

MAX PAYNE & ANARCHY ONLINE REVIEWS AND STRATEGIES

16 Hot
Reviews
Inside

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

**10-Page
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Massively
Multiplayer
RPG
Revealed!

World Of Warcraft

PLUS! Previewed: Ghost Recon • Zoo Tycoon
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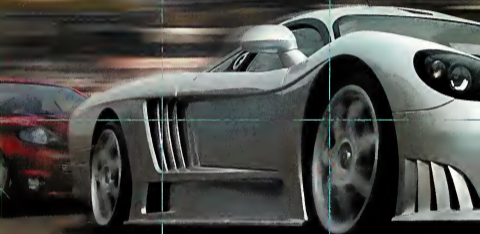
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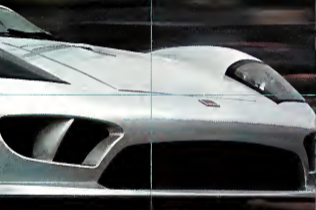


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REVIEWS.....89

Anarchy Online	92
Combat Command 2: Desert Rats	109
Cultures	96
Dark Orbit	113
Decisive Action	112
Divided Ground	112
Empire of the Ants	98
Eurofighter Typhoon	106
Green Berets	102
Legends of Might and Magic	104
Mox Payne	90
Mega Man Legends	108
Rules of the Game	108
Settlers IV	96
Starfleet Command: Orion Pirates	109
Vietnam: Squad Battles	112
Paseidon: Zeus Official Expansion	108



HOT SHOTS24

Ultimate Ride, plus what's on tap for C&C.

HARDWARE116

Samsung sent us a killer 21-inch LCD monitor worth \$4,000. Think they'll get it back? Read the review and take a guess. Also, the return of Microsoft's venerable SideWinder GamePad and the nation's new favorite column: Wil Power.

REVIEWS: Samsung SyncMaster 210T, Microsoft SideWinder GamePad, HP Pavilion 9800, Dell Inspiron 8100

Inside Gaming154

Homebrew by T. Byri Baker	154
Maximize your Payne.	
Flight Sims by Gordon Berg	156
Gordon hates sims, so why is he writing this column?	
Wargames by Bruce Geryk	158
Bruce is a crazy jerk. His words.	
Role-Playing Games by Desstock	159
My Orc is hungry!	

The Usuals

EDITORIAL Tom Price's economics wisdom.....	7
LETTERS Everyone's a critic.....	13
GREENSPEAK Come back Ian Storm! All is forgiven.....	140

STAFF EDITORIAL - TOM PRICE

Gaming Economics 101

Last week I received my \$300 tax rebate courtesy of Dubya and the Republicans. Now, I'm not going to get into some partisan political debate about the wisdom of cutting taxes in the face of an impending recession, and I'm not going to take cheap shots at the guy who came in second in last year's election. Lord knows I don't want to get threatening hate mail like Wil O'Neal did from our surprisingly large contingent of right-wing readers. Heh, Rush is right, fellas!

But I must admit, I was happy to get it—\$300 is a lot of money to a lowly, underpaid game magazine editor like myself. The pay here at CGW is peanuts. No, really, those yucky orange candy ones. What can I say? The PC gaming industry is in a bit of a lull right now. But then it hit me: a plan to revitalize the industry with our new-found fortunes. Everyone, let's spend our tax rebates on gaming stuff.

I'm not trying to be a shill or anything, but think about it. If every gaming enthusiast out there spent their rebate on some new games, used it to upgrade a piece of hardware, or went out and bought a subscription to CGW (okay, now I'm being a shill), the industry as a whole would see a huge infusion of much-needed cash. That means fewer games being canceled, more advances in hardware technology, and more pages of quality editorial in your favorite gaming mags (unless Jeff Green bogarts the money and buys himself that big gold chain with the "Mack Daddy" medallion he's had his eye on).

Average gamers would reap benefits, too. Now you could finally afford to pay for those games you've been warez-ing for years (yeah, I'm talking to you), or all those countless "Collector's Editions" with the little pewter figurines that sit on top of your monitor and collect dust. Or what about those damn expensive GeForce3 cards? The rebate will make only a dent in the cost of one of those puppies, but it's a big dent. And what about all the game magazines? You could get 12 whole months of 35-year-old editors trying to sound hip and "with it," demo discs that actually work, and Jeff blathering on about nothing issue after issue. That's a sweet deal, dude!

C'mon folks, let's show our support for the hobby that makes us so happy, the pastime that keeps us up all hours of the night and ensures us a level of social maladjustment that will keep our therapists busy for years. Hey, there's another industry that could benefit!

As for me, well, I already blew all my money at the craps tables in Reno last weekend. But I get all my games for free anyway. Bwahahahaha! **CGW**





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Don't say 2007

Made friends, made enemies, and almost died
-cant wait to go back!

Me battling vile otthoi
insects in Marae Lassel



My wardrobe
didn't even -ah- the
joy of being a monarch



Scrap from wardrobe
I'm clearly lost -ah-



- claw face
nearly lost
arm

Note to Self:
Otthoi breed
deadlier than
last month



Dark hole from my 2nd trip
to Marae Lassel



My precious pressing sheet
which the 1st was from

My house, Southern Osteth



purchased
on 12/10/06

Weapons stored here
-Quiddity Sword
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Darbhan Society: mutant, allegiance
meritless, trained
in rap and sword



friends in my allegiance, each chosen
for a purpose,
a specific skill



Blade Master



Enchantress



Life Mage



Anchor

Another skin beast
(see claw size here)



"bit of the best"
-bit of hair
from my first
togetherness killing



Volcanic ash from
Obsidian Plain
-possibly the most
dangerous food
I've ever
visited



-Anchored to
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LETTERS

Letter of the Month



The other day after "playing" *WORLD WAR II ONLINE*, I wondered if I could use the "release now, patch later" business model in my line of work. I am an auto-body man, and what I decided to do was repair the next customer's car I got as fast as possible—no matter what the cost. After

was done, I had left out about 15 percent of the bolts and stuff, but the customer was very happy that their car was done so fast. Well, in a few days, the customer brought the car back complaining about wind noise, water leaks, and the fact that the headlights didn't work. I explained to them that this was repair v1.01B and that they were beta testing it for me. This seemed to make them very angry. I told them all I had to do was install the patch and they would be good to go. After they left to take their car to another body shop, I started getting these strange phone calls from their lawyer. I can't imagine why. So this got me thinking: If I can't use this business practice, well, who can? I came up with a short list of professions that I think could.

1. President (of anything)
2. Surgeon
3. Air traffic controller
4. Interpreter
5. Console game developer
6. Prostitute
7. Fast food worker
8. Wal-Mart greeter
9. *CGW* editor
10. The guy who shovels chicken sh*t

Unfortunately I think the rest of us are going to have to try to get it right the first time.

Jacob Kresbach

See? See Why We Hate Them?

What the hell have you guys been reviewing? Alphas? Pre-alphas? Your reviews, in general, suck. *EMPEROR* is like the best RTS out there. Crappy multiplayer my ass. Bad pathfinding AI? Were you guys trying to lead a decimator through infantry rock again? Only 2.5 stars—jeez. *PC Gamer* gave it 89 percent. Even without patches *TRIBES 2* is fun, but what did you guys do? Try to play online? How would you review it without patches if you have to get a patch before you log in?

From up here in Canada, go outside and play hide and go f**k yourself. Eh?

Joe Mackinnon

Hey now! What's with the potty mouth? We cancelled the Canadian Corner and everything! What is it with you people? Sheesh!

CGW Editors: Cranky Self-Fulfilling Prophets of Doom?

All we hear from you folks these days is about the "impending doom" of PC gaming. It's like an increasing layer of dust that is slowly coating every corner of your magazine. Almost every article in issue 205 made mention of the feared "demise of the computer game." In some cases, the "need to avert the next of kin for the mouse and keyboard" was the focus. Aren't you shooting yourselves (and in turn, all of us) in the foot when you repeatedly print this? To borrow from Orwell, if you constantly reinforce that "war IS peace," then people will start to believe it. How do I know this? Because prior to reading your publication every month, I actually thought there was nothing wrong with Canadians. (By the way, thank you for enlightening me to the error of my ways.)

Please take a lesson from our politicians: If things look bad, deny, deny, deny. Repeat.

Thanks for taking the time to promptly delete my email.

Matt Brown

Bewitched by Bejeweled



My *Bejeweled* score is 34,567 in Timed Trial. Since this wasn't registered, you don't see a high score screen—so I took a pic of the screen while I was playing for proof!

Joshua Lilly

Let me start off by saying I have been a reader and subscriber for years. My girlfriend "Bertie" has never understood the computer game fascination, so she was happy when my hard drive died. Using some outdated parts, I managed to get it running, but could play no games—that is, until I checked the September *CGW* CD. *BEJEWELED* sounded like something to try out until the new hard drive arrived. So I loaded it she heard the clicking and the "Excellent!" sound and decided she'd like to try. I figured, okay, what the heck.

I have not been able to play on the computer at all since then. Inside of a week,

she has wiped out the free trial and I have had to purchase the game for her.

I thought your editor's scores were pretty good until this: Game Duration, 80:27 mins.; Gems Cleared, 3,795; Longest Cascade, 6; Best Single Move, 2,100, and last, Level

Coming Next Month—Best Issue Ever?!

Be sure to be here next month when a whole new era begins for *CGW*! We're not kidding. This is big. We're unveiling a brand-new redesign that we're sure you're gonna love. (And if you don't, we're sure you'll let us know.) Some great magazine, some gang of geeks writing it—just a whole new look.

To help celebrate the new look, we're unleashing a veritable gaggle of goodies:

- Exclusive, huge, hands-on evaluation of *EVERQUEST: SHADOWS OF LUCIN*.
- A full copy of *EVERQUEST* on CD (yep—the whole game) in newsstand copies.
- An exclusive six-page feature comic about computer games, written and illustrated by comic book genius Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics*.



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13, 84,365 points. She doesn't think she's reached her peak yet, so I just thought I'd say, THANKS A LOT YOU GUYS. Well I gotta go. She wants to use the computer again. Guess I'll go read a book or something...

MoanMan

I can't believe you would consider any score below 30,000 in BEJEWELED "godlike." I can get over 40,000 anytime. It just goes to show that you guys at CGW suck. By the way, my subscription to CGW is expiring. If you guys can beat me, maybe I'll consider renewing.

Keng Chuah

We received numerous letters and screenshots from folks who had all beaten the formerly cocky Robert Coffey, who now, mercifully, has stopped crowing around the office about how great he is. Keep it up, gang!

All He Is Saying Is Give TRIBES a Chance

I just got the October issue today. First off, WI O'Neal's staff editorial is freakin' great. I didn't have to wait until the last page for some laughs (Jeff rocks!). But my real reason for writing is to tell you to look at TRIBES 2 again (first reviewed in July 2001). Reviewer Tom Price has no clue how to play the game ("I don't like spending three minutes walking across the map just to get blown up..."). All I have to say to him is, get a ride, dude, either as a talkrunner or a havoc strike team.

You put a note in your WWII ONLINE review saying that it might not suck anymore and updates were coming, so look at TRIBES 2 again. The company got axed but the game continues, and a "healthy mod community" HAS blown up and saved the game—Tom was right about that at least. Look at the RENEGADES mod—you remember that from TRIBES 1, right? It kicks ass and is just one of many things the best community in gaming has done to make TRIBES 2 great. Also, thanks to the Dynamix guys who put out the six new maps they had been working on.

D Poston aka BladeWalker

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Bring Out Your Dead

Hey! I've got a hanker' for GRIM FAN-DANGO, but I've already played through it a dozen times. Adventure games are da bomb, so tell LucasArts that they have fans wanting more of this dead Mexican dudel! You proved that when it was inducted into the Hall of Fame a few months ago! I know they probably wouldn't listen since they haven't said anything about an adventure game lately, except for the incredibly gorgeous Verant-made STAR WARS RPG. The last one was ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND, which supposedly didn't live up to fans' standards, unfortunately. These guys have a cash cow going, but they're not milking it! Someone needs to wake them up before they miss out on this opportunity.

Tim Lohrenz

Your point might be better received, sir, if you didn't refer to Mr. Manny Calavera as "this old Mexican dude." Please—let's show a little respect here, people.

If You Think He Sucks, You Should Read His Brother Jeff

Your magazine is great where reviews and previews of games are concerned. But Tom Green's column just talks about random stuff that has precious little to do with games. In the last issue (September



2001) he tells us how he got his poor daughter obsessed with EVERQUEST because it's all he talks about!

When I was 7, I was blasting my way through D&M, and so what? Please persuade him to write more about the games themselves!

Samantha D.

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如光
如景
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如隆
如景
如直
如定
如安
如元
如隆

We couldn't agree more, Samantha. How the heck did he end up with Drew Barrymore, anyway?

Praise for "Babes in Boyland"

Having gradually lost most of my interest and excitement in computer games, it was a while before I picked up the September issue of CGW. Flipping to the letters section, I noticed Brandon Reiston's letter to Holly Fleming.

It seems unfair that Ms. Fleming should receive such inane attention for the article she wrote. I know this is belated, as both the August and September issues are behind you now, but better late than never: "Babes in Boyland" was the most intelligent, amusing, entertaining article I have read in your magazine for as long as I can remember. It brought to light some human moments amidst that shameless barrage of juvenile advertising. I am thankful that you saw fit to publish such an insightful piece in your magazine.

Thank you, Holly. That blend of commentary and humor should be seen more often in such publications as these, which are frequently bogged down by the unavoidably repetitious nature of computer game journalism.

Jeremy Welsh

Why We Need Year-Round Schooling: A Case Study

Listen, CGM! I think you have the best mag, but the demos are junk. I mean, give us some games like *SERIOUS SAM* or *CDS-SACKS*.

I have a question, too. My bro called me up and told me that the people who made *MAX PAYNE* went out of business. Is this true? And I have one thing to say to people who read this: Never stop being a PC gamer. I have an NG4, an awesome computer, a PlayStation, 30 console games, and more than 40 computer games. Heck, I must play four hours of *STARCRRAFT*, five hours of *DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION*, and three console games at one hour each every day in summer. I will never stop.

David Z. (Dazz)

Okay, Dazz. By our count, that adds up to 12 hours of gaming every day. We're just gonna take a wild shot in the dark here: You don't have a girlfriend, right?

Maybe It'd Play in Wisconsin?

First, I want to start this letter by saying *YOU GUYS ROCK!!!* You know, they make simulations for all the most abstract things on earth, such as ants (*SIMANT*) and the



new *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS!* If ant simulators can sell more than 1,000 copies, why don't they make a cow simulator? It would have the best simulation designer at the helm (Will Wright, of course), and Will could just grab a couple of amateur designers and start the wheels-a-turnin'. You could do so many things! You could try to produce the most milk and win the Best Bessie Award. You could try to serenade the hottest cow if you were a bull, and you could be in a bullding championship and get to ram some of those annoying rodeo clowns.

If they ever make a game like this, I know what my hard-earned babysitting and burger-flipping money is going to be spent on.

Brett "KillerHamster" Smith

We're scared of our readers. Really, we are.

Jeff Green Is a Big Giant Trout

I am a nobody living in nowhere. But enough about me. I would like to say that Jeff Green is the best person in the whole world—next to me, of course. I will think of inviting him to my house for some gummy-bear hunting and playing *Drying Paint Simulator*—isn't that just fun, and don't you wish you could come too? In your dreams!

Jeff Green does NOT deserve to take this abuse all day. Why the hell does he have to play "cool" games like *UNREAL TOURNAMENT* and get beaten all the time, while he plays his more intelligent games like *WINDOZE XP*? Oh yeah, and let me reveal one of his secrets: Jeff Green is in reality a big giant trout. Or at least his mom tells me he is. Tomorrow I will try to contact him about the squirrel factory I ordered, and about my attempt to overclock my PIII processor to 234GHz. Where are those blast-proof CPU cases I ordered, Jeff?

TFRakie001

The 291,000 watt, interstellar-travel-capable-fish

Have we mentioned that we're scared of our readers?

Help for a Jaded Gamer

Hello, I was just playing *EVERQUEST* and decided to quit. Yes, quit, and give all my stuff away at random. I thought playing an online RPG would be cool and that people would role-play. I was dead wrong! First off, I have been playing for almost two years, and most of the time when human greed would show its face, like in an auction or group play, I would just

ignore it, but I am at the end of my rope. Even in a computer game, you can't escape greed and all the disgusting behavior it engenders. Now I look back to more single-player games, and I can't find one that I will play till the end—*DEUS EX*, *UNDISYNG*, *COMMAND & CONQUER*, *THE LONGEST JOURNEY*. The list goes on and on.

Is there any type of game out there that will keep my interest anymore? Consoles to me are dead, nothing more than sixth-grade-level puzzle-solving and jump-jump-jumping. Is there a gaming environment left for me? Is *HAUF-LIFE* the last game I will ever finish? If you could respond, feel free to give me suggestions on games that I might play till the end without getting bored to death. Or am I stuck downloading porn as my last outlet for thrills?

Grady G. Gilchrist
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

We can't officially comment on your last suggestion because we're not sure if our human resources department actually reads the magazine. So, before you take that route, try a few of our recent loves: *MAX PAYNE*, *ANARCHRONIX*, or the *BALDUR'S GATE II* and *DAVED II* expansions. And don't forget *BEJEWELED!*

Self-Hating Washingtonian Corner

Now that those dog-sledding, fish-seeing Canadians are over with, how about taking on a new place? Why don't you try Washington, where I live? I live in a town with a bunch of field-picking hecks. We live by a billion farms and ugly, fat, stinking cows. Either choose my state or get me the hell outta here.

P.S. If you make this Letter of the Month, I will renew my subscription.

Chad Greenough
Sedro-Woolley, Washington

What is it with all the talk about cows this month? Sorry we didn't make this Letter of the Month, Chad, but we did give you your own corner!





Best RPG of 2002
Computer Gaming World



Best of E3
RPC
Game Revolution



Top 20 Games of E3
GameSpot

- *The sequel to Arena and Daggerfall, the award-winning 1994 and 1996 RPGs of the Year.*
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- *Explore another world.* The enormous game world is open and free for you to discover. Go anywhere you want and do anything you want.
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Scraping cotton candy off kiddie is a chore unworthy

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NATURE



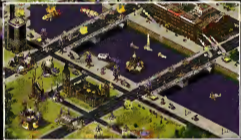
Aligned Content Criteria



HOT SHOTS

QUICK TAKES ON
GAMES IN THE WORKS





Command & Conquer Games

RED ALERT 2: YURI'S REVENGE and RENEGADE... Call it the franchise that wouldn't die. The COMMAND & CONQUER name is one of the most popular in all of gaming. Not only because the RED ALERT games have been some of the top-selling real-time-strategy games on the market, but also because the earthbound science-fiction COMMAND & CONQUER universe appeals to gamers young and old. The next two C&C games poised to rocket to the top of the charts—RED ALERT 2: YURI'S REVENGE and RENEGADE—are appealing for exactly that reason. YURI'S REVENGE is an expansion pack for RED ALERT 2 that gives

gamers a host of new missions, maps, and—what fans will appreciate most—units, without unbalancing the rock-solid RA2 gameplay. Fourteen new single-player missions, 10 co-op missions, and 20 new skirmish maps in various places and environments, including San Francisco, Hollywood, and the moon should keep RA2 gamers busy for quite a while.

RENEGADE, on the other hand, has almost nothing to do with strategy, but instead puts you smack in the middle of the C&C universe as a foot soldier—as a member of the infamous Elite GDI Commando to be exact, and as Capt. Nick "Havoc" Parker, you'll get to see what the Hand of Nod looks like from the inside. And then you'll get to blow the holy Tiberium out of it. Cool. —Thierry Nguyen



Ultimate Ride

This is a theme park simulator of a very different theme. No, you won't be setting hamburger prices or hiring janitors to clean up all the puke. You'll simply be designing roller coasters and riding them. That's right, like that old game COASTER. But this time your thrill-riding world will be rendered in breathtaking 3D and offer more options. Choose from among four environments (Mountain, Outer Space, Tunnel, or plain old Grid), three themes (Jules Verne, Dragon's Realm, and Outer Space), and three basic coaster styles (Steel, Wooden, and Hanging), and you'll be laying track in the easy-to-use editor in no time. Then strap in and test that baby out. Of course, this is a virtual world so don't worry about silly things like G-forces. Either challenge yourself in "Imagineering" mode with specific tasks, or build the most ridiculously twisted coaster you can and put it

on the Internet. Players can download each other's coasters as well as new themes thought up by Disney's Imagineering team—you know, the people who build the real-life amusement park rides. Don't be surprised if a familiar mouse shows up in one of these downloadable themes. Look for our review in the next issue. —*Jim Price*



THE MYSTERY OF THE DRUIDS

...end the
ritual, before
it begins...



In this classic adventure, you will take on the role of young Scotland Yard Detective Brent Halligan, assigned to solving the puzzle surrounding a mysterious order.

In the course of their investigations, the engaging anti-hero and his ally, a young scientist, delve into almost forgotten secrets of the past. Aided by an expert on Druids, they finally travel back in time. Only in the distant past they will be able to find the key to saving the world but will they succeed?

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Counter-Strike: Condition Zero
Hands-on impressions of Majestic
and Return to Castle Wolfenstein



This metallic monstrosity is known as a Gladiator. Astute gamers can figure out that he's some sort of new Stroggos critter waiting to tear your flesh into confetti in *QUAKE IV*.

New details on id's next shooters emerge at QuakeCon By Thierry Nguyen

Texas won its independence when a ragged band of young guns became heroes in a hail of bullets. Today, 165 years later, another ragged band of fighters is battling for glory—only on the PC. During the first weekend of August, the quiet town of Mesquite, Texas, plays host to the biggest *QUAKE* shootout in the world, with 3,000 gamers vying for the title of fastest gun in the West.

An id-sponsored LAN party of sorts, QuakeCon has grown over the last few years to become a mini-E3 for the Dallas shooter community. Despite the competition and all the vendors (such as NVIDIA, Apple, Activision, and Linksys), the highlight of the show was id's first press conference, followed by a keynote from John Carmack himself.

id's first announcement was that they had partnered with Nerve Software to create a new game franchise (still untitled) focused on "cooperative team-based" play. Nerve, formed by Brandon James (designer of *QUAKE III*'s "The Longest Yard" map) and several ex-Rogue Entertainment employees, will also be handling the multi-player portion of *RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN* (see story, page 42). The new franchise is at least a year away, so no other details were available.

Next, id confirmed rumors that Raven will be designing *QUAKE IV* using technology from *DOOM 3*. Because id and Raven have worked closely together since *HERETIC*, id feels comfortable letting Raven



LEFT: Biz director Marty Stratton (back of his head, at least), animator Fred Nilsson, and designer Tim Willits took on gamers in a "play CTF against Id" event on Saturday. **RIGHT:** Just to hear Id's announcements and Carmack's technical talk, press and public crammed the hall just outside the conference room. Can you spot the CGW editor onsite in this picture?

QUAKE FIRE AND DOOM-NATION



The GBA version of DOOM 3 was also on display. The port has the familiar obnoxious sounds of imp fury and jaggy graphics of pink demons getting torn in half by shotgun blasts. It's everything you loved about one of the greatest shooters ever, in a convenient, portable version. Yeah, baby.

generate a new game in which the Straggos war (QUAKE II plot line) rages on. Since the development of QUAKE IV depends on the completion of DOOM 3, don't expect this for a long time.

Finally, Id previewed more demo footage of DOOM 3, and Carmack discussed his work on

the engine, followed by his own thoughts on the 3D graphics card industry. There were no cameras allowed and no screens given out, so you'll have to rely on our impressions.

Perhaps the best way to describe the scene of a new "pink demon" leaping from the shadows and munching on a corpse is to say that it looked like a CG cut-scene from a RESIDENT EVIL game. It looked as detailed and frightening, and it moved as fluidly as a high-end cut-scene. In fact, the only reason I didn't dismiss the demo as mere marketing hype is that Carmack truly has the skills to pull it off, and he's one of the few no-bull members of the industry. He spoke about the graphics industry in technical gobbledegook that a mere handful of people understood. Here's the layman's summary of his keynote: GeForce3 chips are good, ATI has some interesting stuff coming up, and Direct3D is decent, but we still need a universal graphics card standard. He also said that end-users can easily create on their home computers a scene that rivals a Pixar film or Shrek in looks (one of Id's recent art hires, Fred Nilsson, was an animator for Shrek).

Tim Willits, design lead for DOOM 3 (still tentatively titled), offered few details on what will surely become the Next Big Thing in shooters. But he did say, "The general approach to designing DOOM 3 is focusing on the single-player story. The game's driving force will be its story, setting, atmosphere, and single-player-focused gameplay. . . . The biggest lesson I've learned from past games is the importance of pre-design and planning. The entire story is already complete. . . ." Carmack summarizes DOOM 3 as "more marines, zombies, and demons." Expect more DOOM 3 news from CGW as soon as we can find out more. **CGW**



What happens when you network 1,000 computers (top) in the Bring-Your-Own-Computer area? Power outage on the first day. The measly megawatt power supply (middle) crapped out, so id had to bring in a massive, gigawatt monstrosity (bottom). The entire town of Mesquite doesn't need a gigawatt of power, but QuakeCon did. Yowza.

KING OF QUAKE

While the recognition of going named (the best QUAKE III ATEEN! player) is nice, John "zeRo4" Hill has some real-world loot to show for it—namely, a cool thirty

grand from NVIDIA. The plucky 17-year-old from San Diego won a machine (it last year's QuakeCon) and went all the way for the money this year. His decisive drubbing against one of the world's

prom or players, John than 'fats hity' Wundat, 26-5, was further proof of his prowess at the game. Man alive, we're wondering what he'll win at next year's QuakeCon. **CGW**

UPDATE

COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO

Gearbox takes over, plans new graphics and tech enhancements

One could easily get lost in the corporate soap opera that was the transfer of power in the development of the **CONDITION ZERO** add-on for **COUNTER-STRIKE**. Bouncing from Rogue Entertainment to Valve, it finally landed in the hands of veteran Valve partner Gearbox (creators of **HALF-LIFE: BLUE SHIFT**). After engaging in a little tête-à-tête with Gearbox president Randy Pitchford, we've got the lowdown on what's changed since our July cover story.

Of the listed new weapons, only the M60 remains (alas, we were looking forward to the flesh-tearing power of the Pancr Jackhammer), and the new list is as follows: the French FA MAS, the Israeli GAUL, the Molotov Cocktail (Terrorist only), the Gas Grenade (Counter-Terrorist only), the LAW Rocket, and assorted items like a ballistic shield and pistol combo, a machete, a gas mask, a flare, and an ammo belt.

Pitchford also mentioned several enhancements to both gameplay and technology aimed at making **CZ** a fun single-player game. The mission-objective aspect of the design is retained and improved. Now completing objectives nets you cash, which you can use to get the traditional CS stuff and—another cool addition—to recruit characters. Yes, there will

be recruitable characters, Pitchford plans for you to "care about your squad. You're going to invest in recruiting them, and you're going to invest in training them to be better snipers or whatever skill you like. So, these guys now have unique faces and unique voices."

In the visuals, look for a **BLUE SHIFT**-style High Definition pack to be applied to **CZ**. New player models will have higher polygon counts (1,250, as opposed to 700 for the current models), and you can even see the eyes behind their Pleglass eyeshields. There will also be new uniforms and faces for all of the skins, allowing for more differentiation between players.

