much of a problem landing this atmospheric jumbo, considering the landing is on a down slope. Just look out for those power lines...



**CLEAR** That down train will get in your way any chance it gets. Thankfully, there's a little camp near gate 10 on Moss Air II.



**UP A TREE** Once you clear the first gate on Mechanized Mayhem, go straight up the hill to the next gate. Whatever you do, stay to the left of the tree, otherwise you'll go tumbling deep into the quarry all to the left.

I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO HEARS YOUR CRIES. I AM THE ONLY ONE WHO FEELS YOUR PAIN.  
YOU WILL FEEL MINE.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME II: THE LEGEND OF COFFIN ROCK  
OCTOBER 2000

© & TM Adams



# COMBAT MISSION

—Bruce Geryk

## ATTACK STRATEGIES

"Get there fastest with the mostest"

■ ■ ■ Concentration of force is crucial when attacking. Massed firepower, even just locally, often wins battles. After obtaining enemy dispositions through reconnaissance, concentrate your forces to achieve local superiority while the enemy remains dispersed. Just move quickly.

■ ■ ■ Leapfrog positions when advancing, unless you're under serious time constraints. Pick some positions you want to reach, have some of your troops lay down covering fire, and advance the rest. When the advancing troops reach their positions, pick out some even more advanced positions, and move the covering fire troops you left behind past your newly advanced units (which will now provide the covering fire) and into more forward positions. This ensures that advancing troops will always have support. Don't try to leapfrog too far, though, or you'll outrun your suppression fire.

■ ■ ■ If you can't leapfrog, advance on mass. Choose a few units to lay down suppressing fire and move everyone else forward. Advancing piecemeal lets the enemy concentrate his fire on a select



**BIG GAME HUNTING** From the flank or rear, though, it's a different story. This big cat is about to be caged. Close-quarters fighting makes the odds a bit, uh, odd, and that tank on the right is toast, too.



**PLANETENSCHECK!** These tanks advanced without infantry support and were punished by an anti-tank team. Always keep infantry close by your tanks to engage enemy infantry.

few of your units. Giving him a lot of targets at once will reduce your casualties—unless the enemy has local force superiority, in which case you probably shouldn't be advancing in the first place!

■ ■ ■ Infantry that has taken cover in a building can be very difficult to dislodge with direct fire. An effective answer to this is to target the building itself with Area Fire. Light buildings will collapse quickly, while heavy buildings may need the added attention of a tank or two. Collapsing buildings do serious damage to the infantry trapped in the rubble, so wise defenders won't stick around a building that's been targeted this way for long. The drawbacks to Area Fire are that it uses lots of ammo, and units committed to Area Fire will pass up better targets to maintain fire damage. Monitor these units carefully. Another use for this tactic is "reconnaissance by fire." Not sure if a building contains hidden enemy units? Target it with Area Fire and find out. It's safer than charging.

■ ■ ■ Those pesky crews that escape from your vehicles when they get knocked out aren't very useful in combat, but they're worth a ton of points, and getting them killed will hurt your side's morale. Shepherd them towards the rear as soon as possible. Losing a scenario on points from dead crews is sloppy play and avoidable.



**SHOOT FIRST, THEN FLEE** Without any armor to cover the entrance to the buildings in the distance, sniping tanks by sniping while they advance close the distance quickly. Sniping is a valuable resource.

**SALT THROUGH** These guys know how to shovel, so that's it if you run out of ammo! With their experience, traps can usually hold their own with a leader. Gilly, the wily green or orange, traps you're never trouble. Keep track of your command base.



**LIVE AT THE RACE!** Fast vehicles like this Deyford can use their speed to get around as easy tank for a tank shot.



**TARGET PRACTICE** Can you see the Panther? You should, but why? Because you're about to hit another! Neither can the instant's Fire Frocks to it crew. Tigers and Panthers have a huge armor and main-gun advantage. All long ranges by the way, Deyford can't track a chase.

IT HAS GROWN STRONGER SINCE THE LAST TIME IT CALLED. OR HAVE I GROWN WEAKER? MY BLOOD STILL RUNS RED, BUT THIS POISON RUNS DEEPER. LET MY FATHERED MUSE FIND A PLACE TO REST.

HELLWITCH VOLUME III: THE ECLY KEDWARD TALE  
NOVEMBER 2000

© 1999 TM Activision



## DEFENSIVE TACTICS

■ ■ ■ Successful defending is all about positioning. A seemingly strong defensive line can turn into a deathtrap for your units if there is no place to fall back to. A machine gun team in a heavy building surrounded by open fields will have to retreat across those fields if it gets into trouble. Keep that foremost in mind when setting up as the defender.

■ ■ ■ This focus on position extends to all aspects of defense. **COMBAT MISSION** programmer and designer Charles Meylan suggests, "Position defensive forces so that the attacker cannot bring all his weapons to bear, once he figures out where you are. Use intervening terrain to mask critical units from enemy units. A tank deployed just to the rear of a hill crest can often bring fire to bear along an entire flank, whilst being absolutely invisible to any enemy units not on that flank. Don't position infantry squads upstairs unless you have a plan. Once the enemy spots them, they'll make an easy target for anyone with a gun. Position snipers and antitank teams two-three meters away from the walls when they're in a building. It will help them stay undetected a lot longer."

■ ■ ■ Use your artillery! An attacker that has had to advance through three turns of an artillery barrage won't be nearly as strong as if

he had made the move unhindered. Any long-range weapons (like machine guns) can be used to slow, harass, and cause attrition to attacking forces.

■ ■ ■ Keep a central reserve at all times. Shifting units laterally across a front is almost impossible, and withdrawing a unit and moving it around through the rear to a different sector takes far too long. If a hole develops, it's curtains. A single squad, fully-armed and supplied, can make a huge difference at the end of a scenario. Don't commit everything at once.

■ ■ ■ Don't be afraid to counterattack. Even a well-planned attack can be thrown into chaos if the defender can achieve a local force superiority somewhere and use it to counterattack. When counterattacking, all the rules of attacking apply. Concentrate your force, but don't weaken your defense so much that you allow breakthroughs elsewhere. Also, don't get carried away. A counterattack can be cut off and annihilated if it gets too far ahead of the main line of defense.

■ ■ ■ Trouble with Tigers? If you have the luxury, drop an artillery barrage on them. They have very little top armor.

The author would like to thank the entire **COMBAT MISSION** team for their thoughts on skillful play.

## TEAM FORTRESS 1.5

by Alex Handy

■ ■ ■ Dustbowl is a tough map to defend on. When on offense, take advantage of this by using as many heavy weapons guys and soldiers as you can. Defenders should be engineers, snipers, and demomen. And since dead players respawn, try using your medics and spies to disorient your opponent instead of killing him.

■ ■ ■ Wargpath is a tough map since you respawn out of the combat zone if your base has been penetrated. Remember: You've got to wait 15 seconds before you can recapture a command point. Make sure you control the first two command points on your side as soon as possible—a loss of either of these can be disastrous.

■ ■ ■ Remember that there's a new GUI to use. Access it by pressing 'V'. It's very useful for shouting commands off to your teammates in a short amount of time.

Here's one we discovered while playing against Gab: Maxwell: The APC on Epicenter (the capture point) can be jumped over. It's a real neat trick to pull on a heavy weapons guy who's standing on the capture point.



■ ■ ■ The Pyro is now a useful character. With the new network code, it's easier to light your enemies on fire with his weapons. Whip out that flame thrower and set your opponents ablaze. A good pyro can blind his foes with his flames as well as damage them. It's almost as annoying as being infected by the medic.

# WARLORDS BATTLECRY

by Jason Kapalka

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES:

WARLORDS BATTLECRY differs from your usual real-time strategy title in a number of regards—such as its persistent RPG-style heroes—but most important, from a tactical perspective, is the usefulness of Conversion.

Heroes and select other units cannot only convert neutral mines to their own side, but enemy-owned mines as well. Moreover, they can also convert all enemy buildings except towers. What does this mean? It means that, in many cases, you're better off converting enemy structures instead of simply destroying them. At worst, if you're unable to use your ill-gotten gains, you can hit Ctrl-D to destroy the converted buildings instead of letting your foe nab them back.

Pressing R will show your hero's command radius; all buildings within that radius will be converted after a set period of time, dependent on your hero's Conversion skill. At high levels, this can be as short as five seconds! A speedy or stealthy hero can frequently dodge enemy defenses to convert the heart of a foe's base, or undefended outposts.



Don't forget that palaces can also convert. Though they take a long time to do so, they have a huge effective radius, meaning that you can often build a cheap level-1 palace just outside your foe's defensive perimeter and still convert his resources and buildings.

Your generals can also convert using your hero's effective level for speed, but unfortunately, their radius is rather small. Use them to convert scattered mines and structures behind your front lines, while your hero focuses on more strategically important areas.

Finally, the Alchemy spell Acquire is even more effective than basic conversion. A fast or invisible hero, with Spell Mastery or Grandmastery increasing Acquire's radius, can infiltrate a base and take it over in mere moments.

**HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND CONVERT BUILDINGS** Tired of sneaking for the blood of the living, this thoughtful hero of ancient times a smoke break while their hero converts the enemy base to his own side, via elegant arm-waving.



**Blair Witch Volume I: Martha Parr**  
Martha Parr combines traditional adventure elements such as research, exploration and puzzle-solving with a healthy dose of loot-peddling action to create a frighteningly cerebral gaming experience.



**Blair Witch Volume II: The Legend of Coffin Rock**  
Haxan Wood Shallows infuses the power of Nocturne™ technology with Resident Evil-style game play, making The Legend of Coffin Rock a uniquely satisfying romp through hell on Earth.



**Blair Witch Volume III: The Ely Kidnapped Tale**  
The Ely Kidnapped Tale focuses on action and will feature a spell-based combat system.

## BLAIR WITCH

Gathering of Developers proudly announces a three-game series based on the rich mythology behind the blockbuster film, *The Blair Witch Project*™. Haxan Films has granted unprecedented access to its wealth of intricate folklore, providing developers Terminal Reality, Human Head Studios, and Ritual Entertainment with ample fodder for detailed and compelling storylines. These chilling narratives are powered by the awe-inspiring Nocturne™ engine, creating infinite opportunities for masterful suspense and blood-curdling realism.



# KISS: PSYCHO CIRCUS

by Jason Babler

■■■ **Stargrave.** His slit-walker feeds off electricity, so you need to take out the source. Shoot him until he turns on the four generators, then crouch behind the metal protector. Move over slightly and destroy the four generators, then take him out by shooting his shoulder that sticks out. He'll pull down lightning from the sky and power up again. Don't worry; stay crouched, dodge his bolts, and keep firing—until there's nothing left but stits.



**CSITERS ARE BE MICROPOWER** They hide behind this plate and maybe you'll survive. Hit slit-walker manually.

■■■ **RingMaster.** The mad leader of the circus is the last level boss you have to take out as The Demon. He zaps around from platform to platform, breathing fireballs, summoning lava spitters, and even duplicating himself, forcing you to gun down the doppelgangers. Stay out of the lava, keep Draco (your ultimate weapon) spewing fire on him, and you'll be able to take him down in one try.

■■■ **Fortuna.** Take out the exploding barrels first, then focus on this bowling-pin-tossing clown. Circle-strafe and pummel him with the weapon of your choice. He grows in size after each "death" and his bowling pins get more dangerous to dodge. Strafe, shoot, and repeat until he goes down.

■■■ **Tiberius.** The animal trainer has been turned into a giant minotaur with an affinity towards goring you into the spikes. If you stay on the ground, Tiberius breaks open boxes of stumps and headless to plague you. Grapple up to the trapeze net for power-ups and ammo while dodging his whip and headbutts. A few well-placed Spirit Lances will put his head over your fireplace.

■■■ **Final Boss: The Nightmare Child.** You pick which elder to start with in a huge, eye-covered cavern. Take out the eyes while dodging their lasers. Before you shoot the last eyeball, make sure you're powered up with ammo. Health can be found in the portals on either side of the cavern. The Nightmare Child will throw a fit and burst out of his womb. I kept Draco reining down a mouthful of lava and grabbing health until I beat the little brat. But you're not done yet! His head sprouts legs and comes after you again. Just keep firing away, and soon, you'll put junior to bed for good.

# EVERQUEST RUINS OF KUNARK

Alex Handy

Here're some hints and tips for your Iskar character.

- You'll be starting in Cabilis, so get to know the town. Remember that you can swim like a fish, and often the quickest way to get from one area of Cabilis to another will be through the water.
- Directly outside of Cabilis are some excellent hunting grounds. The Field of Bone is always full of scorpions, Scaled Wolf pups, and emerald scarabs. These make great fodder for early characters, but you'll want to cut your teeth on the giant mosquitoes and leeches in the Swamp of No Hope, at least until you reach level 3.
- The Lake of Ill Omen is probably the best all-around place to hunt. You'll be encountering some mean goblin variants, so be prepared to run at the sight of a shaman. Unfortunately, this tends to be the least populated area around Cabilis, so you'd do well to bring a friend along in case you get jumped.
- The merchants outside of Cabilis are a bit harder to find than in most other towns, but rest assured they are there. Wander through the ruined buildings for a while to find them.
- As always, Shamans and Necromancers are going to have a tough go of it without some help early on. The pit area in the Field of Bone is an excellent place to team up with some level 5 through 10 characters. They'll probably appreciate the help of a Healer or Skeleton when taking down the big game.
- Be wary of Scaled Wolves. The pups are some of the easiest monsters around, but their older cousins are infinitely more ferocious. Avoid regular Scaled Wolves like the plague; they're slightly bigger than the pups, but it can be hard to tell them apart.



Friends come and go,  
but Family is for life.



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# ARGANUM

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# REVIEWS

## HOW DO WE RATE?



**Outstanding** The new genre that gets it all right. A must-play experience.



**Very Good** Worth a few bucks and money, but there are drawbacks.



**Average** Either an excellent design with major flaws, or just meh.



**Weak** Certainly lacking in play value, quality artwork, or just another clone.



**Absurd** The new genre that gets it all wrong. Predict. Confer notes.

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

## SPOTLIGHT REVIEW: DEUS EX



**Walter Breiner:** Am I debbed a denk right now? No, I'm not. That's because we have a situation here in New York. I got to my position because I can fit things. You will see clearly, because as you have probably noticed yourself, this agency is broken and needs an overhaul.

**THEY CALL ME THE CLEANER** Significant conversations are delivered in letterbox format. Be sure to initiate multiple conversations, as characters will also have more to say, but will wait for you to talk first.

DEUS EX weaves a Matrix of action, roleplaying, and paranoia

# They're Out to Get Me

**I**n Storm knows you're reading this review. Every copy of this issue has been "tagged" because of the DEUS EX review. Subscribers have already been added to a central IGN Storm database, and if you bought this at a store, the UPC code that the cashier scanned gave you away. When you arrived at this page, microscopic nanites beamed a signal to Austin, alerting IGN to the fact that you're reading it. Your phones are

now being tapped, all of your e-mail will be copied and stored, and a satellite is probably watching your house right now.

That's the kind of over-the-top, conspiratorial paranoia that DEUS EX delivers. Additionally, the game

delivers moments of brilliance, irony, ingenuity, and frustration. It is also the kind of game that makes me hate review ratings, but I'll get to that later.

### Shot, Waterlock

DEUS EX is a tale about one man making a difference in a complex world. You're a nanotechnology-enhanced agent (think of the characters in Neal Stephenson's *The Diamond*

Age), working for an anti-terrorism agency called UNATCO. It's sometime around 2050, and the Gray Death is saturating the nation. At first, you're just lighting off a secessionist force called the NSF and securing the only known cure for Gray Death. But—as in many conspiracy yarns—everything turns topsy-turvy, as connections between the Hong Kong Truck, the Illuminati, Area 51, FEMA, and the Echelon Network become apparent. Like an *X-Files* season on overdrive, or the unexpurgated works of Umberto Eco, the sheer volume of people, organizations, and the secret connections between them, borders on the absurd.

Trapped within this massive web of ideas is a huge cast of characters. You'll fight against or alongside French revolutionaries, Men-In-Black, Cybernetic Death Squads, Triad gangsters, renegade scientists, and giant robots. This hodgepodge cast is entirely voiced. Most of the time, the voice-acting is just passable, though for every questionable choice (the accents of the people in Hong Kong), there's a brilliant casting choice to equate it (for example, Tom Hall, as one of the best villains in a game this year).

### Day, Hour, Minute... Man

Being an RPG at heart, DEUS EX is centered on character development. You define yourself in three ways: by your skills, your augmentations, and your inventory. Like *FALLOUT*, there's a list of skills such as "Lockpicking" and "Rifles," with proficiencies ranging

## ACTION / RPG

REVIEWED BY THURSDAY NGUYEN

## CGW RATED



### PROS

A conspiracy yarn that lets you play the way you want to.



### CONS

A stuttering frame-rate, goofy game-world logic, and idiotic AI.

**Requirements:** Pentium 4 300MHz, 512MB RAM, 700MB hard drive space & CD-ROM, DirectX-compatible video card and sound card.  
**Recommended Requirements:** Pentium 4, 1.2GHz RAM, 700MB hard drive space, & CD-ROM  
**3D Support:** DirectX Multiplayer Support: None

**Publisher:** Eidos • **Developer:** Eidos Storm Austin • **FAQ:** www.jonestorm.com  
**ESR:** Rating: Mature (17+); selected blood and violence.

Any discussion of freakishly hairy, blood-spewing men in towering platform boots is going to struggle to maintain anything like an earthbound sense of proportion. —Jason Babler, reviewing *KISS: PSYCHO CIRCUS*

## This Is Not Your Father's Cliche

By Tom Price

With all the creative talent in the computer gaming industry, you'd think we could find someone to write a backstory that's above the level of B-movie hackwork. Yes, some games are built on great stories, but the vast majority have the same cookie-cutter plots. Are all game developers working from the same Mad Libs book? If we see the following themes one more time, we're going to go post-apocalyptic on someone's ass:

**Post-Apocalyptic Settings:** What, nothing interesting ever happened before the apocalypse? C'mon folks, the cold war is over, and while that doesn't mean the Big One is an impossibility, it doesn't rattle our subconscious like it used to.

**Alien Artifacts:** Look, if someone found alien artifacts on another planet, the odds are slim that it would be some superweapon that would help them wipe out their oppressive corporate overlords. Most likely, they would find the discarded wrapper of some otherworldly neck cake or a dirty alien diaper.

**Rag-Tag Bands of Freedom Fighters:** We've seen the Seven Samurai. Got over it.

**Crates:** Yes, we know crates are probably very easy from a programming standpoint, but we are so sick of breaking them open and moving them around to crates steps, that we're the closest to adopting Old Man Murray's CrateMaster compatibility test for our reviews.

Write to me at tom\_price@ziffdavis.com with your biggest game cliche peeve. I'll be here with my ragtag band of crate-busting, freedom-fighting editors, preparing for the last ditch assault on our evil corporate masters.



**THE WORLD WITHIN MY GRASP** The *UNRAID* engine makes for nice areas like this, at the expense of frame-rate for 63D scores.

between "Untrained" and "Master." By the end of the game, you'll have only mastered about two skills, and the rest will be mostly "untrained," with a few "advanced" here and there. Your skill choices will determine your primary play-style in the game.

Next come Nano-Augmentations, which are essentially super-hero powers hiding behind a pseudo-scientific mask. Every time you get a nano-augmentation, you're offered two choices but can only keep one — choices such as "Telescopic Vision With Targeting Info" versus "Seeing Through Walls," or "Run Insanely Fast" versus "Move Stealthily Like a Ninja." You can upgrade each augmentation, but the upgrade canisters are few and far between.

Finally, you have your backpack, which provides a fixed amount of inventory space. If you want to be Arnold-incarnate, all those guns will hog the space that could be used for stealth items like lockpicks or thermoptic camouflage armor. Consequently, all of that miscellaneous equipment takes up space that, say, a Plasma Rifle could use. Alas, like every RPG before it, inventory management is pure hell. This game, like others, screams for an auto-arranger for your inventory.

### Parlez Kung Fuus?

A quick way to describe the game is to call it the love child of *HALF-LIFE* and *SYSTEM SHOCK*, with some *THIEF* thrown in for good measure. The core gameplay can be boiled down to one word: choic-ee. A typical snippet of *DEUS EX* gameplay:

Four soldiers, a camera, and a turret are guarding a door. You have: a sniper rifle, an assault rifle, a grenade, some lockpicks, and some packets of soy food. What do you do?

You could: a) Snipe the four soldiers, then use the grenade to blow the door open, b) Find the air ventilation shaft and completely sneak



**LITTLE DEAD BIG MEN** Jail about everything — Tom Sawyer allies to the Hamachi — is woven into the conspiracy-thriller plot.

## OCTOBER REVIEWS

GAME	RATING
Backyard Baseball 2001	★★★★★
Beachhead 2000	★★★★★
Dark Reign 2	★★★★★
Deus Ex	★★★★★
Enemy Engaged: Comanche vs. Nokun	★★★★★
F1 World Grand Prix	★★★★★
Icewind Dale	★★★★★
KISS: Psycho Circus	★★★★★
Panzer Campaigns: Normandy '44	★★★★★
Star Trek Conquest Online	★★★★★
Start-Up 2000	★★★★★
Warlords Battleroy	★★★★★

past them, or c) Throw the soy food to distract the four goons, and either pick the lock, or use a nearby security terminal to have the turret shoot the four dopey vegans when they return.

These choices are ultimately what make the game so fun. Each of the roughly 15 missions has a set goal, but you can achieve that goal however you want. You gain skill points by getting to certain areas or fulfilling duties, not by killing people. Each level is designed with enough malleable items and passages for flexibility in accomplishing most goals.

The concept of choice and flexibility is so inherent in the game design that the endgame, too, depends on your choice. Upon reaching the end, you're given three different tasks, all of which are extensions of three different ideologies; it's up to the player to determine which of those ideals will be followed, and hence, which ending will be seen.

No matter how you approach a scenario, you'll need to get into some combat. While the designers claim you can play this like a shooter, it's just not feasible. With the limited ammunition, and the RAINBOW SIX accuracy model (standing still means a guaranteed shot, moving around severely diminishes accuracy), you have to be careful with your shots. Like SYSTEM SHOCK, it's neither a pure shooter nor a pure RPG, but one of those pesky hybrids.

### The Right Ear Left in the Cold

If you're the sort to look at ratings first, you can tell that the game has some major flaws. The most obvious one is graphics. This game uses the Unreal engine with some enhancements from UNREAL TOURNAMENT. Direct3D support isn't one of those enhancements. The game runs much, much smoother in Glide, and even on a Pentium-III/733 with a GeForce 2 card, it can severely chop down the frame-rate. The frame-rate cut is severe enough to hamper things such as, oh, aiming your gun or dodging a bullet. Gamers using Direct3D are encouraged to either turn off "Detail Textures" (it adds things like gradations in wooden floors; the performance increase more than makes up for the subtle difference in image quality), or to use the beta Direct3D patch that was released at press time.

Also, the AI is extremely inconsistent. Your enemies are either psychic geniuses or absolute idiots. No matter what, if you shoot but do not kill an enemy, they will always know where you are. Yet I've managed to kill a guard, while his buddy four feet away didn't notice. Occasionally, the AI flirts with brilliance, such as actually noting dead bodies or comrades falling down, but overall, it tends to gravitate toward the extremes I've described.

Finally, there are the little problems that may test the gamer's suspension of disbelief. In the name of gameplay, there are crates all over the place - crates that you need to smash open. Ammunition is extremely limited, oddly - the government spends billions to train you, but never gives you enough supplies. The enemy almost always has only four bullets when you scavange their equipment, and people sell clips of sniper ammunition for seven hundred dollars. You get scolded for killing people in cold bloods or walking into the women's restroom, but you can throw potted plants at people's heads or hack into their computers right in front of them, and get only a verbal reprimand. Last time I



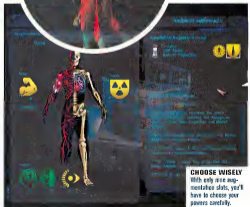
**THIS AIN'T NO WILL SMITH**  
Jack, you'll even see lady Men (or Vienna)-in-Slick.

**UNTIL YOU'RE BLUE IN THE FACE** Mastering the various AIs in the game may make you more careful about what you write in your e-mail.



### SOMETHING FISHY

HERE little moments such as encountering this "odd mechanic" show off the flexibility of the design: what you do to this fellow will determine whether or not a certain person lives or dies later on.



**CHOOSE WISELY**  
With only one augmentation slot, you'll have to choose your powers carefully.

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checked, trying to read my boss' e-mail after frowning a chair at him would result in his firing me on the spot, if not his calling the security goons.

### Short Gen, Long Odds

Despite all that, I still loved the game. To me, it's like *The Matrix*; it pulls together many disparate elements that, on their own, are mediocre, but they manage to add up to something better. I was able to look past the choppy performance, the mental lapses of the AI, and some of the goofy gameworld logic and immerse myself completely. Yes, it's a game featuring light sabers, rogue AI, crates, muscular Germans, and other clichés, but it pulls them together into a great package. It's the kind of game that inspires players to tell stories about how they accomplish certain missions.

So while I love the game and see it as Game Of The Year material, I can't, in good conscience, give it the Almighty Score. It has deep flaws that sometimes frustrated me, as they detracted from its ambitious design. I realize that not everyone will be as tolerant as I am about its flaws. Nevertheless, *DEUS EX* is ultimately a game-well-done, and if you look past its flaws, it's a fine ride. **CCT**



**SHOPPING AROUND** Though it's kinda silly that I can just read my boss' e-mail right in front of his, with every pretzellock.

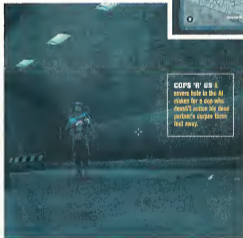


**YOU ARE HERE** While there is no in-game compass, most of the layouts make sense, and you're occasionally given rough maps such as this one.



**I GOT MAD SKILLZ** With a limited number of skill points, you'll have to either specialize or be a jack-of-all-trades.

**PSYCHIC KILL** Even though I was pretty well centered, the fact that I missed meant that everyone was magically alerted to my exact spot.



**COPS 'R' US** A covers hole in the AI makes for a cop who doesn't notice his dead partner's corpse from next away.





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**ANCHORS AWEIGH** Some campaigns will have your aircraft based on helicopter carriers.



Razorworks delivers the best chopper sim ever

# Gone to Chopper Heaven

**W**hether flight sims, or so the industry punditocracy would have us believe. Well, don't tell that to Empire Interactive and Razorworks, who have just delivered what is clearly the best overall helicopter sim of all time, and one of the best flight sims ever to grace a PC - **ENEMY ENGAGED: RAH 64 COMANCHE VERSUS KA-52 HOKUM**.

## ENEMY ENGAGED: RAH 64 COMANCHE VERSUS KA-52 HOKUM

Reviewed by Jeff Lasky

### CGW RATED

#### PROS

The best chopper sim ever, with three wonderfully hyperactive campaigns, very good flight dynamics, and all the little touches that make a game great.

#### CONS

No pilot/CPD co-op mode; trees are still large blocks of solid terrain; inability to remap key commands.

#### Ratons Engaged

Simulation designers have to tread a fine line between making a game so hardcore it discourages casual gamers, and "dumbing down" the sim to the point of inspiring disdain amongst serious simmers. Razorworks has done a masterful job of blurring the lines; the resulting product has great appeal to both camps. On the simulation side, COMANCHE offers two state of the art combat helicopters: the U.S. RAH 64 Comanche, and the Russian Ka-52 Hokum. While you won't be able to jump into the real thing and fly it after a few hours with COMANCHE, the flight physics and avionics are good enough to please the average sim fanzist.

Flight physics unique to high-performance helicopters - such as retreating blade stall and vortex ring effects (a particularly deadly situation in which you lose all lift) - are included and have a significant effect on your chopper. These can be toggled off, a convenience for less experienced pilots. Cross-coupling of your tail rotors to your cyclic can also be toggled on or off (for an advanced chopper such as the Comanche, it may be more realistic to leave it on). There are easily discernable differences in the flight characteristics of the Comanche and the Hokum, in particular: the unique handling of the dust-rotor Hokum - which allows maneuvers not easily achieved in any other helicopter. If there is any complaint in this area, it may be that the differences in handling of the two aircraft aren't as completely different as one might expect from reading open sources on these choppers. But this is just speculation, and not a significant issue.

Avionics are simplified, but still realistic enough to please a hardcore simmer. Air and ground radar is presented identically on both helicopters, easing the learning curve when jumping between aircraft. Both radar types do a fairly realistic job, e.g., terrain blocking and cluttering effects are represented. Filters are available to assist in prioritization of threats, and you can adjust sweep rates and range to suit your situation. Optical-target recognition modes are also simulated, such as FLIR, DTV, and the Russian periscope. While it's tempting to simply rely on the radar, there are situations in which the optical equipment is preferred - such as seeking out that annoying soldier with the shoulder-mounted SAM, or when stealth is required. One problem with employing the FLIR modes of targeting is the need for a stable hover in order to maintain a visual lock. This would be easier if your CPDG would assist you in seeking out and locking on targets with the optical modes, but your partner is fairly passive and requires you to lock on and fire the weapons. Overall, COMANCHE presents a nice compromise of avionics, presenting the spirit of realism without requiring night courses in engineering and physics to effectively use them.

Requirements: Pentium 200MHz or 60-70MB, 64MB RAM, Direct-supported G2D graphics card with 4MB memory. Recommended Requirements: Pentium 300MHz or 60-240MB, 128MB RAM, 3D Support: Direct3D Multiplayer Support: Network/Internet (1 GB per player), IPX or TCP/IP network, modem, serial link, serial cable.

Publisher: Empire Interactive • Developer: Razorworks • \$19 • www.enemyengaged.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

## Campaigns to Die For

A combat flight sim is made or broken by the campaign world in which you fight. To summarize the campaign environment of COMANCHE in professional-writer terms: Boo-ya! This is arguably the best dynamic war engine in the genre (go ahead and gnash your teeth, FALCON 4 fanatics – it's all that and more). Three campaign scenarios are offered, located in Taiwan, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia/Yemen, all playable from both sides of the conflict. If you already have ENEMY ENGAGED: APACHE VERSUS HAWOC installed (and the latest patch applied), COMANCHE will automatically merge the two programs, resulting in those three campaigns and choppers also being available. Graphics are very good and gameplay is smooth. One disappointment is that trees are still represented as solid blocks of hedge-like terrain, so there's no hiding behind individual trees.

If you never played COMANCHE's predecessor, be prepared to be blown away by the level of concentrated activity in these virtual wars. Unlike most flight sim campaigns, these are not at all player-centric. There's a war going on all around you, with missions being generated and assigned, whether you jump in or not. Razorworks has accomplished a true breakthrough here by creating wars in which you are a small player in the big picture, yet allowing you to make a significant impact on the progress of the campaign. On the mission-preparation screen, you can observe the progress of the war, see where the critical battles are occurring, and then choose a mission in which to fly. Mission types include everything from escort and transfer to close air support, battlefield interdiction, and suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD).

## A ROOM WITH A VIEW The birds-eye view in the Comanche cockpit.



## Decisions, Decisions...

Have you ever played a flight sim in which, if you wandered off of your assigned mission path, the world at war turned oddly serene? No chance of that here: This is a highly populated, fully-litged battlefield. As you traverse to your assigned target, you will observe many of the thousands of units that are fighting their own part of the war. Radio calls will flood your ears with status reports, mission updates, desperate calls for assistance, and more. Nothing is pre-scripted, as the campaign engine enables units to react to their surroundings and circumstances to provide a dynamic campaign in the truest sense of the word. Accordingly, you are required to make on-

## MY COMRADE Your cockpit/gunner in the Hoban takes a close of the terrain.



the-spot decisions: Do you relentlessly continue towards the air defenses you are tasked to take out, or do you divert and go to the assistance of the tank column under heavy attack? Assets are limited, do you take your slightly wounded bird directly home for repair after a successful mission, or do you swing wide to expand your remaining missiles on that pesky SAM site that keeps knocking your comports down?

Every time you go into the air you're faced with such decisions, and it creates an atmosphere of tension and unpredictability that keeps you coming back for "one more mission." To get a real feel for the world that Razorworks has created, hit the F11 key. It will continuously switch between all of the active units on the map, revealing how much detail is involved in this environment. SAM vehicles turn and fire, cargo planes drop their supplies, aircraft pop flares and chaff, and much, much more.

The biggest problem in COMANCHE's predecessor, APACHE VERSUS HAWOC, was the lack of control over your wingmen. They would fly off on their own, following some mabegetton logic that made them less than useful. Thankfully, that has been fixed in spades, with all the wingman commands you could ask for. Not only that, your computer pilots are smart enough to seek protected firing positions on their own. This improved logic is used in the old campaigns from APACHE VERSUS HAWOC if you integrate it into COMANCHE.

## Cleared for Landing

While there are a few minor issues, there are far more things that COMANCHE gets right than can be covered here. This is a great sim and a great game, providing heaps of excitement, tension, drama, and just flat-out fun. It's highly recommended, for everyone from hardcore sim fanatics to sim newbies looking for a sustained jolt of entertainment. **C**

[www.razorworks.com/guide/](http://www.razorworks.com/guide/) An updated strategy guide that goes a step beyond the manual.

[cb-central.frontsiveworld.com/main.htm](http://cb-central.frontsiveworld.com/main.htm) Frags' excellent Comanche Hoban Central site.

[www.flightgear.org/wiki/Utilities:EE\\_CSS\\_1.9.ZIP](http://www.flightgear.org/wiki/Utilities:EE_CSS_1.9.ZIP) A great utility for EDR by Flexiva.



ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS BADLY Excepting the game's horrendous ending, *DARK REIGN 2* features cinematic cut-scenes that are plentiful and entertaining.

*DARK REIGN 2* grabs the eye, but not the imagination

## Reign of the Same

**D**ARK REIGN 2 presents a paradox. On the surface, this title does everything right. But disturbingly, its ho-hum reception by the gaming public indicates a certain numbness among real-time strategy game fans. Three years ago, Activision and designer Pandemic's offering would have been an instant classic. Now, it's just another RTS.

What gives? For starters, the fundamentals of the genre just haven't advanced much over the last four years. Amass a huge force of troops, and send them in. Continually crush units against the enemy, until you win. In the single-player game, brute force

missions have always been balanced by small squad, tactical mini-missions that, though smaller in scale, still require a critical core of offensive firepower.

Despite the familiar turf, *DARK REIGN 2* actually succeeds on the RTS front. In fact, it may be the best-looking game in the category. And the frequent letter-based cut-scenes, while occasionally flawed and incomplete, add the kind of atmosphere and plot twists not usually present in this kind of game.

Unfortunately, the gameplay – while varied and enjoyable – is entirely too typical. And these days, typical just doesn't cut it.

### A Noble Attempt

*DARK REIGN 2*'s designers do make some extraordinary attempts to elevate the game's atmosphere above the typical real-time strategy fare. They've included tons of cut-scenes – rendered in-engine and frequently mid-mission – that advance the game's far-fung future plot, which centers on a battle between the Sprawlers (a rebel faction) and the authority-type JDA faction.

Unfortunately, like most other PC games, the story simply serves as a line to connect the dots between the two separate campaigns. Even when the plot twists, the game just puts its head down and keeps moving forward in the most linear direction possible. As a consequence, the game loses dramatic impact. Had the missions been more tightly interwoven, *DARK REIGN 2* could have been far more visceral.

At one point in the JDA campaign, a super-powerful unit called the Juggernaut demolishes your forces. If you play the Sprawler campaign first, you'll know that the Sprawlers actually captured this weapon from the JDA. Play JDA first, and you have no idea your own weapon is being used against you. At another point, you have to murder a group of traitorous senators; unfortunately, there's no explanation as to their motives. That's too bad, as this kind of table-turning makes for dramatic moments.

It's also too bad that the designers weren't able to create a mission structure that bypassed convention, switched between the two sides on the fly, and allowed you to get more emotionally involved with one of the factions – maybe even to choose one side for the game's final battle. In the original game, you could at least play all the missions from both sides' perspectives.

A bigger problem lies within the game's ending. With 20 missions

## DARK REIGN 2

reviewed by GERRIT SPILL

### CGW RATED

#### PROS

Splendid graphics, lots of cut-scenes, and well-balanced play make *DARK REIGN 2* a prima representative of the RTS game-style.

#### CONS

The standard RTS game-style is getting stale.