Hopefully, Gearbox will take the lessons of focus, design, and gameplay they learned for **BLUE SHIFT** and apply them here to make **CONDITION ZERO** a must-have for **COUNTER-STRIKE** players everywhere. —Therry Nguyen



REALITY CHECK

The overall average is up this month, finally, with **MAX Payne** leading the way. If you're looking for a sure thing to spend your time with, the souped-up shooter with the *Matrix*-style graphics and b-d writing is it. Apart from the two massively multiplayer games, and **ALONE IN THE DARK**, everything earned an A or B average on game Rankings.com, suggesting the summer doldrums may finally be over.

	GDW	PC Games	GDW	Gamespot	Adventure Vault	gameRankings.com
Alone in the Dark: New Nightmare	C	C	B+	C	C-	C+
Anachronox	B+	A-	*	B	C-	B
Anarchy Online	C	B-	D	B	*	C+
Arctium	C	A	*	B-	*	A-
Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal	A	A-	B+	A-	*	A-
Desperados	B+	B+	*	C+	*	B+
Diablo II: Lord of Destruction	A	B	A+	B+	B+	B+
Max Payne	A	A	*	A	A	A
MechCommander 2	B-	B+	*	B	B+	B+
Starfleet Command: Orion Pirates	B+	B	C	B	*	B+
World War II Online	D	C-	F	C	*	C

* no rating available at press time



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The CGW Mix



Operation Flashpoint

The U.S. version just went gold, but we've been playing the final European version for the last month (and the demo before that). This exactingly detailed simulation of the modern combat experience is so gripping, it could be a contender for Game of the Year.



Shogun: Warlord Edition

Slaughtering 1,750 Samurai warriors on the slopes of Mount Fuji is a thrilling climax to the Kublai Khan campaign to rule Japan. The new units, campaigns, and improvements make WARLORD EDITION a must-have for those who haven't yet experienced this superb strategy game.



Dating Game Online

It doesn't get much sadder than this. Three CGW editors wasted an afternoon at Sony's online gaming area (www.station.com) trying to woo women in this online version of the old, lame TV show. And guess what? The ladies hated them online just as much as they do in real life.



Samurai Jack

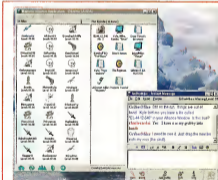
Yet another reason to watch Cartoon Network. With a mix of slow motion, quick cuts, bullet-time, and split screens, *Samurai Jack* has some of the most compelling fight scenes on television to date. We all want tattoos of Aku now.

Not Very Majestic Yet

MAJESTIC may be different, but that doesn't mean it's fun

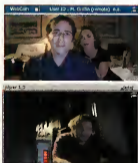
If you listen to fans of EA's new online-conspiracy-busting game, MAJESTIC, you might think you were hearing the sound of a revolutionary new form of game being born. If you listen to MAJESTIC's critics, though, all you hear is the sound of gamers being bored. What's really going on?

As usual, some truth resides in both points of view. MAJESTIC deserves credit for trying to do something that hasn't been done before (or at least hadn't until the PR team promoting the movie A.I. surprised everyone with a similar sort of online scavenger hunt this past summer). EA's vision of a computer game played out in real time using only the tools of the ordinary Web surfer—a Web browser, AOL Instant Messenger, your e-mail—is clever, especially when combined with middle-of-the-night faxes arriving at your office and frantic phone calls. The potential for a never-before-experienced level of immersion in a gameworld is what is getting MAJESTIC's boosters so excited.



The exciting desktop gameworld of MAJESTIC.

Unfortunately, the reality pales when compared to the concept—so far, at least, in the game's free pilot episode (which you can sign up for at www.majesticthegame.com), the phone calls and faxes are few and the online gameplay is slow, simplistic, and skimpy. Too much time is spent literally doing nothing while you wait for an e-mail to arrive or for a new link to be posted on a Website. And after you get the message or link, there's often nothing to do except click on it and then sit back to wait some more.



In the first episode, the "fun" parts of MAJESTIC, like this video conference, dribble in at a less-than-satisfying rate.

The result is a strictly linear experience that hardly qualifies as a game—it's more like watching a slideshow, at the pace of two or three slides per day.

Naturally, MAJESTIC's defenders say the game will get better as you go deeper. We hope it will. If not, MAJESTIC may well go down in gaming history as one of the greatest missed opportunities of all time. —Charles Arava

Watch for a full review of MAJESTIC next month in CGW.

ZOO TYCOON™

OR "NUTRITION"

"HEY MOM THE LIONS ATE GRANDPA MILTON."



Build improper cages, and your guests will be pounced upon in the new PC game, Zoo Tycoon™. As operating manager you are responsible for over 40 species constructing their habitats and keeping them healthy. Hire zookeepers who will gladly clean their cages. Your animals will be happy, and your guests will be too. Especially when all their needs are left intact.



RIIIEE, T-BONE, FILET MIGNON A LION WILL EAT THEM ALL.

The safest and most cost-efficient way to feed animals is to have zookeepers serve them raw meat. But for some excitement, you can feed the lions other live animals. *Be-lye gazelles.*



YOU TRY SWALLOWING A WHOLE MOUSE.

The House of Reptiles is just one of the buildings you place in your operation. There are also petting zoos, bathrooms, and gift shops selling overpriced African Warthogs. The kids love 'em, and your profit margin will too.



ALL SHE NEEDS IS A GOOD SALAD BAR.

The herbivores in Zoo Tycoon need habitats that resemble their native lands. Design them properly and your animals will be happy and fat. Rain forest animals need rain forest trees. Desert animals need desert vegetation. You get the drift.



Nutrition is only one part of Zoo Tycoon. For more info on other facets of the game, go to microsoft.com/games/zootycoon



Microsoft microsoft.com/games/zootycoon

HEARST

DYNAMIX: End of a Dynasty

Sierra shuts the legendary studio behind **RED BARON**, **KRONDOR**, and **TRIBES** **By Sandy Brundage**

You could smell the change about to happen at Sierra. A six-month hiring freeze, no green lights for new projects... but the official word from Sierra (owned by Vivendi Universal) surprised many: it was a dreary epitaph for a studio that lived up to its motto, Make Great Games.

Sierra, as part of a "strategic reorganization that will improve operating efficiencies through the consolidation of non-developmental functions" shut down Dynamix on August 13. The 17-year-old studio, with a staff of 97 and a reputation as the profit center for Sierra, racked up successes like **RED BARON**, **BETRAYAL AT KRONDOR**, **STARSIERGE-TRIBES**, and this year's best-selling **TRIBES 2**. Dismayed fans immediately petitioned for its resurrection (www.PetitionOnline.com/savedynamix/petition.html).

Brewing Great Games

Dynamix was known for more than just games. "One time [some Dynamix employees] let slip that they liked good beer, so from then on people tried to bribe them. Some delivered beer to Dynamix to try to get on the beta test," said Alex Kodberg, Sierra brand manager.

The legend grew. Dave Georgeson, now ex-producer on **TRIBES 2**, remembered a kid who showed up at Dynamix one day,

"Us Versus Them"

But as the Gathering of Developers also learned, the financial shelter of a big corporation like Take Two Interactive or Vivendi isn't free. Nels Bruckner, a fixture at the studio from the pre-Sierra days through the start of **TRIBES 2**, watched Dynamix change from an "amazing place to work, with a great team feel" to one with an unhealthy corporate atmosphere as first Sierra, and later Vivendi, took the reins.

"A tendency developed to hide problems because otherwise 'they might cancel us,'" he said. "This led to a lot of 'Surprise, we are gonna be late—really late' situations. That eroded trust and led to even greater separation between departments. Accountability gets filtered at big companies, so the problems didn't get fixed."

Georgeson feels differently. "I've gone over and over this in my head and can't see a reason. **TRIBES 2** was successful, selling over 200,000 units and continuing to sell. I think what happened was that Sierra was told by Vivendi to lose employees, and Dynamix was easiest to cut." The team could have been sold to a company like Microsoft, or become an external team like Blizzard or Relic Entertainment to minimize the risk to Sierra. "Practically anything except just cut all that talent."

"I THINK WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT SIERRA WAS TOLD BY VIVENDI TO LOSE EMPLOYEES, AND DYNAMIX WAS EASIEST TO CUT."

mom in tow. "She had asked him, 'What's the place you most want to visit?' And he answered, 'Dynamix.' So she bought him a train ticket. Our reputation as beer drinkers had preceded us, so he convinced his mom that she had to buy beer before showing up. It was a hoot. This guy and his mom, taking a tour around the dev team with the kid passing out beers."

TRIBES 2, unleashed in March, has already raked in more than \$7 million despite its premature release in a buggy state. It should be a profitable title by anyone's standards. How could so much money add up to layoffs? One employee pointed a finger at the development budget, large enough to make breaking even impossible, and called the **STARSIERGE-TRIBES** franchise a "huge money sink for Sierra."

And the Band Plays On

While Sierra employees enjoyed a company bash complete with hula lessons and steel drums, the Dynamix casualties attempted to band together. For a while Georgeson sought financial backing to form a new studio, and then joined Variant as executive producer for **PLANETSIDE**.

Meanwhile, the **TRIBES** franchise lives on. Sierra said, "Work continues on a patch and a playable demo. The authentication servers are up and staying, that way IRC servers should continue as they are. The forums on tribes.com are strong and thriving. Nobody needs to worry about their favorite game going away."

No, they're just saying a forced farewell to the studio that made it.

DYNAMIX CLASSICS

Here are a few of the 43 games for which Dynamix will long be remembered, along with an excerpt from their *CGW* review.

Betrayal at Kronдор® (1993)

"... a rare gem. It has broken free of the boundaries of common fantasy CRPGs, gives players a compelling story, and sets new standards for others to follow. For once, a game actually lives up to, even exceeds, its advance billing."

Red Baron® (1991)

"Dynamix set three goals for **RED BARON**: Get the flight dynamics right, make sure the dogfighting is realistic, and get the historical color right. They have accomplished all three goals with vigor."



FPS Football Pro® (1993)

"The Super Bowl of football simulations."

Acas Over Europe (1993)

"Bug-free—quite a task in today's software market... A significant step in the Great Warplanes Series and a must-have product for WWII air combat fans."



MechWarrior (1989)

"So easy to use, fast to play, and absolutely mesmerizing in its presentation that it forces players to suspend disbelief like no previous product. I literally shuddered when the cockpit view shook from enemy attacks."



* *CGW* Hall of Fame game.



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Scooter Cries Wolf

Hands-on impressions of RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

After spending some time with RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN, in both single-player and multiplayer modes, we're beginning to see the results of the extra labor going into the project. We particularly liked a later level in the single-player game set in a Nazi-controlled chateau; it features a breathtaking jump through a skylight to take out hapless Nazis below. Creating goose-steppers has never been so electrifying.

Multiplayer is a mix of TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC and UT-style Assault scenarios. That is, you have two teams with specific objectives, and each player can choose from a variety of classes, including medics, engineers, and soldiers. Each class can have a customized armament, so soldiers can carry flamethrowers, Venom guns, or Thomson submachine guns. Engineers can demolish structures and repair items, medics can revive players in the field, and lieutenants can both distribute ammo and call in support elements (air strikes and artillery fire).

We played two maps: In the first one, the Allies had to storm a beachhead, steal Nazi documents, and get out. The other required the Allies to destroy a Nazi radio tower. Playing as a soldier is straightforward: You just run in and shoot, regardless of the weapon you're carrying. Engineers tend to be more vital for mission success, as they breach bases, destroy objectives, or fix defense mechanisms. Medics are important for game speed: If you get killed on the field, you won't respawn for a long time without a medic. But a medic can run in and get you back on your feet within moments, making sure no one is out of commission for too long. Lieutenants are the most interesting because they're the sole source of ammo (besides corpses), and they can throw flares to summon support elements. I used one such flare to flush out a trench full of Allies by calling in an air strike near their landing boats. What a pity to see the Flower of democracy floating in the waves. Hopefully, the developers will give us plenty of opportunities to experience all the different player types with an interesting variety of maps.

Watch for WOLF to be in stores later this year. —Thierry "Scooter" Nguyen

NATURE

M
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BY ESRB
FOR
MATURE
CONTENT

Animated Blood
Animated Violence

www.swat3.com

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KEEP THE PEACE AS A SWAT OFFICER

This special two-CD edition includes new missions, 10-person multiplayer, and an Advanced Tactics CD containing interactive video and reference materials from the official SWAT training site — the Blackwater Training Center.

Conquerors Fight for Kingly Sum: \$50,000

Microsoft is hosting a \$100,000 competition to crown the world's top player of AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE CONQUERORS. The international tournament will award \$50,000 to the player who emerges victorious from among 15 competing countries. Ensemble Studios' game designer Bruce Shelley will host the world finals in Redmond, Washington, on October 24. Rules and country-specific information are available on the official tournament page at: <http://zone.msn.com/conquerors/azapworldtourney.asp>.



Titus Takes Over Interplay

In two moves announced in rapid succession in August, French gaming company Titus Interactive wrested control of Interplay and ended its role as a game publisher. While Interplay will continue to develop PC and video games, Titus announced that French-owned publisher Vivendi Universal will publish Interplay's games in the U.S. Interplay's marketing and distribution staff is expected to join the 60 employees Interplay laid off earlier this year.

Titus took over Interplay by increasing their stake in the company's stock to 51 percent. A Titus spokesperson said that the takeover wasn't a surprise to Interplay because Titus converted a \$20 million loan they had made to Interplay for preferred stock in the company.

What does the takeover mean for fans of Interplay's PC titles like the BALDUR'S GATE series? Interplay declined to comment, but Corinne Puissant at Titus said that Interplay's games would not undergo review by Titus and that the Interplay brand would be retained. When we asked if Titus would require Interplay to place a greater emphasis on console games, Puissant replied, "Interplay has a 2001 release schedule placing more emphasis on the next-generation console market, while still supporting the PC role-playing genre, which has been Interplay's strength historically."

Interplay has been struggling financially for some time. The company announced dismal second-quarter results for 2001, losing \$12.4 million — a whopping 550-percent increase over a loss of \$1.9 million in the year-earlier quarter. Shares in Interplay (PLY) have been trading for less than \$2 as a result. In addition, in its report Interplay warned that it was in violation of some financial agreements and was paying \$250,000 in monthly penalties.

The latest news followed Interplay's announcement in late July that it was laying off 60 employees and canceling the development of TORN. Although Interplay's RPG division Black Isle Studios seemed to emerge unscathed, other game divisions like 14 Degrees East (FALLOUT, FALLOUT TACTICS) were gutted.

Meanwhile, although it has not been announced, sources within Interplay say that ICEWIND DALE II is in development and is scheduled to ship before Christmas. —Mark Asher

Death, Stabbing Blamed on Counter-Strike

Yahoo News reported in late August that a Singapore man allegedly stabbed a teenager for killing his character in COUNTER-STRIKE. Daniel Tan Thiam Soon, 21, was accused of stabbing 16-year-old Ng Qiyong in the back at an entertainment center in Singapore. Qiyong suffered a deep cut that required stitches, and Tan was arrested.

Around the same time, authorities in Thailand reported that a man died from heart failure after an all-night round of COUNTER-STRIKE. Twenty-two-year-old Thanet Sommo, a Thai factory worker, was found dead at his computer terminal in an internet cafe in Chiang Mai. Police said his friends told them he was addicted to the game and played it from Wednesday evening until he was found slumped over the computer's keyboard at noon on Thursday.



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Establishing software release dates is as tricky as trying to predict which black gaming T-shirt Scooter is going to wear on a given day. These dates represent the best available info we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send your updates to: updates@time.com.

Updates



DUNGEON SIEGE

DUNGEON SIEGE: Well, it's delayed again, but let's temper our disappointment with a reminder that these things are usually for the best. Chris Taylor and company decided they needed extra time to properly balance the gameplay—and that's what we all want, right? So keep your shorts on and go back to *DIABLO II* in the meantime.



DARK AGE OF CAMELOT

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT: In late August, Mythic Entertainment began the fourth round of beta testing on their upcoming massively multiplayer RPG set in Europe's mythical past, and they're still predicting a mid-October release. Let's hope they've learned their lessons from the other recent, disastrous, too-soon MMORPG releases and take their time getting it to work first.



COMMAND & CONQUER

COMMAND & CONQUER 4: This one scares us a little. Novologic is touting the next version of their popular helicopter sim franchise as more action-oriented, and from what we've seen so far, they ain't kidding. We actually saw this demo'd with a mouse and keyboard, with a helicopter taking repeated blasts against a cliff like a flying version of *TWISTED METAL*. Yikes.



MOTOR CITY ONLINE

MOTOR CITY ONLINE: Two years after we first wrote about it, EA has finally begun beta testing their one-of-a-kind online massively multiplayer auto-racing game—and the early word, we're happy to report, is good. Any game that lets us tinker in an online garage, fix up hot rods, and beat you out of your pink slip is one we want to play—but we were worried it'd never happen. Now that it looks like it's really on track, we're revved up for it all over again.

Age of Mithology Essence	Spring 2002	Impire: Galactic 2; Genesis GV	Spring 2002
Age of Monders II: The Wizard's Throne GGD	Spring 2002	Master of Orion 3 Intergrates	Spring 2002
Alien vs. Predator 2 Microsoft	Winter 2001	ESPECIALLY Medal of Honor: Allied Assault EA	February 2002
Aquilon FishTank Interactive	Fall 2001	Milaged Foxpro	Summer 2002
ESPECIALLY Azx Falls FishTank Interactive	January 2002	Night and Magic IX: Writ of Fate 3DO	Spring 2002
Asheron's Call: Dark Majesty Microsoft	Winter 2001	Motor City Online Electronic Arts	Fall 2001
Asheron's Call 2 Microsoft	Winter 2002	Nyct III: The Well Age GGD	Winter 2001
Command & Conquer 4 Sierra	Winter 2001	Neverwinter Nights Interplay	Winter 2001
Combat Mission 2 Big Time Software	Fall 2001	Requiem: The Pit Strategy First	Spring 2002
Commander Jill Slantack	Spring 2002	D.I.B. Strategy First	November 2001
Command & Conquer: Renegade Westwood	Fall 2001	PlanetSide Neotek	Summer 2002
Counter-Strike: Deathmatch Zero Sierra	Fall 2001	Republic: The Revolution Edios	Summer 2002
ESPECIALLY Dark Age of Camelot Sierra	Winter 2001	Return to Wolfenstein Activision	Winter 2001
Destroyer Command Ubisoft	Summer 2001	Sid Meier's Civilization III Intergrates	Fall 2001
Deus Ex 2 Ion	Summer 2002	Sid Meier's Star Trek EA	Fall 2001
Die Hard: Nakazem Plaza Sierra	Fall 2001	Signar: The Adventures of Rex Chance Microsoft	Fall 2001
ESPECIALLY Disciples II: Dark Prophecy Strategy First	January 2002	Sinville EA	Spring 2002
Dragon's Lair 3D Blue Byte	Fall 2001	Sins Delina EA	Summer 2002
Duke: Nakes Forever 3D Ion	January 2002	Soldier of Fortune II: Double Halo Activision	Winter 2001
ESPECIALLY Dungeon Siege Microsoft	January 2002	Sovereign Sony Deluxe Entertainment	Summer 2002
Earth & Beyond Westwood	Winter 2001	Star Trek: Borg Assassinator Activision	Winter 2001
Elder Scrolls: Morrowind Bethesda	Fall 2002	Star Trek: Bridge Commander Activision	Fall 2001
Empire Earth Sierra	Fall 2001	Star Wars: Galactic Battlegrounds LucasArts	Fall 2001
Etherlands Strategy First	November 2001	Star Wars: Jedi Academy LucasArts	Spring 2002
Europa Universalis II Strategy First	Winter 2001	Star Wars: Jedi Outcast: Jedi Knight II LucasArts	Spring 2002
ESPECIALLY EverQuest: Shadows of Lucin Level	Winter 2001	Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic LucasArts	Fall 2002
Flight Simulator 2002 Microsoft	Fall 2001	Stratfield Ion 2	October 2001
Freedom Force Crave	Christmas 2001	Team Fortress 2 Sierra	Spring 2002
Galactic Civilization Slantack	Fall 2002	Thief II Ion	Summer 2002
Global Operations Crave	Winter 2001	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Ubisoft	Spring 2002
ESPECIALLY Halo Microsoft	Spring 2002	Twisted II Intergrates	Spring 2002
ESPECIALLY Heroes of Might and Magic IV 3DO	Winter 2001	WetCraft III Westwood	Spring 2002
Hidden & Dangerous 2 GGD	Winter 2001	ESPECIALLY World at War Electronic Arts	Eventually
IL-2 Sturmovik Ubisoft	November 2001	Zoo Tycoon Microsoft	Fall 2001

No murders to avenge.
No helpless families to save.
No morals to uphold.

Sweet.



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microsoft.com/games/mw4_blackknight

THIS MONTH'S TOP 5 PREORDERS



Everquest: Shadows of Ishtari (PC GAME) With a new territory to explore, with it's own secrets, artifacts, and unique riddles—new game elements, including a new player race and class, plus an upgraded 3-D graphics engine, this expansion will open a new world to players—literally!



The Sims Expansion: Hot Date (EA GAMES) Hot Date will not only add new character models and objects that players can buy for their houses, it'll also feature dating between sims. Players will be able to either have their sim ask another sim out, or use a new in-game matching service.



Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (EA GAMES) Play the role of Harry Potter as you sneak, climb, and jump through 3-D environments. Play foot-pooed, anacardi-style Quidditch and interact with more than 50 characters as you battle evil creatures using all of your newfound magical abilities.



Empire Earth (EA GAMES) This game promises to be the premier historical real-time strategy game, as accessible as Age of Empires, but with far more excitement and depth, offering players unprecedented freedom to customize both the historical scope of their game and the character of their civilizations.



Civilization III (WOODWARD) A whole new dimension of strategy and possibility that was absent in past Civilization games is created by integrating the concept of culture into the Civilization universe. Brute military force is no longer the only option you have for conquering enemy civilizations.

THIS MONTH'S TOP 5 RELEASES



Pool of Radiance: Tales of Myth and Magic (EA GAMES) The first game to incorporate the new 3rd edition D&D rules, features new races and offers new class abilities, spells, and heroic feats. Your journey back into the Forgotten Realms promises to never offer the same experience twice.



Return to Castle Wolfenstein (PROXIMA) id's Quake III graphics engine brings the gloomy castle and its evil dimensions to life. You'll play as BJ Blazkowicz, a covert Allied supersoldier with a massive chip on his shoulder and an insane Jones stand hatred for Nazis, as he infiltrates and brings down the evil castle.



Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2 Expansion: Yuri's Revenge (EA GAMES) Two months after the events of Red Alert 2, Yuri and an army of psycho soldiers reappears. An emergency team composed of core Allied members is hastily assembled and is sent back in time to stop Yuri before he takes over the world.



Madden NFL 2002 (EA SPORTS) EA Sports looked back on Madden 2001 to see what they could change or refine to make it a little more realistic. This game comes with improved defensive AI, which has also been affected by an increase in different player animations, better graphics, and knock-back blocks.



MS Flight Simulator Pro 2002 (MICROSOFT) Flight Simulator 2002 is the new edition of Microsoft's highly realistic, graphically advanced flight simulator, the best-selling PC flight simulation game ever and includes real-time, interactive Air Traffic Control (ATC), stunning new scenery and visual effects.

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20

TOP 20

Top-Selling PC Games in July



Diablo II: Lord of Destruction (Vivendi)

\$35



The top-selling PC game in the month of July, with Blizzard's latest perched at the top. As it should be—this is one of the all-time greatest additions, despite middling reviews in magazines that don't know any better. If you love *DIABLO II*, this is a worthy addition to your addiction.

1

The Sims (Electronic Arts)

\$42



This game is destined for the Hall of Fame. And the revenues it's generating as a best seller could easily put it at the top of the all-time PC gaming money-makers. It's gotta be killing Microsoft that they didn't publish it.

2



The Sims: House Party (Electronic Arts)

\$29



We're ready to move on to the next *SIMS* expansion, *HOT DATE*. But until that's released, *HOUSE PARTY* is still the add-on of choice for those who can't get enough of playing with virtual people's lives.

3



4	Diablo II Vivendi	\$38	
5	Roller Coaster Tycoon Infogrames	\$27	
6	MS Flight Simulator 2000 Microsoft	\$30	
7	The Sims: Livin' Large Expansion Electronic Arts	\$29	
8	Max Payne GodGames	\$49	
9	Age of Empires II: Age of Kings Microsoft	\$43	
10	Half-Life: Blue Shift Vivendi	\$29	
11	Black & White Electronic Arts	\$42	
12	MS Train Simulator Microsoft	\$46	
13	Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal Interplay	\$30	
14	Roller Coaster Tycoon: Loopy Landscapes Infogrames	\$28	
15	Myst III Exile Ubi Soft	\$42	
16	Sim Theme Park Electronic Arts	\$20	
17	Emperor: Battle for Dune Electronic Arts	\$42	
18	Anarchy Online Funcom	\$48	
19	Backyard Baseball 2001 Infogrames	\$20	
20	SimCity 3000 Electronic Arts	\$19	

Based on sales figures for July 2001. Source: NPD INTELLECT Market Tracking

5, 10, 15 Years Ago in CGW

5

Nov. 1996



This 390-page tome marked our 15th anniversary of insulting the companies who pay us to advertise their products. In our lists of bests and worsts, we crowned *CIV* the best game of all time and *OUT-GOT* the worst. Funniest game: *SPACE QUEST IV*; worst back story: *QUAKE*; most memorable game villain: the Purple Tentacle from *DAY OF THE TENTACLE*. Today's villains make old Tentacle look like a garden slug.

10

Nov. 1991



CGW's 10th anniversary issue included a dry but exhaustive history of gaming, spruced up with black-and-white photographs. One picture showed a pensive Richard Garriott holding a wand and dressed in frilly "Lord British" garb, looking like he failed to get the part for an Imperial margarine commercial. The issue also featured the Game of the Year awards, with *RID BARON*, *KNOX'S QUEST V*, and *LINKS* sweeping their games. Game of the year *WING COMMANDER*, hands headin' down.

15

Nov. 1986



It may be hard to believe, but once upon a time we started reviews like this: "Sir Flene Bonum swaggered into the dark tavern. His practiced eye recognized eight potential enemies and his tactical intuition moved him to a position where his back was to no man." We'll just call that Exhibit A for all you folks who think our writing quality has been in decline since then. We might not win the Peabody award, but at least we don't talk about characters being "hypnotized by a mesmerizing boss." Then again, perhaps we should....



With King Arthur dead, the Realms of Albion, Midgard and Hibernia are locked in a mortal struggle.

All three must protect their territory and precious Relics from the enemy or risk being overrun.

Built of myth and forged from magic, Dark Age of Camelot is an immersive massively-multiplayer online role-playing game drawing on Arthurian legends, Norse mythology and Celtic lore.

Explore 3 vast mythologically-inspired realms of Sean Éireann, Great Britain and Ireland, featuring medieval villages, dark dungeons, misty forests, sweeping plains and glacial fjords.

Fight intelligent monsters, as well as enemy-realm players, using a vast arsenal of weapons, special combat moves, magic and siege engines to conquer and hold onto your realm's territory.

Quest with an intricate and extensive questing engine offering up countless adventures for both the new player and veterans alike.