Requires min. Pentium® 233MHz, 32MB RAM, 650MB hard disk space, 3D card. Recommended Requirements: Pentium® 300MHz, 64MB RAM, 3D Support; DirectX 3 compatible 3D card required. Multiplayer Support: 2-8 players over PX and XMPN, max 60 per player.

Publisher: Activision • Developer: Pandemic • 353 • www.activision.com • ESRB Rating: Teen; restricted blood and violence.

FORGOTTEN REALMS

# ICEWIND DALE™



"It would be a damn shame if you spent your \$60 for the month of July on Diablo II and let Icewind Dale pass you by." ~ Daily Radar

"(Icewind Dale) is well suited for fans of Black Isle Studios' previous games, fans of classic hack-and-slash AD&D computer games, and anyone looking for an action-packed role-playing game with a lot of depth." ~ GameSpot

"Action, action, and more action. This is an AD&D dungeon crawler's dream come true." ~ IGN

[www.interplay.com/icewind](http://www.interplay.com/icewind)



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total – ten on each side – DARK REIGN 2 is a long, hard-fought game. And when you get to the end, your rewards are minimal. At the end of the Sprawler campaign, you send a highly destructible Juggernaut through a portal to destroy the JDA. You kill yourself to accomplish this task, and barely get the Juggernaut through intact. But you don't get to see the explosive payoff! You're simply told that you've succeeded, and the next thing you see is your units moving through the portal into a new world. Very disappointing.

It's not that DARK REIGN 2's linear approach is an outright failure. The game actually goes farther than any other game in its story-telling devices. But it could have been so much more. At its best, the game is capable of providing some great surprises. In one level moment in the JDA campaign, you approach a powerful artifact in a hallway occupied by two huge, unmoving, monstrous creatures. As soon as you take control of the artifact, the two beasts pounce, tipping your forces to shreds. It's a great moment in the game and it illustrates the future potential of the entire genre.

#### But as a Game...

In reality, DARK REIGN excels when judged within the cozy confines of real-time strategy gaming. The game's 3D graphics don't complicate the action. You can play it in the ideal fashion: as if it were a 2D game with 3D graphics. There's no need to swivel your perspective to be more effective, since the game camera adjusts itself to the appropriate height.

In fact, it seemed like pivoting the camera around only made things more difficult, as it was too easy to lose the north-south orientation you'll need. You might wish that you could zoom in and out a little bit more, thankfully, there are patches available that let you do this at [www.darkreign2.net](http://www.darkreign2.net).

The mission types consist of the usual mix – all-out battles interspersed with smaller, more tactical missions – the kind where losing too many units means failure. One nice touch is the number of timed missions in the game. In one such level, you have to ensure that nine out of twelve scout ships land safely at your base, which means you have to go on the offensive, taking out a series of anti-air installations before they destroy four of your craft. In another, you have only 30 minutes to assassinate a leader before he makes his escape into the mountains.

#### Mines!

One major frustration is how the game uses mines to impede your progress. These are the DARK REIGN 2 equivalent of the jumping or maze puzzles in action or adventure games; every single level, it seems, is filled with mines capable of taking out your meticulously-placed armies in one blast.

While it's true that the mine-detecting units on each side can discover these mines, their presence seriously erodes the pacing of the game. Complicating the problem, the units' pathfinding AI usually results in your minesweeper getting stuck at the back of the pack. So, you have to send off your mine detector with a small squadron – in which case, if they run into the enemy, you're cooked. Or you have to send them with a big squadron, where units still tend to run into undetected mines. A nice solution would have been to abstract the destruction of mines in such a way that when units detect them, they're automatically destroyed.

Another frustration is that the game's formations don't really work. By holding down the V, B, or N keys, you can move your units into a formation. This helps during a firefight, but the units don't stay in formation when they're moving. Too many times, units get picked off attacking a mounted defense simply because you can't get them to show up on time together.

#### Few of My Favorite Things

These problems are nothing out of the ordinary. In fact, DARK

**TAKE 'EM OUT** No matter what setting – jungle, urban, or alien – DARK REIGN's graphics are the best ever for an RTS game.



**IF IT MAKES YOU HAPPY...** The same rules apply – build up a massive army and rush the enemy to win.



**IN THE BEGINNING** From this point, you'll build a massive – albeit temporary – empire. Be careful not to scout around too far in the early stages of the single-player game; you'll pay for it.



REIGN 2 suffers from fewer of these kinds of glitches and annoyances that RTS gamers have come to expect. And the elegant interface really makes commanding and constructing your forces simple.

Even the game's multiplayer options – which present several different types of games – are solid. It's still interesting that even three years later, no one has come up with a more open-ended, AGE OF EMPRES approach to multiplayer.

But somehow, DARK REIGN 2 is less than the sum of its highly-evolved parts. What is probably one of the finest real-time strategy games ever released feels typical and unimpressive. This is probably the only time Computer Gaming World will ever (we hope) quote Huxley Lewis, but we need a new drug. One capable of recapturing the manic fervor even mediocre real-time strategy games used to inspire.

**CGW**



"Think of Sea Dogs as Pirates! in 3D but with more depth to it... Sea Dogs simply looks great."  
Gamers Central

"...combines the extremely addictive gameplay of both Daggerfall and the old Sid Meier classic, Pirates!  
FiringSquad



Sea Dogs is an epic role-playing game for the pirate in all of us. Return to the age of sail as a young captain looking to make a name in the world. Develop your character from humble beginnings and rise to control all of the islands for your country or yourself. You can give your allegiance to one of three countries or choose to serve only yourself as a swashbuckling pirate. Build your wealth and reputation and use it to acquire bigger ships and better crewman. Hire other captains to join you in attacking and capturing other ships or forts. Where you go and what you do is up to you.

The choices in Sea Dogs are endless...

And so is the fun.



# Sea Dogs



**Bethesda**  
SOFTWARES

Bethesda Softworks Inc.™ 1370 Piccard Drive, Suite 120, Rockville, MD 20850 Fax: 301.826.8300 [www.bethsoft.com](http://www.bethsoft.com)  
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Manage your empire the way you want. Dictate every decision or allow your mayors to govern their cities while you concentrate on the big picture.

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What if Kennedy had backed down from Khrushchev? What if Alexander the Great had been a diplomat? What if the King and Queen of Spain hadn't funded Columbus? What if Vice President Gore had invented the Internet? What if you led the world?

# CALL TO POWER II



THE POWER TO CHANGE HISTORY  
IS IN YOUR HANDS.

**SO MUCH DEATH!** A kind of Uchiha assists a Dragon in quickly reducing the enemy tower.



**DEPTH OF CHARACTER** Each character has 10 secondary stats, like Command and Morale, that are derived from the primary stats but which can be improved separately — if you have the experience points.

### LEARN NEW SKILLS



## Without its WARLORDS-style heroes, this damsel would be in serious distress

# Heroes to the Rescue

**C**ould **WARLORDS BATTLECRY** be the least-anticipated game of the year? Fans of SSG's long-running turn-based **WARLORDS** games were skeptical, to say the least, of their beloved franchise's abrupt leap onto the real-time bandwagon; die-hard RTS fanatics merely sneered (if they noticed at all) at what seemed to be an outdated 2D rip-off of **WARCRAFT II**, limping onto the scene at a time when titles like **GROUND CONTROL** and **SHOGUN** are making 3D the standard.

But what adventurous gamers will discover is an intriguing, if not wholly successful, blend of role-playing and traditional real-time

strategy. If it's not likely to make the **WARCRAFT III** team at Blizzard quake in their boots, **BATTLECRY** does succeed where the ballyhooed **TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS** fell flat on its 3D polygonal face, it's the best

real-time fantasy/strategy game since, well, **WARCRAFT II**.

### Not Even Skindeep

Sadly, your first impression of **BATTLECRY** is unlikely to be good. Despite supporting resolutions of up to 1024x600, the graphics are, frankly, a bit lame. Forsaking the more realistic isometric view favored by recent games like **AGE OF KINGS** for the slightly warped top-down perspective of older titles doesn't help, nor does the fact that the buildings, terrain, and units are uniformly clunky and lackluster. Worst of all, units and buildings are often very hard to distinguish from one another: A gold mine looks much like a rock quarry which looks alarmingly similar to an iron mine, while your crucial hero unit is distinguished from run-of-the-mill grunts primarily by the tiny, easy-to-miss flag he carries around. Eeek.

While the interface does offer all the gimmicks and conveniences we've come to expect from a modern RTS title (stackable waypoints, production queues, rally points, formations, defensive or aggressive stances), it's not exactly a miracle of ergonomics. It's all too possible, for instance, to click on a rapidly-parishing hero's portrait in an effort to get him clear of danger, only to find you've accidentally brought up

## WARLORDS BATTLECRY

reviewed by Jason Kinglik

### CGW RATED

#### PROS

Nine interestingly varied races and a massively deep character-development system make for nearly endless replayability.

#### CONS

Lackluster graphics and clunky interface elements make it hard to see past the surface.

**THE QUICK AND THE DEAD** Heroes come in all shapes and (subtly) colors, with 7 races and 10 classes to choose from. Heroes gain experience and levels not just in campaign play, but in multiplayer and in skirmishes against the AI.



**Requirements:** Pentium 233MHz, 64MB RAM, 133 MB free drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium 300MHz, 3D Support: Not  
**Multiplayer Support:** Modem (2 players), LAN Network, or TCP/IP (2-4 players), one CD per player.

**Publisher:** SSI/Mental Interactive • **Developer:** SGT • **E-til:** www.warlordsofbattlecry.com • **ESRB Rating:** Teen; unsuited violence.



## THE EVOLUTION OF FLIGHT COMBAT

Echelon puts the player in white-knuckle air combat over lush alien landscapes and towering cities in a futuristic war. While exploring several branching campaigns and a gripping storyline, the player-pilot advances in rank and assumes greater control over wingmen during combat. As a hot-shot pilot you'll fly a variety of craft types with different flight models that provide changing and challenging tactical combat in both single-player and multi-player games. Shoot and maneuver, pursue and evade a cunning and ruthless enemy over eye-popping, breath-taking terrains.

### Echelon features:

- Spectacular 3D graphics presenting highly realistic environments + effects
- Fourteen selectable player craft with over 20 different weapons
- Customizable controls + autopilot functions offer you perfect combination of action + sim
- Two branching campaigns promise a different experience each time you play
- Multiplayer support for up to 16 players over the Internet, including co-op + deathmatch



# ECHELON



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the spellbook that covers half the screen, Double click.

And the aggravations continue. It's quite easy to build structures in a position where eating units will be trapped, permanently, between the building and adjacent obstacles. If the pathfinding is generally good, the AI is sometimes suspect, with demitted troops standing stoically as they are bombarded from afar. The campaign scenarios are an exercise in frustration, from voice actors who seem to have been instructed to sound as condescendingly snotty as possible, to the incredible (but familiar) irritation of having to keep three or more unique allied characters alive to win, most of which are all too easy to mistake for normal units, and all of which have a tendency to charge suicidally into battle against overwhelming odds.

### Pretty on the Inside

In fact, it's not until you take a break from the campaign for some skirmish games vs. the computer that you're likely to start enjoying *WARLORDS BATTLECRY*, and it's not until you've played a half-dozen games and leveled-up your hero that you'll start to appreciate the game's depth.

Heroes are your key units in the game: They can build structures, rally troops, cast spells, and most importantly, convert resources. Rather than building refineries or poors, in *BATTLECRY* you simply take over existing mines via the Conversion command - your hero waves his crudely-animated arms around for a minute or two - and poof! All the mines within his radius begin producing resources for you (your standard gold, ore, stone, and crystal).

Apart from this quirk, *BATTLECRY*'s basic gameplay is very familiar: Build structures, produce troops, upgrade your tech, build more and better troops or defenses, crush the foe, etc. Where the game distinguishes itself is in the variety of the available races, and in the awesome complexity of the hero and race system.

There are nine races, ranging from doughty dwarfs to beefy minotaurs, and if they're all standard fantasy archetypes, their play mechanics are refreshingly varied. The minotaurs, for instance, have exactly one basic unit. It's called a Minotaur. However, they can build a variety of upgrades for that unit, giving it the ability to attack flying units, stronger armor, and so on. While the Humans play in standard *WARCRAFT* fashion, the Undead produce most of their elite units by "morphing" skeletons into Wights, Wights into Liches, and so forth, in a manner similar to *STARCRAFT*'s Zerg.

Some races require huge amounts of gold, others crystal, and so on. Some, like the Humans, can convert one resource to another using marketplaces; others, like the Dark Elves, lack this convenience but instead have the ability to summon hordes of Thralls to work their mines, or perish in sacrificial rites to summon a mighty Daemon. The differences between races, and the strategies involved to win with each, are quite dramatic.

### From Zero to Hero

But the real meat of the game is the hero system. While heroes are always crucial for building initial structures and capturing resources, as they increase in level they can even more impressive abilities. With a monstrously complicated stats system (9 races, 16 classes, 10 schools of magic, 2 dozen skills, 60 different abilities, 80+ spells), you're free to construct any number of different hero types as you gain experience points, from a summoner who can raise packs of supernatural beasts, to stealthy assassins, to more traditional sword-wielding warriors and fireball-hurling wizards. As in the turn-based *WARLORDS* games, mini-quests available at various frequently offer

**CIRCLE OF POWER** Your heroes have a command radius, within which troops become more powerful and aggressive.



**CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT** Thanks to powerful magic, these undead troops grow stronger as they attack under the cover of artificial nightfall.



**BOREO STIFFS** A long list of statistics makes themselves by juggling their strength. There's a traitor, only a little bit to looking up the otherwise dark woods of the game.



the reward of a hero-enhancing magic item, if you complete their objective (slay X enemies, answer a riddle) in a limited time.

Adding to the sense of continuity the hero offers is the Retinue, a pool of powerful units you can bring along with you. Tough generals or experienced troops can be stored in the Retinue and then carried over to another game or scenario, depending on the handicap setting (weaker sides will get more points to bring in more of their Retinue or extra basic units).

While a few earlier games - notably *RAGE OF MAGES* and its sequel *NECROMANCER* - tried to incorporate the persistent characters of the role-playing genre into real-time strategy, *BATTLECRY* is the first game to make it work. You really do develop an attachment to your hero, and agonize over where to spend your hard-earned ability points. Should you buy a new skill? Enhance an attribute? Increase your command radius? Save up for Spell Mastery? Do you choose to lead a race that complements your hero's strengths, or pick a side with weaknesses you can shore up? Without the heroes, *BATTLECRY* would be merely a competent clone, but with them, it becomes a surprisingly addictive, almost infinitely replayable experience. The robust multiplayer suite increases longevity further, allowing you to set up any number of different scenarios, including randomly-generated maps and team games with or without AI players.

Once you get over the dull graphics and interface glitches, *BATTLECRY* manages to retain a surprising amount of the old *WARLORDS* charm, while offering new-school RTS gamers a novel challenge. It's the first RTS game to successfully incorporate that "just one more level" hook that makes titles like *DIABLO* or *MIGHT & MAGIC* so addictive. Now, if you'll pardon me, I have to level-up my Undead Necromancer so I can buy that third-level spell I've had my eye on... **CGW**

# This is The Final Frontier!

## STAR TREK NEW WORLDS

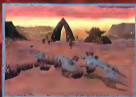
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- PC Gamer



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ICEWIND DALE is a first-rate D&amp;D dungeon romp

# Ice Ice Baby!



**T**he RPG genre has been suffering for the last few years from a lack of games that truly capture the spirit of role-playing.

Although there's been a plethora of wannabes, few games claiming to be of the RPG variety have lived up to the claim — they're usually action and/or adventure games in disguise. Black Isle's ICEWIND DALE is the developer's third foray into the AD&D world of the Forgotten Realms, and is a cup of refreshingly cold ice water in the vast desert of the RPG genre. It's been a long time since I've found a game that has held my interest for more than a couple of days at most. I've been playing ICEWIND DALE for several weeks now.



**I NEED AN ATM** Drilling your party reamed out can cost a pretty penny, so real death is never possible.

## ICEWIND DALE

Reviewed by Tina "Cassandra" Hageman

Anyone who has read *The Crystal Shard*, the first book of the Icewind Dale Trilogy by R.A. Salvatore, will find much of the unbinding story in ICEWIND DALE familiar. But because the game doesn't tell the same story as the book, those who haven't read the book aren't at a disadvantage. The biggest advantage readers will have is in being familiar with the region. You start off in Essthaven, one of the infamous Ten Towns in the Icewind Dale region of the Forgotten Realms.

north of the Spine Of The World. However, you don't play Drizzt, Wulfgar, Bruenor, or anyone else from the story. In fact, the game is set over a decade before Drizzt — one of D&D's most popular characters — makes his first literary appearance.

ICEWIND DALE uses Bioware's Infinity engine, the same used in BALDUR'S GATE. It's set in the same world, but its relationship to BALDUR'S GATE ends there. It's set in a different area of the world and the story doesn't relate in any way. While the interface and game may feel familiar to those who

have played the earlier games, if you're looking for a BALDUR'S GATE sequel, you need to wait for BALDUR'S GATE 2.

### Stone Cold

The game begins with the moderator (voiced by the talented David Ogden Stiers) telling of an invasion from the creatures of the lower planes, a desperate battle, and the emergence of a hero who saves the world but gets turned into a large stone, not unlike Han Solo in *The Empire Strikes Back*. Rather than the now-standard 3D-rendered intro movie, ICEWIND DALE's intro unfolds as a series of hand-drawn sketches, which gives a richer flavor to the narrative.

Character creation is a long and involved process — at least, if you want to get it right — and a dream come true for hardcore role-players. There are no pre-rolled characters to use; you must create your entire party from scratch, which usually means you form a greater attachment to your party than when you are issued stock characters.

Using the basic AD&D rules, you can choose from a variety of races and classes, everything from humans to gnomes and paladins to druids. Each character type has its advantages and disadvantages, as do the classes and alignments. Many NPCs react

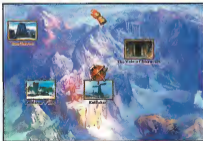
## CGW RATED

### PROS

Highly customizable characters gives you a greater attachment to them.

### CONS

A bit of a steep learning curve for combat.



Requirements: Pentium 233M to 1000 or better; 32 MB RAM; 430 MB hard drive space. Recommended Requirements: Pentium 266MHz or better; 64 MB RAM; 650 MB hard drive space; CD-ROM; 4 MB 3Dfx video card. Multiplayer Support: LAN, TCP/IP, custom world (full screen)

Publisher: Interplay • Developer: Black Isle • \$44 • www.interplay.com/icewind • ESRB Rating: Teen; unlimited violence.