Build siege weapons, armor and other essential items via the game's revolutionary trade skill system that features thousands of uniquely craftable items. Dark Age of Camelot's extensive content includes player housing.



www.darkageofcamelot.com

A massively-multiplayer online roleplaying game

Illustration by Terese Nielsen
www.tnielsen.com

Will you be the one to bring
order to the realms?



Dark
Age
of
Camelot
Live the Legend™



How do you follow up on the gold standard in single-player tactical shooters? That's been Red Storm Entertainment's challenge since the release of their landmark RAINBOW SIX: ROGUE SPEAR, CGW's 1999 Action Game of the Year. Their answer is to do something different—by heading outdoors and undertaking a serious ground combat sim, as opposed to the close-quarters counter-terrorism that has been Red Storm's trademark.

GHOST RECON concentrates on the small-unit tactics of infantry combat. Commanding a team of heavily armed elite soldiers, you'll engage in outdoor firefights in large areas in forgotten corners of Eastern Europe. Your soldiers will infiltrate hostile territory to neutralize military targets or support allied forces. You're not bagging tangos anymore; now you're after tanks.

GENRE: Combat simulation

RELEASE DATE: Q1 2002

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

DEVELOPER: Red Storm Entertainment

CONTACT: www.redstorm.com

GHOST RECON

RED STORM TAKES GAMERS ONTO
THE 21ST-CENTURY BATTLEFIELD
BY RAPHAEL LIBERATORE



GHOST RECON's new engine allows for more scenery and, consequently, more places to hide your troops. But beware that your enemies are probably hiding just as well.



With actual war at the center of *GHOST RECON*, expect to engage in missions that take place in the Eastern European wilderness as well as the shattered remains of towns and cities.



The detailed mission planning of the *RAINBOW SIX* games isn't appropriate in a combat environment, so it won't appear in *GR*. Instead, players will issue live commands during battle, just as soldiers do. More noticeably, *GHOST RECON* will sport a new engine, totally new characters, a new story line, and a new way to control fire teams. Using a combination of command screens and hotkeys, you'll control your team's fire and movement tactics in a variety of positions, including low-crawl, prone, and standing, viewed from either a first- or third-person perspective. Waypoints are easy to control, and there's an RPG-lite mode, with soldiers honing and advancing their skills with each successful mission.

Operation: Impressive Area

Each mission begins with a briefing, after which you select and outfit your team. Fifteen missions will vary from peacekeeping operations to direct action strikes and artillery support. Sometimes your team will work independently, other times you'll call in assistance from troops in tanks, helicopters, and close air support. In many cases, you'll be working with NATO forces to fight against rebel soldiers led by an insane dictator. Some missions require you to blow up bridges to stop an advance, bust tanks, raid rebel bases, and rescue an American pilot who gets shot down behind enemy lines. As the game unfolds, a number of specialties will become available to your handpicked team.

Maps are large and detailed, so

your soldiers will need to recon areas more often so they can better understand how to achieve their objectives. As in real-life combat, camouflage will enhance your soldiers' ability to survive in hostile environments. Likewise, enemy troops will take advantage of terrain for fire and movement, making them more difficult to interdict.

Tools of the Trade

One of the coolest aspects of the game is that it lets you play with state-of-the-art weapons, like the Army's new Land Warrior weapons system. The Land Warrior includes a portable computer, a GPS system, and a small eyepiece that shows the location of your troops. Because suppression fire is just as important as tank busting, *GHOST RECON* members will be packing serious firepower, like the military's new Objective Individual Combat Weapon—a combination rifle and grenade launcher that fires 20mm explosive rounds—as well as the M63 Machine Gun and the M136 Anti-Tank Rocket. Add ballistic effects such as hitting two opponents standing back to back with a high velocity round capable of hit-specific damage, and you're getting serious realism out of this weaponry.

GHOST RECON should give gamers a good idea of what being a 21st-century foot soldier is about. That it will be brought to us by the folks behind the *RAINBOW SIX* games gives us reason to believe that we'll be playing one of the best soldier sims around. *GHOST RECON* hits the combat zone in early 2002. **CGW**



As a foot soldier in *GHOST RECON*, you'll have vehicles like this fully loaded tank backing you up.



The broken streets of ruined cities provide opportunities for missions such as trapping and ambushing enemy convoys between wrecked cars.



THE

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• A one-of-a-kind blend of strategy, tactical combat, and role-playing.

• Eight-player multiplayer support.

• Unique magic system allows you to change the spells and creatures you bring into battle each time.

• Master an arsenal of more than 50 different spells, including Meteor Shower.

• Summon 22 different types of creatures, including giants, dragons, knights, and more.

Spellbinding Real-Time Sorcery and Strategy



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Animated Violence
Animated Blood

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ARMORY

**ANTI-TANK**

M136: The M136 is a fire-possible, recoilless response system that fires an 84mm HEAT (High Explosive Anti-Tank) rocket intended to destroy light armored vehicles. The HEAT round is capable of penetrating 420mm of armor. In addition to the HEAT, the M136 can also fire an HP (High Penetration) round that is capable of penetrating up to 600mm of armor, sufficient to overcome the armor of most main battle tanks.

SUBMACHINE GUNS

MPS: The MPS is a submachine gun that fires a 9x19mm pistol ammunition round. The selector allows the MPS safe, semiautomatic, 3-round burst and fully automatic modes of fire from a 30-round magazine. Both military and police forces around the world use the MPS.

MP5SD: The MP5SD is the MPS submachine gun equipped with an integral silencer. It fires a subsonic 9mm round. The combination of subsonic ammunition and silencer means that the sound of the firing mechanism is about the only sound you hear when you fire this weapon.

RIFLES

M24: The M24 weapons system is the current sniper rifle system of the U.S. Army. It is a bolt-action rifle, firing a 7.62x51mm round. It has a 6-round integral magazine and a 10-power telescopic sight.

L96A1: This is a bolt-action, single-shot rifle firing 7.62x51mm ammunition. It has a 10-round box magazine that feeds just in front of the trigger. Empty, the weapon weighs approximately 6.4 kilos.

SVD: The SVD, or Dragunov, is a semiautomatic rifle firing 7.62x54mm ammunition of Russian design. It is fed from a 10-round box magazine that loads in front of the trigger. The SVD weighs approximately 4.3 kilos.

M82A1: The M82A1 is a 12.50-caliber semiautomatic rifle. The extreme power of this round makes it ideal for taking out light armored vehicles. The weapon is fed from a 10-round box magazine that is mounted right in front of the trigger.

M16A2: The M16A2 is the standard U.S. Army-issue rifle. It is semiautomatic and fires 5.56x45mm ammunition. The weapon is fed by a 30-round magazine that inserts just forward of the trigger. The M16A2 has a selector with a safe single-shot and a 3-round burst position.

M16/M203: This variant of the M16A2 rifle comes with the M203 underbarrel, 40mm grenade launcher attached. The M203 is a single-shot, breech-loading weapon.

OCW: The Objective Individual Combat Weapon is a weapons system currently being tested for possible implementation by the U.S. Army. It consists of an assault rifle capable of firing 5.56x45mm ammunition and a 28mm semiautomatic grenade launcher. The grenade launcher barrel is mounted above the rifle barrel, and the launcher feeds from a 6-round magazine near the rear of the weapon in a bullpup configuration. You can separate the two systems and use the lighter assault-rifle-only portion independently of the grenade launcher.

CARBINES

M4: This is a scaled-down version of the M16 rifle.

SA-80: Much as the M4 is a scaled-down version of the M16, the SA-80 is a scaled-down carbine version of the M16 individual weapon. It fires the NATO-standard 5.56x45mm round from a 30-round magazine loaded into the weapon in a bullpup configuration.

LIGHT MACHINE GUNS

RPK74: The RPK74 is a heavier variant of the AK74 assault rifle. The barrel has been extended and made heavier to support the role of light machine gun. Like the AK74, the RPK74 fires a 5.45x29mm round. Empty, the weapon weighs approximately 4.4 kilos.

M249 SAW: The M249 SAW (Special Automatic Weapon) is the light support weapon currently used at the squad level in the U.S. Army. The M249 fires the same 5.56x45mm ammunition as the M16, and it can use M16 magazines, though it usually fed from a 200-round box magazine.

M63: The M63 fires a 7.62x51mm round. A special drum has been manufactured to hold 100 rounds of the linked ammunition for the weapon. As originally made, the M63 supported only belt-fed ammunition and did not have a box for feeding ammunition. With the bipod mounted on the front of the weapon, the M63 weighs approximately 11.95 kilos.

PISTOLS

M9: The M9 is the standard-issue sidearm currently in use by the U.S. Army. It is a 9mm pistol with a magazine capacity of 15 rounds. It replaced the 8.45-caliber M1911.

MPS9: The MPS9 is the standard M9 pistol equipped with a silencer. The SD variant uses a subsonic ammunition to keep the firing even quieter, but it sacrifices power.

THE DEMON HAS BEEN RELEASED



THRONE OF DARKNESS

Who cares if this mech can't destroy the subterranean buildings? It has stop war for a second, that's pretty useful anyway.

MECHWARRIOR IV: BLACK KNIGHT

More guns, more mechs, more worlds—'nuff said

by Robert Coffey

All I want for Christmas is an Ultra 20 Autocannon. And I'm going to get it, thanks to Cyberlore (creators of MAJESTY) and Microsoft (creators of suffocating monopolies). That big, nasty gun and a whole lot more will be packed into the MECHWARRIOR IV: BLACK KNIGHT expansion pack for everyone's favorite giant robot game.

Hardcore mech fans are going to love this pack. With more than 20 new missions, all jacked up to a difficulty approximating godawful hellaciousness, BLACK KNIGHT is investing heavily in the "More More More" philosophy of game design. Does this mean BLACK KNIGHT is going to revolutionize and redefine mech combat? Nope. Does it mean that with 5 new mechs, 5 new multiplayer games, 2 new planet types, 10 new vehicles, new weapons, and more that MECHWARRIOR fans are going to be too busy torso-twisting and slinging missiles to care? Yep.

BLACK KNIGHT's new story line sets the player up as a Black Legion mercenary fighting for House Steiner. While gameplay isn't going to change drastically, Cyberlore has made some nice additions to traditional mech

action. In keeping with the mercenary premise of the game, a new Black Market feature will let players barter for their favorite weapons and chassis between missions, or just sell off the ones they don't need. And while the campaign is still basically an A-to-B-to-C affair, it has some exciting new flair, at times, players will have a choice between two missions, each

affecting the other. For example, do you launch a raid on an installation to steal some new mechs, or do you take out an airfield first so your raid won't be plagued by enemy air support? Then again, those new mechs would be just the thing for taking out the airfield.

The five new mech types run the gamut from scout units to heavy

Inventory				Buy			
Item	Name	Value	Qty	Item	Name	Value	Qty
	Gas Filter	2	1		SR Large Laser	80	1
	LRM10	16	2		SR Medium Laser	5	2
	CESTRK	34	2		SR Large Pulse Laser	80	1
	LRM AC20	39	1		Gas Filter	2	1
	Gasault	122	1		LRM10	16	1
	Ustil	100	1		AC20	22	1
	Vulture	100	1		Gas Filter AC20	2	2

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Just when you get used to dealing with hordes of mechs, you have to deal with a volcanic world that kills you for making the mistake of standing on it.



A mech seeks out an enemy base secreted in a crater on the new mineral planet.

assault mechs. New weaponry includes Ultra Autocannons, a vicious Xpulse laser (deadly but a really bad heat generator), and a shiny, happy Cluster Bomb variation of the Long Tom will help you fight back against a slew of new enemies, including my new (least) favorite, choppers with long-range missiles. Now that's just not right.

But perhaps the most exciting additions in MECHWARRIOR IV are the new battlegrounds. You'll fight on a (lunar-like, mineral-rich planet that's constantly bombarded by meteorites. Loaded with huge crystalline structures perfect for blowing up and pockmarked by yawning craters ideal for enemy ambushes,

the landscape is bleak but beautiful. Cyberlore has also added a ruined version of a cityscape from the source game. Players will be able to shoot each other through the gaps of the war-scarred buildings, seeking what little cover remains behind the crumbling shells of the few structures left standing.

But you'll encounter the coolest—and most challenging—of the new warzones during the final missions of the game. That world is a volcanic hell, a planet choked with smoke and floating embers. The volcano effects are beautiful, but deadly. Lava hot spots abound on the planet surface, and not only will they totally screw with your mech's heat management, the larger ones will actually start damaging the legs of your mech if you linger on them for more than a few seconds.

The dropship should be leaving BLACK KNIGHT on store shelves just in time for the holidays. **IGN**

SEVEN SAMURAI BATTLE THE ULTIMATE EVIL

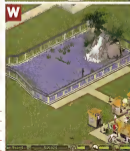
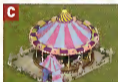


THRONE 魔
OF DARKNESS

GENRE: Space simulation
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2001
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Cyberlore
CONTACT: [www.microsoft.com/
games/mechwarrrior4](http://www.microsoft.com/games/mechwarrrior4)

ZOO TYCOON

Hey kids! Let's all go to the zoo!
by Robert Coffey



GENRE: Business simulation
RELEASE DATE: Q4 2001
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Blue Fang Games
CONTACT: www.bluefanggames.com

A is for Animals from lands far away.

B is the Business you'll build while you play.

C is for Carousel, spinning kids 'til they're dizzy.

D is for Design—making zoos keeps you busy.

E is for Excrement your zookeepers must sweep.

F is for Finance and the records you keep.

G is the Gift Shop where guests get their mementos.

H is for Hamburgers: You set the prices, you add pimientos.

I is for Interest, built by Tour Guides you need.

J is for Junior, the miracle panda you breed.

K is for Kiddies who pour through your gates.

L is for Landscaping, raising and dropping tectonic plates.

M is the Money for which you must strive.

N is the Nurturing keeping critters alive.

O is the Opinions of guests that you see.

P is Pandemonium when a tiger gets free.

Q is the Quality maintained in each animal's habitat.

R is Researching new objects, buildings, and this and that.

S is for Sandbox! Scenario! Two great ways to play!

T is for Topiary that brightens the day.

U is for Urine, that's why you build restrooms.

V is for Volume, make wide paths to give guests room.

W is for Waterfall to make these crocs feel home.

X is for Xylophone, 'cause it's always for xylophone.

Y is for Young and Old, who'll think this game's great.

Z is the Zillions it'll make for Bill Gates.

MONOPOLY TYCOON

Bringing out the Boss Tweed in all of us
by Tom Price

Remember when you were a kid, sitting on the rumpus room floor with your little sister playing *Monopoly* and losing terribly? There you were, down to your last few colored bills, and you land on Boardwalk and it's covered in that little brat's hotels. She looks up at you with that gap-toothed grin and exclaims with an innocent lisp that belies her cutthroat nature: "Pay up sucker!" Remember how far you threw that godforsaken game board? I bet your Mom still hasn't found the top hat.

MONOPOLY TYCOON brings back that good old crap-on-your-neighbor competitiveness of the original board game but with an entirely new gameplay paradigm. MONOPOLY TYCOON is definitely not just a computerized version of the Parker Brothers classic. Instead, it's a competitive strategy game where you fight for control

GENRE: Strategy of an imaginary city with a host of cutthroat
RELEASE DATE: 04 2001
PUBLISHER: Infogrames entrepreneurial
DEVELOPER: Deep Red tycoons represented by the

well-known *Monopoly* game pieces—race car, iron, thimble, and so on.

In fact the computer game has very little in common with the board game outside of familiar icons like the game pieces and the properties. Properties are represented as city blocks, where Boardwalk is still the most valuable and Baltic still one of the least. Players can build more than just hotels and apartments on properties; they can build apartments or retail outlets divided into daytime and nighttime businesses. Daytime businesses include things like butcher shops, toy stores, and newsstands, while nighttime businesses consist of things like bars, nightclubs, and other entertainment-oriented ventures. The whole point is to put your businesses in places where they will get enough traffic to generate income that exceeds their operating costs; the costs depend on a variety of factors, including the value of the property where they are located. So a clothing store on Broadway is going to have to make more money to cover its nut than a bar on Mediterranean. Businesses in the same area will compete with or complement each other.

CONTACT: http://us.infogrames.com/games/monopoly_tycoon/



Let's face it, people love to shop. Your task is to make them love shopping at your stores.



Losses to properties are purchased at auctions—one element of the game that could get hot between human players.

Players can also compete to own the properties themselves by bidding on them at auction. This is another area where players go head to head in direct competition. Thankfully a little chat browser has been implemented into this screen to allow deals, trash-talking, or outright threats to take place between humans in a multiplayer match. Owning a property means not having to pay rent on the businesses you own on that property and collecting rent from other players.

The possibilities that this game suggests for all-out multiplayer hate fests are astounding. I never thought anything would be more satisfying than demolishing someone's wonder with trebuchets in AGE OF KINGS, but then again I've never driven down the property value of someone's tony shopping district with a row of sleazy pool halls and dingy bars right across the street. Or surrounded their exclusive high-rise, high-rent apartment complex with low-rent, clapboard crack houses. But I want to reel bad.

I just hope no one throws their computer across the office. **CGW**

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WORLD of WARCRAFT

By Jeff Green

What will Blizzard do next? It's a question we love to ask—those of us who have become ensnared by their addictive games—and one we always get wrong.

So when Blizzard announced that they were going to reveal their next project this September, the speculation ran rampant, as usual, as fanboys and industry dorks alike started guessing at the possibilities. STARCRAFT 2? Massively multiplayer DIABLO? A first-person shooter? The answer was finally revealed on September 2 at ECTS in London—and, as usual, everyone was wrong again.

Coming next from Blizzard is WORLD OF WARCRAFT, a massively multiplayer RPG set in the WARCRAFT universe. And although no one expected this, it is as exciting an announcement as they could have made. Finally, Blizzard is swooping down from that eagle-eye view and letting us play inside one of their fantasy universes. Finally, instead of commanding troops from above, we get to be mighty heroes ourselves, creating our own personal legends.

It is Blizzard's most ambitious game to date—and over the next 10 pages, the green-skinned CGW peons are ready to take you on a tour of the now-living kingdom of Azeroth in this exclusive first look. Zug zug!





Meet The Tauren



In **WARCRAFT III** Blizzard will introduce a third race for player characters: the Tauren, huge creatures who live in a peaceful, tribal society. They are a wise, nomadic race, who ally with the Orcs in **WARCRAFT III** because they identify with the Orc struggle to retain their traditions and identity. The Tauren live in the grassy lands of central Kalimdor; their only natural enemies are the brutal centaurs of Kalimdor, who have raided Tauren villages for generations.



A Human decked out in footpad armor. Expect to see many of your favorite **WARCRAFT** units throughout the game.

As any serious **WARCRAFT** geek knows, Blizzard has long had a huge story in place for its flagship universe—but most of that story never appeared in the games themselves. But the **WARCRAFT I** and **II** designers were obviously frustrated storytellers, because they packed the manuals and subsequent novels with details of a deeply thought-out fantasy world (some-what reminiscent of Raymond Feist's great *Riftwar Saga*) that has just begged for further enrichment. Blizzard tried to build on the story in the never-released **WARCRAFT ADVENTURES**, and the fact that they're coming back to it again—this time in an online RPG—just proves the level of their obsession.

"The simple fact is that **WARCRAFT** is our flagship IP," said Chris Metzen, longtime Blizzard veteran and "keeper of the arcane flame" of all **WARCRAFT** continuity. "**DIABLO** kicks ass, **STARWARS** kicks ass—I'm partial



of **WARCRAFT** may represent a quantum leap in ambition, scope, and technology over anything they've done previously, at root, this is still going to be a Blizzard game—with all the simplicity, ease-of-use, and—in theory—fun that that implies.

AT YOUR SERVICE

From the moment you launch **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**, Blizzard aims to make the

"Dude, how cool would it be to be in this world, to be those heroes?"

to all of them. But ultimately, we were like, f**k it, this is it—the **WARCRAFT** universe is Blizzard. There wasn't much to think about. It was a perfect fit for this kind of game."

And while it may seem odd for Blizzard to be announcing another new **WARCRAFT** game while they're still struggling to finish **WARCRAFT III** (now bumped to 2002), the fact is, **WORLD OF WARCRAFT** has been in development for a year already, with a team of nearly 40 people working on it full time. When we flew down to check out the game in mid-August, the team demo'd it live, on a running server, with other Blizzard employees for a full hour.

And the great news is that while **WORLD**

experience as simple as in all of their other games. Like all MMORPGS, you'll start out by creating your character. At this point, Blizzard is announcing only three of the player races: Human, Orc, and Tauren. The first two we all know about, while the latter is a race being introduced in **WARCRAFT III** (see sidebar).

Players will have a healthy number of options for making their characters stand out physically, because the team realizes that in MMORPGS, as in real life, looks do matter. As such, Blizzard is including loads of options for character creation, including numerous facial choices, hair (or, in the Tauren's case, horn) styles, skin colors, and

"The goal was to glom onto the WarCraft look and extrapolate it into a first-person universe."



even tattoos. Armor and weaponry will be huge, of course, and (as in *DIABLO*) the acquisition and wearing of unique, bad-ass items will be key to making your character stand out. Blizzard won't reveal character classes yet, except to say that they'll fit into the *WARCRAFT* universe—so you can at least expect the standard mix of warriors, spellcasters, and rangers—and you can look to the *WARCRAFT II* (and *III*, when it ships) manuals for further ideas.

The most interesting part about character creation in *WORLD OF WARCRAFT* is what you don't do. At the beginning, you don't assign any skill points at all. That's right: no numbers. You'll pick your race, your look, and your class—and then you jump into the game.

"We want this all to be really, really simple," said Bill Roper, another longtime Blizzard veteran (who at one time, long ago, provided all the voices to *WARCRAFT II*). "We don't want you to make choices about things without any information, we don't want you suddenly putting points into stats and skills that you have no idea about. Much like *DIABLO II*, we're gonna start you off with the right stats for your character type. But as you play and start learning things, then you'll get to assign points, and it'll feel like an informed decision."

Let's be clear: This isn't an attempt to dumb down the RPG elements of the game. It's simply a matter of Blizzard trying to do what they always do, which is create a game that's "easy to learn and hard to master," as many on the team repeated throughout the demo.

"Even though we love the current massive multiplayer games," said Roper, "the truth is that they still appeal mostly to the hardcore. The interface is very difficult, the learning curve is too steep, and they punish you too severely too early."

Project lead Shane Dabin added, "For lots of people, you gotta remember, it's still scary to even go online, let alone play a massive multiplayer game. We want to give players a ramp-up period to feel comfortable first."



A Tranny, equipped with a wicked Dragonmaw Battle Axe, in the dense jungles of Stranglethorn. *WARCRAFT* players will recognize the goblin zep-pain-krish-d into a tree behind him.

Enemy Harvest Golem



Stranglethorn Jungle, a previously unseen area in Azeroth, shows off the bright color palette Blizzard is going for in **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**.

The large green fellow on the left is not mere shrubbery. He's a load-ass monster called a treant, and he was the "end boss" of a multi-part quest. The treant shakes the player's screen slightly when he's nearby, and shakes it a lot when you kill him.



READY TO SERVE

Once you create your character and enter Azeroth, it becomes clear just how serious Blizzard is. The team has created a brand-new 3D engine for the game, which you can view from a first- or third-person perspective (easily switchable with the mouse wheel), and it is a marvel. Unlike nearly every other massively multiplayer game around, **WORLD OF WARCRAFT** is not going for a "photorealistic" look with lots of earth tones. It is instead opting for a more surreal and colorful look that is faithful to the **WARCRAFT** palette, and that feels, as Roper put it, "almost like you're inside a painting."

For Metzner, this look was crucial. "It was a very specific goal for us, to glom onto the **WARCRAFT** look and try to extrapolate it into a first-person universe. We were looking for something more iconic; we wanted a level of rightness not found in other games. And that's what this game is about: mighty dudes doing great deeds."

To give the world a "live" feel, the team has added large environmental effects like moving water and skies, along with more subtle effects like swaying cobwebs and flying butterflies and birds. More important, all the monsters and NPCs in the gameworld are always doing something. NPCs don't stand around waiting for you to come to them; they have assignments, such as patrolling, guarding, or hunting. You may even see a line of peons chopping wood.

You traverse the world mostly on foot at first, though higher-level characters will gain items like teleport scrolls. The world is going to be huge, encompassing at least a good portion of Azeroth as depicted in the **WARCRAFT II** manual, along with new areas depicted in **WARCRAFT III**—though Blizzard declined to be more specific on this point.

Perhaps the coolest element of travel—and a feature that all veteran massively multiplayer gamers are going to shout out loud about—is that there are no load times between zones. The world is streaming, as in **DIABLO II**, so that you actually experience a smooth transition as you move from one environment to the next, with no load screen whatsoever. We actually saw this work, so unless Blizzard was using

Anatomy of an Interface

This is you. The red bar is health, the blue is mana. To cast spells or use items on yourself, just click on the lion of your face.



You can drag spells and items into the Action List at the lower left of the screen for quick access.



The cursor is context-sensitive. For example, when you drag it over a sword. Once you've killed the monster, the cursor turns into a gauntlet holding a bag, indicating you can now loot the corpse.



Your "paper doll" and backpack icons appear in the lower right. You can right-click on items to drop them immediately into your backpack. When you pick up armor, it automatically fits itself to the proper slot on your body.



Your current location. The game's daylight cycle. You can mouse over it to get the exact gameworld time. As you locate places in the world, they're added to your mini-map. You can zoom the map in and out.

smoke and mirrors to fool us, they've already solved a major MMORPG headache. In addition, every player will have the ability to bind to a location via huge binding stones scattered throughout the world—so you won't have to beg another player to do it for you.

wait an hour to lure one creature out and then spend 10 minutes trying to kill him. ("We don't feel like you should be reading a book or doing your laundry during combat," said Roper.)

Death is going to be made somewhat less painful than in the current crop of MMORPGs. "We want it to be not terribly

"We've learned a lot from battle.net over the years, both good and bad. Hopefully we can use that knowledge here . . ."

BY YOUR COMMAND

So what, exactly, are you going to be doing in *WORLD OF WARCRAFT*? Combat, obviously, will play a huge role. (Yes, there will be player-versus-player—and yes, you can avoid it if you want.) Blizzard is promising, however, that battles will happen faster and more often than is typical of the genre. It won't be quite as frenetic as *DIABLO II*, but on the other hand, you won't have to

jerking," said Debin. "You've gotta be sorry when you die, but you shouldn't feel like you just got punched in the stomach and want to go cry for a week. You've got to want to jump right back in and try to do better, rather than shut the computer off and think 'the game screwed me.'"

Blizzard is also stressing, however, that players will be able to gain experience from activities other than combat, such



as going on quests, practicing trade skills, helping other players, and maybe even just exploring. Quests will range from easy, solo missions that you can do in one or two hours, to large-scale quests that may involve many players roaming all over the world for weeks.

Blizzard demonstrated a sample quest for us, a multipart one that required us to travel to different locations. The original quest, given to us by an NPC, is to destroy a strange tree beast that attacks folks out in a jungle. On our way, we discover that we need a specific weapon, a flaming blade called the Firestar, to defeat him, but that

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"That's what this game is all about: mighty dudes doing great deeds."



A Human player makes his way uphill toward a huge keep in Iron Forge—WORLD OF WARCRAFT will give Azeroth a sense of scale the universe has never had.

Enemy Ghoul



the hit and the blade have been separated. To get the hit, we have to battle some monsters in a local graveyard, and to get the blade, we need to find the thief in town who has stolen it. Once we have both pieces, a blacksmith forges them together for us and we're on our way. And the bonus, after we've felled the tree beast, is that now we have a flaming sword, com-

A Human fights two ghouls. Damage appears onscreen, leaving the chat window free for its intended purpose.

plete with particle effects, that we can show off to other players in the world.