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differently to different types of characters, so you'll want a good variety. (Hint: Make sure the majority of your party have some sort of missile-weapon skill.) You can import your own character portraits and voice files for your characters, and Interplay has released some new portraits by one of their artists on their Web site

([www.interplay.com/icewind/](http://www.interplay.com/icewind/)), as well as several PLANESCAPE: TORMENT portraits that were altered to fit ICEWIND DALE.

### Die, Monster, Die!

Combat in ICEWIND DALE is intense and plentiful. Rather than immerse you in FedEx quests, most of the game involves combat in a large variety of dungeons. Yes, ICEWIND DALE is ultimately a dungeon crawl, but it's a good crawl. As in BALDUR'S GATE, combat can be real-time, turn-based, or a mix of the two. Being able to pause the action while directing your druid to heal your party is vitally important, or you'll quickly find yourself with a large party of corpses—and it can get rather expensive to have them constantly resurrected.

The ICEWIND DALE combat system rewards clever strategy over a fast mouse-hand. You can't run into an area, click on everything with an axe and expect your party to survive, especially in some of the more dangerous and difficult areas. You'll want to walk slowly into an area and lure some of the creatures into range, and then hit them with as many missile weapons as you can before they get close enough to do any damage.

One of the game's best features is the ability to use scripts to control your party during combat, either using the pre-written scripts that come with the game, or by writing your own. You can set your fighters to go berserk as soon as a battle starts, or have your mages cast offensive or defensive spells

and then run to safety if anyone comes close enough to attack. After your first few forays into combat situations, you'll learn what works best with your style of play and may find yourself rolling some new characters. Characters can be exported from the single-player game and then imported into multiplayer games or for use in other saved games.

The multiplayer game is the same as the single-player game, except that instead of creating your party and controlling them, your party consists of other players using their own characters. The host starting the game is the leader and is in control of things such as saving the game and decid-

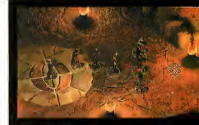


**CUSTOMIZING IS GOOD** Write a customized script to control your party's behavior during battles, and write your own background for each character.

ing who can join and what types of characters to allow. You can either import one of your previously-created characters, or use a button to pre-generate a generic character. The leader can set up various permissions as well, deciding whether people can spend party gold, pause the game, or initiate dialogue, among other things.

### Bring It On

After such a long dry spell, there seems to be a large number of RPGs hitting the shelves these days. Everyone's trying to cash in on the action and there's a lot of hype surrounding some of the biggest names. For serious role-players, I'd recommend ICEWIND DALE before DIABLO 2. While DIABLO 2's pure hack-and-slash approach can get tiring after awhile, ICEWIND DALE manages to combine a lot of slaying with a great story and more strategic gameplay. Once again, Black Isle has succeeded admirably in creating a game that both the casual gamer and hardcore roleplayer can enjoy. **GGW**



## It's My Party, I'll Die When I Want To

**L**ittle piddly goblin mooks taking you down? Here are some tips for optimizing your party makeup.

■ **No matter what, every character should put at least one star in a ranged weapon of some sort, whether it be bows or missile weapons. Ranged weaponry is extremely powerful, and having at least one star in a ranged weapon means you don't suffer any penalties when using one. Give fighters and thieves bows, and the rest of the party elgs.**

■ **Put two fighter-types up front. Have at least one pure fighter, and either create another pure fighter, or something "fighter-ish" (Ranger, Paladin, or one of the multi-class fighter combinations). With the best weapons and armor, they will soak up and deal the most damage.**

■ **Back up the fighters with two priests: at least one pure cleric, and either another cleric, or a druid, or a multiclass leveling one of the two. Have one memorize nothing-but-healing spells, and the other a few healing spells and some general spells. There will be a lot of undead, so the pure cleric is needed for Turn Undead. Having two healers ensure survival in long dungeons away from town.**

■ **Have at least one mage, preferably two. The mage is artillery: physically weak, needs protection, but possesses vital firepower. To ensure your mage stays out of combat, he or she should never have a melee weapon (unless that weapon enhances spell-casting skills). Stick to elgs.**

■ **You need at least one thief for both trap spotting/dismantling, and to serve as "bait." We prefer the multiclass Mage/Thief, as he provides thieving abilities and extra spell support. Use the armor off, cast spells, then run and hide behind everyone else.**

—Thierry Nguyen

*it's always fun until...*

*someone totally kicks your ass!*

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***kick or be kicked!***

*Outnumbered.*



# But Not Outsmarted.

Project IGI: I'm Going In is the first military shooter to stress cunning and covertness over firepower.

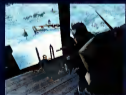
Sent in behind enemy lines for a routine track and capture, you take on the role of Dave Howelwyn Jones, a British and US operative. Suddenly caught between greed and treason, this assignment evolves into a mission of stealth and retaliation.

Battle your way through Eastern Europe in pursuit of homicidal ex-Russian Colonel bent on turning Europe into a radioactive wasteland. An adrenaline pumping plot keeps you riveted as you go behind enemy lines to save the world from nuclear terror!

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- Call in for Nagain strikes via your revolutionary map/communication hub.
- Equip yourself with the latest NATO sniper and assault weapons to defeat enemy surveillance, bunkers, tanks, and gunships.

# PROJECT IGI I'M GOING IN.



# It's Not Part of My Rock 'n' Roll Fantasy

## HELL ON WHEELS

The *Psycho* is a one-wheeled, fire-blasting circus freak and is one of the game's several well-designed enemies.

It's a KISS game and there's not a guitar-gun or groupie in sight

**A**ny discussion about freakishly hairy, blood-spewing men in towering platform demon boots and nightmarish Katakana makeup is going to struggle a little in maintaining anything approximating an earthbound sense of proportion.

Thankfully, *KISS Psycho Circus: The Nightmare Child* abandons any such nubby notions of scale and revels in the excess that defines its source material. Todd McFarlane's excellent *KISS Psycho Circus* comic book – itself loosely

based on the Grand Guignol heavy-metal theatrics of the band, *KISS*. The game does justice to *KISS* licensing, but there're a few things that prevent it from being a game worth recommending – regardless of whether you're a *KISS* fan or not.

### Play it Loud

The game never lets you forget it's all about *KISS*. From posters, song-blasting radios, and hidden references, the game is one long knowing-wink to members of the *KISS* army.

Just don't expect any voice-overs from any members of the band. You'll want to crank the volume nice and loud – the better to enjoy the moans and bosses' grunts, growls, or insane laughter, and the jukeboxes blasting *KISS* songs (plus, you'll get a nice reward if you wait out the entire song). Unfortunately, you'll want to shove wax into your ears and strap yourself to a pole during the annoying tutorial and the ear-chafing speech of your gypsy guide, Madame Raven.

The game's premise is straight out of the comic: The usual four avatars that harbor the *KISS* Elders were members of a circus. They're all evil now, and it's up to you and your band to save the world and battle them as end bosses before fighting the main enemy: terrible, the Nightmare Child. You can choose to play as any of the characters at any time, but the game suggests a certain order for storyline continuity and difficulty ramping. You start out playing as the Starbearer, collecting armor pieces to become the Elder and fight the level boss.

Each level is based around the Elder's elemental realm: Earth, Air, Water, and Fire. For instance, Earth is home to the Beast King, so you weaken your mayhem across green caverns, hills, and tunnels. The Demon's Fire realm features magma, blood, and raging furnaces.



**FASHION DO'S AND DON'TS** Do float in the air while during new enemy phases. Don't feel compelled to vomit blood, just breathe you fans into a drows.



## CGW RATED

### PROS

Great-looking game, great-looking enemies, and hey, you play as Gene Simmons.

### CONS

Bugs, dumb AI, and a lack of weapon variety.

**Requirements:** Pentium 233, CD-ROM had this space, 5MB RAM **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-4 CPU, 512MB RAM, 1GB+ HD available  
**3D Support:** Direct 3D **Multiplayer Support:** LAN, Internet (2-16 players), via CD per player

**Publisher:** Gathering of Developers • **Developer:** Third Law Interactive • \$49 • [www.kisspsychoircross.com](http://www.kisspsychoircross.com)  
**ESRB Rating:** Mature: simulated blood, gore, and violence.



**BAD CASE OF CHAIRS** The *Demon* makes up for their lack of AI minds by thinking in incredible numbers.

**PUFFS A WIMPY DRAGON** If only more of the weaponry were righted along the lines of the *Demon's* ultimate wimpus, a flame-spraying, shoulder-pushing *UP* Dragon.



**EXPRESS TRAIN TO HELL** The hushed *Hellish Station* levels may sound silly, but they're among the scariest in the game.



**DEWEY DECIBEL SYSTEM** *Chaos II* sounds practically serene "Use Me!"



don't tax your foraging skills. What is taxing us here the special power-ups and armor are explained only through "paraphrasis" you pick up in the game and nowhere else. I didn't know what the "chaos heart" did specifically until the last half of the game, because I didn't find the right pamphlet.

### God of Thunder and Not Much Else

The highlight of the game, the point at which everything comes together, is when you play as the *Demon*. Too bad it's only the last quarter of the game. The best level design is here, populated by the most challenging amount of badies, and did I mention, playing as *Gene Simmons ROCKS!* For this one portion of the game, you really feel like you were raised by demons and are lord of the wastelands. In comparison, the other *Elders* feel like just so much asserted error.

This isn't a bad game, but gameplay is mind-numbing in parts, and some of that blame falls on the weapons. Why do all the *Elders* use the same four weapons, with only the melee and ultimate weapons unique to

each? Why must four totally different avatars share the same chainsaw, shotgun, whip, and grenade launcher? Shouldn't the *Demon* have an arsenal of hellie-based weaponry? At the very least, secondary-fire options would have broken up the monotony.

### Sinister Sideshow

The main challenge in the game comes from the amount of enemies. This is a game designed around the "more is more" philosophy, with hordes of bad guys spilling over walls, through doors, and down stairs. These are not brainiac, HALF-LIFE-caliber bad guys — these nasties aren't smart enough to move over a foot when you're blasting their arm off. But there are so many of them — so many DOOM-style swarming hordes of monsters — that you'll be frantically fighting for your life almost constantly. By the end of the game I so hated the *Slurpee*, with their little canine barks and fire-belching bite, I had to ask editor Robert Corley for new sailor talk.

The chaos the hordes create is giddy, dizzyingly bloody, imagine lacking through a sea of headless monstrosities with your melee weapon because you're low on ammo and that *Spawner* behind the horde keeps spitting more out. The ground awash in blood, you inch your way through the crowd, ignoring the flying *Gasbags* belching poisonous green clouds, the *FatLady* on the ledge lobbing exploding lengths of her intestines at you, and the bloated *Ballbuster* firing cannon balls from atop a nearby building. Run away! Don't even think about it — narrow passages and the "there's only more ahead" design puts you under the love gun constantly. These are truly inspired atrocities — too bad the weak boss AI lets you simply hide behind something and whip them to death.

A few other problems get in the way at times. Some clipping problems trapped my character in spots, forcing me to reload my last quicksave; I had to constantly re-map my forward- and back-keys; one of my quicksaves crashed and forced me to restart a whole level; and a few times the game just crashed. Frustrating? Oh yes.

There's a dearth of good shooters right now, and *KISS PSYCHO CIRCUS: THE NIGHTMARE CHILD* is a wild ride for shooter fans willing to forgive (and shoot) a lot. In the end, this game is a great time for *KISS* fans and a so-so time for gamers. **C-+**



**Dewey Dewey** song from *Rock and Roll Show*



**Alvin** name of 1972 album



**Cold** *Don't say you love KISS* self-titled album  
**The Dewey** title of 1972 *KISS* cassette



**Gene** art form through *Rock and Roll Show*



**Shocker** song from *KISS* self-titled album

Welcome to cookie cutter Formula One racing

# When Mediocrity Is (Yawn) Good

**M**ediocrity isn't necessarily a bad thing. Sure, it's easy to condemn any game that doesn't advance its genre, but this is a shortsighted view which fails to recognize the fun that can be had with recent titles like *NOX*, *SOLDIER OF FORTUNE*, and even *DIABLO II*—games that provide hours of entertainment without even the pretense of breaking new ground.

F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX boldly joins the ranks of the fun-but-unremarkable. The Lankhor-designed racing sim would best be summed up as stunningly average. Its visual and sound stylings are more workmanlike than inspired, and its physics engine has been cobbled together with parts from every Formula One racer released since 1997. Yet, as bland as this looks on paper, it's hard to really criticize the game. While I'll forget all about it no more than 15

minutes after completing this review, I can't say that I didn't enjoy the ride.

## A Face in the Crowd

Unsurprisingly enough, virtually nothing about F1WGP stands out. The game is an acceptable recreation of the 1999 Formula One season,

complete with all 11 teams, 22 drivers, and 16 tracks. It comes complete with configurable practice, single race, and championship season modes, along with a thorough garage feature that lets you adjust your vehicle in almost every way imaginable.

Game physics vary, depending on your choice of arcade or simulation difficulty. The former makes everything more forgiving, allowing you to slam on the brakes at the last possible second without locking up your wheels, punch it off the blocks without spinning out too much, and so on. This setting seems perfectly suited to the game—cars and track conditions are only vaguely reminiscent of reality, yet still authentic enough to be both captivating and challenging. The simulation mode is plagued with problems. While opposing drivers are a lot more cutthroat, everything else is erratic. Tires lock up in turns, no matter how you approach them. Even the lightest touch on

**FOOL IN THE RAIN?** An incredible variety of courses allow you to scope out the action from almost any trackable vantage. Here's a close-up of my car as a race gets underway in rainy Montreal.



the brakes regularly brings on an uncontrollable powerslide that leads directly to the grass or dirt.

Arcade physics are also supposed to lessen damage taken in collisions, although I found the damage model to be all over the place, in both settings. You can usually drive out of crashes that would leave real-world drivers maimed, but then minor bumps often result in serious damage. Just touching the car in front of me while negotiating a turn often left my vehicle with a falling front wing or a blown tire. Fortunately, even something this serious never prevented me from quickly reaching the pits for a speedy repair.

## Some Tea, Mr. Schumacher?

Presentation values are high, but in a low-key way that doesn't draw attention to special effects. The Direct3D-accelerated visuals do a good job of depicting just what you need to see, although there's a slightly grainy appearance to everything. Cars, tracks, grandstands, and other scenery look exactly as they're supposed to. Audio is very similar. Unlike other racing titles, where engine and pitcrew whining assault you with obnoxious volume, sound effects here are as well-mannered as a tea party two doors down. While some will be disappointed, I found this a nice change of pace.

Bottom line: Stick with the arcade mode in F1WGP, turn damage off, and confine yourself to solo races and the smooth online multiplayer option. While this means forgoing a full championship season (only available with the simulation setting turned on), the effects in sim mode are just too irregular and frustrating to bother with. No matter how you cut it, this isn't a racing sim in the tradition of MicroProse's GRAND PRIX series or anything by the oil-soaked gurus at Papyrus. But if you're just out for a few days of fun at the racetrack, you could do worse than this one. **CGW**

## FIFTH WHEEL? MAN, I JUST WANT TO KEEP FOUR!

Minor fender-benders typically result in massive damage to your front wing, or wheel. Expect to lose a lot of air accessories when making turns, if you're not extra cautious about bumping cars.



**Requirements:** Pentium 166MHz MMX, 32MB RAM, 250MB free disk space, 48 CD-ROM drive, Direct3D card with 4MB memory, DirectX 7.0-compatible sound and video cards. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium III 250MHz, 64MB RAM, 250MB free disk space, 6X CD-ROM drive, DirectX card with 8MB memory. **3D Support:** DirectX Multiplayer Support: Up to 12 players via LAN or 162MP (Internet), up to four on a single computer (split-screen).

**Publisher:** Eidos • **Developer:** Lankhor • **323** • [www.eidos.com](http://www.eidos.com) • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone

## F1 WORLD GRAND PRIX

Reviewed by Brett Todd

## CGW RATED

### PROS

Probably the most accessible F1 title currently available for the PC.

### CONS

Stylish physics and a constant sense of having been there, done that.





"This is definitely not a  
'me too' game:  
it has the potential  
to be one of the  
compelling strategy  
titles of the year."  
PC Gamer, August 2000

"Graphically, this is  
by far the  
most intriguing of  
the Battle Isle games"  
Computer Games Magazine,  
August 2000

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**AIRBORNE** Keeping track of your units can be hard, but that's a problem in real life as well.



**TOY SOLDIERS** For the hexagonally-challenged, there's a 3D view.



Saving Private Ryan, one turn at a time

## Hedgerow Hell

**W**hen you've got a perfectly good wargame system that's served well for several years, why change? That must be John Tiller's philosophy, and it hasn't steered him wrong yet.

The designer of TalonSoft's popular **BATTLEGROUND** series of 19th-Century tactical-warfare games, Tiller took his brainchild to Scott Hamilton's HPS Simulations last year and released his first game, **PANZER CAMPAIGNS**:

### PANZER CAMPAIGNS: NORMANDY '44

designed by Bruce Geryk

**SMOLENSK '41.** This was the first in a projected series of Panzer Campaigns games that will cover famous actions during World War II, both on the eastern and western fronts. While the system has evolved, the graphics and gameplay still bear the unmistakable marks of the line of games we grow to love on the fields of **TILLER'S WATERLOO** and **GETTYSBURG**. Long-time fans will find plenty to like here.

#### All Ashore That's Going Ashore

**NORMANDY '44** covers the Allied D-Day landing on June 6, 1944, at the company level, using the familiar hex-based grid inherited from board games. Hexes represent 1 km across, each turn is two hours of historical time, and scenarios range from the first few hours at Omaha Beach, to the entire Normandy campaign, from the landing to the August break-

out. Longevity is one of the game's strong points.

The game system used in **NORMANDY '44** is turn-based, but comes in two flavors. The first is a combined movement/combat system where all actions – whether moving, firing, or entering into close assault combat – take place during one phase. Defensive fire is automatically handled by the computer (even if you're playing against a live opponent) and the result is very wide-open, which sometimes seems at odds with the ferocious, inch-by-inch combat the game is trying to recreate. Gamers can opt for a more traditional system in which movement, defensive fire, and combat all take place in defined phases. This will appeal to those players who need to retain control at all times, but it will also radically change the flow of the game. The latter system significantly tips the balance in favor of the Germans in some scenarios.

#### Home Before Christmas?

When wargames came in cardboard boxes with lots of little counters to manage, there was a physical limit to the size a game could assume in order to remain playable. Computer wargames greatly extended that limit, with mixed results. While the ability to re-light all of Waterloo on a very small scale or to re-create giant Russian front encirclements without having to clean out the basement is a good thing, it imposes a certain discipline on the designer to keep things manageable. In **NORMANDY '44**, however, Tiller seems to have gotten a bit carried away with his infinite virtual canvas, and as a result, some of the large scenarios can be a bit of a chore. There is a good selection of small scenarios, and some players will revel in the ability to simulate the entire invasion from June to August; but a slightly more focused design would have yielded a better game. In the campaign, sitting through an AI move can be tedious.

**NORMANDY '44** is only available direct from HPS Simulations, and it lacks a printed manual, but the documentation on the CD is extensive and printer-friendly. This is a solid, fun, polished game from a talented game designer. Any wargame fan will want to own it. **CGW**

Requirements: Pentium 133MHz, 20MB RAM, 20MB free disk space. Multiplayer Support: Simultaneous (2 players), TSP (4 players)

Publisher: HPS Simulations • Developer: John Tiller • \$49, plus shipping • www.hpsgames.com • ESRB Rating: Not rated.

### CGW RATED

#### PROS

Single game system with emphasis on strategy; many scenarios.

#### CONS

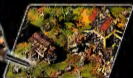
Game balance upset by system changes; large scenarios are very unwieldy.

A Plague Falls Upon The Land  
and **Enemies** become **Allies**

Who can you trust?



# THE SETTLERS



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[www.bluebyte.net](http://www.bluebyte.net)

## STAR TREK CONQUEST ONLINE

**S**TAR TREK CONQUEST ONLINE makes us remember why *Magic* was the only real winner in the trading-card game wars: The others were deeply flawed and full of bad design choices.

Star Trek's biggest gaffe was a slow of cards whose sole purpose was to negate rare cards. Genetic Anomalies has done hunkand the favor of recreating this real-world disappointment in a virtual setting.

At least a virtual card game lets you save lots of deck combinations and trade with anyone in the world. You're still stuck with the horrible auction phase of the game, where instead of drawing your own cards, a random piece is pulled and players bid to get good cards, or to pass on the bad ones.

You can buy booster packs of 15 pieces online for \$3, or a starter pack for \$10. Why, in an online game, are the pieces distributed in the same numbers and prices as real world cards? Why the hell am I bothering to play online? At least in reality, I can put my hands on the darn things. As aggravating as this is, it also



leads to a real gameplay problem: If your opponent is willing to shell out the money, he's virtually guaranteed to win.

I suppose this could have worked if Genetic Anomalies hadn't straightjacketed itself into remaking an already miserable card game. It also might have worked if they'd reworked the game mechanics so that so many pieces didn't exist solely to remove Captain Picard, or Worf, or Tric, or whomever else, from play. As it stands now, STAR TREK CONQUEST ONLINE definitely does justice to a half-assed trading-card game that never had anything going for it, outside of an \$80 Captain Picard. —Alec Handy

Genre: Strategy • Publisher: Activision • Developer: Genetic Anomalies  
\$30 • www.activision.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone



## BACKYARD BASEBALL 2001

Genre: Sports • Publisher: Namco • Developer: Namco  
Sports • \$20 • www.namcoesports.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

**W**hat? The HIGH HEAT-loving baseball-grognards at CGW are even reviewing

**BACKYARD BASEBALL 2001? A kid's game?** Well yes, yes we are, for one simple reason: It's a darn good baseball game, and a lot more fun than EA Sports' or Microsoft's entries into this year's derby. No, we're not giving up on our HIGH HEAT devotion, but BACKYARD BASEBALL 2001 translates a lot of the same baseball-loving spirit into PC gameplay that HIGH HEAT does. Plus, it's cute.



So, if you've got a youngster in the house who you're trying to induct with the national pastime, BACKYARD BASEBALL can provide a game paced slow enough for them to absorb, but stringent enough in baseball rules and culture to establish the foundation for a future fanatic. Having the full MLB license means you can match up dream teams of pee-wee versions of your favorite real-life players. Plus-sized Ken Griffey Jr. (Junior Junior?), blasting one off the tool shed in right-center is as exciting as any one of his SportsCenter highlights. —Tom Price

## BEACHHEAD 2000

Genre: Action • Publisher: WizardWorlds • Developer: Digital Fades • \$20 • wizard-worlds.com • ESRB Rating: Teen



**H**ere's some chicken-fried steak for the gaming soul. It's of modest quality, and you know it's terrible for you, but something about it makes you shovel it down your gullet.

BEACHHEAD 2000 is a 3D remake of an '80s-era 2D arcade game, its rebirth no

doubt inspired by the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*. You play that German machine-gunner who mows down rows of G.I. Joes before they even set foot off their landing craft and onto French soil. In the arcade universe, your machine-gun is augmented with air-to-air missiles and artillery shells



doubt inspired by the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*. You play that German machine-gunner who mows down rows of G.I. Joes before they even set foot off their landing craft and onto French soil. In the arcade universe, your machine-gun is augmented with air-to-air missiles and artillery shells

with which to pound back grunts, tanks, armored cars, jets, helicopters, and strategic bombers. They just keep coming at you, and you just keep shooting, wave after wave after wave.

It's stupid-simple, it's repetitive, and I played it a lot longer than I care to admit. —Chris Lombardi

## START-UP 2000

Genre: Business Simulation • Publisher: Interplay • Developer: Monte Cristo  
\$30 • www.montecristo-mali.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone



**I**f you've dreamed of starting a high-tech company, making a few billion on the IPO, then retiring with a martini in one hand and a babe on one arm, START-UP 2000 might be for you. START-UP 2000 puts you in the seat of an entrepreneur, flush with fresh venture-capital cash, eager to

dominate the globe in one of three markets: video phones, game consoles, or "cyber-televisions." You are responsible for everything from deciding which features to include in your product; hiring staff for functions



such as R&D, finance, production, and tech support; budgets for advertising and PR; setting selling price; and negotiating with retailers.

The features that make START-UP 2000 an enjoyable simulation — i.e., the myriad of variables that you control — can also make it somewhat frustrating for someone who just wants a game they can jump right into. The tutorial is fairly non-instructive and the requirements for success are not necessarily intuitive. However, an excellent manual/strategy guide does much to get you started in the right direction, and observing the moves of the computer opponents is enlightening. If you're willing to put in some thinking time, START-UP 2000 is an enjoyable simulation and an education that won't cost you your life savings! —Jeff Lackey



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IT'S GREAT FOR FLYING AND DRIVING, BUT OTHER GAMES BENEFIT LESS

# Does FSAA Make a Difference?

**M**any gamers have been heaping praise on full-scene anti-aliasing (FSAA), the technology that helps clean up jagged edges in 3D games. But not everyone is sold on it. While FSAA can improve the image quality in some games, it has little effect on others, and it often exacts a major performance penalty. This has led to a spirited debate as to FSAA's value, complicated by the fact that there are three different implementations of FSAA currently available, from 3dfx, nVidia, and ATI.

I decided to see for myself which titles benefit from FSAA and which ones don't.

by Dave Salvador

Using graphics cards from 3dfx, nVidia, and ATI, I tested one OpenGL and 15 Direct3D games that varied in genre

and age. I looked at several older titles, because FSAA can really help clean up their image quality, as those titles often used lower-fidelity textures. What I found is that of the 16 games, FSAA made a difference in eight of them. And of those eight, there were five cases where 3dfx's FSAA worked better or didn't have compatibility issues.

Whatever brand of FSAA you opt for, it is expensive in terms of processing power, video-memory bandwidth, and diminished space for texture caching. But there are cases where the benefit outweighs the cost. The chart below will help you identify which games and cards offer the best FSAA compatibility and image-quality improvements.

## What is FSAA?

FSAA is a technique for cleaning up three principal image-quality problems: texture crawling, pixel popping, and jaggies. Texture crawling and pixel-popping are most visible in large 3D environments, like flight sims, driving titles, and some sports games. Textures on distant objects appear to crawl on the object as you move toward it. An example of pixel-popping would be the yard-line markers on a football game's playing field flickering on and off as the cam-

era moved over the field. Jaggies is essentially the stair-stepping effect you see on lines or objects in a 3D world.

In our 3D card Slap-Down between 3dfx and nVidia (August), I told you that FSAA can do good things to image quality in games with large, open 3D environments, such as flight sims and driving titles. That hasn't changed. But its benefits can extend into some sports and 3D strategy games as well, though not all of them. Shooters do not lend themselves to FSAA, since it can tank frame-rate and introduce control latency into game performance, which spells certain death.

In presenting the 3D Slap-Down, I opted not to delve into deep detail about the different implementations of FSAA, but for the sake of alleviating confusion, here's how they work.

3dfx uses a technique called Rotated Grid Super-Sampling (RGSS), where a 3D scene is taken, and four "copies" of the scene are created. In creating these four copies, Voodoo 5 "jitters"—or slightly offsets the geometry—in these images in four different directions. Next, Voodoo 5 recombines the five images (original plus four offset copies) using an averaging algorithm, just before the image is sent to Voodoo 5's RAMDAC to be passed on to the monitor. This essentially has a blurring effect of smoothing jagged edges (jaggies), as well as curbing texture crawling and pixel-popping. 3dfx has two FSAA settings: 2X and 4X.

nVidia and ATI have implemented an FSAA technique called Ordered Grid Super-Sampling (OGSS), where the 3D scene is first taken, and blown up to a larger resolution—say, from 800x600 to 1600x1200 (2X for each dimension). In this case, there are now four times as many pixels on the screen, and each pixel from the original screen size now effectively has four "sub-pixels." These sub-pixels are averaged together, and the result is then drawn as the final pixel at the original 800x600 resolution. This particular example is called 4X FSAA, and nVidia's driver has eight differ-

BEFORE



## THE JAGGED EDGE

These shots show how FSAA cleans up jaggies, but some artifacts—the pixel-popping and texture crawling—can only be appreciated when you're moving through a scene. FALCON 4 cleans up very well with FSAA enabled, without tanking frame-rate much. This shot was taken running on the Voodoo 5 5500.

AFTER



ent settings, but the control panel does a poor job of explaining which setting does what. Also, the FSAA panel is buried in the driver control panel, and takes over ten mouse-clicks to get to. (For more on this, see the Tech Tip in this month's Tech Medics.) NVidia's FSAA works pretty well, but five titles had severe drawing errors in the menus, making them difficult to navigate. Though in three of the eight cases where FSAA was of benefit, nVidia's image quality was comparable to 3dfx's.

For its Radeon part, ATI has implemented only one FSAA setting, which is 4X for both Direct3D and OpenGL (see review on page 150). But ATI's Direct3D FSAA is currently so riddled with problems that you'd do better just leaving it disabled, and running at a higher resolution—something which ATI's Radeon does very well.

**The Bottom Line**

If most of your gaming involves flying or driving, you'll probably want FSAA. And 3dfx's FSAA has better compatibility than nVidia or ATI, and in a few cases noticeably better image quality. So, if you don't mind trading some performance for the feature (Voodoo 5 5500 is 13 percent slower than GeForce 2 GTS-based cards, and 5 percent slower than ATI's Radeon in 3D GameGauge performance



**MOMMA MIA** You can see where the *Hitman* HUD readability edges clean up with FSAA turned on, and how some texture crawling goes away as well.

with FSAA turned off), then you'll probably want to go with the Voodoo 5 5500.

But, if you spend most of your time playing shooters and RTS titles—and with few exceptions, these kinds of titles tend to be the best-sellers—FSAA won't do a lot for you, and will likely cost you more performance than you're willing to give up. 3dfx's upcoming Voodoo 5 6000—with its four VSA-100 graphics chips and \$600 price tag—won't put you in the FSAA/frame-rate dilemma, but the Voodoo 5 5500 often does.

There are a number of cases where FSAA can have a dramatic effect on image quality. But in almost as many other cases, its improvements are more subtle, and in an informal straw poll of CGW editors, they sometimes couldn't tell the difference. This proved especially true in tactical sims. If you think FSAA will make a difference in your gaming, keep in mind that 3dfx's approach has a near 100 percent compatibility rate, something nVidia and ATI are now endeavoring to match.

What's more, it appears FSAA's importance will continue to grow, as evidenced by the fact that DirectX 8 will support a new FSAA technique. In the meantime, until we reach a point where the smooth frame-rate/smooth image-quality dilemma goes away, you'll have to pick and choose which titles you run with FSAA enabled. **CGW**

**FSAA and Games: What's the Difference?**

Game	Genre	3dfx Voodoo 5 5500	ELSA Gladiac GTS	ATI Radeon
Falcon 4	Fight Sim	Jaggies and texture crawling clean up nicely, though some detail is lost to blurriness	Some texture crawling cleans up, as do some jaggies, but some of both remain; frame-rate stayed playable	Default new. Cockpit had bad drawing errors and some melting effect. Virtual cockpit OK, as is re-cockpit view
Homefront	3D RTS	Some texture cleanup, and edges are smoothed	Some texture crawling cleans up, as do some jaggies, but some of both remain; frame-rate stayed playable	Melting menus, both before and in-game, plus garbage on the side of the screen; mouse sluggish in in-game menus
High Heat 2001	Sports	Cleaned up jaggies, but 4X was unplayable, and 2X still introduced latency into the controller buttons when hitting	Cleaned up texture crawling and most jaggies, but introduced latency into controller when hitting	Bad overflow on menus; navigation nearly impossible; jaggies mostly cleaned up except on linefeed; frame-rate seems okay
Jazz's USAF	Fight Sim	Some cleanup of texture crawling, though difference is not substantial	Some cleanup of texture crawling, though difference is not substantial; there was a drawing error where part of a runway on Fuel got overlaid with a terrain texture	Garbage overflow on the cockpit instruments; runway melted, noise near horizon; not visible at all
Melrose Place 2	Driving	Shrillery stopped "shimmering," slight cleanup of texture crawling	Menu overflow errors; melting mess. But, texture crawling cleans up, and best of all, the shrillery doesn't shimmer	Bad menu-drawing errors, but game graphics do clean up—including a lack of the dreaded shrub-shimmering
Need for Speed III	Driving	Considerable texture and edge cleanup with little perceptible loss of frame-rate	Frame playable; some cleanup, but some jaggies remain	Frame playable; some cleanup, but some jaggies remain
Quake 3 Arena	Shooter	Frame-rate drops off considerably, with only some jaggie cleanup	Some improvement in jaggies, but not really noticeable, given the pace and type of game	Frame-rate drops, not a lot of image-quality improvement
Boycr Spear: Urban Ops	Tactical Sim	Some texture crawling goes away; slight smoothing at edges, though overall effect is not really perceptible	Menu overflow errors; melting mess. Edges and texture crawling clean up somewhat, but not that perceptible	Frame-rate braked; menus at bottom of screen blurred and nearly illegible





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# Under the Hood

BY DAVE SALVATOR



## Force-Feedback Is a Bust

Why didn't force-feedback get into more gamers' hands?

**I**t was one of those sublime, wonderfully unexpected moments of gaming. Coming off the first turn of the Homestead track in *NEED FOR SPEED III*, I hit a jump. The engine screamed. The car soared. And when I landed in a covered bridge, the combination of the impact of the landing, the groan of the car's suspension, and the rattle of the force-feedback wheel came together so seamlessly as to completely immerse me in that moment. And I said to myself, "Finally, a great game made greater by force-feedback."

For me, *NFS3* remains one of the greatest force-feedback (FFB) titles ever created. Great, not just because the effects are convincing, but because they perfectly match the experience of tearing up the game's courses. The problem is, *NFS3* ranks among games I can count on one hand whose FFB really adds to the experience. Sadly, many titles' FFB is more annoying than gratifying, and I wind up turning it off and using a non-FFB controller. It's very rare to ever see any CGW editor crank up an FFB controller for our in-office gaming.

So why has this technology, which showed so much promise, been relegated to afterthought by game designers, and considered a feature many gamers can live without? It's a combination of overpriced controllers that haven't sold especially well, along with the very small number of developers who have figured out how to make FFB effects gel with the rest of their game. Both Microsoft and Logitech are shipping new FFB joysticks this fall with lower price tags. But given how few games seem to need a joystick these days—let alone force-feedback—it may be a case of too little, too late.

### Chicken, Egg, Chicken.

The classic uphill battle that all aspiring game technologies have faced is that of "platform vs. content." It goes something like this: A cool new technology comes along; the company championing it persuades it around to game developers and to the gaming media, in the hope of getting developers to implement the tech in their upcoming games. Sounds simple enough, right? It's not, because game developers don't want to dedicate scarce development resources to enable a technology that doesn't have a large installed base. And gamers don't want to buy a new technology if no games support it. Seems like a Catch-22, but several now-common technologies have stormed this beachhead and broken through. How did they do it? In 3D graphics' case, the technology was such a quantum leap in visual quality over what came before it, that 3D graphics sparked a revolution. Positional audio made its way through, albeit with less fanfare, because a sound card is a must-have part of any system, and because a little company called Aureal caught the giant

(Creative Labs) napping. But, after Creative awoke from its slumber, it brought its industry weight and deep pockets to bear, and put 3D audio into every sound card it made.

So where did force-feedback get derailed on the road to acceptance? It hit several pitfalls along the way: Most FFB controllers have been well over \$100, and given the paucity of great FFB titles, it never broke out of the Catch-22. More importantly, I think it was the lack of the mystical X-factor that makes gamers have to have some-

**Programming force-feedback that transports us into a sublime gaming moment is a difficult craft, one that may soon become a lost art.**

thing, like an insidious pleasure fix where after you've had it once, there's just no going back. Yes, the technology has had its shining moments, but it never gained the momentum to solidify its place in the gaming universe.

3D graphics had *QUAKE*, positional audio had *THIEF*, and FFB has had several titles with great effects. But the deeper truth may be that doing great FFB that transports us into that sublime gaming moment is a difficult craft, and given how its failures outnumber its successes, this technology may be riding off into the sunset.

### So Now What?

Is there still hope for force-feedback? Maybe. One realm that hasn't been explored with force-feedback is sports titles. Gravis and Logitech will have an FFB gameped on the market this fall, and ACT Labs has their HammerHead FX gameped that has some basic FFB effects. Any sport that involves physical contact might be enhanced by adding force-feedback effects to the mix, so that when you get hip-checked into a wall in *NHL 2001*, you've got to physically contend with your controller in addition to the loss of the puck. It's kind of a long shot, and unless EA decides it's something worth doing, it probably won't see the light of day. Given the current crisis in flight sims, and the relative dearth of driving titles, force-feedback's future isn't looking too bright.