FOR THE ALLIANCE

Of course, the game is really all about other players. Blizzard is focusing much attention on developing rewards for participating in the community and working with others.

One exciting concept they're introducing is that of ritual magic—spells that will require multiple casters to use. The example they demonstrated for us was a ritual spell that opens a portal to a special zone. To do this, we needed multiple casters because different players possessed different spells that all needed to be cast together. The reward for participating in such a ritual is that all the casters can then travel through the portal, but access is barred to anyone else. So if you're one of the few people in the world who can do certain ritual magic spells, everyone will know it, and you're going to be a popular player.

Another good reason to group with others is that every character class will come with an innate passive ability. When you join a group, that ability is shared automatically with everyone in the group. For example, a ranger's ability may be that his minimap is

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Koloth



Tauren and Human players band together to fight gnolls near the Duskwild border. This bridge will actually take you to another zone, but, unlike other MMORPGs we've seen, you'll get there without a load screen.

filled in with more detail than maps of other classes. If you group with a ranger, you will receive that bonus, as long as you stay with him. Because different races will have different classes, this will also

how you conduct yourself, of course, will also affect how the other denizens of Azeroth respond to you.

MORE WORK

It all sounds good now, in theory. But will Blizzard really be able to pull this off, avoiding all the technical problems that have plagued nearly every other game of this type? So far, they remain confident.

"We've learned a lot from battle.net over the years, both good and bad," said Roper. "It's still the largest online multiplayer game service, so we have lots to draw upon."

"We don't feel like you should be reading a book or doing laundry during combat."

encourage players of different races to band together.

Orcs and Humans, banding together? We're not sure. And Blizzard isn't telling. WORLD OF WARCRAFT actually takes place about five years after the conclusion of WARCRAFT III—and whether these mortal enemies can now live in peace is a plot spoiler that Blizzard will not yet reveal. Differences in faction definitely will be a part of the game, however, and

Obviously we're not going to be running WORLD OF WARCRAFT on Diablo II realms, because it's a completely different paradigm. But we can utilize the full breadth and scope of our knowledge on getting hundreds of thousands of people online playing with each other really simply."

Blizzard will be setting up multiple realms on servers around the world for WORLD OF WARCRAFT, and the company plans to maintain a full-time staff with the sole

Two Humans and an Orc standing around looking cool in Goldshire. Orc and Human players will be able to play together—but you'll have to work on that relationship to make it happen.

Duskwild is the creepy forest to the south of the Human capital. Blizzard is hoping to make each area completely distinct, with a graphical look that puts you "inside of a painting."

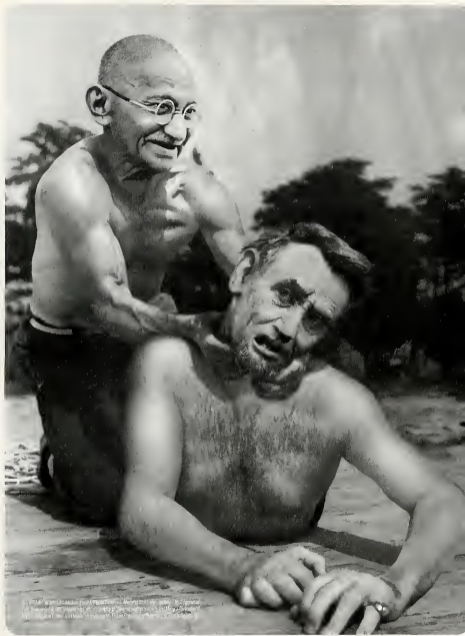


Blizzard's No-No List

When the WORLD OF WARCRAFT team first started the project, they got together and talked about all the things they don't like in other MMORPGs. The result? You won't see any of those things in their game. Or at least that's what they're saying now. Here's what Blizzard is promising you won't see in WORLD OF WARCRAFT:

- Load times between zones
- The need to camp for crucial monsters
- Too much downtime between battles
- Food and drink needed to stay alive (though these things can help heal you if you're found)
- Rats or rabbits to kill (Bill Roper: "Fleeing with my mighty dwarven warrior toward a guard to save me from a rat—that doesn't make me feel real epic and mighty.")





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Azeroth

Here's Blizzard's latest version of their fantasy world of Azeroth. They're basing the geographical layout on the maps from the strategy games, but are adding areas, like Stranglethorn, that we've never seen before.

Human Footman



A human character casts Word of Recall to return to his bind point. All characters will be able to bind themselves to a region—you won't have to seek someone's help to do it.

responsibility of continuing to create new content for the game. "We think of it as an amusement park motif," said Metzen. "We want you to keep coming back again and again, to keep trying new things. And our

job will be to keep the lines short and keep changing up the rides."

Blizzard is also promising to conduct extensive beta testing and swears they're going to take their time with it. "The beta test is actually the big x-factor here," said Roper. "We can't tell you if it's going to be one month or one year. We put the biggest pressure on ourselves. If a game ships on time, but it doesn't work and it's not fun, then who cares? We've always felt it's much more important to get a game right when it comes out, so that four years later people are still playing it because it's a good game."

So what does that mean for a release date? It means, unfortunately, that there isn't one. "No matter what date we tell you, you're not gonna believe us," said Roper. "So we don't have a release date."

And that was the only lousy thing we'd heard all day.

FOR THE KING

With **WORLD OF WARCRAFT**, Blizzard is veering away from familiar terrain and entering an extremely competitive gaming landscape fraught with hazards—as the frazzled teams of **EVERQUEST**, **ANARCHY ONLINE**, **WORLD WAR II ONLINE**, and others would all attest. But it's a challenge that clearly has Blizzard jazzed.

"Huge communities have always built up



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Feature: World of Warcraft



Sunset over the Swamp of Sorrows, near the Orcs' Dark Portal.

around our games, from WARCRRAFT II on," said Roper. "Every time we come up with a new product, we work on how we can better integrate the community and get people to interact. So a massive multiplayer game is just the next logical step. What's really exciting to us is sitting around and talking about a game that won't have a chat room.



You'll now finally be talking to other players as your character, all the time. It's exciting to us as developers and gamers."

And that last part is why Blizzard always gets it right: At root, they are just geeky gamers like the rest of us. They're making WORLD OF WARCRRAFT because this is the game that they want to play.

"There is so much to this universe," said Dabm, "so much we want to explore. All we could think as we started this project was,



Orcs versus Humans in the Iron Forge mountains.

dude, how cool would it be to be in that world, to be those heroes, and adventure in the places we fought all those massive battles in?"

Dude, we couldn't agree more. So hurry up, finish WARCRRAFT III already, and let us into the world. The kingdom of Azeroth needs heroes like us. [cdm](#)

WarCraft III Update



The way we see it, the biggest obstacle standing between us and hundreds of hours lost playing WORLD OF WARCRRAFT isn't the technology or the design or a rigorous beta test: It's that damn WARCRRAFT III. During our visit, Blizzard kept vowing that the incredible amount of new gameworld content in WC3 will have a huge impact on the eventual state of WORLD OF WARCRRAFT. So how long until we can see that 200-percent increase in content and start

speculating about its expression in WORLD?

Well, not until spring of 2002. The good news is that Blizzard has nailed down the design and most of the units. The final unit mix will be determined by the vigorous play-balancing yet to come (an internal beta should be underway by the time you read this). The design team is overhauling the art for all the races, adding new low-poly models to ensure every unit looks great even on lower-end machines.

They're tweaking the tech tree for all four playable races, which has led to the welcome return of the gryphon whirly for the Humans. Lumber harvesting has been added to the game to create more of a classic WC2 feel, though the harvesting is performed at a slower rate and should prevent players from hacking down entire forest walls. Additionally, a great deal of effort is going into finalizing the affects of the cycling of day and night—specifically how daylight or the lack thereof affects fog of war, line of sight, and the special abilities of certain races. Oh, and there's that little matter of actually creating a single-player campaign. Fortunately, the story line is pretty well set and the multiplayer testing has led to the prototyping of a variety of mission types.

What we saw looks good. From the thoughtful interface tweaks to the mobile Night Elf buildings to the devastating assortment of boss-celiber dragons, WARCRRAFT III looks to be well on its way to delivering a great gaming experience. If not an imminent one. —Robert Coffey

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Nothing Left to Say

No, this isn't one of those I-can't-think-of-anything-to-write-about-so-I'm-going-to-write-700-words-about-how-I-have-nothing-to-say columns that every writer seems to crank out at least once in their career (or if you're Jeff Green, on a monthly basis). That's not the problem. The problem is, this is the last reviews opener as you've come to know and love them and I can't figure out how to say goodbye.

Quit yer cryin'—I'm not going anywhere. I'll still be here cranking out half-assed, know-nothing reviews like my sublime TRIBES 2 piece and doing all my regular duties at the magazine. You know—writing, editing, occasionally giving Robert Coffey a "how's your father?" with a cattle prod (he begs me). But the plan for the impending redesign calls for some changes in this space as well as the rest of the reviews section.

For instance, say goodbye to the little pictures representing the star rating system. Oh, we'll still give you a humorous theme for the ratings scale, but from now on it will be done with text. Actually, this opens up a whole new world of possibilities when it comes time to think those blasted things up. Our first list could be four-letter words or completely innocuous phrases that sound dirty when translated into French. For our last list we decided to go with recent CGW covers. More than one reader wrote in and suggested we put CGW editors in that slot,

but we didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings. Specifically, Jeff's.

And the reviews themselves are going to look quite different as well. Don't worry, we're not changing our theories on game reviewing, or moving toward the brevity of *Entertainment Weekly*. We're simply putting together a section that makes you want to read every page instead of just flipping straight to the specific review

you're looking for. You'll see, it'll be great.

I'm bad at goodbyes, so let's not say that. Instead, I've got a few parting shots. To everyone who's ever been pissed off at a review I wrote and subsequently emailed everyone on the masthead with a two-thousand word diatribe about why I'm "hell's lame": Bite me. To Jeff: Whoops, I already took my shots at you. To the gnome: We'll always have Paris. —Tom Price

NOVEMBER REVIEWS

GAME	RATING
Anarchy Online	★★★★★
Combat Command 2: Desert Rats	★★★★★
Cultures	★★★★★
Dark Orbit	★★★★★
Decisive Action	★★★★★
Divided Ground	★★★★★
Empire of the Ants	★★★★★
Eurofighter Typhoon	★★★★★
Green Berets	★★★★★
Legends of Might and Magic	★★★★★
Max Payne	★★★★★
Mega Man Legends	★★★★★
Poseidon: Zeus Official Expansion	★★★★★
Rules of the Game	★★★★★
Settlers IV	★★★★★
Starfleet Command 2: Orion Pirates	★★★★★
Squad Battles: Vietnam	★★★★★

HOW DO WE RATE? We review only finished games — no betas, no patches.



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



VERY GOOD Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.



AVERAGE Either an ambitious design with major flaws, or just vanilla.



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



ABYSMAL The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Cooper material.

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD
EDITORS'
CHOICE

MAX PAYNE

reviewed by Tom Price



Blazing away at some thugs in the dark really shows off the stellar weapons effects, including the flying shells.

The gaming world's first mindless blockbuster

Ecstasy in Slow Motion

The moment—the one where a game does something to make you laugh darkly under your breath, feel the rush of exhilaration, and utter your best Keanu-esque “whoa”—came for me in one of the early levels of **MAX PAYNE**. I was heading up a stairwell when I caught the flash of legs running away down the hall. I positioned myself and activated bullet-time, as I was growing accustomed to doing whenever I knew trouble was just around the corner. As I vaulted in slow-mo up the stairs, a grenade floated gently by my face, on its way through a graceful arc toward my feet where it would detonate and tear me to shreds. Yet in that long, pregnant moment as I watched my fate unfold, I had to laugh. Not only did that scripted sonofabitch ice me, he tricked me into slowing down my own death, as if he were giving me a chance to watch my life flash before my eyes. Now that's dramatic tension.

MAX PAYNE is like a big summer blockbuster movie. You don't go to see those movies for intricacies of plot, deep character development, or dialogue that would make the

Bard weep. No, you see them for the special effects. And when it comes to special effects, **MAX PAYNE** spots some of the most mouth-watering eye candy ever seen in a computer game. And when it comes to story, **MAX PAYNE** is as poorly written and acted as any piece of Van Damme/Seagal/Lundgren (as in Dolph) trash you've wasted eight bucks on at the multiplex. So why is it still so much damn fun?

Well, as I said, the special effects are really something to behold. Remedy's 3D engine does an amazingly effective job of rendering a world that not only looks photorealistic at times but also evokes the grittiness of a noir action-thriller on the big screen. Run-down inner-city resident hotels, filthy industrial areas, and beer-and-vomit-soaked nightclubs are all brought to life by rich textures and moody lighting. These highly detailed and rarely repeated textures add to the realism, as do the countless objects lying around. Syringes, mysteriously stained furniture, bottles—hell, even the crates are believable. The extreme detail of the worlds, even the cleaner environments you encounter later on, really help in the suspension of disbelief. In addition, the models of the characters you encounter (as well as the model of Max) are full of details and come in various sizes and shapes.

CGW RATED



PROS

Stunning cinematic action.

CONS

Really bad writing.

Requirements: Pentium II 450, 512MB RAM, 120MB hard drive space, 16MB DVD video card
Recommended Requirements: Pentium III 700, 128MB RAM, 32MB CD-ROM video card **3D Support:** 133 **Multiplayer:** None

Publisher: Eidos Games • Developer: Remedy/Octopus • \$46 • www.maxpayne.com
ESRB Rating: Mature: violence, blood, drug traffic, sexual situations



A burning ring of fire is your main opponent in this level, where you must escape the trap of a burning building. Levels in *MAX PAYNE* offer various objectives other than blasting away at everything that moves, and there are some truly bizarre dream sequences.

Of course, the special effects that you notice the most are those for the weapons, and they are easily the most dazzling ever seen in any game. Sometimes it's worth it to turn on bullet-time just for the sake of watching the tongues of flame squirt out of gun barrels and to see each projectile rendered down to its copper jacketing or barrel marks.

But that script. *Yeesh!* It's not so much that the story is trite or hackneyed—lots of great books and movies are built on the same old plot foundations—it's the way it's told that shows a serious lack of writing talent. If you don't know already, *MAX PAYNE* is the story of an NYPD detective out for revenge after his wife and infant child are slain by "killer junkies." He goes deep undercover in the DEA to find out who is behind this new designer drug "valkyr." The game follows him through the same plot twists we've seen in every game or movie (warning: spoilers ahead). His partner is killed, and guess who gets blamed? He catches up with the guy he thinks is responsible for the drug epidemic, only to unlock a greater conspiracy involving the government, yada yada yada. The ending—while cool from a gameplay standpoint—is extremely disappointing in being so predictable, especially since intricate plot twists are hinted at throughout the game but never expanded. (End spoilers.)

The writing, obviously going for an over-the-top noir style, like Dashiell Hammett fused with Irvine Welsh, is laughably ridiculous. Here are some choice examples: "The sun went down with practiced bravado . . ." " . . . sirens singing in the off-key harmony of a manic-depressive choir." "Snow fell like confetti over the devil's parade."

Most of this embarrassing dialogue is presented in a serious-sounding voice-over during the graphic novel-inspired cut-scenes. The graphic novel idea is a good one, but it could have been improved in two ways. One: Cut the voice-over. It's like listening to comic books on tape. Two: Instead of using photos of real people in the panels, just hire an artist to create a genuine graphic novel. The "actors" don't fit their parts well at all anyway. The guy playing Max is some skinny little runt, and the so-called killer junkies look like they work in Remedy's accounting department.

Dreams can turn into nightmares—especially when you involve Satanists and dead babies.

Oh, and get a real noir writer to create the dialogue. For some reason, every amateur writer thinks they can write good noir, but they can't. Here's a quarter, call James Elroy.

Yet the hammy writing still couldn't ruin *MAX PAYNE* for me. The action was too hot, the slow-bullet-time too cool. It really never got old. The fact that the game took me only about 12 hours to finish wasn't a drawback either. The developers included gameplay modes, *Hard-Boiled* and *New York Minute*, that significantly add to the game's value. No, there's no multiplayer mode, but for a very good reason: It wouldn't work.

Because *MAX PAYNE* strives to offer a cinematic experience, it's only fair to judge it by the same standards I would judge a movie. Whenever I see a movie, I ask myself: Would I see it again? Would I recommend it to friends? Did I waste my money? The answers are yes, yes, and no. *MAX PAYNE* is no *Citizen Kane*, but then again I've watched *Death Wish 4: The Crackdown* more times than any of Orson Welles' movies combined. What can I say, I like guilty pleasures. **CW**



Telling a story through graphic novel sequences is inspired, but next time leave the real-life actors at home.



Spray-and-pray strategies are much more effective when bullet-time is in effect.



ANARCHY ONLINE

reviewed by Thomas L. McDonald

Players use group tactics to roam the countryside hunting high-level monsters for experience.

Of course it's broken, but it'll be great. We hope.

Fun Bomb

I began installing *Anarchy Online* one sunny morning at about 10:00. I finished the next day around noon. It took me a dozen re-installations, multiple patch downloads (many of which failed), and other system contortions to even get up to a registration screen, and when I did get a chance to register a new account, the servers were down. To convince me of its all-consuming wonderfulness after all that, ANARCHY ONLINE would have to cook a meal, fetch my slippers, and crap gold doubloons.

Even Norwegians can't squeeze all that into a box for \$12.95 a month. And, truth be told, AO didn't work all that well once I got inside.

But it was clear after only a few hours spent creating characters and fiddling with play mechanics that Funcom has the chance to move massively multiplayer role-playing into a new realm. That is, if they can make it work. This game has the stuff of greatness in it, but it's buried beneath serious problems.

AO is most like *EVERQUEST* in the way it matches a dazzling array of careers, skills, and stats to a potentially strong questing and narrative element. Like *EQ*, the world is vivid and well conceived, adding substantially to the role-playing and career-building experience essential to a good MMORPG.

Where *EQ* felt like work, with a forbidding interface and a steep learning curve, AO is inviting. It streamlines interactions and offers a more enticing experience/rewards system. It feels like a complete, living environment, where people can gather, team up, swear, trade, dance, and more.

Funcom accomplishes this in various ways. Most obvious is the brilliantly crafted gameworld. The city and countryside exteriors are beautiful, with diverse architecture, believable weather effects, and a sky that convincingly cycles from day to night. Interiors are less effective, particularly for missions in caves and other natural environments.

But beyond the visuals lies AO's real strength: the planet of Rubi-Ka. In a departure from the conventional quasi-medieval/fantasy settings of the other MMORPGs, Funcom offers a futuristic world. Rubi-Ka's narrative involves warring factions 30,000 years in the future, with megacorporation Omni-Tek fending off rebel clans. As you cross the expansive landscape, you get a sense that this is a real world. Regions flow smoothly into each other, with minimal load times. Exploration of the wild landscape reveals caves, small towns, forts, castles, and several cities. One abandoned fortress-town is under constant bombardment, which shakes the ground. Craters pock the landscape and twisted ruins line the streets. In the distance, you can watch the town's massive cannons exchange fire with some distant enemy. Touches such as this permeate Rubi-Ka and make it a place you want to return to.

CGW RATED

PROS

A deep role-playing experience with a fantastic array of character types, stats, and skills. A complex, vivid world brought to life with fine visual flair.

CONS

Notably plagued by bugs and server errors, including broken missions, broken combat, persistent memory leaks, and trans-rate problems.

Requirements: Pentium III 300, 64MB RAM, 768MB hard drive space, 8MB 3D graphics card, Internet connection, 28.8 modem
Recommended Requirements: Pentium III 450, 128MB RAM, 32MB 3D card, 1GB hard drive space, cable or DSL modem **Support:** Unreal3D
Multitaper: Massively multiplayer

Publisher: Funcom • **Developer:** Funcom • \$19.99, \$12.95 per month subscription fee • www.anarchy-online.com
ESRB Rating: Teen, Blood and Violence

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Visually, caves may not look much better than a three-year-old RPG, but they give you plenty of opportunities to gain experience.

The sci-fi setting is largely confined to the lingo and visuals, with plenty of tech-talk and ersatz-Blade Runner clothing. There's no space travel and vehicles are rare and expensive, making it a fantasy-style game with futuristic trappings. The game mechanics are familiar, with nanotechnology assuming the role of magic and "nano-energy" taking the place of mana. But within this format, AO manages to create a unique experience in which people improve their characters through an impressive array of performance-enhancing implants and "nanoclusters."

The interface is one area where AO really stands out. A lot of information can be onscreen at once without looking busy. Interactions get complex, so you'll appreciate the ability to drag and drop weapons, objects, and individual skills and attack types to a small, floating interface bar. You can create and save elaborate custom action strings and add them as macro buttons for use during gameplay. These let you perform several actions in a row, such as sit, select yourself, heal, use nanotechnology, stand, and attack.

Missions remain, at press time, a frustrating weak link. You can take on solo or team missions, with rewards doled out as experience points, credits, and items. Many missions are glorified dungeon crawls in which you make your way through a limited environment, clearing out enemies and performing rudimentary tasks. Missions with complex goals are available but most have a similar seek-and-destroy

They may call everything "nano" this and that in AO, but it all looks and functions a lot like conventional magic.



Crossroads are good gathering places where you can rest, get some food, and form parties.

feel. Even good missions often don't work, either failing to give you credit, disappearing from your mission list before the time limit expires, or simply crashing on completion. Locked doors will prove frustrating, leading to dead ends for anyone who forgets to buy a lockpick kit and enhance the Breaking and Entering skill.

Combat is another horribly broken aspect with real potential. The complex interactions among skills, nanotechnology, implants, weapons, training, race, and career make for a sophisticated and highly customizable combat experience. There is a wide selection of weapons and attack types, ranging from firearms and hand-to-hand combat to nanotech, with each character offering a unique combat experience. Engineers unpack little androids to fight for them. Agents strike quickly and move away. Meta-Physicists summon mystical creatures and can positively or negatively affect the stats of others. You can swap out weapons and create multifaceted attacks, effectively mixing nanotech, hand-to-hand, and weapons. But you can still fire through walls, even from two and three rooms away. The role of dodging and evasion is unclear. I've been hit around corners, while moving away, and from the far side of a large room by a close-quarters attack such as Brawl. It's reasonable to expect that no one should be able to land a roundhouse punch from 40 feet away.

Although CGW has a strict policy of reviewing only the released, unpatched code, this is simply impossible with an MMORPG. Patching is mandatory as part of the login process. As released, AO features the bugs discussed so far plus horrendous lag, a crippling memory leak, thousands of broken CD keys, and unsecured registration. Frame-rates slower than 1 frame-per-second and minor warping were common. As we go to press, Funcom is up to version 12.4. Almost two months after release, the patching has helped improve and stabilize ANARCHY ONLINE, though breaking other things in the process. The

latest patch did improve my frame-rates and reduce lag, allowing me to improve performance by making other gamers invisible—of course, this moots the point of an online RPG. Vexing crashes persist, and exploitable holes allow people to cheat their characters up to ridiculous levels. Worse, 12.4 introduced a stack overflow that was crashing the program after only 10 minutes of game time.

While Funcom was still working to solve these problems, they made the huge PR blunder of starting the clock on the free first month. The game was so far from stable at that point that gamers balked at having to pay for beta-testing it. Whether people will stick with it and grow the community remains to be seen, but the game appears to be on its way to being stable and playable. Broken combat, mission bugs, and memory leaks remain formidable challenges and are still preventing many from fully enjoying the game. Some of these problems—particularly the memory leaks—are inexcusable.

Even with all these problems, there is a lot that works in AO. Unlike the equally troubled WORLD WAR II ONLINE, AO has all of its features in place and has a strong design. The world is large and rich, and the different careers and skills, various regions, and hostilities among Omni-Tek and the clans will make for a deep role-playing experience. A four-year narrative arc is already planned. When it becomes fully functional, ANARCHY ONLINE will be the MMORPG by which others are measured. **CGW**

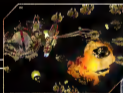
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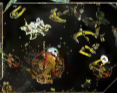
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SETTLERS IV and CULTURES go precisely where you've gone before

Oéjà Vu All Over Again

Some things travel in pairs, like Laurel and Hardy, Ben and Jerry, and those parts of Pamela Anderson that always enter a room first.

Sometimes games arrive in pairs, too, such as SETTLERS IV from Blue Byte and CULTURES from Funatics. These games couldn't be more alike in most ways and both are afflicted by the same curse: They require far too much micromanagement!

CULTURES and SETTLERS IV are building games. If you're unfamiliar with the SETTLERS series, of which CULTURES is obviously a copy, the objective is to create a settlement and nurture your village into a thriving colony, all the while balancing resources and building interdependencies. In other words, you're required to do a lot of continuous knob-twisting and button-pushing. You could call these god games if you like, but it's God as an accountant first and itinerant tinker second.

In CULTURES you manage a band of Vikings who have arrived on distant shores. You help them build their village, assigning individual Vikings different jobs. Some scenarios in the campaign require you to do battle with rival groups, including Eskimos, Indians, and Mayans; some groups offer noncombat solutions.

In SETTLERS IV you play as Romans, Mayans, or Vikings. The new unplayable race is the Dark Tribe. The building process here is more complex than that of CULTURES, as each building is dependent on others. It's the same town building system that's been used in the previous SETTLERS games, so series veterans will be at ease but probably bored with it.

It's not the basic gameplay that's the problem in these games. What drags them down is that you have to play through campaigns that pile on multiple scenarios that differ in only minor ways. The tech trees are

fully unlocked in these games from the start, so you'll find yourself building the same buildings over and over again in each scenario. It's like driving through Kansas: "Look, kids, more wheat fields!"

In fact, the best scenarios are the open-ended stand-alone ones—you just build and fiddle to your heart's content. The pace is more relaxed and you get to do what you buy these games for in the first place: build up a community of little people and a well-run, well-balanced village.

There is one key area where these very similar games diverge. In CULTURES, you get a much more personal relationship with your Vikings, almost a Sims-like one. They have names, you tell them when to get married and when to have kids, you pick the sex of the child, and so on. This comes with a price—lots of micromanagement. SETTLERS IV, though also heavy in micromanagement, isn't as bad as CULTURES. Score one for SETTLERS.

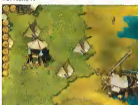
SETTLERS IV eschews these personal touches but has its own bent. Although it's a builder, it's also a game that requires military conquest to complete scenarios. You always have to eradicate a rival race, so your building is geared toward creating an army. In CULTURES, going to war is only one of the ways to complete some of the scenarios. The result is a slightly more relaxed gaming experience. Score one for CULTURES.

Maybe the biggest difference between these games is in the glitz. Both are certainly full of 2D visual appeal, but SETTLERS does more with cut-scenes and the graphics are generally better.

In the end both are pleasant enough gaming experiences if you don't mind the micromanagement. Not much is new in either game, but not much strays from what makes such games popular in the first place. Here's your best weathervane: If you liked the previous SETTLERS games, both of these are up your alley. If you didn't, steer clear. **CGW**



SETTLERS IV



CULTURES

From humble beginnings do mighty civilizations grow in both of these games. SETTLERS IV just does it better, and it's prettier.

SETTLERS IV AND CULTURES

reviewed by Mark Asher

CGW RATED

SETTLERS IV

PROS
Nice graphics and gameplay that Settlers fan love.