So, what do you think? Is force-feedback already history, or is it just a slow starter whose glory days are still ahead of it? Let me know at [cgw\\_hardware@ziff-davis.com](mailto:cgw_hardware@ziff-davis.com) **CGW**

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# + Tech Medics



**You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers**

by Dave Sabatier

Wounded on the technological front? Our medic may be able to patch you up and get you back into the action. Send your gaming-related technical questions to [cgw\\_hardware@ziffdavis.com](mailto:cgw_hardware@ziffdavis.com).

## Head-to-Head Hookup

**I have two computers that I want to network for multiplayer gaming. One is a Pentium-III 600MHz, and the other is a Pentium 200MHz. If I network them, will games run at the speed of the faster computer or the slower computer? What type of networking cards do you recommend?**

Well, it depends. If you're playing any real-time games — and these include strategy games, shooters, sports titles, flight sims, and driving games — the game's networking multiplayer "engine" has to keep gameplay synchronized, so the slower system will "bottle" your

gameplay. This is true, irrespective of which system is the server; though you'll want to use the faster system, since it can better handle the additional burden. But for turn-based games, this shouldn't be an issue. As for which type of networking cards to look at, D-Link makes a great home networking kit for under \$100 that's 100 Base-T, which is a lot of speed for very little cash. The kit includes two 100 Base-T network cards, a four-port hub, and plenty of Category 5 networking cable. This kit can grow with you as you upgrade.

## 3D Card Conundrum

**I am getting a new computer with a Riva 128ZX, which I can upgrade to an S3 Savage 4 Pro**

**for a total (with the Savage) of \$1,500. Should I buy it with the Savage or with the Riva, then replace it with a Hercules Prophet II?**

If you're getting a speedy CPU (800MHz or faster), then go for the added horsepower that the Hercules' 3D Prophet II can deliver. Find out from your system builder how much the baseline system is (with the Riva 128ZX), and how much it would cost to upgrade to the 3D Prophet II. At press time, the 3D Prophet II with 32MB of DDR memory was hovering around \$260 (check [www.pricewatch.com](http://www.pricewatch.com)). If the system builder's price for the upgrade is much more than that, you can save some money by having these ship you the PC without a 3D card, buying the Prophet II elsewhere, and installing it yourself.



## TECH TIP nVidia's Mystery FSAA Slider, Explained

**3**dfx's Full Scene Anti-aliasing (FSAA) control panel is straightforward, but nVidia's is a different story. Here's how to tweak all of GeForce's and GeForce 2 GTS' FSAA settings:

- In OpenGL, nVidia has three settings:
  - 2x anti-aliasing with the back buffer at 2.25x screen resolution (default setting).
  - 4x anti-aliasing, with MIP Maps at the native game resolution (back buffer is 4x screen resolution).
  - 4x screen resolution with MIP Maps at the 4x resolution (back buffer is 4x screen resolution).
- There's no slider for changing the OpenGL AA settings, and the only way to tweak them is to edit the Registry.

So, open RegEdit (Start → Run... → regedit), and find the following key:  
 \HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\System\CurrentControlSet\Services\Class\Display\000x\Nvidia\DD蓬GL

Create a DWORD value called FSAAQuality. The default is 0 (2x mode). A value of 1 is 4x mode, and a value of 2 is 4x mode with high-quality MIP Maps.

For DirectX's FSAA settings, use the slider bar found in the driver's control panel. It's buried; right-click on the Desktop, and select Properties. Go to the GeForce or GeForce 2 GTS tab and click on Additional Properties. Select the Direc3D



Settings tab and click on the More Direct3D button toward the bottom. From here, select the Anti-aliasing tab, and you're there. Here are the settings for the mystery slider (from left to right).

- AA Dfx (left-most setting).
- 2x anti-aliasing (back buffer is 2x screen resolution).
- 4x anti-aliasing with MIP Maps at the native game resolution (back buffer is 4x

- screen resolution).
- 4x anti-aliasing with MIP Maps at the back-buffer (higher) resolution (back buffer is 4x screen resolution).
- 4x anti-aliasing with MIP Maps at the native game resolution (back buffer is 4x screen resolution). A Gaussian filtering is applied to improve image quality.
- 8x anti-aliasing with MIP Maps at the native game resolution (back buffer is 8x screen resolution).
- 8x anti-aliasing with MIP Maps at the back-buffer (higher) resolution (back buffer is 9x screen resolution). Note that 32MB cards may not be able to run in this mode, because they run out of memory. 8x mode means that the back buffer on a 640x460 image is running at 1920x1440.

Our experience with GeForce 2 GTS cards has been that using the fourth or fifth setting gets good results without tanking frame-rate too badly. The last two settings will probably kill frame-rate, but play with them and let me know if they work for you.

I don't know really how to say this, but I had a few doubts about the buzz on your new RADEON™ gamer boards. I checked out your so-called RADEON™ GPU with its integrated T&L acceleration and ultra-fast DDR to speed up my Quake™ III Arena framerates. Not only does RADEON™ have awesome high-quality performance but it supports more advanced 3D games and upcoming DirectX™ 8.0 features than any other graphics board. The DVD playback feature will come in handy when I need to take a break from gaming. And, I have to admit the video capture and TV-output option on RADEON™ 64MB DDR makes it a must-have. But, just remember, the only opinion of RADEON™ that matters is mine and I have only one thing to say to you ATI.

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 Logitech WingMan Extreme

**Active Compound**  
 Intersect Rarronhead FX  
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## Power Rig

Component	Manufacturer	Price	The Skinny
TY Mousepad case	Young Toys	\$213	Lots of cooling
Keyboard	Asus P3C-E	\$180	ASP 4K, Win, 820, RAMBUS
CPU	Intel Pentium® III 830	\$770	3K, not a Celeron, but at least you can buy it
<b>Memory</b>	<b>2GB of PC800 SDRAM</b>	<b>\$780</b>	<b>Up from 128MB</b>
Desk Controller	Adaptec 29160	\$185	Stable faster, but also PCI-E support
Primary Graphics	NVIDIA 3D Prophet II 64MB	\$340	DDR SDRAM and T&L support
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	\$20	You still have to have one
Hard Drive	Quantum Atlas 30k-11	\$838	Now at 30GB
Backup	Quantum DVD-RAM drive	\$270	5.2 gbps of backup
CD-ROM	Pioneer EK-SC29 DVD-ROM	\$126	Five Pioneer Best-Drive DVD
Monitor	Mitsubishi DiamondPro 32" Monitor	\$3,150	Perfectly flat, great RGB support
Primary Audio	Sound Blaster Live Platinum	\$180	For four-speaker DirectSound, ASIO, and DAP
Speakers	BenQ Acoustics 341900	\$179	Great, clear, uncolored sound
Networking	3COM Ethernet 10/100 PCI	\$67	Needs no additional software
Networking Hub	Netgear FS506	\$85	Multibrayn & DSL modem support
Power Supply	PC Power and Cooling, Integrated 300	\$80	More power, smaller
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro	\$59	Intuitive in, Microsoft out
Mouse/Pointing Device	Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer	\$67	No fiddly
USB Hub	Logitech WingMan 7-port USB Hub	\$70	Get them USB ports system

Total w/o Game Controllers: **\$5,560**

Flight Joystick	3M FTD CombatStick USB	\$95	It just beats eight
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Gamepad	Intersect Rarronhead FX	\$40	DualShock-like, force-feedback controller

Total **\$6,975**

The Price Point: All component prices based on actual availability and pricing. Prices listed are average low prices from Web price search engines like www.computerhope.com or www.pricerunner.com. Lists inspired by Dave Silver.

## Lean Machine

Component	Manufacturer
Webcam	ASUS 81V
CPU	AMD Duron 700 w/ cooling fan
Memory	1GB of PC133 SDRAM
Desk Controller	Dell in USB/33
Primary Graphics	NVIDIA 3D Prophet
Flppy Drive	Teac
Hard Drive	Maxtor DiamondMax 9000 Plus 80 GB HD drive
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer DVD-114
Monitor	Optiquest Q55
Primary Audio	Sound Blaster Live
Speakers	BenQ Acoustics 341-435
Modem	Adaptec PCI Soft-Wiring Modem
Case	Case West 730-48
Power Supply	Antec 300W
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard
Mouse/Pointing Device	Logitech USB Wheel Mouse
Joystick	Logitech WingMan Extreme Digital



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Want a full-bore gaming beast without having to build it? We've got you covered. These two systems tested very well, and will put you into the fray without your ever having to charge up the electric screwdriver.

## Power Rig

Memory's Area 51 Aurora took no prisoners in our recent testing, and its latest AMD Athlon-based rig pushes the CPU speed up to 1GHz. The Aurora packs 2GB of PC3200 SDRAM for system memory, a GeForce 2 GTS-based 3D card with 64MB of DDR SDRAM, and Klipsch's tubular free-standing ProMedia 1.5-100 speakers. The rig's all-black components give it a menacing look to match its performance.



Falcon Northwest's Talon

• \$1,749 as configured • [www.falcon-nw.com](http://www.falcon-nw.com)

## Lean Machine

Falcon Northwest has long made its reputation on building gaming rigs from the "best out of hell" school. But Falcon has branched a line of value-oriented boxes that will serve the budget-minded gamer as well. Dubbed Talon, these boxes can be custom-tailored, but the rig, its case, mouse, keyboard, and system speakers (two, 5.1-channel ProMedia 1.5-100), a Hercules 3D Prophet II (GForce 2) graphics card, Sound Blaster Live! Value, and a 16GB AD-45 hard drive. With a 17" monitor and Cambridge's PC Works speakers, this box will get you going and deliver a lot of punch for the price.

## THE PROCESSOR REPORT

**1** GHz Pentium-III CPUs are still in short supply, so we stuck with the 933MHz chip for our Power Rig. Even Dell has a two-week delay delivering 1GHz systems. But given that the 1GHz CPUs are only about 7% faster than the 933MHz CPU we recommend, you're not losing that much.

In the Lean Machine, we've opted for AMD's new Duron, the "value edition" of the Athlon, which—like Intel's Celeron processor—has a 128KB onboard Level-2 cache. But unlike Celeron, AMD didn't "dumb down" the system-memory bus interface to 66MHz to create an arbitrary product niche. Duron has the same 200MHz front-side bus as

Athlon, and can talk to PC133 system memory. And like its Athlon sibling, AMD's Duron also has 64KB Level-1 cache. Moving the L2 onboard should make for some incremental performance improvements.

At press time, Duron 700MHz chips were about \$30 bucks cheaper than Athlon 750MHz chips, which—coupled with Duron's onboard L2—compelled us to make the move.

We've also switched over to a KX133-based motherboard, both for the gain in system memory speed (1.1GB/sec peak), and for the move to AGP 4X. —Gene Johnson

**C**hoosing the right 3D card depends on your CPU and your motherboard, so we have two recommendations for you:

For a Pentium 233MHz or slower, or a PCI motherboard (no AGP), or a motherboard-down AGP graphics chip with no AGP slot, get 3dfx's Voodoo3 3000 PCI board. At around \$120, the V3 3000 delivers good price/performance, and will do a good job with current games. And, when you swap in a new motherboard/CPU, you can continue to use the Voodoo3 in the new setup until you decide to get an AGP-based card.

For motherboards with AGP, we recommend Hercules' 3D Prophet II, based on nVidia's GeForce 2 GTS chipset. This board comes with 32MB or

WHICH  
**3D CARD**  
SHOULD I BUY?

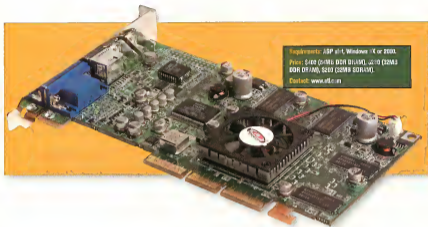
64MB of DDR SDRAM, either of which will more than meet your needs. If your monitor can tolerate it, try running your favorite game at 1600x1200: Prepare to be amazed. If you can't handle \$310 for the 32MB version, look at its celebrated predecessor, the GeForce-based 3D Prophet. By now, the GeForce cards should be dropping below \$200.

Price	The Skinny
\$129	Solid, stable, KX133 Athlon system board
\$85	Onboard L2, and a little cheaper than Athlon
\$133	1GBMB, equalized in
\$0	It's in there
\$138	Solid GeForce 5000M card
\$20	Still gets the job done
\$38	Fast and cheap
\$55	Start-drive DVD
\$300	Solid 17" monitor at a budget price
\$25	A.P. Aurora
\$80	Best mid-\$300 speakers, tested
\$70	Solid performance, good price
\$75	Back to the old frontier
\$40	Quake with power
\$24	Cheap, nice mid-in buttons
\$30	Better than the "gaming" mouse
\$30	Very solid 3D joystick with 800

**Total \$1,537**

# Movin' On Up

ATI aims for the top, and comes close



Requirements: ASP slot, Windows XP or 2000.

Price: \$169 (64MB DDR D15M), \$219 (32MB DDR D7AM), \$269 (32MB DDR15M).

Contact: [www.ati.com](http://www.ati.com)

**U**ntil recently, ATI has been comfortable in the middle of the 3D pack.

With its high-volume, low-cost parts, ATI's chips make their way into corporate and low-cost boxes that have made ATI the number one volume graphics chipmaker. But with its new Radeon card, ATI is gunning for 3D leaders 3dfx and nVidia, and judging from its performance, Radeon (no, not the noxious gas the government has warned you about) has come to play.

The Radeon chip is ATI's first part with accelerated transform and lighting (T&L), and according to ATI, its Chameleon engine can process 30 million polygons/second, vs. GeForce 2's polygon rate of between 20-25 million polygons/second. In addition, Radeon's architecture is optimally designed to handle multitexturing effects in games like *QUAKE III*, since it can process two pixels per cycle and three textures per pixel.

On paper, GeForce 2 GTS's specifications easily outpace the Radeon (GeForce 2's 1.6Gtexels/sec versus Radeon's 1.6Gtexels/sec). But in our testing at 1600x1200x32 with 3D WinBench 2000 and *QUAKE 3 ARENA*, ATI's Radeon was more than 20 percent faster than GeForce 2 GTS on both of these tests. In addition, Radeon's 3D WinBench 2000 score was the fastest we've ever seen, and it also stacked up well for 2D performance. In terms of raw 3D GameGauge performance, Radeon

lands between *Voodoo 5 5500* and *GeForce 2 GTS*, though most of its individual game frame-rates are closer to the latter.

#### Out of the Box

To differentiate itself from the pack, ATI has implemented several unique features in Radeon, including their proprietary Hyper-Z technology, which ATI says reduces the amount of data sent to the frame buffer. ATI looked for ways to reduce video-memory traffic, because "brute force" 3D chips with multiple pipelines working in parallel tend to hammer video-memory bandwidth, particularly at higher resolutions like 1600x1200.

ATI has historically delivered good hardware but often-shaky drivers, which had to be fixed with subsequent versions. But Radeon's 1.0 drivers burned through our tests with few complaints, at least until we turned on its full-scene antialiasing (FSAA). Radeon implements a very complicated FSAA setting choice: on or off, in both Direct3D and OpenGL, ATI is doing 4X ordered-grid super-sampling, very similar to nVidia's. And while nVidia's FSAA has some problems of "melting" menus and in-game drawing errors, ATI's FSAA rendered most

games nearly unplayable. We looked at 16 games (15 Direct3D, one OpenGL), and ATI's FSAA caused problems in all but five of them. So, if you're a flight sim fan or driving fan who wants FSAA, this is not the best choice in 3D cards.

But, in terms of raw 3D performance, ATI was hot on the heels of nVidia, and in the case of high-resolution 32-bit-color tests, was well in front. As for T&L performance, nVidia was ahead on two of the three 3D WinBench 2000 tests we ran to look at this performance. But, ATI was neck and neck with nVidia on a *QUAKE 3 ARENA* map designed with very high triangle count to show off what T&L can do (you can get this map on nVidia's Web site).

Overall, Radeon is certainly competitive with nVidia's GeForce 2 GTS and 3dfx's *Voodoo 5 5500*. The card's FSAA won't make it any friends, but if that's a

feature you can live without, Radeon will power your gaming at very high resolutions.

But appreciate that the 64MB DDR version of Radeon loads out with chip/memory clock rates of 183MHz/183MHz, whereas the 32MB DDR and SDRAM Radeon cards clock at 166MHz/166MHz, so their performance will be slower.





Logitech WingMan Force 3D

## LOGITECH WINGMAN FORCE 3D

**Requirements:** USB or joystick port.  
**Price:** \$60  
**Contact:** [www.logitech.com](http://www.logitech.com)

**T**he WingMan Force 3D seems like a slam-dunk. Take a superbly designed and sturdily built joystick from one of the industry's premier controller makers, add force-feedback, and push it out the door for under \$60. At least, we thought it sounded good when we heard Logitech was developing a force-feedback stick based on their excellent WingMan Extreme design. But alas, the attractive price point translates into less-than-cutting-edge feedback effects.

Because the design didn't really change, we can't fault the grip, which is very comfortable despite its angular looks. The feel of the original WingMan Extreme was light without being too stiff, but the inclusion of force-feedback necessitates a stiffer stick for the WingMan Force 3D. It tightens up when playing, but the feel just isn't the same. It's good for space sims and other "flying" games (we had a blast playing our ORION'S SHIES beta with it), but less than stellar with motorcycle games, although it does come bundled with CASTROL HONDA SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONS. If you're considering trading in your WingMan Extreme, don't. Not for this stick, anyway. —Tom Price



GameCommander MX

## GAMECOMMANDER MX

**Requirements:** 1GB RAM; 2GB free hard drive space; Windows XP/7-compatible, 5.1- or higher sound card.  
**Price:** \$40  
**Contact:** [www.zlib.com](http://www.zlib.com)

**G**ameCommander MX is a marriage of technologies. Yiddled here are in-game voice-command recognition and voice-over-IP apps like Roger Wilco.

Following the directions provided by Mindmaker (yes, you really should read them), I had both programs working together in a game of COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR in under two minutes. GameCommander MX has a pass-through that can be configured for the same key you use to activate the mic in your game. When you want to talk to your friends, just hit your mic key as usual. Or, if you usually run in voice-activated mode, you can toggle between the two voice apps with a hotkey, or hold a hotkey down while you issue GameCommander orders.