CONS
You've played both these games before, and they still require too much micromanagement.

CULTURES

PROS
Offers more personal touches than Settlers.

CONS
You've played both these games before, and they still require too much micromanagement.

CULTURES

Requirements: Pentium II 266, 64MB RAM, 215MB hard drive space **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium II 400
3D Support: None **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2-3 players)

Publisher: Alcat Interactive • **Developer:** Funatics • \$39.99 • <http://www.alcat.com> ESRB Rating: Not rated, but suitable for children

SETTLERS IV

Requirements: Pentium 300, 64MB RAM, 250MB hard drive space **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium 333 **3D Support:** None
Multiplayer: LAN, Internet (2-8 players)

Publisher: Blue Byte • **Developer:** Blue Byte • \$39.99 • <http://www.bluebyte.com/settlers4/> • ESRB Rating: Everyone

**YOUR OPPONENT
EXPLODES
AS YOUR MISSILE
COLLIDES
INTO HIS
ENGINE!**



**YOU FLY
THROUGH
THE AIR
AND SLAM THE
BALL THROUGH
THE HOOP AS THE
CROWD
ROARS!**



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TO PASS WITHIN
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When you're sick and tired of people, insects will do fine

Why Ants Don't Suck

By offering a gaming universe that is 1) based on a rather interesting best-selling book and 2) radically departs from the current real-time strategy norms by using insects instead of people, **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS** definitely positions itself as the right game at the right time. Because people, you see, are annoying. Whiny, hypercompetitive, passive-aggressive, self-centered people—they're everywhere. Turn on your television. Be it MTV or ABC, all you hear are people incessantly whining about how bad they have it. I mean, really. You're on TV—how bad can things be?

They're on the television. They're at the gas station. They're eating in restaurants. They're online playing **COUNTER-STRIKE** with ignorant, asinine names loaded with stupid racial slurs and third-grade-caliber ass jokes. They work at corporate entities in New York, where their primary job function appears to be blocking your plans for a

wicked-cool gaming site, and their operational methods appear to be closely modeled after those of the Department of Motor Vehicles. They work in the government, where they chest on their wives with young women and avoid anything genuine and honest. They are in-laws who need to micromanage every single aspect of their youngest daughter's wedding. They are teenagers who wear pants that ride so low you can see their pelvic bones. They are airline attendants who smile as they tell you your flight is cancelled and that the next one leaves in five hours.

But why stop there? I'm even sick—heck, I'm most sick—of computer game people. Aside from the amusingly dysfunctional **SIMS** characters, why do most computer game characters look and act the same? Especially in the real-time strategy department. They carry AK-47s or flamethrowers. They drive trucks and planes, and they bomb and destroy targets. Except for color variations or the witty responses they emit when you click on them, they all look and act the same. When you're viewing the action from 20,000 feet, everybody starts to look alike, I guess.

So the characters in **Strategy First's** surprise summer sleeper, **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS**, represent a much-needed breath of fresh air, both for gamers and this reviewer. (Note to self: Don't ever plan an



EMPIRE OF THE ANTS looks great . . . until you get too close to the ants and realize they're not 3D objects.

early September wedding, a mid-September honeymoon, and a late September Web site launch again.)

The only tricky part is that as you play through it, you'll wonder, *is this game really that good? Or is it just so different that I find it engaging?*

Hey, sometimes it's not easy to tell. When you begin **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS**, you're greeted by some discouragingly ambiguous full-motion video introduction that amounts to very little and explains even less. But when you start playing the game, you'll be amazed at the in-game graphics, which depict ants and other insects and foliage in lifelike fashion. This game looks pretty good, you'll think to yourself. Then you'll set about playing as you would any other real-time strategy game since **COMMAND & CONQUER**.

And then you'll get frustrated, because **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS** exhibits some different play mechanics than those dictated by the current RTS paradigm. You can't just click on a worker ant and tell it to retrieve some food. That's not the way ants work. How they get their instructions in real life isn't very clear, but in this game ants are motivated by the nonspecific priorities you set. At first you'll feel confused. You might even be pissed off. Many a gamer just isn't going to get what **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS** is all about.

It's entirely possible that **Microïds** (the game's

EMPIRE OF THE ANTS

reviewed by George Jonas

CGW RATED

PROS

Interesting melding of war and real-time strategy.

CONS

Could have been so much more.

Requirements: Pentium II 233, 32MB RAM, 200MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium III 250, 64MB RAM **3D Support:** Direct3D **Multiplay:** 1-8 players on LAN or Internet
Publisher: Strategy First • **Developer:** Microïds • \$39.99 • www.strategyfirst.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

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Ants are interesting creatures. Though individually limited, the insects have instinctive, specific knowledge.

French developer) doesn't entirely get what *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS* is all about. The company's treatment of the game reflects a duality: They set the game structure up like a traditional RTS, but the gameplay requires anything but that. You engage in multiple, sort-of-sequential missions. You have a home base. You have to gain resources and build an infrastructure while engaging the enemy on multiple fronts. The mission objectives are precise and military and often require puzzle-solving. But successfully completing these missions requires unique tactics and thinking that gamers won't feel prepared for based on their experience.

But whose fault is that? You can easily argue that "flaws" like the above are more a manifestation of gamers' now-instinctive expectations of the real-time strategy genre. Of course, had *Macroïds* been as creative with their game mechanics as they were with the concept, this might not even be a point of contention.

And that's the biggest frustration you'll experience with *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS*: what it could have been. Why didn't the game's designers build more on the narrative of Bernard Werber's book than on the mechanics of the real-time strategy genre? It's ironic—with some story writing, some built-in flow, and much more emphasis on the ants themselves, this could have been a classic. Instead, it's merely interesting.

But while you're figuring all this out, you'll find yourself absolutely sucked into the universe of ants and their fellow insects. You will fear the praying mantis, which can destroy all of your best-laid plans in a heartbeat. You will respect the beetle for its ant-transporting capabilities. You will expectantly await your queen's egg-laying

Planet of the Ants
Published in 1991, Bernard Werber's *Empire of the Ants* is a fascinating, if slightly manipulative work. Right from the start, the author plants several mysteries in the mind of the reader. None of them are essential

to the book, but they do serve as an effective story device and will keep you turning the pages.

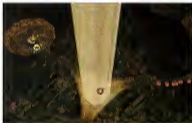
By attaching human emotions and thoughts to the entirely real, complex society of ants, Werber successfully creates wonder, intrigue,

and concern on the part of the reader.

In terms of story and character development, the ants are far more sophisticated than the clichéd humans. But maybe that's the point. For any gamer, this is definitely a book worth reading.



For some strange reason, the ants in this world can't climb trees.



You have very little control inside the anthill, other than being able to lay out passageways and entice the queen to lay eggs.

and follow the life cycles of your fledgling ants. You might even find yourself amazed at this tiny insect.

The game drives home how fleeting and unimportant individual life is to the ant. Of course, you could say the same about most other real-time strategy games, in which the only reason you create (human) units is to send them to their deaths. I'm not taking it any further than that. But you can . . . **CGW**



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Despite Bungie's MIA status, the MYTH II legacy continues

The "A" Team

I make no bones about it—I'm still a MYTH junkie. When Bungie sold out to Microsoft, I was crushed. I thought the MYTH series was dead. Part of the deal had Bungie selling off their MYTH franchise to Take Two. In the end, this turned out to be a good thing. Take Two and Take Two grabbed a few experts from the MYTH map-making community like Cydonian, GHOST, OZONE, Ares, Clem, Fish, Iggy Pepped, and Santa's Head and asked them to churn out an expansion based on the MYTH II engine. Hard work breeds success, and what they came up with is a MYTH scenario based on the small-unit exploits of the highly acclaimed, elite U.S. Special Forces soldiers known as Green Berets. Those familiar with the MYTH II WWII plug-in

RECON will be right at home with this game.

Like MYTH II, GREEN BERETS is a tactical strategy game. But instead of following a sword-and-sorcery story line, GREEN BERETS takes place in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam conflict of the 1960s and '70s. Gone are MYTH's swords, arrows, satchels, and fireballs, replaced by M16s, M60s, grenades, and rocket launchers.

There are 18 unit types, each with a distinct area of expertise, from A-Team leaders who can fight hand to hand, call air strikes, or pop smoke for resupply efforts, to Medics who heal fellow team members, and Huey helicopters for taking out the enemy in a big way. Enemy units are also distinct, with Viet Cong Mortar and rocket-propelled grenade units harassing your teams with long-range explosives. You'll be bedeviled by machete-wielding VC Assassins sneaking up on your units, not to mention the more organized North Vietnamese Army regulars. Game balance is solid, considering the variety of units.



As in the original MYTH games, unit formation in GREEN BERETS plays a vital part in meeting your team's objectives—and ultimately in its survival. This team has just repelled wave after wave of VC by forming a circle—and they took no casualties. They deserve Silver Stars.

GREEN BERETS is extremely challenging even at the easiest setting. There are 10 missions, each divided into several objectives, from capturing downed pilots and destroying enemy installations to escaping and evading the Viet Cong and calling in air strikes. One false move and your whole team can end up in body bags. Green Berets are noted for their ability to conduct ambush and counterambush tactics. The developers did a fine job recreating these types of missions. Each mission provides the look and feel of Vietnam jungles with plenty of rivers, hills, hooches, and bushes dotting the countryside. But your team has to remain alert, because these VC love to hide in the dense jungle and a well-placed sniper can create havoc for your team.

To this day, MYTH II remains popular on bungie.net and GREEN BERETS builds on that popularity by providing a variety of multiplayer games. There are Platoon-type games of two large teams or multiple-team games with smaller squads, and then there's single-man elimination mode to test your skills against individual opponents. All unit types and single-player maps are accessible, including a selection of Southeast Asia multiplayer maps. There's even an option for playing Green Beret and VC units on regular MYTH II maps.

GREEN BERETS comes with the original MYTH II CD, so if you haven't played it yet, and RTS is your bag, you won't be disappointed. To the MYTH II WWII RECON grognards out there: This game is for you. With 10 well-made missions and a variety of units, the game's depth is well worth the small price. **CAW**

GREEN BERETS

Reviewed by Raphael Libertore

CGW RATED

PROS

Gameplay rocks with lots of interesting units and multiplayer maps.

CONS

The MYTH II engine feels a bit dated.



Helicopters like this UH-1 provide infiltration and exfiltration for each mission. In some missions, players control helos in order to destroy enemy positions.

Requirements: Pentium II 200, 64MB RAM, 3D card, 500MB of hard drive space **Max Compatible:** Power PC 601 or higher **Recommended Requirements:** 128MB RAM 3D Support, Direct3D **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2-16 players)

Publisher: Take Two Interactive Software • **Developer:** TakeTwo • **ESRB Rating:** Mature, some blood, simulated violence

This very bad idea can be yours for just \$19.95!

Blunder Strike

A number of developers have been grabbing at Sierra's coattails in attempting to duplicate the COUNTER-STRIKE phenomenon.

Despite this, searching through pecked retail shelves trying to find FPS games worthy of your time and money is still a bitch. The truth is, some developers have no business making FPS games. Add 3DO to that list. In a sorely misguided attempt to lure fantasy RPGers into the world of online fragfests, 3DO has tried to branch their acclaimed MIGHT AND MAGIC franchise into the shooter market. "Try" is the operative word here. LEGENDS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC has jobs of foul-smelling mediocrity smeared all over it.

LOMM demonstrates simplistic design at its best (worst?). You choose either the good or evil side by picking one of six character types—Paladin, Druid, Sorceress (Good), or Warrior, Heretic, and Archer (Evil).

Then you play in one of four online game types at Game-

spy or over TCP/IP with up to 16 players. Straight-forward, eh? Pretty lame, too. Apathy rapidly sets in.

First, the good-versus-evil concept is unimaginative and bland. If there were an intriguing story line, it might have worked. But there isn't, so it doesn't.

Second, in an attempt to create game balance, 3DO created character classes, but they all share similar capabilities in running, jumping, weapons, and equipment use. Paladins can use a bow, and Heretics can fight with axes, both without restrictions. So character classes amount to skins that differentiate characters only visually, because everyone can fight equally well with hoes, swords, or scrolls. To be fair, some characters do possess an item or two unique to their class, like the Archer's Eye Bow, but these don't enhance the game in any way.

Third, the selection of weapons, armor, and magic available for equipping characters is paltry. It would have been nice to see more equipment assigned to

each class and presented as something to strive for later in the game.

LEGENDS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

Reviewed by Raphael Liberator

CGW RATED

PROS

Free online servers via Gamespy.

CONS

Mediocre everything else.



The LOMM HUD is very straightforward. The crystal ball reveals your teammates' or monsters' positions. But it's not as in-depth as the MYTH II or Diablo II minimaps.

Games are divided into four scenarios: Sword in the Stone, Rescue the Princess, Wizard Escape, and Slay the Dragon. Despite the Camelot names, they're standard FPS teamplay fare like Capture the Flag.

Players begin by equipping their characters using the menu at predetermined Purchase Zones. As the game progresses, just as in COUNTER-STRIKE, characters earn money to buy better equipment and arms. The ability to increase a character's level, stats, or skills would have made LOMM more appealing. But no, 3DO didn't include that. In LOMM, combat success is simply a matter of characters with better weapons and armor upgrades having the advantage. The bottom line is that LOMM is a slavish copy of COUNTER-STRIKE dressed in fantasy drag. The one exception: You can add monsters to some scenarios. Why? Did some COUNTER-STRIKE-playing 3DO programmer really think, "The only thing standing between Hostage Rescue and greatness is the lack of mummies. It is my mandate to add those mummies!"

Although LOMM uses the LithTech 3D engine, I found game mechanics a tad slow when reloading bows, slashing opponents with swords, and dodging monster attacks. The only plus is that it's stable, and the interface is easy to navigate. Some of the maps have a nice layout, too.

In the end, LOMM is a cheap shooter with no real appeal. It pays lip service to its fantasy trappings, its alleged gameplay style, and a distinguished franchise that shouldn't even be associated with this mess.

3DO should be ashamed. **CGW**

There's nothing special about wands, staves, and rods. They fire some sort of laser beam or blast and all seem to do the same thing. Secondary fire features are a tad more interesting. But what's the point of having a "Far Sight" ability in a wand during a close melee fragfest?

Requirements: Pentium II 300, 64MB RAM, 3D hardware acceleration, 500MB hard drive space **Recommended Requirements:** 128MB RAM
3D Support: Direct3D **Multiplayer:** TCP/IP for LAN or Gamespy (1-16 players)

Publisher: 3DO • **Developer:** 3DO • \$19.95 • www.3do.com • **ESRB Rating:** Teen (13+), blood, violence



WASH. FORESTERS FILE # 925741
ORIGINAL NAME
CAUSE OF DEATH: Savage blast
due to decapitation, and
sharp notch on base.

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON sets its sights low and off-target

Lite Don't Make Right

Hardcore flight sim buffs often make the mistake of thinking that any sim with pretty graphics and simplified controls is a good game for novices. EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON aims for that mass market, but numerous design flaws demonstrate that making a good game for casual PC pilots is not as easy as one might think.

In the near future, tensions between Russia and NATO have erupted into war. Your task is to defend the strategically critical island of Iceland against a Russian invasion. CNN-style newscasts present the events of the war. The graphics of the world in which you fight are quite nice, convincingly portraying hills and valleys, rivers and ocean, and the fighting machines.

The core of EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON involves managing six pilots, chosen from a roster of pilots listed with their characteristics (such as health, experience, combat expertise, and so on).

These six squadron members operate in parallel, their status (eating, sleeping, in combat, in the hospital, dead, and so on) displayed as icons on the bottom of the screen. If, while in the middle of the dogfight, another icon pops up telling you that another pilot is attacking a ground target, you can jump into that mission by clicking on the icon. Being able to jump into the most interesting mission at any time is good in theory for a game targeted at casual flyers, but it will likely frustrate those same gamers. Your pilots are inept enough that, without your intervention, they will usually fail their missions and often be shot down. Thus you find yourself constantly forced to jump from the middle of one mission to the middle of another and then into another. This can be disorienting and destroys the illusion that you are an actual fighter pilot engaged in a war.

Novices will also be baffled as to why so many sorties fail due to a lack of proper weapons—if you don't also jump into each briefing session, planes will often be loaded with weapons completely inappropriate for the mission. Ironically, in addition to the hectic nature of the missions, the other key problem is long periods of inactivity. Particularly after losing a couple pilots, you will often face five to ten minutes—in real time—of



A fully loaded Typhoon hunts for Russians.

waiting for a mission to be assigned, even with time acceleration turned on. That's hardly fun for any gamer, casual or not.

The campaign is a mix of dynamic missions within a scripted series of events. The events of the war unfold the same way each time you play, but specific missions will vary according to how well you are doing. The campaign is interesting and seems well made the first time through (except for a very stupid "kill the big boss" last mission), but the fact that the war unfolds the same way each time kills replay interest. There are no single-mission, instant action, or mission builder options—although you can play some of the multiplayer missions solo—puzzling omissions in a game targeted at casual gamers.

Less than sound completely negative, I should say that the actual missions can be entertaining. Avionics are simple and fairly effective, with instruments represented as onscreen multifunction displays. The flight model is very fly-by-wire, and thus quite forgiving, allowing novices to yank and bank to their hearts' content. Unlike many "lite" sims, the opposing AI's sophisticated team tactics challenge even veteran flyers. Your own weapons have reduced effectiveness "for gameplay reasons," but this again will be problematic for novices, as they'll wonder why their short-range missiles and supposedly sophisticated air-to-ground weapons consistently miss their mark.

The wide range of mission types will hold your interest the first time through the campaign, and the relatively clever enemy AI will result in quite a few edge-of-the-seat moments. Still, the design problems keep EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON wide of the mark of an ideal lite sim. **C**

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON

reviewed by Jeff Labrecque

CGW RATED

PROS

Nice graphics, easy to jump in and play; some of the missions can be a lot of fun.

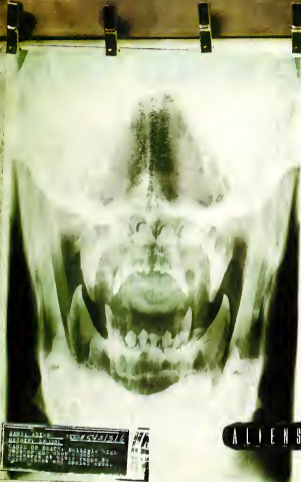
CONS

Campaign is good for only one run; no single-player option; long waits between missions; doesn't hit the mark for serious simmers or novices.

Requirements: Pentium 266, 84MB RAM, 3D accelerated video card with minimum 8MB RAM, 650MB hard drive space
Recommended: Suse 7.0 Support: Direct 3D **Multiplayer:** LAN, Internet (2-16 players)

Publisher: Taka Two Interactive Software, Inc. • **Developer:** Rage Software • \$39.99 • www.rage.com
ESRB Rating: Everyone

Recognize your mortality.



Kill or be killed as three different species: Alien, Predator, Human. Each with new weapons and capabilities in a single storyline told from three perspectives. Intense action. With graphically accurate environments. Blinking just became a liability.

ALIENS ^{VS. PREDATOR} 2 PREDATOR

the evolution of fear



<http://sierrastudios.com/games/aliensvspredator2/>

POSEIDON: ZEUS OFFICIAL EXPANSION



★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

We have a theory about expansion packs here at CGW. If they offer more of the same gameplay, while offering some substantial new goodies, then that should be good enough for the fans of the original game. And on paper, that's what **POSEIDON** seems to do for fans of **ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS**. There are new buildings in each category, new gods and heroes, new trading partners, and so on.

But when you're in the game, those goodies seem like nothing more than a bunch of new icons that don't have any impact on the gameplay. Of course, hardcore fans will probably delight in spending hours checking out and placing the new buildings, some of which are admittedly quite cool (the Hippodrome, for example). But you can count me in the group that prefers the payoff of overcoming smart AI and a challenging mission over the instant gratification of watching an animated fruit-temper juggle oranges. Call me crazy.

I have to give major props to Impressions, though, for including an adventure editor with **POSEIDON**. It's the one thing serious **ZEUS** fans will have to fall back on if the new stuff doesn't stimulate them like a poke in the ass with a trident. —Tom Price

Genre: Strategy • Publisher: Sierra • Developer: Impressions Games • \$20 • <http://poseidon.impressions-games.com/> • ESRB Rating: Everyone

RULES OF THE GAME



★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Never has sports trivia been so dull. Based on an eponymous board game predecessor, **RULES OF THE GAME** is a sports trivia game that plays like a badly written quiz show. It falls entirely and utterly out of bounds. The MC, Joe Banks, is about as lame as game show hosts come, futilely attempting **YOU DON'T KNOW JACK**-style humor. After a couple of rounds, not only does his babbling become unbearable, it hampers game flow. Thankfully, you can turn off his annoying commentary. But even with his commentary disabled, his antics remain visible—sitting at his MC desk, he twirls basketballs or hits paper baseballs as players try answering questions. Pathetic.

The game supports up to four players going toe-to-toe in the hot-seat or online at Gamespy. **RULES OF THE GAME** advertises more than 1,500 questions spread out in seven categories, from golf and baseball to college hoops and football. There's also a miscellaneous category that quizzes you on obscure games like badminton, tennis, horseshoes, darts, and the like. The questions are rarely brain stompers, so don't worry about busting a vein. But some of the questions and answers are downright confusing. Take for example, "How many cad-dies can you have during a game?" Answer: "As many as you'd like, but only one at a time." And although **RULES OF THE GAME** supposedly has tons of questions, many of the same ones spring up, even in the beginning rounds. This game stinks. —Raphael Liberatore

Genre: Puzzle/classics • Publisher: Infogrames • Developer: Random Games • \$30 • www.infogrames.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

MEGA MAN LEGENDS



★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

Mega Man, Roll, and Data the talking monkey (must... suspend... disbelief) star in **MEGA MAN LEGENDS**, an RPG-style 3D action game. Together they traverse caves and towns battling the Bonne family with wide-eyed anime mayhem.

What started as a graphically superb (it seemed bizarre to require a 3D card when everything looks software-rendered) yet enjoyable experience ended up leaving me unsatisfied, because it repeatedly crashed at the end.

Still, **MEGA MAN LEGENDS** has many subquests that are fun to try, the best being the burglar chase scene and timed racing. Boss fights prove challenging, because you must spend time considering a plan of attack before fighting, but overall it lacks the much-touted "legendary gameplay."

Overly complicated controls will bog down casual FPS players (no mouse compatibility), but the RPG elements are balanced.

Storywise, it tries too hard to develop a plot, with characters that become increasingly unbelievable. Mega Man's exclamation, "You're alive! That's great!" to a former enemy seems unbecomingly and naive for a hero, even if it is only a game.

Fans will need to change their expectations to embrace the RPG play style, and anime lovers can laugh at the Japanese characters. Their huge eyes and out-of-sync dialogue make for fun, *Mystery Science Theater 3000* fodder for only a bit more than a night at a bad movie. —Wen Laws

Genre: Action-adventure • Publisher: Capcom • Developer: Capcom • \$19.95 • www.capcom.com • ESRB Rating: Everyone

STARFLEET COMMAND 2: ORION PIRATES



★★★★

Looks like all that time Scotty spent crawling around in the Jeffries tube has finally paid off: We now have a **STARFLEET COMMAND** game that works out of the box.

Billed as an expansion for **STARFLEET COMMAND 2**, **ORION PIRATES** is actually a standalone game that offers a number of new ships and races to play.

Why call it an expansion instead of a sequel? Because there's nothing radically new here. Like **SFC 2**, **ORION PIRATES** features real-time strategic combat between starships, with battles playing out more like deliberately paced naval encounters than click-feet RTS skirmishes.

Set up instant action battles, play campaigns as any of a variety of Star Trek races, or battle online in the persistent Dyanverse II campaign. Visible changes to the engine are minor, with some enhanced special effects and a number of more detailed ship models—and the same confusing **STARFLEET COMMAND** interfaces.

Despite all that, this is a better game, not only because it's relatively bug-free, but also because

it has noticeably better artificial intelligence. Computer captains push their ships to the limits and make deadly use of hit-and-run tactics.

The biggest addition is the eight new playable Orion Pirate captains, each with its own campaign. Each has about 30 ship types, some common to all the Orions and some that are modifications of ships of other races—for instance, the Korgnath carrier uses a mixture of Orion and Klingon ships. You can also play any of the original races, but only in a dynamic "conquest" campaign without a scripted story line (you'll need **SFC 2** to do that).

A number of new ship and weapon types for all the races from the *Starfleet Battles* board game make an appearance in **ORION PIRATES**, including hyper-advanced "x-ships" with super deadly weapons such as Phaser Xs and heavy photons. Taking out a dreadnought with a light cruiser can be fun.

In spite of its flaws, **ORION PIRATES** is the best game yet in the **STARFLEET COMMAND** series, and it's a bargain at 30 bucks. —Denny Atkin

COMBAT COMMAND 2: DESERT RATS



★★

Old-school wargamers, the kind who think all you need for a good game are a hexagonal grid map, some counters, and a combat resolution table, will love **COMBAT COMMAND 2: DESERT RATS**. It's a deliberate throwback to those very board games grognards cherish. Everyone else should save their 40 bucks.

DESERT RATS is grand, tactical-level WWII desert warfare as viewed on some far-away general's map. Command control is paramount. You must keep units in range of headquarters or their movement is halved and they will not coordinate attacks. The other key to success is maneuvering into position. Surround enemy units or hit them with multihex attacks. Tank duels are fast and decisive but entrenched infantry can take days to root out. Sick fog-of-war rules and decent AI keep the scenarios challenging, but the lack of a campaign game and sterile graphics made me feel more like Robert McNamara crunching numbers at the Pentagon than Erwin Rommel sweeping across the sands of Egypt.

Ultimately, that sense of abstract detachment is the downfall of **DESERT RATS**. Without a strong visual identity, it ceases to be a game about desert warfare and becomes nothing but numbers on a screen. —John Fletcher

Genre: Wargame • **Publisher:** Shrapnel Games • **Developer:** Boka Strategy Games • **\$39.95** • www.shrapnelgames.com • **ESRB Rating:** Unrated

Genre: Strategy • **Publisher:** Interplay • **Developer:** Tokren • **\$30** • www.interplay.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone; violence

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By GARY KEITH

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-Natalie Davis, *British Press Herald*, May 1st 1998

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-Dr. Javier Solana, The Secretary General of NATO, May 1st 1998

SEPTEMBER 18, 2001

IN STORES
SEPTEMBER 2001



SQUAD BATTLES: VIETNAM



★★★★

The list of Vietnam War computer games since Avalon Hill's VC in 1983 is a short one. While Vietnam scenarios for THE OPERATIONAL ART OF WAR exist, they don't capture the operational problems faced by forces in that conflict, as few battles at the battalion level and above were serious contests. The serious challenges were faced at the squad level, and John Tiller's new game engine captures this brilliantly.

There is much in this design that will be familiar to veterans of Tiller's other games, but here it all fits together better. Tiller's painstaking tracking of casualties, which felt cumbersome and out-of-place in the PANZER CAMPAIGN series, works brilliantly in this game. Not only is it accurate in simulation terms, but it also manages to focus the game squarely on the individual soldier and his plight. It's one of the rare instances of using the computer to simultaneously increase realism and streamline the game design.