The voice-recognition engine in GameCommander is really fast, with almost no delay between saying a command and seeing it carried out on screen. The accuracy is also very high, and unless I'm weeping or screaming, it usually gets it right on the first pass. Because of the time savings it affords, GameCommander can definitely give you an edge. Keyboard mappers? You've got to be kidding. But with voice control, the right key is just a spoken word away.

Given how GameCommander MX frees you from hunt-and-peck, its brain-dead simple setup, and its ability to play nice with voice-over-IP apps, this is \$40 well spent. —Greg Furlow



PolkAudio AMR7D Speakers



Product photos by  
 Hayden Rouser/DIGITAL CLARITY

## POLKAUDIO AMR7D SPEAKERS

**Price:** \$80  
**Contact:** [www.polkaudio.com](http://www.polkaudio.com)

**P**olkAudio knows speakers, but has only dipped its toes into PC waters, making very low-end speakers for HP Pavilion systems. Following its early foray, Polk has returned with a line of four-speaker sets. The AMR7Ds are in the middle of this line, and deliver surprising amounts of clean volume despite their modest spec's — 22 watts continuous average RMS of amp power, satellites with 3" shielded drivers, and a base unit with a 4" shielded driver. Despite the good volume and relatively uncolored tonal quality, the AMR7Ds cut some corners, and their unnatural imaging produces listener fatigue.

The AMR7Ds setup is painless enough, with no convoluted wiring schemes. But they do arrive with the dreaded wall-wart power supply, and no headphone jack. Additionally, no matter what audio CD I tried, there was always a "spatializer" effect that made me want to stop listening. Spatializer effects artificially widen the sound field and are sometimes useful for PC speakers where the satellites tend to be close together. Game audio sounded much better.

If you don't listen to CDs on your PC, these are solid speakers that crank out clean game audio, but the wall-wart power supply and lack of headphone jack are a pain. If you also listen to music, check out Boston Acoustics BA-635s, which sound better and cost about \$20 less.

—Dave Salvatore



## MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER

BY THOMAS L. McDONALD [tom@kotaku.com](mailto:tom@kotaku.com)

### Building a Better Online RPG

#### ATRIARCH LEADS THE NEW WAVE OF GRASSROOTS GAMES

A s new and exciting as the world of massively-multiplayer games is, there is already a whiff of staleness in the air, thanks largely to a string of fantasy RPGs that all plumb similar Tolkien-esque turf. There's nothing wrong with the traditional FRPG, which has proven to have a large and dedicated core audience. But if someone new wants to compete against the likes of EVERQUEST, ASHERON'S CALL, and ULTIMA ONLINE, they better be mighty different—and it's hard to imagine something more different than ATRIARCH.

All of the MMRPGs that have splashed to date have come from large companies with plenty of cash to invest in building and troubleshooting complex net code. The new wave, however, seems to come from the exact opposite direction, with titles such as ANARCHY ONLINE, SHADOWBANK, and ATRIARCH emerging from grassroots designers. Companies like Funcom, Wolfpack, and World

Fusion have varying levels of experience, but all are approaching their MMRPGs with an aggressive desire to distinguish themselves from the pack, none more so than ATRIARCH.

ATRIARCH ([www.atriarch.com](http://www.atriarch.com)) has been a two-year labor of love for World Fusion President and Lead Designer Serafina Pechan, with a rollout due some time next year. The money game company has made over the last 14 years as a programmer of massive multi-user software for the likes of Sun (they were responsible for the implementation of Java 3D for Direct3D), Visa, BellSouth, and others has been pumped back into ATRIARCH—which is now their sole, all-consuming obsession. Their long history of programming netcode puts them in an interesting position to launch an MMRPG.

"If we were working with a major company or looking for a publisher from the beginning," observes Pechan, "we would have begun with the gitz—the

graphics, the combat engine—and then gone back to work on the multi-user technology. We went the other way, creating one layer of complexity and testing it, then adding another and another. By the time we release, we will have the most stable and well-balanced game possible, with the least amount of complexity and greatest amount of features. We can host a single world, or multiple worlds the size of the Earth's solar system, and never once need to hit a zone or any artificial boundary. We can host a world with as many gamers as will physically fit on the planet."

The game itself is a science/fantasy/role-playing game with an emphasis on construction and character development. "From the beginning, I designed ATRIARCH to integrate elements of three gameplay genres: roleplaying, strategy, and empire building," says Pechan. "The reason they work well together is because they weren't thought of as separate games, but rather as a natural

extension of each other, like they would be in the real world. The difference with ATRIARCH is that it gives players a degree of freedom to impact the world that will provide the most immersive and fulfilling online experience possible. A player has the power to affect the story, the environment, the politics, economy, and ecosystem for themselves and for other players."

Further distinguishing ATRIARCH is its complex alien world, which is a far cry from the elves and trolls of most MMRPGs. World Fusion has created an alien planet with a wide array of organic life forms, none of them human. The player-character can be developed in myriad ways, with players able to determine appearance, clothing, skills, and other characteristics, as well as to change the environment itself by building structures. Each character exists in the world at all times, with safe places for characters to hide and continue to learn skills when the player is offline.

This is one of the grassroots titles that will define the shape of massively-multiplayer gaming in 2001. We've already seen what massively-multiplayer gaming can be. Now it's up to the Indies to take it in new directions.

There are no human characters in ATRIARCH, so gamers play as one of five different races. On the left is a Thyson scratching his head, while a Cowles inspects a tentacle nearby.





## CLASSICALLY MULTIPLAYER

### A Whole New Fortress

# TEAM FORTRESS 2: Starting Over?

■■■■ Valve isn't talking about TEAM FORTRESS 2 right now, but one thing is certain: It's really, really late, and it's not about to arrive any time soon. There's one very good reason: Valve has decided to convert to a new graphics engine. They have scrapped the QUAKE 2 engine and are reportedly moving to a new custom-built system. This could still yield the stellar product we are expecting, but it will also create further delays. Both DUKATANA and DUKE NUKEM FOREVER converted mid-stream to new engines, and the results couldn't have been worse. DAIKATANA never recovered (though it could be argued that there was nothing to recover) and DNF has fallen off the map.

No matter how long Valve has been working on this new engine, there is going to be a huge implementation and testing curve. Valve tweaked QUAKE 2 so much and so well, there was almost no code left in the thing. They've gone from working with clean, known technology to something untested and unknown. If they were worried about keeping up with the Jonoses, a licensed engine would have been more expeditious. As it is, TF2 – and by extension, HALF-LIFE 2 – just fell down the rabbit hole, and we have no way of knowing where, when, or how they'll emerge.

In the meantime, Valve has earned the smoldering ire of the TEAM FORTRESS community by issuing a TF patch that ruined the game for many. One goal of the patch was to improve performance to high-ping clients by shifting the burden for position prediction from the server to the client. This essentially means that a high-ping player can see and hit a predicted position of a target; a low-ping player can see the predicted position, but only hit the real position. This effectively screws low-ping targeting and leaves you firing at something that is no longer there. To compound the problem, the patch over-writes CFG files without asking, and fudges weapon accuracy – perhaps as a concession to the quirks of the new code.

Is this a step toward PowerPlay, the new Internet gaming standard spearheaded by Cisco? If so, it bores ill. It's also puzzling, since the future of the Internet, and especially Internet gaming, is in broadband; the new TF patch panders

to the 56K crowd at the expense of the broadband player. While we think games should be playable across dial-up connections, it's pretty clear that the hardcore online-game community is almost entirely cable and xDSL customers. Nothing ruins a high-speed session faster than a 56Kec.

These problems – coupled with the continued popularity of counter-terrorist mode like COUNTER-STRIKE and STRIKE FORCE for UNREAL TOURNAMENT – are casting a bit of a pall over the most widely-hyped online action title of the last two years.

*Editor's Note:* Valve Software was contacted for this story, but declined to comment.

### TOM'S MIX

1. Warlords: Battlecry
2. Counter-Strike
3. Dark Reign 2
4. James Bond Special Edition DVDs
5. Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss



The upgrade in servers dedicated to free HALF-LIFE TEAM FORTRESS mode like COUNTER-STRIKE shows a public apology for TEAM FORTRESS 2. But when is it?

## Online Gambling Laws: Bad for Gamers?

■■■■ "Gaming" means a very different thing to the reader of CGW and to the average Las Vegas visitor. Outside of our niche, gaming is a more word for "gambling," and encompasses everything from casino games to horse and sports betting. It didn't take long for gaming to expand online, where cyber casinos allow you to gamble for real money. Unlike "real" casinos, online casinos aren't subjected to industry regulation and scrutiny, and their mostly offshore bases make this impractical.

Equally impractical is banning them, since Congress still has no authority outside of America. But that's not stopping them. The Internet Gambling Prohibition Act (H.R. 3125) bans all online "gaming," and will further sink federal hooks into the Internet. The legislation is backed by the usual moral watchdogs like the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family. Barring a delay, the

House may already have voted on H.R. 3125 by the time you read this, but that still leaves the Senate. (Find out the status at [www.capweb.net/icc](http://www.capweb.net/icc).) You may not care about Internet gambling. You may even think it's dangerous. But as an Internet gamer, do you want to surrender moral rights? The language of this legislation is vague enough to allow abuse down the line that could wind up affecting online gaming. Combine laws against Internet gambling with attacks on violent computer/video games, and you set the stage for an erosion of civil liberties and rights of computer gamers.

We're on precarious ground here. People don't see much value in a lot of what we find entertaining. They find it, and by extension us, dangerous. If they can scare enough people, they can burrow into our lives with intrusive laws. Today, they come for the gambling Web sites. Tomorrow, the QUAKE servers. You can bet on that.

# Voice Control That Works!



"Cover me."



"Entering the pits."



"Clear my six."



"Launch artillery strike."

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**Game Commander™**  
www.gamecommander.com

## Believe it

Game Commander is for real. No type. No gimmicks. Wish you could tell your wingman to attack your target without having to remember the keystrokes? Want to be in command and bark out orders to your troops? Ever dream of verbally directing your crew on the bridge of your starship? Stop dreaming!

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Use any word or phrase to trigger keystrokes. With **no voice trailing**. And you can program up to 256 keystrokes for each command to carry out a series of actions or navigate even the deepest of nested menu options. Since Game Commander sends keystrokes as if you had typed them, it will work with any simulation, game, or application that accepts keystrokes.

The MX Edition of Game Commander can run simultaneously with voice chat software such as TeamSpeak™, Roger Wilco™, BattleCom™ and the like. Use voice commands and your favorite voice chat. It's the best of both worlds.

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With a full-duplex sound card and a microphone (preferably a noise canceling mic), you can try Game Commander and experience the improved convenience, realism, and immersion it brings to your favorite simulations and games. Download the free trial today at [www.gamecommander.com/trial/](http://www.gamecommander.com/trial/)

Enter discount code **CGH2CT** when you order online and get \$30 off Game Commander or Game Commander MX until October 31, 2000.

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- CNET Gamecenter

"Game Commander rocks"

- PC World

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- ZDNET GameSpot

"Amazing to use"

- Computer Gaming World

"Revolutionary"

- CombatSim.com

"A real winner"

- FlightSim.com

"Superb recognition"

- GameVisions.com



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BY T. BYRL BAKER [tbaker@esmi.com](mailto:tbaker@esmi.com)

(left) The River District serves up some challenging jumps

(right) The beginning of one of the best fan missions ever produced. The alien is in the lower to the right

# All Hail CALENDRA'S CISTERN

AWESOME ADD-ONS FOR THIEF AND COMBAT MISSION

I'm literally surrounded by shiny boxes full of new games, from DEUS EX to SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR, but for nearly a week now the only game I've been playing is the original THIEF. What would cause a game addict to play a game that is nearly three years old, when the new stuff is beckoning? Two words: CALENDRA'S CISTERN. Over a year in the making, this massive mission combines all the great tricks I've seen in other fan missions, integrates them into an immensely enjoyable whole, and stretches the THIEF engine to the point where I must constantly remind myself that I'm not playing a THIEF 2 mission.

That the compressed download is over 30MB is the first indicator of the amount of work that went into this project. Thieves willing to brave the download time will be treated to a full opening video narrated by Garrett's new love interest, Mercedes. Finish the mission, and you'll be rewarded with a similarly well-produced epilogue video. You can forsake the videos to shave off some download time, but the mission itself still weighs in at 14MB (nearly 50MB when uncompressed).

It's worth it. From the moment the mission loaded, I was in awe. Should the tired THIEF engine be able to look this good? The architecture is amazing, and looks even better thanks to all the impressive new textures Team Calendra added. Bricks and stones look especially good, but there are also plenty of new rugs, pictures (which can be stolen), beautiful stained-glass windows, and doorways that make this mission look like nothing you've played before. There are more than a dozen new high-quality

skins for the cast of characters that populate the game, from the fainting Lord Wimple in his bunny-rabbit jammies to a bellowing four-eyed beast.

All these new characters come with their own sound files, with THIEF community legend Loonster providing voices for Garrett and most of the others. The conversations that take place, along with the various scrolls and books found along the way, help build the mission's storyline in a way few other levels have.

The mission plays as well as it looks and sounds. The streets of the enormous city Team Calendra modeled are mostly bare for the first part of the level, encouraging exploration over sneakiness. I was stuck within ten minutes of playing, until I looked skyward and discovered CALENDRA'S CISTERN is a level designed for roof running. My mouse hand was pouring sweat from all the daring leaps I had to make. Sometimes the environment feels a lit-

tle too confined—since events have to happen in a certain order for the story to make sense—but the tradeoff is ultimately worth it.

Technically, CALENDRA'S CISTERN is brilliant. There's a working store where players can trade their stolen loot for equipment (get rope arrows immediately). There's a safe with a combination lock, scripted events like a massive mage showdown, and a seamless integration of new sound and environmental effects. It's a masterfully crafted level as full of surprises, that there's a great debate raging over whether it should receive the elusive Gold Hammer award at the The Circle of Stone and Shadow fan site, meaning it's better than the best missions that came with the original game. I'd say it's easily on par with those missions, and it's a great tribute to the now-defunct Looking Glass Studios. You can see for yourself by downloading the mission at [www.thief-thecircle.com](http://www.thief-thecircle.com).

## T. BYRL'S MIX

1. Combat Mission
  2. Diablo 2
  3. More Combat Mission
  4. Devo's Pioneers Who Got Sculpted anthology
  5. Dreaming of Babylon
- by Richard Bratugan

5-star wargame gets mod reinforcements

## COMBAT MISSION Makeover

■ ■ ■ Wargame fans who haven't tried COMBAT MISSION: BEYOND OVERLORD are missing out on what I feel is the best tactical wargame ever released. The game already has an enormous following, and mods started to trickle out within a few days of COMBAT MISSION's release.

Mad Dog's Mod Packs are multi-downloads, with better graphics and vastly improved sounds that add a lot of atmosphere to the battles. The graphics pack has new grass files that make elevation changes easier to eyeball, and also adds spiffy new paint jobs for a few vehicles. The sound pack makes guns sound beefier, adds more screams and noochee noises, and generally makes you feel like you are directing a big-budget, Hollywood flick instead of merely ordering troops around the map. You can grab both packs and several updates at [combothq.tbegames.net](http://combothq.tbegames.net).

# REBUILD. REUNITE. REJOICE.



*There is a place where starships, space stations, and planets once thrived. A place where alien races were as one. A place called Startopia. Come. It's time to rebuild the old empire, maintain peace and order, and prosper. Yes, we can all get along.*

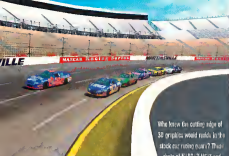
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BY TOM PRICE [tom\\_price@edge.com](mailto:tom_price@edge.com)

We have the cutting edge of 3D graphics world racing in the stock car niche now? That's about as close as you'll get to the state of NASCAR HEAT and NASCAR RACING. But the kind of photo-realism.



Yes, of course NASCAR HEAT will let you play through a fully-licensed NASCAR season, with every track, Daytona included. And yes, you'll be able to compete against your favorite drivers in time trials. But what's really different about NASCAR HEAT is their "Beat The Heat" mode—a mission-based game style that challenges you to progress through a series of driving scenarios emphasizing different skills. In one challenge, you might have to use drafting to move up a specified number of places; in another, a huge wreck develops directly in front of you, and you must find a path through the smoke and spinning cars back into the race. Completing challenges opens up more missions and some special prizes at the end.

If you're worried that all that fun is going to impinge upon the hardcore simulation aspects of the game, forget it. Publisher Hasbro is working with developer Monster Games—a company started by ex-Papyrus folks—who developed the well-liked VIBE RACING for Sierra Sports a few years back. These guys know racing sims like no one knows racing sims.

Well, maybe like no one except the Papyrus team, which is still alive and kicking, and at this moment racing to get NASCAR RACING 4 out the door before Christmas. Their demo at Sierra's E3 booth this year drew crowds of sleek-jawed race fans who came to gawk at the "I can't believe its not butter" graphics. The NASCAR RACING series has set the standard for stock car sims, and minor tunes to their already superb physics engine and near-photorealistic graphics engine just mean more excellence.

The question is, will NASCAR RACING 4 lose its spot at the top of the heap to the upstart NASCAR HEAT? If you ask us, who cares? Two really excellent NASCAR games at the same time is nothing we'll cry over. Heck, break out the Schlitz and Skol—it's racin' time!

## Start Your Engines

HASBRO SET TO HEAT UP THE RACING GENRE

When it's released in late summer/early fall, NASCAR HEAT could very well turn out to be the HIGH HEAT 2000 of NASCAR simulations. It has the potential to refresh the PC racing-sim genre in much the same way 3DO's celebrated baseball sim did to its own. The reason? Not only does it sport some gnomard-worthy, sensuously-anal physics and hyper-realistic graphics, it features one of the best single-player career-modes since GRAN TURISMO.

### TOM'S MIX

1. Deus Ex
2. The Software Slump  
by Granddaddy
3. The Forums at  
[edge.com](http://edge.com)
4. Napster
5. Getting to 00, my very first mix column

"What Do They Call You, Wheels?"

## EA Superbike 2001

Inside Racing got a recent sneak peek at an early version of the next installment in EA's venerable motorcycle racing sim, SUPERBIKE 2001, which is based on the SUPERBIKE 2000 engine, but with new animations that should dish out some spectacular crashes. The driving difficulty has been dumbed down a bit for newbies as well. Other than that, the only really significant change is the AMA league update to the 2000 season.