The game takes a few shortcuts, such as abstracting some support elements and avoiding detailed ballistics models. But rather than detracting from the game, they simply make the squad-based element stand out. Too few wargames really know what they're trying to simulate. This game exhibits no such ambiguity. It's not the most original design, but it's one of the best of recent years. —Bruce Geryk

Genre: Wargame • Publisher: HPS Simulations • Developer: John Tiller • \$40 + shipping • www.hpsims.com • ESRB Rating: Not rated

DECISIVE ACTION



★★

Some games try to be simulations. DECISIVE ACTION is a simulation that tries to be a game. Unfortunately, while it does a good job of presenting the issues important to a division commander in a modern conflict, it doesn't do a good job of making them engaging or interesting.

The game uses turns that are broken into phases. The system allows you to give orders that the units try to fulfill during the turn's phases. Battlefield intelligence is a crucial aspect of gameplay, and you have to watch the map very carefully to determine what your movements have uncovered. The game has many of the key elements of modern warfare, such as chemical weapons, air strikes, electronic warfare, and so on. The problem is that the restrictive game system limits player interaction to an extent that may be realistic but makes the game feel rather bland.

DECISIVE ACTION goes a long way toward showing just how artificial regularized hex-grids and arbitrary factor-counting are to wargaming. But at some level, wargames are supposed to be games, and these conventions prevent designs from feeling too mechanical—a word that aptly describes DECISIVE ACTION. —Bruce Geryk

Genre: Wargame • Publisher: HPS Simulations • Developer: John Tiller • \$40 + shipping • www.hpsims.com • ESRB Rating: Not rated

DIVIDED GROUND



★★★★★

Six minutes per turn, 250 meters per hex. That's the scale of Avalon Hill's landmark board game, Panzerblitz, and any computer game at this scale covering the subject that DIVIDED GROUND does invites comparison with Panzerblitz's well-known sequel, ARAB-ISRAELI WARS. While the board game was a redesign meant to tailor a game system to a new era, the computer version is just an old game system with some new data tables.

With a new equipment list, the game does a good job of simulating the enormous increases in firepower since the World War II era. The increased range and lethality of anti-armor weapons, as well as the emergence in later years of significant infantry anti-tank capability, means that DIVIDED GROUND plays very differently than previous games in the series. It's a whole new world of warfare.

Unfortunately, you don't have much of a chance to explore it because DIVIDED GROUND's scenario design is quite possibly the worst of any recent computer game. There is hardly a worthwhile scenario in the bunch, which is a crime considering some of the battles available for study. In many cases, the scenario description is more interesting than the gameplay. It's difficult to make a bad Chinese Farm scenario, but this game manages to do it. DIVIDED GROUND is essentially a database. If you want an actual wargame to go with that, you'll have to design it yourself. —Bruce Geryk

Genre: Wargame • Publisher: Take Two Interactive • Developer: TalonSoft • \$45 • www.talonsoft.com • ESRB Rating: Not rated

DARK ORBIT



★★



"Hey, you want to review **DARK ORBIT**? It's supposed to be **DIABLO** in space," my editor said, just like that, with reverberating echo sound effects, "DIABLO in space..."

How could I resist?

So I was off with WildTangent's new downloadable game. You play a miner piloting a mining ship on the 10th planet, Nibara, now overrun with cranky aliens waking up from a long

nap. Everyone's dead but you, and all you want to do is get the hell out of Dodge. You fly your ship from a top-down perspective, watching as it bounces off canyon walls like a bumper car while you zap aliens. You collect the mineral Maktum, find ships for scavenger, and return to base to deposit the loot and spend the proceeds to upgrade your ship. There are even teleporters that work

like the Town Portal spells in **DIABLO**.

So it's sci-fi instead of fantasy with some sharp 3D graphics, zap and crash instead of hack and slash, and lots and lots of repetition. The beauty of **DIABLO** is that beneath the repetition there's infinite variety. Sadly, beneath **Dark Orbit**'s repetition is only more of the same. **DARK ORBIT** is a one-way rocket ship journey to Dreamland. Zzzzz. —Mark Asher

Genre: Action • Publisher: WildTangent • Developer: WildTangent • \$21 • www.wildtangent.com • ESRB Rating: Unrated

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RED ALERT 2 EXPANSION

Photography by Arnold Treasjo



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Companies that make LCDs are always crowing about the advantages of LCDs over CRTs: "Low radiation emission means that you won't die of brain cancer." Or, "LCDs use less power so you'll be conserving energy." Whatever. The truth is, people don't buy LCDs because they're healthy or energy efficient. People buy LCDs because they're sexy as hell.

You wouldn't believe how many people—upon walking by my office and noticing this baby sitting on my desk—felt compelled, nay, drawn by some strange force to come in and touch, oggle, drool, or otherwise comment on this super-sweet monitor. LCDs like this one are CEO stuff, man. You know what I'm saying, six-figures, beach houses, trophy wives. And this monitor's hefty \$4,000 price tag can attest to that.

A 21.3-inch TFT, active matrix LCD, with a

maximum resolution of 1600x1200, dual (analog and digital) video inputs, picture-in-picture, composite and S-video connections, the SyncMaster 210T is the be-all and end-all of 21-inch LCDs.

I originally hooked the SyncMaster 210T up to my VisionTek GeForce3's analog video-out. While basic Windows applications looked fine, DVDs, and especially games, looked fuzzy as the LCD's slow redraw rate (slower than a CRT's) was blatantly obvious. Then I installed a Hercules 3D Prophet III—the 210T has a DV-out connection—and things changed for the better. With the standard analog connection, COUNTERSTRIKE was virtually unplayable, but with the digital video connection I could actually play without getting nauseous. The thing is, though, performance was still well below that of a CRT of comparable size.

SAMSUNG SYNCMASTER 210T

Prose Sexier than Antonio Banderas.

Cons: The LCD's fixed pixel grid means that any resolution other than 1600x1200 will look fuzzy; mighty damn expensive!

Requirements: A computer

Recommended Requirements: A graphics card with a digital video-out connection to take full advantage of the monitor's digital video capabilities

\$3,999 • Samsung • www.samsungmonitor.com

The SyncMaster 210T is not for the faint of heart at nearly four large. You're gonna be hard pressed to justify this purchase to the little woman. If, however, you happen to be walking by your boss' office after hours and you see one sitting on his underused desk, might I suggest liberating it to the comfort of your den? —William O'Neal

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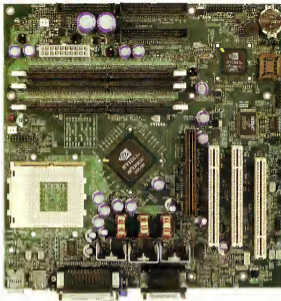
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PRECISION STRIKE FIGHTER

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Chip maker's mobo design makes a lot of sense

Next for NVIDIA: Motherboards?

Having won the graphics technology battle—at least until ATI's Radeon R8500 comes out—NVIDIA has set its sights on a new target, the motherboard market. Realizing that traditional motherboard designs create bottlenecks and latency issues that hamper a system's performance, NVIDIA has developed the nForce Platform Processing Architecture. Based primarily on their IGP (Integrated Graphics

Processor) and MCP (Media & Communications Processor) technologies, nForce-based motherboards will boast everything from GeForce2MX-quality graphics and Dolby Digital 5.1 audio to built-in ethernet. If you're thinking that this is just the technology to speed up that Pentium 4 of yours, then think again: At press time nForce motherboards will only support Athlon and Duron processors.



nForce boards will ship with two demos. INTRUDER, an FPS, shows off the board's graphics prowess and BATTLE-DOME shows off the DD 5.1 capabilities.



Wil POWER

America's the Bomb Diggity F'sho!

I have the best job in the world. Not only do I get to play with some of the coolest junk around, I often have the privilege of getting it before anyone else does (read: Vederman). For instance, I'm writing this editorial on Dell's latest top-of-the-line notebook, the Inspiron 8100, while my wife watches the latest episode of "Sex and the City." I thank God every day that I'm a member of Generation X.

To put this laptop through its paces, I ran through my standard barrage of tests: buttloads of COUNTER-STRIKE, down loading videos and movie trailers, stealing music with Morpheus, and watching The Patriot on DVD. And you know, something occurred to me while I watched Mel Gibson run around South Carolina with a hatchet: America is the bomb!

As you no doubt know, I've been pissing off a lot of people lately with my constant Republican bashing. But the thing is, while I think a lot of people are selfish and want nothing more than for America to become a plutocracy, I do in fact love this place. Think about it: Here I am, a spoiled black kid from Oakland, California, who gets paid to sit in an office all day playing games.

That being said, I don't want any Republicans who read CGW to get their panties in a bunch. So here's my challenge to our more conservative readers: In 100 words or less, convince me, a black, bleeding-heart liberal, with a second-grade son in public school and daughter about to go into kindergarten, why I should become a Republican. The reader with the best letter will not only see their words printed in the hallowed pages of this here magazine, I'll also send 'em one of the many useful tchotchkes I have lying around.



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NVIDIA's 32MB GeForceGO is currently the belle of the mobile graphics ball, but midnight is fast approaching. ATI claims that its upcoming Mobility Radeon 7500 gets scores near 4000 in 3DMark2001 on a Dell Inspiron 8000—nearly double the score of the Inspiron 8100 tested here.

DELL INSPIRON 8100
Pros: Fast as a ill get-out!

Cons: Heavy as hell!

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If Shaq were a laptop he'd be the Dell.

Inspiron 8100: huge, powerful, and undeniably the best. It has a list of components that makes hardware junkies like me shiver with joy: a 1.13GHz Pentium III processor, 256MB RDRAM, NVIDIA's 32MB GeForce2 Go graphics card, a 15-inch Ultra XGA TFT display with a maximum resolution of 1600x1200, a 20GB ATA-100 (4,200RPM) hard drive, and a 6x max DVD/4x CD-RW combo drive. This rig will have you doing everything from playing COUNTER-STRIKE to watching DVDs, whether you're sitting on your couch or chilling in your favorite watering hole. Throw in Firewire, S-Video, and S/PDIF ports, and it's safe to say that you may never use your desktop again...

Accolades aside, however, the 8100's real beauty shone through when we started throwing benchmarks at it. While its 3DGameGauge score of 63.45 is well below

that of the HP and Voodoo

desktops that we tested,

QUAKE III ARENA frame rates of 73 fps on a laptop are freakin' Incredible! Furthermore, the

8100 was right with the two desktop machines in UT, and it even beat the HP in EXPENDABLE's 16-bit test. Damn!

While the 8100 is in no way expected to compete with GeForce3-based desktop machines (its 3DMark2001 score of 2016 can attest to that), the fact that 3DMark2001's lobby scene not only ran on it but looked fantastic speaks tomes about this laptop's abilities. Basically, if you're in the market for a gaming laptop and you can't fork the nearly three large for it, then consider your purchasing decision made. —William O'Neal

*3D GameGauge is a performance metric that tests the speed of nine high-end 3D games. The 3D GameGauge score is an average of the frame rates from those games, yielding a single number that can be compared across different systems.

Benchmarks
Voodoo Computers
HP Pavilion 6800
Dell Inspiron 8100

Benchmarks	Voodoo Computers	HP Pavilion 6800	Dell Inspiron 8100
Graphics card:	GeForce3 64MB	GeForce3 64MB	GeForceGo 32MB
Quake 3 16-bit (demo 127):	152.6	160.1	73.1
Quake 3 32-bit (demo 127):	150.3	158.2	53.9
Unreal Tournament 16-bit:	65.99	60.02	58.56
Expendable 16-bit:	101.6	72.96	87.89
Expendable 32-bit:	102.2	72.86	49.98
3D GameGauge 2.5.*	102.2	93.8	63.5
3D WinMark 2000:	200	209	74.5
3DMark2001:	5167	5752	2016

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HP's 1.7GHz Pavilion is about as kick-ass as any boutique machine

Pretty Fly, for a Gray Guy



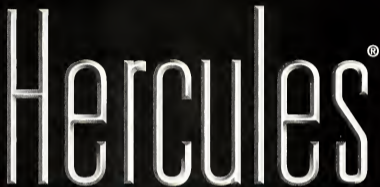
After spending the past few months playing with desktop machines from Falcon Northwest, Alienware, and Voodoo Computers, I was a little skeptical when three boxes with HP logos all over them showed up. As a bona fide techno-snob I—like many of you—am want to thumb my nose at consumer-oriented companies like HP and Compaq.

Built around the ASUS P4T (Intel 850 chipset) motherboard, the HP 8800 boasts a 1.7GHz P4 with a 400MHz front side bus, 256MB PC800 RDRAM, HP's 19-inch WXGA monitor, a 70GB hard drive, 16x DVD-ROM drive, 12x8x32 CD-RW, Creative SB Live Value

³D GameGauge is a performance metric that tests the speed of nine high-end 3D games. The 3D GameGauge score is an average of the frame rates from those games, yielding a single number that can be compared across different systems.

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3D GameGauge 2.5: ¹	102.2	93.8	63.5
3D WinMark 2000:	200	209	71.5
3D Mark2001:	5467	5752	2016

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HP PAVILION 9800

Pros: Sleek design, great all-around family machine.

Cons: Not as fast as its boutique competitors.

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Continued from page 124
sound card, 64MB ASUS GeForce3 card, and Polk Audio AMR 150 4 1 speakers. In other words, this machine is about as kick-ass as any that a boutique shop might put together.

I put the 9800 through our standard suite of tests: 3D GameGauge 2.5, Ziff-Davis' 3D WinMark 2000, and MadOnion's 3DMark 2001. As this is an Intel-based machine, I wasn't at all surprised by the Pavilion's awesome *QUAKE III ARENA* frame rates of 160.7fps in 16-bit mode. But the Pavilion ended up scoring a lower-than-expected 93.78 in *CGW's 3D GameGauge 2.5*, due mainly to its low *EXPENDABLE* scores. In other words, if you were to remove *EXPENDABLE* from the tests, the Pavilion's score would be more in line with that of the *Voodoo* machine we tested last month. That said, though, the Pavilion beat the *Voodoo* machine in both *3D WinMark 2000* and *3DMark2001*.

But enough about that. As an all-around family machine, the Pavilion boasts a bevy of extras that will please almost any home user. The machine has four USB ports (two in the rear and two in the front) as well as three Firewire ports. This means that transferring video from your camcorder should be a snap if you feel like taking on the daunting task of editing that video you took at your cousin Rick's bachelor party. You can also use the Firewire port to connect to an external hard drive, like the *Maxtor* one that we have here.

The 9800's only shortcomings are in the sound department. Since nearly every system that we've reviewed lately has come with *Klipsch ProMedia 4* is, we've grown accustomed to sound of that quality. And while the *Polk Audio AMR 150 4* is that came with this system are good, they aren't *Klipsches*. Also, the Pavilion's supposedly "tool-free" mechanism for accessing the graphics card and various PCI cards wasn't very tight when it arrived and the sound card kept slipping out—a problem that we easily fixed.

The bottom line is that the 9800 is a fantastic machine, and it's backed up by a big company, so you know that they won't be out of business before your warranty wears out.

Microsoft brings back its original eight-button, two-trigger gamepad. And we say, "Huzzah!"

Restore to Previous Version? <Yes>



Years ago I did my first tour-of-duty with Ziff-Davis as the technical editor of the now-defunct *Computer* magazine. During those storied times I would while away countless hours beating the hell out of *CGW's* then-technical editor (this weird guy named Dave "Shaft" Salvator) at *HFA*. While Dave swore by some strange gamepad that Gravis made (I think it was called the *Stinger* or something), I would dish out endless drubbings thanks to the *SideWinder GamePad*. With eight buttons and two triggers, I had just enough control to show Shaft that his World Cup team of Speedo-wearing Brazilian goatherders was nothing compared to a team of half-crazed North Koreans captained by yours truly and his trusty gamepad. Sure, after each game my hands were frozen into a horrible tangle of thumbs and fingers that Dave dubbed "SideWinder Claw," but the fact remained, I was un-freakin'-stoppable!

No doubt you can imagine my excitement when I received the *SideWinder GamePad USB* in the mail. "Sure," I thought,

SIDEWINDER GAMEPAD USB

Pros: \$49; works with damn near any game; neat grey color.

Cons: Doesn't have additional USB ports for linking multiple pads together.

Requirements: Windows 98/ME/2000/NT, USB port; at least a 166MHz Pentium

\$24.95 • Microsoft • www.microsoft.com/sidewinder

"It'll cause a little pain. But you know what? Victory is never free!" And after logging a ton of hours playing *FIFA 2001*, *SUPERBIKE 2001*, and *TONY HAWK PRO SKATER 2*, I realized that using the *SideWinder GamePad USB* is a lot like sleeping with an ex-girlfriend whom you're not quite "finished with", sometimes you gotta take a step back if you want to go forward. —William O'Neal



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Graphics Card	Ultra GeForce 620	\$100
3.5" floppy drive	None	\$0
Hard Drive	Maxtor DiamondMax 6020 1TB	\$100
CD/DVD drive	Plextor PX-700	\$25
CD/DVD drive	Creative PC-DVD Express 12x	\$150
Monitor	Samsung SyncMaster 950DF 19"	\$268
Sound Card	Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy	\$250
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Modem	Adaptive 56K PCI Pro Modem	\$40
Keyboard/Mouse	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro w/ IntelliMouse Optical	\$15
Joystick	Senko Syberg USB Gold Stick	\$10
Game Pad	Microsoft's SideWinder GamePad USB	\$15
Total		\$3,112

Lean Machine Components

Component	Manufacturer/Model	Price
Case	Aero: SX-635	\$60
Motherboard	ASUS ATX-E	\$60
CPU	3000MHz AMD Duron	\$75
Memory	Corsair 128MB PC133 SDRAM	\$25
Graphics Card	Mercury 3D Prophet 4500	\$80
3.5" floppy drive	None	\$0
Hard Drive	Maxtor DiamondMax V80 10GB ATA	\$60
CD/DVD drive	Creative PC-DVD Express 12x	\$110
Monitor	Samsung SyncMaster 752 DF 17"	\$175
Sound Card	Creative SoundBlaster Live Value	\$10
Speakers	Altec Lansing AC895W	\$25
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Keyboard/Mouse	Microsoft Internet Keyboard Pro w/ IntelliMouse Optical	\$15
Joystick	Senko Syberg USB Gold Stick	\$10
Game Pad	Microsoft's SideWinder GamePad USB	\$15
Total		\$1,125

Power Rig

I'd been debating whether to upgrade to a 3GHz Pentium 4, when suddenly Intel made the choice easier by unleashing its 3GHz chip. Being a geek, I found the opportunity to build a machine with—arguably—the fastest CPU available too tasty to pass up. So, a week later I built this month's Power Rig and was so impressed by its performance that I decided to stay with it.

If you're on a budget, then go with a 1.4GHz Athlon, an ASUS A7A266 or A7M266 motherboard, and 256MB of DDR RAM. You won't suffer any PC envy with that kind of system.

Lean Machine

My Lean Machine hasn't changed much, but for the price (one that seems to go down a little every day), it's still a pretty good deal. As soon as I get one of those nForce-based motherboards, I intend to build it up. That'll increase performance (by adding a GeForce2MX and the nForce's onboard Dolby Digital 5.1) while lowering the price.

Side-by-Side

Here's how my new Power Rig stacks up to the big boys. (We reviewed the Pavilion 9800 this month, and the \$3,200 Voodoo Monsoon last month.) You'll notice that the 3GHz Power Rig didn't always come out on top because it doesn't have the same components or tuning tweaks as the other rigs, but that's about to change. Next month, I'll tell you which performance tweaks we used to put our beast out front.

Benchmarks	CGW Power Rig	Voodoo Monsoon	HP Pavilion 9800
CPU:	3GHz Pentium 4	1.4GHz Athlon	1.7GHz Pentium 4
Video card:	ELSA GeForce 620	Mercury 3D Prophet III	ASUS Geforce2
Quake 3 16-bit:	173.1	152.6	160.1
Quake 3 32-bit:	170.3	150.3	158.2
Unreal Tournament 16-bit:	62.78	65.99	60.02
Expendable 16-bit:	84.76	101.6	72.95
Expendable 32-bit:	84.68	102.2	72.86
Re-Volt 16-bit:	355.3	314.9	228.9
Re-Volt 32-bit:	260.2	215.6	226.6
GameGauge 2.5*	104.53	102.21	93.78
3D WinMark 2000:	216	200	209
3DMark2000:	6026	5467	5752

TECH

You've Got Questions. We've Got Answers

It Never Hurts to Ask ... Unless I Find You in an Alley Somewhere
 Could you send me one of the PCs that you tested for a review ... it would be much appreciated ... I'll give you my mailing address if there's a yes or no, okay? —Alek Nelsen

Why would I need your address if the answer is "no"?

Which Laptop Should I Buy?

Love the column but I wish it were a few pages longer. And I know you'd beat Vederman in a fair fight—you're smarter than him. Anyway, I am looking to buy a new laptop, but I have a budget of around \$2,000. I am looking at either a Dell Inspiron (the 8000 series) or a Toshiba Satellite (2800 Series). Which would handle strategy or RTS games better? I'm leaning toward the Inspiron (although I hate mail order and would rather buy something at a store), and after configuring the options I want, I have a choice between a 15-inch UltraXGA TFT Display with an 800MHz Intel P3 or a 14.1 SXGA+ with a 900MHz Intel P3. Should I choose a bigger screen or a faster processor? Also, should I go with the 16MB GeForce2GO and a faster (900MHz) processor or with a 32MB GeForce2GO and a slower (800MHz) processor? —Will Miller

I would forego the 100MHz of processing power for both the bigger screen and more memory (32MB GeForce2GO). I would also make sure to get a machine with at least 256MB of memory.

The Vede's New Clothes

You have nothing to worry about [from Vederman]; after all, he didn't come home from E3 with a bunch of T-shirts like you did. —Daniel A. Homa

You're probably right, I'm willing to bet Jeff Green's first-born child that "the Vede" didn't get a single T-shirt at E3

Overclocking Is Kewl!

I currently have a 300MHz Pentium III. I am planning to overclock it to 500MHz. What should I do? For instance, do you think 3 inches of concrete in the CPU case will deflect the resulting explosion? Should I wear EM shielding? —TFRakinoor

Whatever you do, set up a video camera (a la Jackass) behind a piece of Plexiglas if you videotape the resulting ... uh ... situation, we promise to post the video on our Web site and our demo disc

I Wish I Had an Extra Thousand Bucks Lying Around

I have an AMD-K6a 350MHz PC with 128MB of SDRAM, 20GB of hard drive space, a crappy ATI Rage 2 video card, some generic sound card, a 52x CD-ROM (obviously, I have upgraded it to the max), and about a thousand bucks. First, I would like to know if my computer is okay. I find that I am often depressed when reading the advertisements for the newer computers out there. Should I get a new one right away? Second, if I sell my current computer, how much do you think I should sell it for? Last, if I pool that amount with my thousand bucks, what kind of a system could I get? —Lucan McRandal

For your depression, try Xanax. As for your computer being "okay" that depends on what you want to do with it. Getting a new graphics card (GeForce3) and an additional 128MB of SDRAM would certainly speed things up. But with a thousand bucks to spend, I would completely overhaul the whole shebang. For a thousand bucks you could buy an ASUS A7M266 motherboard, a 1.4GHz Athlon, 256MB of DDR RAM, a GeForce3 card, and any power supply and fans you'll need.

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AD INDEX

Activision	Super Street Car	4-8
Ajmanwee	Ajmanwee Scenario	128-128
Amazon.com	Amazon.com-Line Listing of Top Games	46
ATI Technologies Inc.	RAGEON™ 5500	129-131
Best Buy	Best Buy	41
Bestware Software	Montezuma	106-108
Bestware Software	Age of Sol	94
CDV Software Entertainment	Mystery of the Druids	27
Cosmoses Inc.	Operation Flashpoint	74-75
Creative Labs Inc.	Saved Hunter Andry X-Serier	118
Dell Computer Corporation	Dimension 4 and Inspire Systems	25-28
Dinary Interactive	Ultimate Rice	20-21
Electronic Arts	SimCity	2-3
Electronic Arts	Sim 3 Hot Date	32-33, 72-73
Electronic Arts	Red Alert 2	114-115
FishTank Interactive	AgeMax	14
FishTank Interactive	Edwards	75
FishTank Interactive	Sphinx	88
FishTank Interactive	Car Tecon	101
Full Sail Real World Education	Degree Point	197
GameSpot	GameSpot	153
HeroLogic	HeroLogic	125
Infogrames	Microsphy Tzoon	44-45
Infogrames	Civilization III	50-51
JetWood Productions	Warrior War III	68-69
JetWood Productions	Genius - The Legacy of the Dragon	83
Kingston Technology	Memory	123
LuceArts Entertainment Company	Star Wars Selects Backgrounds	28-31
Memorex	Accessories	69
Microsoft Corporation	MeshWorler IV Expansion Pack	47
Microsoft Corporation	Asheron's Call	10-11
Microsoft Corporation	Zoo Tecon	39
Microsoft Corporation	Mesh Commander 2	63
Microsoft CO	Mail Order	132
Mega Industries - Welpa.com	HDTV Digital Audio PC systems	130
Mythic Entertainment	Dark Age of Camelot	50-51
Nevologic Inc.	Cosmosmala	12
Sony Online Entertainment	Expansion Pack	96
Strategy First	Kahn	77
Take 2 Interactive	Starbustle	113
THQ	Red Faction	105-106
Thrustmaster	PC Gaming Accessories	67
UtI Soft Entertainment	Ghost Recon	23-1
UtI Soft Entertainment	Rogue Spear: Black Thorn	87-8
UtI Soft Entertainment	Conquest	95
UtI Soft Entertainment	Civilian Zone	110-111
UtI Soft Entertainment	Pool of Reflection	29-29
Waveset Universal - Sierra On-Line	SWATS GOVY	42, 43
Waveset Universal - Sierra On-Line	Throne of Darkness	55, 57, 59
Waveset Universal - Sierra On-Line	Expire Earth	8-8
Waveset Universal - Sierra On-Line	Alexis v. Predator 2	103, 104, 107
Waveset Studios	Ringside	81-85
Xicat	Take2	118
Xicat	F-15 Karen	117

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GAMER'S EDGE

Max Payne

Cheat, direct, and see the sites in Max Payne's world **By Tom Price**

To activate cheat codes in Max Payne, you have to make the console available. Do that by adding "-developer" [make sure you leave a space before the dash!] to the end of the command line that you see when you right-click on the Max Payne icon on your desktop and choose Properties. When you're in the game, hit F12 to bring up the console. Here's a list of available commands for you to enter and what they do:

CODE	RESULT
codr	God Mode, All Weapons, Unlimited Ammo, etc.
god	God Mode
mortal	God Mode Off
getallweapons	All Weapons
getbullettime	Fill Up When Bullet-Time Out
getinfiniteammo	Unlimited Ammo
getpainkillers	Get 8 PainKillers
noclip	No Clipping Mode
noclip_off	No Clipping Mode Off
showfps	Show Frame Rate
c_addhealth (100)	Add 100 to Health
jump10	Jump Higher (set to 20 or 30 for even higher)

You can also skip to any level you want by typing the following into the console:

maxpayne_gamemode->gm_ini(levelname).