Turn, turn, turn

## The Return of Grand Prix

Of course, NASCAR isn't everyone's cup of beer. Some racing sim fans like to make a right turn once in a while. In fact, Formula 1 racing has become one of the fastest growing sports internationally, and is making its return to the United States on September 24th in Indianapolis. Here in the States, we treat F1 like soccer: a wildly popular international sport that befuddles us. To the rescue: another Hasbro title.

GRAND PRIX 3 from Geoff Hammond—the programming whiz who brought us F1 GRAND PRIX and GRAND PRIX 2—will give gamers the opportunity to compete against all of the FIA-licensed teams in a simulation of the entire F1 season. Hammond's earlier games have been hailed for their physics engines, and this year's model looks to be tighter than ever. GRAND PRIX 3 is on shelves now.



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BY DESSLÖCK [deslock@deslock.com](mailto:deslock@deslock.com)

Who dares ignore the elves? For comments from the creators of **DEUS EX**, **FALLOUT**, and **SYSTEM SHOCK 2** on this column's topic, as well as daily RPG news updates, check out Deslock's **RPG News** at [deslock.gamespot.com](http://deslock.gamespot.com).

# Four for One

## DESSLÖCK WEIGHS IN ON THE BIG SUMMER RPG RELEASES

**F**our significant RPGs have been hurled into the waiting hands of gamers during the past month. You'd have to go back to 1992-1993 and the glory days of the **ULTIMA** and **WIZARDRY** series to find more than a couple of major role-playing games released during even the same quarter. But while many of the RPGs released during the early '90s had similar gameplay and comparable medieval fantasy settings, these current RPGs are more easily differentiated.

### Diablo II

As in its predecessor, **DIABLO II**'s gameplay consists almost exclusively of slaughtering hordes of monsters to gain treasure and experience points. Since your character constantly gains more formidable abilities and weapons, the relatively simple playstyle is just as addictive as the original **DIABLO**—and in other games that exploited that same formula, such as **EVERQUEST**. It's difficult to extract yourself from a game that keeps you on the verge of being rewarded.

In spite of its gameplay, **DIABLO II** just isn't as compelling as other Blizzard titles. The gameplay gets repetitive far quicker than the original

did—perhaps because the monsters seem less challenging. It's still fun, and its new development system can make playing each class a completely different experience. But Blizzard has been unable to get its BattleNet servers to consistently perform, even after conducting a lengthy stress test to prepare the servers for anticipated demand. It's particularly frustrating, since some of the game's cooler features are only available online. Any other company would have been lauded for creating **DIABLO II**, but because of Blizzard's reputation, the game is mildly disappointing.

### Icewind Dale

When **ICEWIND DALE** was initially announced at last year's ECTS, I was concerned that Interplay was over-playing the **BALDUR'S GATE** engine and D&D license to quickly produce a game without having a strong design vision. But the producers of **FALLOUT** and **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT** have ended up with another solid RPG. It doesn't have the storyline depth of **PLANESCAPE: TORMENT**, but in a number of ways it's a "meatier" RPG than **BALDUR'S GATE**, although smaller in scope. The music is outstanding, the monsters bigger and more detailed than those in

**BALDUR'S GATE**, and there's a high experience-point cap, allowing you a more satisfying stand-alone D&D experience.

### Deus Ex

**DEUS EX** offers a hybrid gameplay style that, at first glance, resembles a sophisticated first-person shooter burdened with mediocre AI—in spite of the solid RPG pedigree of its development team. But **DEUS EX** provides completely original non-linear gameplay, a character development system with skills and traits that are almost all useful, and a compelling big-brother conspiracy theory plot. **DEUS EX** merges gameplay features of **SYSTEM SHOCK** and **THEFT** with the **UNREAL** graphics engine—and storyline elements that seem liberally extracted from *The Matrix*, *Slade Runner*, and the *X-Files*. It's a truly unique game that provides a very personalized experience, in a visually stylistic setting.

### Vampire

Lastly, and least, is **VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE—REDEMPTION**, a game that doesn't live up to its promise. Opinions on **VAMPIRE** are mixed—it's not a clear-cut winner or loser. It does feature the best-looking graphics of any of the new RPGs, and *Nihistic* has done a great job

of adapting *White Wolf*'s complex milieu. But its story-driven gameplay is linear, repetitive, and non-interactive. Although **VAMPIRE**'s AI is a lot better than **ULTIMA IX ASCENSION**'s, the game ultimately ends up highlighting how difficult it is to make AI function well in 3D environments. **VAMPIRE** is still fresh looking, with a novel setting and intuitive interface. The story-teller feature—where players act as game-masters and generally control the gaming world for other players—represents a significant advance for the genre.

Most surprisingly, all four of these RPGs have enjoyed a level of commercial success, proving that there is a demand for a variety of RPGs...now, what will next month bring?

### DESSLÖCK'S MIX

1. **Diablo II** hardware mode
2. **Fight Club DVD**
3. **Pen & paper D&D** dejs vs. while playing **Icewind Dale**
4. **X-Men**
5. **The simulation (but not the implementation) of** *Kingdom Academy*

### Which RPG Is for Me?

Who dedicated RPG fans won't hesitate to pick up all four games, each like is sufficiently different from the others to potentially appeal to different groups of gamers. For gamers who have to narrow their choice to just one, here's an outline of who is most likely to enjoy, or hate, each of these four games.

Game	Most likely to appeal to fans of...	Most likely to annoy gamers who...
<b>DIABLO II</b>	<b>EVERQUEST</b> and <b>DIABLO</b> , best for gamers who like to stamp down on monsters	Prefer deeper role-playing games, like <b>FALLOUT</b> and <b>PLANESCAPE TORMENT</b>
<b>ICEWIND DALE</b>	<b>D&amp;D</b> and <b>BALDUR'S GATE</b>	Hated the <b>BALDUR'S GATE</b> engine or combat
<b>DEUS EX</b>	<b>SYSTEM SHOCK</b> and first-person shooters	Like exclusively medieval fantasy RPGs or who hate 3D engines
<b>VAMPIRE</b>	<i>White Wolf</i> 's settings and adventure/RPG hybrids	Are looking for more interactive, non-linear environments

# Drop in on some friends



When terrorists secured the compound, Alpha Team mobilized on their favorite server.

Agent Z instant-messaged his teammates with a balley scheme to go through the window.

Twenty minutes of breaking glass and shattering limbs ensued.

Afterward, they regrouped on the chat channel.

"Next time, you guys be the terrorists!"



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# Get Out of My Interface!

**GAME DESIGNERS, PLEASE DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL**

If you want to tell a story with moving images, you have a lot of options: You've got your assorted puppets, live performance, film, video, cute little flip books, and so on. But if you're charging actual cash money to see your masterwork, you better have a really good reason for showing your movie upside down and underwater, forcing your audience to don scuba equipment and bob on their heads for two hours. Actively alienating your audience doesn't put you on the fast track to success.

And yet, incredibly, that's what some games seem to be doing on the most fundamental level: their interface. While turn-based games are frequently guilty of needlessly baroque layers of tabs, buttons, and mystifying icons (think BRAVEHEART or GANGSTERS), it's

RTS games that have been driving me nuts lately. I am sick to death of being forced to click on empty terrain simply to deselect units. I am tired of 3D games with loads of valleys and dramatic elevations, but no hotkey for centering on my current squad. I am tired of mopping up the gallons of bile I am compelled to spew because this one game uses the Alt key where every other game in the history of gaming has opted for Ctrl. I don't need to relearn how to ride a bike every time I hop on a new one, and I shouldn't have to relearn or reprogram rudimentary commands every time I load a new game, simply because some designer thought that building an interface every bit as likely as an Indigo Girls swimsuit calendar would set him apart from the pack. It does set you apart. You become the

game I hate to play.

So please, lord god king game designers of the world, stop it. Stop it now. Take a cue from the by-now-standard-mouse-and-keyboard-combo-of-first-person-shooters, and just acknowledge that some things work well. Look at the games that made RTS what it is (STARCRRAFT, WARCRRAFT, C&C) and build on those interfaces, don't overhaul them. Remove that initial hurdle and let games get right into the things that make your game good.

## ROBERT'S MIX

1. Diablo II
  2. Dark Reign 2
  3. The Dio 97s
  4. George Lucas in Love
- at [www.mediatrip.com](http://www.mediatrip.com)
5. Deus Ex

## AGE 2 Value Test

### THE CONQUERORS is to AGE OF EMPIRES 2 as RISE OF ROME is to AGE OF EMPIRES?

■■■ If you see this analogy problem on your gaming IQ test, know that the answer is B: Not quite. THE CONQUERORS expansion is not the massive improvement over its predecessor that RISE OF ROME was, but, of course, the original AGE was in need of a lot more work. THE CONQUERORS offers a few game-mechanic tune-ups (peasants behave a little more sensibly, farms can be queued up using the MEL ships now sail in formation), but this expansion is really about adding a little more of everything—a few more civs, techs, special units, single-player campaigns, and multiplayer victory conditions. If you enjoyed the single-player campaigns of the original, you'll get your money's worth of war from the four campaigns, one of which features famous battles from the past 1000 years of warfare. If you're a net player, the few new victory conditions and unique units could spice up the competitive stew. —Chris Lombardi

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## TO THE COMMANDER IN CHARGE OF MY ALLEGIANCE TEAM:



*I'm sure you want to win. I'm sure you have the best intentions for us — your teammates and willing minions. But could I make a small suggestion? Either buy a flickie' claw or relinquish the reins of power, because I'm sick and tired of fleets of Interceptors repeatedly killing me because you're too damned stingy or oblivious to upgrade our ships beyond Fighters with plinky-see guns. So do us all a favor: Have a strategy, listen to your teammates, leave the game, and stop watching those damn Friends reruns while playing, or so help me God I will find a way to send an electromagnetic pulse so huge through your modem line that even your neighbor's refrigerator won't run for a week.*

*Thanks for your time, and Happy Gaming!*

*—That Guy You Just Sent to His Certain Death for the 23rd Time*



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# Quoth the Raven: "Ship It!"

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT CRUNCH TIME AT RAVEN SOFTWARE

What's it like to work at a game company? A recent visit to Raven Software during crunch time for *STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE* revealed a game company with a work ethic as unique as their games.

## Feed the Team

Some of the things I saw that day looked pretty normal. Conference rooms were set aside for the three teams (*SOLDIER OF FORTUNE GOLD*, *VOYAGER*, and an unnamed PS2 project), yet the only time I saw such a room being used was for the Pizza Lunch. Every fifteenth of a month, the staff (around 50 people) is treated to pizza. It also happened to be owner Brian Rafkin's birthday, so a cake was thrown into

the mix.

After munching on pizza and cake, Project Lead Brian Pelletier gave me the low-down on the development of *ELITE FORCE*. "At first, I was kinda bummed that we got the *Voyager* license instead of the *Next Generation* one, but then I started to appreciate the freedom we had. We were able to make up whole new alien races and weapons, and we can just say 'it's the Delta Quadrant, this is an undiscovered species.'"

Gamers who played the demo noticed the slick scripting system that allows the player to affect scripted events, which took quite a bit of work. "The scripting system took somewhere between three weeks to a

month to create, and then we kept on tweaking it for the designers," missed programmer Josh West. That is just one of the things they had to add to id's *QUAKE III ARENA* engine; another was, well, a single-player game. Adding to the challenge was the fact that id wasn't finished with *Q3A* while *ELITE FORCE* was in development. "We've always had a good relationship with id; we'd send them a bug, and they'd reply with a way to fix it,

the extremely casual atmosphere in quality assurance. Programmer Jake Simpson threw up a Capture-The-Flag server, and soon enough, a good chunk of the staff joined in, and it became a big Boog vs. Klingon Empire match. Afterwards, employees casually floated in and out of each other's cubicles/offices, and discussed the latest rounds of bugs and design issues. Programmer Pat Lipo asked for input on weapons balancing, several team

## SCOOTER'S MIX

1. Transmetropolitan #35, page 11, bottom panel
2. Diablo II
3. Deus Ex, by The Pixies
4. Death to The Pixies, by The Pixies
5. Easy Riders, Raging Bulls, by Peter Biskind

about what needs fixing and what doesn't after a session," he says. But it's not always so casual. They're



left to right (1) It's official: Raven employees will now have to start sacrificing sleep and weekends to hammer out any bugs or design issues in *ELITE FORCE*. (2) A typical decision session. From left to right, programmers Mike Gummel, Pat Lipo, and Keith Fuller discuss the possible addition of a "ship it" key. (3) Artist Kim LeVing in the typical Raven employee: His cubicle doubles as a toy museum. (4) Raven's trophy case serves as a motivator for their work ethic.

Understandably, they pretty much stopped talking to us when *Q3A* shipped. But by then, we had already added so much, that we focused on getting everything to work," remarked lead programmer Jamie Monroe.

When I was there, the team was making sure the team AI worked (*DAIKATAMA* had just been released). Employees often tested missions to make sure the team members navigated the world properly. Once satisfied with that, they'll send a release candidate to Activision, who will then start the beta-testing.

## Real Design Work

This all sounds fine and normal, but then I observed

members debated the weapons. An excerpt from the ensuing conversation:

John Scott (programmer): The *Savenger* primary fire is completely useless. The *Tachyon Disruptor* primary is way too powerful; everyone was using that...

Pat Lipo: Yesterday, everyone said that the *Tachyon* secondary fire was too wimpy, so I upped the primary to make up for that. Now the primary is too powerful? Okay, let me adjust the damage values again. Now what about the *Compression Rifle*...

Pelletier explains that these impromptu gatherings are the heart of development right now. "We always just gather around and talk

entering crunch time, and that's evident by the many employees talking about coming in during the weekend to handle with bugs, or the fact that when we returned at 11 p.m. after seeing *X-Men*, several staffers had remained at the office the whole time to tweak the game.

In short, I went in expecting a typical, people-chained-to-their-computers-and-attending-meetings atmosphere, but instead found a dedicated team of people who knew how to have fun while working.

I'd like to thank all the people at Raven for putting up with me that day and showing me the ropes of development.









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# A Moveable Geek

Jeff comes back from France and is more confused than ever

**I** expect you people to behave. I expect to be able to go to France for a month, come back, and not have the whole damn gaming world turned upside down. Is that really too much to ask? Apparently, it is, because I did just get back from a month in France, and suddenly, I have no idea what's going on any more. Four weeks of blissfully eating baguettes, drinking wine, and watching Jerry Lewis movies, all shot to hell the instant I get back, because you guys can't keep it together. What am I talking about? Let's see....

## Microsoft Buys Bungie

Understand that I am one of the original MacDorks. My very first computer was a Mac Plus, which I bought back in 1986, when most of my fellow editors were either in diapers, in junior high, or both. While Mac gaming has always been fairly pathetic, there have been a few bright spots. DARK TOWER is one of my all-time favorite games, as is Bungie Software's MARATHON, which to this day has still not received the credit it deserves for being the first shooter to ever tell a compelling story (and to offer outstanding deathmatching options), years before HALF-LIFE appeared on the scene. Bungie had been the great white hope of Mac gaming—essentially the equivalent of id Software in terms of talent, ambition, and cool.

But now that's all over. Bungie belongs to, of all people, Microsoft. Han Solo has joined the Empire. Yes, I know they're still going to bring HALO to the Mac, but that's not the point. The point is, even though I have been completely co-opted into the Microsoft Borg myself, I still don't want them to own everything. Even though I sold my soul, it was always comforting to know that those guys were out there, keeping the faith. Even when they expanded into the PC market with the MYTH games, that Mac cred remained strong.

I still think Bungie is one of the coolest companies around, and only a fool would blame them for making such an incredibly sweet deal, but, man, go back five years and this is every Mac gamer's worst nightmare. Someone hold me.

## DIABLO II Battle.net Woes

What the hell? Just a couple months ago, I used this space to write a Blizzard love letter, "What Would Blizzard Do?" One month in Froggyville, I come back and now I have to write a follow-up. Let's call this one "What Blizzard Didn't Do." What they didn't do, apparently, is adequately prepare for the onslaught of gamers who'd want to play DIABLO II online, as trying to connect to the BattleNet servers—at the time of this writing—is still a frustrating and mostly futile experience.

Blizzard still has loads of credibility in my mind, and I'm sure they'll get this together, but I can't blame the many,

many disgruntled fans for being pissed. I've been able to successfully start or join multiplayer games maybe 50 percent of the time, at best. If I'd had to pay for the game, I'd be feeling screwed right about now.

This is an old story, repeated many times in this business, but never before by Blizzard: You need to adequately test your product before releasing it to the public and charging money for it. No one wants to pay for something that doesn't work as advertised, and no one wants to hear your excuses—no matter how valid—for why it doesn't work. Yeah, it's a new client-server model; yeah, there are too many people trying to connect; yeah, these problems always occur with new Internet games. But shouldn't these problems have been foreseen before the game shipped?

“ Bungie belongs to, of all people, Microsoft. Han Solo has joined the Empire. ”

Especially after the battle.net fiasco with the first DIABLO II. This is a rare misstep from a great company—and I hope they learn their lesson while taking their lumps.

## The Death of PC Gaming

Gee, should I update my resume? (Wait, don't answer that.) While everything seemed relatively fine and dandy before my vacation, I came back to find everyone suddenly debating whether this industry was on its last legs. The Xbox and PlayStation 2, the migration of developers to these next-gen consoles, the death of great PC games, the aging PC audience—all are cited here and there as signs that we shall soon be folding up the tent and turning in our mice and keyboards. This is quite simply a load of pish.

Look, we go through this every time the next round of consoles come out, and it never means anything. The fact is, there are certain types of games that will always be better and more popular on PCs, and, right now, the PC can still do things—like Internet gaming, and upgrades, and user mods—much better than the consoles. I'm not saying we're not in a downturn—we are. But the demand is still there, the machines are still there, and these new consoles have yet to even ship or to prove themselves. Who knows? The Xbox could blow. So let's cut the nervous-Nelie act and save the panicking for when it really matters.

And in the meantime, any publishers starting an Xbox magazine, you know where to find me. **GGW**

Jeff hopes that the jerks who mugged him in Paris spent the money on DIABLO II and then couldn't connect. Email him at [jeff\\_green@attion1916.com](mailto:jeff_green@attion1916.com).

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