Level names are as follows:

part0_level1	part2_level0	part3_level3
part1_level1	part2_level1	part3_level4
part1_level1b	part2_level2	part3_level5
part1_level2	part2_level2b	part3_level5b
part1_level2b	part2_level3	part3_level6
part1_level3	part2_level4	part3_level7
part1_level3b		
part1_level4	part3_level1	end_combat
part1_level5	part3_level2	{secret finale}
part1_level6	part3_level2b	

Another cool trick you can do with Max Payne gives you complete control of the camera. Type "-developerkeys" instead of typing "-developer" on the command line. Once in the game, pause the action with "p" and then hit "c" to take control of the camera. Use the mouse and arrow keys to zoom around the action.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Anarchy Online Maps!.....	134
Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal...	142
Anachronox	148
MechCommander 2.....	150
Dirty Tricks and Tips	152

Anarchy Online

Getting up and running in Rubi-Ka

by Thierry "Sneakyscooty" Nguyen, level 12 Opifex Agent

Why is it that these MMORPG manuals are useful only as emergency confetti? Even with the best of intentions, *ANARCHY ONLINE's* manual and tutorial don't tell you enough about the game mechanics for you to do well. I've asked the AD-playing wunderkinds of *CGW* for tips on subjects ranging from how the hell a starting player can make sense of AD to higher-level tactics. The majority of this guide is slanted toward guiding the newbie player into the gameworld, but there are some tips for players from levels 20 to 40 as well.

Who Am I?

First things first: You ought to figure out what your goals are. Much like *EVERQUEST*, the professions in AD can be broken down into their ability to either be a "tank" (offensive damage-soakers) or a "caster" (supports the party via nanoprograms and the like) and by how effective each profession is when it comes to soloing and grouping. While each can theoretically work well either soloing or grouping, there is still an underlying design that dictates which professions excel at other activity. But because there are so many professions to choose from, you can just go all out and experiment—go ahead, it's not really that hard. The game is flexible enough that you can still have fun with some of the "odder"

breed and profession combinations (Atrax Fixers, Nanotech Enforcers). If you wanna quickly use a character to learn the game mechanics, and then perhaps focus on some more specialized later on, you can't get much more newbie-friendly than an Adventurer, who is both a decent healer and damage inflicter. Another straightforward class that is good for newbies is the Soldier, simply because all you really need to do is pick up a gun and start shooting things.

Life of the Party

If you know you want to be self-sufficient, you can't go wrong with being an Adventurer, Enforcer, Fixer, or Martial Artist. Each of these classes is good for soloing, either because they deal decent damage on their own or can help themselves in a pinch. Enforcers and Martial Artists are pure melee damage dealers and so rely on brute firepower to tear through enemies (though the Martial Artist has some healing skills, while the Enforcer relies on healing stimpacks in the shops). Adventurers, as cited earlier, are good at both healing and killing, and Fixers are good in that they, like Soldiers, can shoot things at range, and when the going gets too tough, they can escape to the Grid (I'll explain later). Because those professions are the best at soloing, the rest of the professions are better suited for grouping. If there is any single

class that is in demand the most, it's the Doctor. There are plenty of people who know how to kill things fast and far away, whether with guns or nanoprograms or servants. What's needed, though, are people who can just plain heal everyone. Adventurers can also fulfill the healer role in any party, but nothing beats a pure Doctor for getting that needed HP boost. Be warned that the Doctor doesn't solo very well, but then again, you'll never be alone, as other gamers will heartily welcome your company.

Start It Up!

Character creation itself is painless and self-explanatory. Note that you'll have to consider which side you choose to start as. At press time, the planned four-year story line hasn't started yet, so I can't comment on how the side you choose will affect the story. Also regarding sides, Omni-Tek employees all start out with a few pieces of basic armor (including the Omni-Tek shirt), and Neutrals are prohibited from using either side's specific shops and they lose faction-specific bonuses.

After picking your side, you'll be dropped into the Training Grounds within your starting city. Starting cities for Rebels are Tir and Athen, for Neutrals they're Newland and Borealis, and for Omni-Tek they're Rome or Omni-1. These Training Grounds are small areas with a guard, a guide, a reclaim terminal, a rudimentary shop, and a portal, surrounded by a larger area with "wildlife." By the way, for the purpose of finding buddies, the game randomly assigns you a Training Ground.

Before you go out to hit those leets, take the time to get used to the interface and your stuff. One piece of advice is to have your panels always present on the right side of the screen. On the bottom of your screen, right next to your money count (indicated by the word "CRED") on the left, there should be a button that shows an arrow pointing left with a vertical line next to it. Click on that, and your view area will shift over and there will be a vertical space alongside the right part of the screen. By shifting your view area, all of your interface panels stay there, and you can even use the mouse wheel to scroll up and down them. The small sacrifice in viewing space is compensated for in the handy ability to simply scroll through all of the panels, rather than click on the buttons to open them first. I tend to keep the Wear, Map, Stats, and Friends panels up at all times. See Fig. 1.

Open your inventory by either pressing the "I" key or clicking on INV at the bottom of your screen. Then click on the first icon in

Newland City





Fig. 1

the upper right (it looks like a little man, and it's right next to the fist) to display your equipment panel. The panel is divided into three tabs: combat items, clothing/armor, and implants. Inventory defaults to combat items when you first open it. Just click on



your weapon, and then click anywhere within the panel; the game will automatically place it in the appropriate slot. Omni-Tek employees can drop their shirt in the same way. See Fig. 2.



You should also have something resembling a glowstick in your inventory; shift-left-click on it and you'll see that it's a nanoprogram. In general, left-clicking targets things, right-clicking uses things, and shift-left-clicking pulls up a helpful information window about the thing. Now, after you shift-left-click the nanoprogram, scroll down in the resulting window, and you should see that it has certain skill requirements.

Fig. 2

Mad Skills

Skills in *AO* work like this: You spend Increase Points (IP) to develop them, but they all rely on your base abilities. That means you can only raise a skill so high before you no longer have the required abilities to use it. However, increasing your base abilities automatically enhances your current skills. Bottom line: Increase your base abilities first and then your skills.

Click on the button marked SKL at the bottom to open up the Skill Tree. Various buttons take

you to the different skill groups, and skills themselves are differentiated by color. Green are the least expensive to raise, while dark blue ones cost the most. Green skills are what your class excels at, so pump IPs into those first and divvy up the rest of your points as you see fit.

A few skills that we found very useful for any class are: Nano Resist (lups your resistance to enemy-activated nanoprograms), Run Speed (to get places faster before you use a car or The Grid, and for running away), both First Aid and Treatment (to use healing equipment), Computer Literacy (to gain Grid access), and any skills involving initiative (whether melee or ranged, so that you can get the first shot in). And don't fret too much about not having enough points early on because you'll periodically get a whole lot more than the traditional 4000 IPs per level, which will allow you to play catch-up with some skills.

So put points into your green abilities, green skills, and then the skills required by your starting nanoprogram. After you click on "Accept," right-click on the nanoprogram to upload it into your memory.

Omni-1 Trade District





Fig. 3

Okay, you got your weapon equipped and your program uploaded, but there's one last thing you should do before going out and fighting things. Customize your shortcut bar. See Fig. 3.

Barkeep!

There should be a horizontal bar in the upper-left part of your screen. There are ten slots in this Action Bar, and it should be your main interface for commands because you can place anything from action buttons to items to macros there.

First, open the Commands panel (click on the fist icon next to the Wear panel icon), and you'll see a variety of buttons corresponding to things like "Sit," "Stealth," or any special attacks your weapons might have. Left-click on a button and then left-click again on the Action Bar to add the button, be sure to open the Nanoprograms

panel (the microchip icon, second from the far right), and put your starting nanoprogram into your Action Bar as well. Then put healing items on the bar.

Note that the Action Bar has a little number on it; clicking on the arrows near the number cycles through different Action Bars. I found myself putting general combat-related commands on the default bar (sitting down for resting, my special attacks, and healing items) and my "downtime" commands in another bar ("buffing" nanoprograms, treatment kits, and so on). While you're at it, target yourself by pressing F1, and then right-click on the nanoprogram you placed in your Action Bar (unless the nanoprogram is an offensive one and not a standard character buff—no need to start hurting yourself).

Finally, before emerging into the wild blue yonder, open the Stats panel—far right, with the bar graphs, next to the nanoprograms button—and look for a green and red bar with the words "DEF" and "AGG" on either end. There should be a marker in the middle; slide the marker all the way to the AGG side. Later on, you might want to fiddle with this slider, but for now, it's simply better to be as aggressive as possible in the newbie area. It's often more efficient to deal damage faster and kill enemies than to stay defensive and run away. See Fig. 4.

Omni Forest

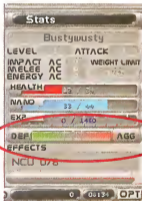


Fig. 4

Fight With Might

All prepped up, you can now waltz out of the camp and into the general combat area. Target enemies by pressing the Tab key, and look at the names and the colored bar that shows up (both near the top of the screen and above the critter's head). The bar is your basic "con" from EQ—it's a quick indicator of how tough the enemy is. Bright yellow means the monster is an equal footing with you. Orange means the monster is a bit tougher, while

Lush Fields



Legend

- = Zone Line
- = Cement Road
- = Dirt Road
- F** = Ferry
Use Transport Access Terminal To Activate
- O** = Machine or Point of Interest

Lush Hills Resort



Harry's



Omni Outpost



Omni Port



Fig. 5

red means that it will likely kill you. Green means it's weaker than you, but you'll still get experience points (XP), and gray means that you'll get a whopping 1XP for killing it. The color bar is a general indicator, but press 'T' for a more detailed comparison of the monster and you. You'll get a box called POD with a line and a circle in it. POD stands for "Possibility of Death," and the position of the circle on the line indicates the enemy's level; exact center means it's equal to you, to the left means it's weaker, and to the right means it's stronger. So, unless you have a full party, you probably shouldn't fight something that goes red and has its POD rating all the way to the right. See Fig. 5.

By default, "Q" is your initiate-attack command, which is what you'll want to be using most of the time for now, although it initiates only basic combat. Special attacks such as Fling Shots or Bursts need to be activated by their own command button, which you should have placed on your Action Bar earlier. As in EQ, combat is auto-attack based, so all you have to do is wait for it to resolve or use your special attacks when they become available. See Fig. 6. Afterward, you just need to right-click on the monster's corpse to loot it. If there are items on it, left-click on them to automatically add them to your inventory. If you need to heal yourself, sit down first ("X" by default), target



Fig. 6

Old Athens



yourself, and right-click on the treatment kit (it looks like a first aid kit) to get a big HP boost, save the heal stim for when you're actively fighting something, as the treatment kit can be used only when you're sitting down and not in combat.

Keep fighting and looting until you get to level 4, the minimum requirement for leaving the Training Grounds.

The last thing you need to learn before you leave is how to work a mission.

Missionary Style

When you walk through the portal near the Guide, you'll pop into a second part of the Training Grounds. Here, you'll see an Insurance Terminal, a Mission Terminal, a Bank, a Surgical Clinic (do not right-click on it by accident, as it costs 300 credits and is used only for inserting implants), and the exit to the city proper. You'll need either 1,000 credits or to be at level 4 before you can enter the city. So before going out, go right to the Mission Terminal. Right-click on it. For now just hit "generate mission," shift-click on the resulting mission to learn about it, and hit "accept" after you've read the description.

After accepting the mission, you need to open the Mission panel (the M icon, fourth

from the left). Put your cursor over the mission icon, and hold down the right mouse button; three new buttons should pop up. Highlight the one that looks like an X on a grid and that will upload the mission coordinates to your map (which should already be open). Now, just find the particular mission building, and go on in.

Later on, you can customize mission settings and choose from a pool of different mission types. The difficulty slider adjusts the levels of the enemies and the loot acquired. Straight in the middle means enemies tend to be equal to you, and the loot is around your level. Sliding the bar between Easy and the default gives you enemies that are about three levels below you. Consequently, sliding the bar to Hard gives you enemies that are around orange, but the loot is damn good. The missions themselves are pretty straightforward, and the only thing to note is that missions that require you to retrieve an item also want you to return said item back to the Mission Terminal you got the mission from.

Only then will you get your reward. The other mission types automatically give you the reward whenever you complete your objectives. Finally, you might want to think about doing missions that ask you simply to find an item, in those missions, you get both the item you find and the mission reward. See Fig. 7.

Ultimate Team-Up

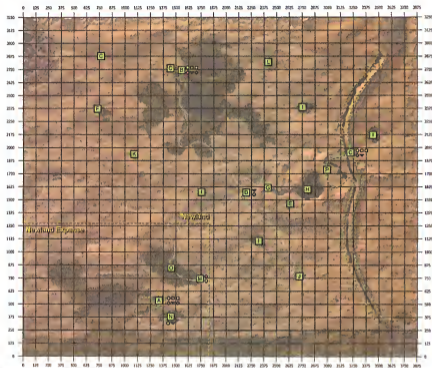
Before sending you off to explore the world on your own, we should get into what is arguably the heart of AD: killing things with other people. Aspects like team communication and Friends lists initially feel quirky to work with, but after you get used to them, you'll appreciate how streamlined they are.

For one thing, the process of adding someone to your Friends list is different than the typical "friend (name) process. You'll need to have received a /tell from your friend earlier. If you open up your Friends panel (the icon with the exclamation point, third from the right), you'll see three sections with a slew of names. The bottom section, indicated by a question mark,



Fig. 7

Newland Playfield



LEGEND

● Reclaim Booth	W Mort	A Newland City	H Rhinomen Scout Camp	I Orsis	L Save Area
● Cell Scanner	S Varnish Woods	B Meelredere	J Rhinomen Camp	J Toxic Lake	M Trading Outpost
● Mission Terminal	E Plains of Salt	C Clan Military Com Station	K Rhinomen Valley	K Guarded Fortress	N Green Valley
● Bank	W Aegean/Water Shore	D Stoltz Trading Outpost	L Rhinomen Village	L Spaceship Wreck	O OT Spawn point
● Shop/Vendor	--- Zone				
● Grid Access	--- 25% Gas (PVP)				

is filled with "potentials." Anyone you've had /tell conversations with will be put here; the icons next to the name in this list indicate whether that person is online. What you need to do here is highlight the name of your friend and hold down the right mouse button again. Click on the Accept button that pops up. The middle section, with the disconnected plugs, is a list of your friends who aren't online. Any of your buddies who is will be moved to the top section, indicated by the connected plug.

To learn up with someone for a party, you'll first target the person and open the Team panel (the three heads icon, right in the middle between the map and the mission icons). There, you'll see the option to invite

the person selected; if someone's recruiting you, that same panel displays the option to accept or decline the invitation. When you're in a team, group-talking is a matter of opening the Friends panel again. Look at the bottom of the Friends panel and you should see two options: Vicinity and Team. Whichever one is in red is what the chat function defaults to. So, if you don't want to type "/group" every time you want to say something to the team as a whole, you just click on Team to make it the default output channel. That way, you can type in whatever you have to say, and only your fellow teammates will see it. See Fig. 8.

Another team consideration is sticking together. Target someone on your team (usually the guy who knows where he's going) and type "/follow." You'll automatically follow whatever you've targeted. Only a movement key will break you out of following mode, so you can still

do stuff like chat around, fiddle with your inventory, or even move your camera. Also, use /follow on a targeted enemy to make a beeline toward it, or if your team is in the same map but you've managed to get lost, click on a team member's name in the Team panel and then /follow to find your way again.



Fig. 8

Also, it's a set convention that the team leader should type "/team list alpha" in order to set looting to alphabetical order so everyone gets a fair chance at the whole pie. Then again, you could make for a massive



Fig. 9

looting free-for-all by typing in "/team list all" to let anyone who touches the body first be the looter.

Finally, the universal /loc command returns. Typing that in spits out a set of coordinates, which is useful for finding people. What's also worth remembering is that by default F9 is mapped to the coordinates command, so just slap F9 the next time someone asks for your /loc.

The last few commands are good examples of how to create and use macros. Macros are basically hot-button versions of commands. Just type in "/macro [macroname] [command]" and you'll create a button to be placed on your Action Bar. Clicking on the button automatically performs whatever action you assigned to the macro. So, if you type in "/macro Follow /follow" you'll get a button called "Follow" and clicking on the button follows your target, so you don't have to type it in every time. Check out sites that list the commands, and learn to make your own macros. See Fig. 9.

Alright, that should be enough to get you up and running and knowing what the heck to do out there. Keep this article around—we have a few more tips for when you get up into the 20s and beyond. Now, have fun zipping around Rubi-Ka, and watch out for those cannons at Clendyke.

ONE LAST RECOMMENDATION

Go to AD Basher (www.ad-basher.com), which is the best fan site around for AD. You'll find a massive, massive database on anything and everything related to AD, from skill charts to announcements to breakdowns to message boards for specific professions. They also have the best maps online, usually annotated with detailed legends specifying stores, monster camps, and what-have-you. To help you get a running start, we got six of these maps right here, if you like what you see, check out the rest of the site for yourself. ●●● Thanks go to John "SoLo" Sussek for the maps of Omni-Forest, Lush Fields, and Omni-Trade, and to Yannick "Zao" Girouard for the maps of Old Alben, Newland, and Newland City. They (and the rest of the AD Basher staff) are good people.

Mid-Level Strategies

by Andrew "Mandrew" Burwell,
level 41 Nanotech Nanomage

As you start getting into the teen levels, you'll find it more and more difficult to make money, rise in level, and get better items unless you start adventuring some. Here are some tips on how you can achieve those goals.



GRID: Have you ever seen those grid terminals and wondered what they were? The Grid is a godsend in the world of MMORPGs, allowing travel to all parts of the AD universe in just seconds. So how in the heck do you use it? The Grid requires a minimum of 100 points into your Computer Literacy, or Comp Lit, skill. At about level 15, start pumping points into it. You can get to 100 points quicker by purchasing a Comp Lit buff spell at the general store (in the Nano section). Having Grid access will open up a whole new world for you. You'll finally get to venture out of that darn area you've been in since level 4. You can now do missions with giant XP or credit rewards. But be prepared for what you'll find in those other areas—make one wrong turn and you can end up in enemy territory or areas with monsters that will take you out with one hit. There is a sort of safety net: Some areas will require 150 to 200 in Comp Lit to allow you to grid to them.

HUNTING GROUNDS: So you've hit level 20, and you have to start venturing out farther and farther to get to mobs that'll give you XP. Below you'll find some of the best hunting grounds for levels 20 to 45. These hunting grounds are not for the weak, so make sure you're in a group and you have a good healer with you.

LEVELS 20-30:

- Devil Forest Expanse (1544x515)
- Mutants and Bloodcreepers

LEVELS 30-35:

- Devil Forest Expanse—Mystic Swamp Circle (216x2395)
- Brellball Dippers

LEVELS 35-40:

- Lush Hills (1712x976)
- Mutants

LEVELS 40-45:

- Galaway—Poole (3426x1573)
- Manteze

CARS: If you're not a class with Grid access or a speed buff, you'll want to get a car. Traveling the expanse of Rubi-Ka can be frustrating at times—like when you get yourself a mission that's light years away with your current run speed, or you have to cross areas so dangerous that you could be killed with one swipe of a monster's arm. A car, and only a car, can get you past these seemingly impassable perils. Pumping a few IPs into your ground vehicle stat and purchasing a low-level car (around 30) will instantly double your run speed. You'll be able to fly right past the fastest critters and traverse vast distances in little time. Mission experience and credits will start flying in as you travel to the farthest reaches of the land. It's also a fantastic getaway device when you're grouping against creatures in any levels above you.

MAP UPGRADES: Upgrading your map might seem useless at first, but once you have the upgrades you'll see why they're so difficult to live without. Not all map upgrades are useful, but here's what you should go for if you have the extra cash: The Monsters upgrade will be really helpful for grouping, as you will be the first to detect enemy mobs. When you start fighting the Manteze you'll thank your lucky stars that you can see all 20 of them before you venture into their area. It's also great for mission runs into dangerous areas. The ability to detect the enemy mobs will help tremendously in avoiding them.

The second upgrade to consider purchasing would be the People upgrade. While not as useful as the Monsters upgrade, the People upgrade allows you to see anyone within the range of your map. It also highlights your group members—this is really handy when grouping if you lose sight of your team. Instead of running around in circles until they come into range, look on your map and head to the nearest fellow.

You can also purchase the Machine locator or Directional Arrow. They grow less useful as you become familiar with different areas, but are handy at the beginning. If you're throwing points into your map reading skills to purchase maps for different areas, and you have some extra credits, you might as well spring for the upgrade. Once you get really high level, and you start to enter the Clan and Omni-Tek areas, you'll want to purchase the Side map upgrade so you can see which alliances people have. This is especially useful for PKers.

EASTER EGG

GAME: **Blizzard Mania**

In the spirit of this month's feature story, here's a run of Easter eggs for many of Blizzard's past games. The early **WARCRAFT** games mainly had the Easter egg everyone knows about—you just clicked on any unit multiple times to hear goofy sayings.

WARCRAFT II's expansion, **THROUGH THE DARK PORTAL**, started the whole Blizzard habit of hiding songs in the games. To get the secret song, you just have to press Enter to get the text box, and type in "disco." Pressing Enter again triggers the secret disco song.

STARCRASH continues this tradition with the key phrase being "Radio Free Zerg." Rather than disco, this one is steeped in techno. Also, if you wait long enough in the first

Terran mission, a recipe for Lemon Chicken should pop up.

The **DIABLO** games have had weirder Easter eggs. One involves hidden text in the splash screens. The Auronun menu for **DIABLO** has words hidden in the horns. You first need to capture the screen (hit Print Scrn near the top of your keyboard), paste the screen into an image editor, and start filling the area around **DIABLO**'s head/horns. You should uncover messages advising you to buy the **WARCRAFT** games.

DIABLO II went all-out by having an entire secret level. Everyone just made up the story about the Cow Level in **DIABLO**, with outrageous requirements like clicking on a cow a thousand times and then fighting **DIABLO**, but Blizzard went so far as to put a Secret Cow Level in **DIABLO II**.

To access it, you need to have finished the game at least once (kill either **Diablo** or **Baal**), depending on whether you're playing the original game or the expansion, then go back to Act One on the same difficulty level. Put Wirt's Leg and a scroll of Town Portal in the Horadric Cube, and execute the recipe while standing in the Rogue Encampment. **Sada-bing**, now fight some cows and take on the Cow King too.

Oh yeah, click on all four corners of the screen in **DIABLO II**'s opening menu and then type, one at a time and in this order (but without the commas): t, h, r, s, i, s, j, u, s, t, a, b, a, d, j, o, c, k, e. This will unlock the hidden build of **WARCRAFT III**. And if you click on the dancing orc in **WARCRAFT III**, you'll further unlock a secret version of **World Of Warcraft**.

Max Payne

In Act 3: Level 4 (the garage), there is an Easter egg featuring members of **Max Payne**'s production team and some other surprises. After the opening cut-scene ends, take out the four guys that the car has dropped off. Before entering the garage on the right, face the garage and look just to the right of the opening. There are three barrels (two of them are stacked up) and an A/C unit coming out of the wall. Jump from one to another to reach the garage roof. You'll now be facing a little shack on the roof, with a door-shaped section painted slightly lighter than the rest; shoot this with any weapon and it will fall away, leading to a room with a small grate in the floor. Stand on the grate, and you will fall into a room with a dead hostage, a sniper rifle and ammo, and a radio that plays a conversation between members of the production team with a bit of humor at the end.

In the rooftop chase sequence, you can get to a room that has a poster of **Solaris Dr. Fokusnik II** and some other useful goodies.

In Chapter 3 when you start on the roof of the military car park, you can jump on the barrels and then onto the roof near the exit ramp. Shoot the peculiar-looking metal wall and it will collapse. Then go through the opening and drop through a nearby vent in the floor, and you'll end up in a small room. You'll find a sniper rifle and some ammo and a radio. "Use" the radio for some laughs.

When you walk in on the bank robbery, you can shoot the wailing siren to stop it. Do this and Max will thank you.

When you find the piano on the manor



level, if you "use" it Max will play the title theme. Shoot the lid support out to drop the lid and then try playing the piano again.

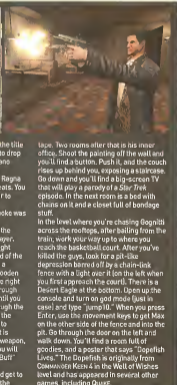
When you find the drum kit in the **Ragna Rock Bar**, "use" it to play some beats. You can also get the guitar on the floor to squeal, and if you use the stage microphones, Max will say: "Karaoke was never my thing."

In Chapter 1, Level 3 you can find the handiwork of **Bully the Vampire Slayer**. From **Muerte's Room**, 313, turn right when you exit the room. At the end of the hallway, turn left and you will see a bathroom on the left side and a wooden door that is partially broken on the right side. Using any weapon, break through the wood. Go through the room until you get to the broken window. Go through the window onto the ledge and follow the blood on the ledge. You will come to another boarded-up doorway that is partially broken. Again using any weapon, break through. Inside the room you will find a body with a stake in it and "Butt" written on the floor.

After you leave the inner circle and get to the main guy's office, you pick up the

tape. Two rooms after that is his inner office. Shoot the painting off the wall and you'll find a button. Push it, and the couch rises up behind you, exposing a staircase. Go down and you'll find a big-screen TV that will play a parody of a **Star Trek** episode. In the next room is a bed with chains on it and a closet full of bondage stuff.

In the level where you're chasing **Gognitti** across the rooftops, after bailing from the train, work your way up to where you reach the basketball court. After you've killed the guys, look for a pit-like depression buried off by a chain-link fence with a light over it (on the left when you first approach the court). There is a **Desert Eagle** at the bottom. Open up the console and turn on god mode (just in case) and type "jump10." When you press Enter, use the movement keys to get Max on the other side of the fence and into the pit. Go through the door on the left and walk down. You'll find a room full of goodies, and a poster that says "Doppelfish Lives." The **Doppelfish** is originally from **COMMANDER KEEN 4** in the **Welt of Wishes** level and has appeared in several other games, including **QUAKE**.



PART II

Baldur's Gate II: Throne Of Bhaal

Conquer the Watcher's Keep by Thierry Nguyen

There's one thing you can immediately take away from Bioware's statement, "THrone Of Bhaal contains our best dungeon ever": It's going to be damn hard. Durlag's Tower, the last massive expansion dungeon they did, was a trap-filled monstrosity, and the closest BGI had to a sprawling dungeon was the Asylum. With Watcher's Keep, Bioware pulls out

all the stops on riddles, puzzles, and ridiculously powerful enemies. Last month, you got some help from Bioware on the overall expansion. This time we're giving you maps of the whole place, along with write-ups on what to expect and how to get through particular challenges within Watcher's Keep. Special thanks go to Bioware for providing

the maps and to Desslock for his GameGuide, which served as a valuable resource when we were researching this piece. If you want to know absolutely everything there is to know about both Watcher's Keep and the rest of THrone Of Bhaal, you should check out his guide at http://gamespot.com/gamespot/guides/bg2_expansion/index.html.

Quest is initiated here; this is where the "shop" will be, and anytime you need to talk to the Knights of Helm, go back here. This is also the entrance to Watcher's Keep.

Direct exit from Level Two: Elemental Laboratory Level

Direct exit from Level Three: Teleportation Maze

Direct exit from Level Five: The Final Seal

Direct exit from Level Four: The Machine of Lum The Mad

Direct exit from The Imprisoned One

Go here to travel to the top of the Keep automatically

This is where you start.



Archivist Level

The beginning level of Watcher's Keep is pretty straightforward. You just need to find some items, give them to the right people, and perform a ritual to open the next part of the dungeon. There are several undead and spiders here, so use your cleric's Turn Undead to take care of the undead, and everyone else can beat on the spiders. Trojls roam about as well, so expect to use flame or acid-based spells/equipment.

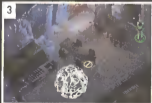
2



This is where you'll find the tinderbox and the slippers, two key items that will help you obtain the rest of the ritual items.



This is where you'll find the bed for the ritual. It's also a nice place to take a breather, since there isn't anything here to initially attack you.



Use the tinderbox at the kitchen hearth right here, and you'll help the Archivist spirit out, and he'll tell you how to appease the Priest spirit. The candle is in this room as well.



Bring the slippers here, and the Priest will allow you to obtain the ritual text in the sarcophagus. It also helps to have picked up the wardstones scattered around this level, as they will prevent the two golems from attacking you.



This is where you will perform the ritual. Drop the bell and the candle in, and you'll get hit by the first statue wave. Don't worry, it's only a mage and a druid. But get ready, because after you complete the ritual, the rest of the statues come alive. We're talking a mage, an archer, and several melee fighters with good weapons (Foebane, a +3 bastard sword and Usanan's Blade, a +4 ninja-to are used here). The ritual itself goes: Ring the bell, ring it again, light the candle, open and read the book, and then ring the bell one last time.

Elemental Laboratory

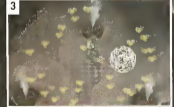
This is also a straightforward level, if you follow everyone's advice. First, you pretty much have to make a deal with the Chromatic Demon in order to progress at all. Then, when you enter the Fire

Mage's study, you'll run into an imp who will give you further guidance. Basically, you'll start from the Fire Mage's study and go clockwise, following the directions found in each mage's study and grabbing elemental

scepters from each lab. The notes that you'll be following detail both how to progress past the labs of the other mages and how to react to the fight you'll be having before you can go down any further.



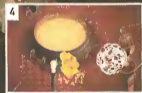
There won't be any enemies in the Air Laboratory... initially. Turning the fan on will trigger Lesser and Greater Air Elementals, in addition to the Guardian Of Air. Just beat on them with your physical weapons, and the Guardian will give up his scepter.



Before going here, manipulate the doors as described in the Poison Mage's notes. Once the proper doors are open, the gas from the Poison Laboratory will waft into the Ice Laboratory. Stay outside of the Ice Laboratory; not only is there poison, but the cold will slow your characters down. Lure the poisoned ice critters out of the lab and quickly dispatch them. The Ice Belem is the scepter-carrier here.



Poison Lab. With both doors open, go back to the Air Laboratory, turn the fan on full blast, and then go into the Poison Lab. Now that the poison gas is gone, you can kill the Slimes and the Snake (which has the scepter).



All-right, last lab, and the most time consuming. Have someone faster than usual (Boots of Speed or Hasted) run into the lab. There's a Fire Giant, and typically two Greater Fire Elementals in the lab; ignore the big guy, and have the two flaming idiots follow you into the Ice Laboratory—they will die instantly. After four of these fools have been dispatched, then you can go in, wait on the Fire Giant himself, and grab the last scepter from his corpse. Get ready for the fight ahead, and remember all the hints that the mages left behind.

The Teleportation Maze

There's no traditional map here, because this is the funkiest part of the whole dungeon. Rather than plot out a landscape, you teleport from room to room, and each has its own minimap. A larger map would be useless, because it all depends on which portal you take. The thing to do here is translate the directions in the Madman's Journal and use those to "correctly" navigate the maze.



Asgareth: "Fardon my atrocious misdeeds. I sometimes forget that you Priests are of some use in Asgareth, and these are my servants and pets."

- 1- And just what manner of creature are you.
- 2- My name is Scedleris. Abhh... pleased to meet you, too.
- 3- You are a demon, fool, and you'll die as every other demon here and

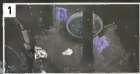
Scedleris: has gained 10000 quest experience points.
Mitar: has gained 10000 quest experience points.
SIP Assimet: has gained 10000 quest experience points.
Jehatra: has gained 10000 quest experience points.
Vifile: has gained 10000 quest experience points.
Sipato: has gained 10000 quest experience points.

1. Sure, talk to the Madman, pilfer his journal (watch out for the trap in his tent), and be on your merry way. If you're a giddy two-shoes, you can use one of your clerics to cast Heal on him to help him recover from his yak-induced madness. Collect the scepter, and start your search for the three jewels. 2. Slightly easier to deal with, but still no slouch, is Tahazzar and his posse of cornugon, imps, an erinyes, and a vellichuu. If you decided to kill the first group, you can present the demon's heart to this guy, and not only do you get your required jewel, you also get the Thieve's Hood, which can be enhanced by Cespener later on. 3. There are two groups of demons, and you'll run into the one first (led by Ka'rashuri). You can either fight them (hard to do, since there's glabrezu and a succubus thrown in for good measure) or bargain to kill the second group of demons, come back, and give Ka'rashuri Tahazzar's heart for safe passage. But if you're a paladin, these guys are "more evil," so you have to vanquish them rather than bargain with them. Not only do you have to get the leader's heart, you also have to get the jewel he has on him. 4. Now, you can either play Asgareth's game involving the Deck Of Many Things to get the last scepter jewel, or you can simply beat it out of him and his tieling pats (and get the Deck for yourself).

The Machine of Lum The Mad

Golly, there's a lot to do in Lum The Mad's level. Be wary of the chests in this level, as quite a few of them are actually Killer Mimics. You'll want to grab all the materials needed to light the torches in the northwest, which then allows you access to the Crystal Hammer, with which you can free Carston and move onto the final seal.

2 Go through this door



On your way to this room, you'll run into a bunch of shadows and spiders. Hava clerics blast the shadows, and beat up the spiders like any other enemy. Over in the pool is the Blue Oil, but it's guarded by Magical Golems. If you don't have normal weapons on hand, get some by raiding the chests scattered around.



Getting the Red Oil is a bit easier. You'll go north of the Machine and into an ilithid camp to fight them and a bunch of umber hulks. Be sure to use Chaotic Command to protect the minds of your party from ilithid possession. Move westward to an isolated room, where half of the ilithid red is in a chest. Continue south, and you'll fight some ulitharid, a tougher ilithid, to get the second half of the ilithid red. Now, you can use the assembled key to open the last remaining door (to the west), and take on these two vampiric ilithid (so add a Negative Plane Protection on top of Chaotic Command before fighting them). The Red Oil is in the vat shown. Now, head over to Githyanki Camp.

3

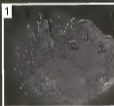
Once you have all three oils and the flint box, go here and light the six torches to open the door and grab the Crystal Hammer. What's the pattern of the torches you ask? Look for two sets of three colors somewhere in the main portion of the level. If you're too antsy to look

for it yourself, it goes: left side, from top to bottom, is red, red, and purple. The right side is blue, purple, and red. Pest the doors are two buff minotaurs who're damn good at using their melee weapons, so get ready to hit them from a distance or stand toe-to-toe with them.

The Final Seal

This is it, the last step before meeting the Imprisoned One. Expect a couple of puzzles and combat that starts off mild but quickly ramps up to present you with some of the toughest monsters in the entire game.

1 Go through these doors



This is perhaps the easiest of the three Helmite Ghost tests, but it's the most annoying. All you have to do is kill a horde of respawning orcs, until the Spirit daems you worthy. Position your fighters near respawn points, use skills such as Deathblow and Greater Deathblow, and have mages ready to neutralize respawning orc mages as they pop on in.

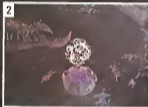
Although you have to defeat this dragon for another part of the Helmite Ghost's test, it's one of the easier dragons to beat. Just hit it with Breach, Pierce Magic, and Lower Resistance, toss in a few summoned creatures, and wall on it. For the Imp test behind the other door, the answers are "7" and you play the game in this order: 2, 3, 1.

The Machine of Lum The Mad: Githyanki Camp

This little offshoot isn't that hard actually and is noteworthy mainly for being a bridge between two moderately powerful enemies: Saladrex the red dragon and a Demilich. The Demilich's loot is mainly a bunch of gold and the Dagger Of The Star (+4). The entrance to the Demilich's tomb is west of the dragon boat.



The very first room that you waltz into in the Githyanki Camp will have the flint and tinder needed to light the lamps. The githyanki here aren't too bad, probably because you're quite powerful by the time you get around to exploring Watcher's Keep.



You have to grab the Purple Oil from this pool, but be sure to scour the area for neat loot such as Angurvadal (+4 longsword with neat AC-reducing side effects) and Montolio's Clasp. Also, this is where you would find the stairs down to Saladrex. You can leave him alone, use flattery on him, or fight him to get the Staff Of The Ram (+4).



To get this key, collect four orbs of each color. The fourth orb will be the "key" to put in the pillar. Every time you collect an orb, you'll get a different encounter, depending on orb color and increasing in difficulty. Green orbs trigger the following enemies: spiders, umber hulks, Greater Earth Elementals, and beholders. Red orbs give you hobgoblins, kua-toa, trolls, and wolfweres. Blue orbs just give you more and more powerful mages (pictures here). Purple orbs give you skeletal warriors, shades, vampires, and liches.



This minigame is pretty straightforward. Feel free to fight just about everything and anything you run into. Ignore the fountain when you find it, as it will poison you. Open every chest you can, so that you can snag healing potions, magic bracers, and a wand of magic missile. When you find the Glibberling Scroll, use it to vaporize the glibberling instantly. Finally, go face the mummy with your wand and magic bracers equipped.



As you unlock parts of the Final Seal, you'll face more and more powerful opponents. The northwest lock conjures a hive mother beholder, a djinni, and several spellcasters. The northeast lock summons interdimensional guardians led by high-level mage Aurumach Rilanni (take him out ASAP). Finally, the last seal will summon flaming skulls and a lich named Azamante. Then, you just need to go in and confront the Imprisoned One. How you do this is up to you, but a couple of hints: If you want good XP and the most "moral" decision, lie at first, and when you get a chance, confront someone with the truth and then forgive them.

ANACHRONOX

Master your skills and get past the toughest doors in Anachronox *by Elliott Chin*

Despite its bugs and crashes, ANACHRONOX is a fun, funny, and well-told role-playing game. If you can get past the technical problems, it's full of interesting characters, NPCs, lots of puzzles, and console-styła combat. However, although a patch can fix bugs, it can't get you past the tough quests. For that, you'll need a little help. This guide details how to acquire each character's master worldskills, so you can pick these tough locks (the one with a 10-second time limit) or snag those far-off items with a master tractor beam. There is also a second part that includes tips for getting past some of the more challenging sections of the game, including supervillain Rictus' villainship.

Master Worldskills

These master worldskills aren't vital to finishing the game, but they do let you pick up hidden and powerful objects, such as excellent weapons, new MysTech, and collectibles like TACOs. In most cases, you'll want to try to acquire these skills as soon as possible, since some of the relevant individuals might not be available or willing to help after a certain plot point (warning, spoiler follows)—when Datta takes over Anachronox (end spoiler). For instance, if you visit Ambassador Ashdown after that, he won't upgrade "Democrat" tractor beam worldskill (although he does give you a nice consolation prize). You'll have to visit him before this event if you want to gain tractor beam mastery.

the Red Light District on Sender Station. Once you finish this last quest, he'll give you a Master Lockpick tool. You don't need to equip it. At first glance, it might not look like your skill has been upgraded when you next encounter a 10-second lock. However, you'll notice a new button on the screen. Clicking on it will reset the timer, and there's no limit to how often you can click on it. Thus, you now have unlimited time to finish picking locks, as long as you keep resetting the timer.

Grumpo: Master Yammer

After you return from Sunder, and MysTech has been awakened, you must enter the Sender Station terminal. Waiting at terminal 2 is a red-robed monk from Hephsestus

Dr. Rho: Master Analyze

Dr. Rho Bowman's master worldskill can be acquired after you return to Sender Station from Sunder. Go back to the Penthouse Suites where you set up the scientist and the lonely woman (see "Find Two Tickets to Sunder," below). They'll still be there. Talk to the scientist, who will kindly teach Dr. Rho how to improve her analyzing skills. After you talk to him, you'll have upgraded to Master Analyze.

Stiletto Anyway: Master Loonie Toss

Stiletto can acquire her master skill after the fight against Chaos' forces on Limbus. Go into the City of Sesostris. There's a fountain, next to which is a wise alien named



At the very least, acquire Master Lockpick. Boots can find it by helping Ruhk on all his quests.



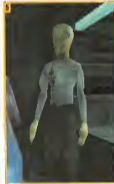
Visit this monk in terminal 2 of Sender Station and he'll upgrade your Yammer skill to master level.



Imagine the robot will teach PAL the art of Master Comtalk. Find him at the Anachronox Tours area.



When Dr. Rho returns from Sunder and speaks to Dr. Brywelle, she'll master her Analyze worldskill.



The planet Democrat can gain his Master Tractor skill in Frank's Flophouse in Anachronox.

Sly Boots: Master Lockpick

In order to get Boots' Master Lockpick skill, you need to find Ruhk and complete all his quests. Ruhk is first found in the Anachronox Tours area, at the crime scene. He'll give you four quests, spaced throughout the game. The final one is acquired in

named Brother Gnosticus. Talk to him, and he'll tell you he won't sell you any of his MysTech, no matter what you say. That's your cue to use Grumpo's Yammer. You'll fail, but the monk will offer to swap techniques with you. Say yes, and he will teach you new yammering skills, thus upgrading your worldskill to Master Yammer.

Thennikendonoff. If you enter the city from the valley, the fountain is located beyond sand to the left of the third door as you move deeper into the city. The fountain is close to the tunnel leading up to the top of the mountain and the giant cannon. Talk to Thennikendonoff and he'll teach Stiletto the Master Loonie Toss worldskill.

PAL-18: Master Comptalk

To acquire PALs master skill, you need to return to Anachronox and visit Anachronox Tours. Inside, near the entrance (in fact, right after you zone into Anachronox Tours), you'll see a two-legged robot with what looks like a baby floating in its head. This robot is named Infantine, and if you have PAL talk to him enough, he will teach you the Master Comptalk skill.

Democratus: Master Tractor Beam

You can get Democratus' master worldskill by visiting Anachronox and entering Frank's Flophouse. Standing by the counter is a Democrat named Ambassador Ashdown, who has been traveling the universe, learning about other forms of government. Talk to him and he will teach you new ways to govern, thus giving you the Master Tractor.

Paco "El Puno" Estrella: Master Ragemight

To acquire Paco's Master Ragemight worldskill, you must return to Hephaestus. Go toward the entertainment district, but instead



Stiletto's worldskill, while not very useful, is easy to upgrade. Do so in the City of Sesostris.



El Puno's ragemight skill can be upgraded by visiting old flame Mrs. Invisibus on Hephaestus.

of going down the stairs at the sign to the district, go up. Take a right, and have Boots pick the lock on the second door. Once you get through, you'll find a transparent woman standing to the left of the door in the kitchen. Her name is Mrs. Invisibus, but during her adventuring days she was a superhero who had a fling with Paco. Have Paco talk to her and she'll teach him to control his anger, upgrading his Ragemight to master status.

Finding Two Tickets to Sunder

You can find three tickets on Sender Station, even though you only need two. The first ticket is fairly easy to get. There's a man standing in the shadows to the right of the Sender Station Commons door when you enter the Commons from the Terminal. He can tell you how to get one ticket, which involves just chasing down NPCs in the area until you finally get a ticket. For the other two, you can either yammer the white-coated scientist in the SenDormitory (after which he'll give you the ticket just to get rid of you) or you can hook up two lonely people. In the Penthouse Suites, there's a scientist about to leave for Sunder who is starting to question his devotion to science. He wants to experience love instead of chasing theories. In the Commons area, watching the clown act, is a woman who is looking for a man with a brain. Talking to them won't be enough, though. On a table near the scientist is a single rose; take it to the woman, and she'll come running to the scientist. When they meet, the scientist will thank you and give you his ticket to Sunder. If you acquire your second ticket this way, you'll also be able to acquire Rho's master skill.

Red Light District Entrance

There's a bug in the entrance to the Red Light District in Sender Station that could throw you for a loop if you aren't careful. After Dr. Rho files the banned-out controls for the locked door leading to the Red Light District, do not manipulate the controls twice. This resets the chain-link door and makes it so that the door cannot be opened from the inside. So be careful to touch the door control only once. Otherwise, you'll need to restart from a previously saved game prior to entering the Red Light District.

Virulent Hive

The Hive minigame is a necessary evil or a refreshing diversion, depending on your taste for rail shooters. Those not used to rail shooters should note that if you find yourself stuck because you've run out of ammo, you can reload by clicking on the ammo icon at the bottom left of the screen.

Get More Save Game Slots

Anachronox doesn't have nearly enough save game slots, but you can always make more. Enable the console by pressing [alt]+[shift]+[F10]. Then, call down the console by hitting the [-] key. When the console appears, type "savegame n," where "n" is a number from 1000 to 9999 (numbers below 1000 aren't usable). To load those save games, type "loadgame n," with "n" being the number of the save game slot. This tip was on PlanetAnachronox.com, a good spot to look for more clues if you're stuck.

Solving the Colored Doors Aboard Rictus' Villainship

Red Door: To unlock the Red Door, you need to arrange the objects in the order in which they first appeared to you. Each object represents one supervillain HQ, which makes this puzzle easy to solve. For example, in the El Puntos room, there is a computer terminal displaying a hologram of an object. El Puntos are represented by this hologram and vice versa. In each of the other five supervillain HQ rooms there is a terminal and a corresponding hologram of an object. Note the order in which you encounter these objects, from first to last. When you reach the Green Room, simply arrange the objects according to the order in which you encountered their representative supervillain.



The first puzzle in the villainship is the Red Door. Take note of your travel route to the door when it comes time to solve the puzzle.

Green Door: The Green Door is similar, but instead of arranging objects, you arrange supervillains. Remember which object represents which supervillain from the previous puzzle because you'll need that pattern. But the order in which you arrange them isn't as straightforward this time. Don't put them in the order in which you find them, as in the previous puzzle. Instead, click on the camera link at the bottom of the puzzle to get a view of the original holo-projector in the hanger control room. The projector cycles through the five objects in a specific order. Each time, it starts with the same object and goes through the other four objects one at a time. Copy that order for arranging the supervillains. If you forget which objects represent which supervillains, go back to their HQ rooms and see which objects are displayed on their computer terminals. Once you arrange the supervillains in the order shown through the camera link, you'll unlock the Green Door.



The Green Door requires you to arrange villains instead of objects.

MechCommander 2

It's a mad, mad mechworld

by Bruce Geryk

Success in **MechCommander 2** begins with good mech design. This isn't as important in the solo campaign, where it's perfectly reasonable to complete the whole thing with stock mechs and no modifications. But when it comes to multiplayer, it's a different story entirely. Tweaking mech designs is half the fun of playing *BattleTech*-based games, and it's a bit of a shame that there isn't a straight solo skirmish mode to test your designs against the computer. Human opponents are better, though, so if you're looking to join the fray either online or on a LAN, here are some tips to give you an edge (just hide this issue from your friends).

Much of the strategy in multiplayer **MechCommander 2** is based on the kind of game you're playing and the map you're using, so it's impossible to talk about the ultimate design because that depends heavily on the mission you're supposed to accomplish. Nevertheless, when it comes to weapon selection, there are general rules to consider. Weapons in the game fall into several categories:

Energy weapons

Pros: No ammo required, low space

Cons: High heat requirements, big weapons are underpowered

The biggest advantage to energy weapons becomes no advantage at all if you're playing with Unlimited Ammo. With that option, the balance swings toward missiles and projectile weapons. Still, energy weapons offer decent firepower and take up very little space. The basic PPC is a particularly good combination of space, cost, and heat.

One thing that shouldn't be overlooked in some energy weapons is their high rate of fire. The pulse lasers may seem underpowered due to their limited damage per shot, but multiply their damage by their high rate of fire, and their value improves drastically. Conversely, the Clan Heavy Large Laser seems like it packs a wallop, but for the price and the heat capacity it's almost certainly not worth it. This kind of efficiency analysis should be the basis for all of your weapon selections.

Projectile weapons

Pros: Low heat, good bang for the buck

Cons: Ammo requirements, take up lots of space

Projectile weapons are a good value for the money, and if you're playing with Unlimited Ammo they become a whole lot better. Unfortunately, they take up far more space than even the largest energy weapons. Also, aside from the Gauss family, there aren't a lot of good long-range projectile weapons. There is a general rule about weapons in this game. Of the different versions of a weapon,



Swapping out machine guns in favor of lasers is generally a good idea.

the biggest one is usually the least useful. The perfect example of this is the Long Tom. It's by far the most powerful and most expensive weapon in the game; it's also probably the most useless. A Gauss Rifle costs almost half as much, does almost as much damage, and takes up less space. And it costs 1/20th as much heat!

On the other end of the scale, there are the Machine Gun Arrays. These are totally useless and should be avoided. Some players use them to fill in the odd slot on a mech that can't fit anything else (since they use no heat), but this is also the limit of their utility.

Much of mech design is about finding the right tradeoff of price for effectiveness when you have a limited budget. The Light Gauss costs less than half the price of a Gauss Rifle, but is better than "half as good." Since you also save two spaces, combining the Light Gauss with a large energy weapon like a Large Pulse Laser is a better use of money and space than the bigger Gauss guns, unless you're really worried about heat.

Missiles

Pros: Low space, target lock-on; cheap

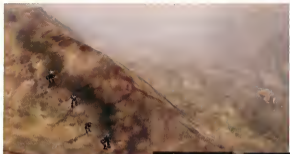
Cons: You run out of them, they blow up

Missiles are excellent for hilly terrain, which can block your line of fire, because they can follow an enemy unit even if it ducks behind cover. They don't do that much damage by themselves, though, so concentrated volleys from multiple mechs should be the order of the day.

The "biggest-is-worst" rule here is perfectly demonstrated by the Thunderbolt Missile. While it's one mean son-of-a-gun, four Clan LRM racks will do about the same amount of damage, cost about the same, fire faster, and take up less space. The only drawback is that they require twice as much heat capacity, but if this is a concern, you should go with multiple linear Space LRM racks instead of the Thunderbolt.

I'm So Special!

Another important aspect of good mech design is knowing your goals for a particular mission, and this in turn depends on the type of game and the map in use. One rule that applies in almost all cases, however, is that putting all of your eggs in one basket is not a good idea. While that überassault mech may look unstoppable, a well-organized force of small and medium-size mechs can often



Lining mechs up out of sight works even better if you power them down, making them invisible to sensors.



If someone is spotting for them, sensor contacts can be deadly even if they can't see you.

clean its clock if they're fast and well armed. Because of the price/space premium for the largest weapons, loading up a few battleships is far less efficient than devising a varied fleet of cruisers and destroyers, so to speak. Also, even the heaviest mechs need backup, and if you've spent all of your money or space on a few mechs, you'll be forced to skimp elsewhere. Variety is even more important when you're not using the "all tech" option, because certain weapons become unavailable.

While creating only specialized mechs isn't a good idea, your mech designs should have a clear purpose, such as scouting, hit-and-run, close combat, or long-range bombardment. All-purpose mechs are rarely good enough at a specific task to replace a focused design. Just don't get carried away.

Tactically Speaking

The MechCommander series requires a slightly different design focus than first-person BattleTech games like the MechWarrior series. When you're fighting on a large team in the latter game, you can afford to have a very specialized mech because you can always concentrate on your task, whether it be long-range sniping or hit-and-run. In MechCommander, however, the unit AI tends to get overly aggressive and chase enemy units if you aren't careful about watching your mechs. This makes long-range mechs very vulnerable to rush tactics, in

close eye on formations, it's almost always a good idea to protect against this problem by equipping all of your mechs with some short-range weapons.

There are numerous multiplayer modes and maps, so giving general advice is difficult. But if you're going to be capturing bases,

The Long Tom Cannon (right) and Thunderbolt Missile (left) are impressive but horribly inefficient uses of resources.

having a few jump-jet mechs is essential. The fastest way to capture a base (as you learn in the solo campaign) is to jump a few mechs over the defending walls and capture the turret controls. Fighting through a base's defense is time consuming and wasteful. Likewise, if you're competing for a lot of resource buildings, having some fast mechs is essential.



Jump jets are the best way to bypass an enemy base defense, but be careful not to jump into a hornet's nest.



Missiles are great for following targets through difficult terrain.

which a fast mech equipped with short-range weapons gets in close and rips a heavier mech to pieces. If you let your long-range mechs wander away, a good opponent will punish you for it. Besides keeping a

Getting the first shot at an enemy mech is good, and getting a lot of shots off before your enemy can return fire is even better. The best way to achieve this is through ambush. In areas with line-of-sight obstacles (like the CapBase Classic map), a sneaky tactic is to use some speedy mechs to lure an enemy force close to a ridgeline or other covering terrain where you have hidden a group of powered-down mechs. Powered-down mechs don't show up on sensors, so even if your opponent is being careful and is using sensor-equipped scouts, they won't detect your mechs until they actually see them (or until you power up). If you've laid a good ambush, even the "Mech power-up detected" warning won't be sufficient to prevent you from getting off a [hopefully] devastating salvo or two. Another devious tactic is to hide some missile mechs out of sight and use a scout copter to spot for them. Remember: You don't always have to see what you're shooting at.

While super-heavy mech armament is generally not worth the cost, the same is not true of fixed artillery. If it's allowed in your game, and you need to break down a tough objective, fixed artillery is well worth the resource points. Just make sure you have a defensible position where you can place it, because left by itself, it'll be gone before you know it.

Not all maps will allow you to fight a combined-arms battle, where long-range mechs team up to support some heavily armored, short-range bruisers. In King of the Hill, it's not only possible, it's required. Paradoxically, the player who loses long-range capability first generally loses a game of King of the Hill, so concentrate your fire on support elements and pummel the rest of the force from a distance while you close in for the kill. Make sure you have a couple of heavy mechs for close-in work when you're ready to take the summit.

DIRTY TRICKS OF THE MONTH

Finally, we're seeing some trick variety. We're getting tricks for more games besides *RED ALERT 2* and *COUNTER-STRIKE*. We haven't gotten that many for the *KOHAN* call we made earlier, and we're expanding our horizons a bit. Now, we'll give the best trick award for *KOHAN: FALLOUT TACTICS*, or even *RED FRACTION* (assuming it's out by the time you read this). Of course, we'll also reward good tips for other games, but gamers with tips for these get the nod.

You'll now be playing for a copy of *HOLOS: WARRIORS: ANAXIOS RESIST*. It's a damn fine game, and once you get into it, it may surprise you. It also has some of the best cut-scenes out there. For now, here's the best tip we've gotten for *KOHAN* so far.

This tip is meant for *KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS* in a multiplayer game when you have an ally to whom you're not particularly attached. There's an easy way to gain some stone per minute, back as well as hurt an ally who's not doing you much good. If you have a lot of outposts, you might find yours, if drained on stone, unusable as you have a rampant economic system. Now what you should do is double-click on one of the outposts, go to the box above "Send to ally," and select the person you want to incur the -3 Stone penalty upon. Now just click on the button. Sometimes the recipient won't even notice the penalty and will just keep playing. Meanwhile, if the outposts are near any minefields, you'll still retain the bonuses from them, as you're allied with the person, but you're not paying for it. —Kyl Dugan

And with that, Kyle snags a Rainbow Six: Coldfire's Emote! Way to screw over someone who isn't even paying attention to his own economy.



Readers Get Bejeweled Also

In Time Trial Mode, you don't advance to the next level until you fill the bonus bar up. And you don't lose unless you let the bar run down (no worrying about whether

your next move will leave you stranded with no moves to follow). That means you can, with enough patience, rack up just as many points as you like on the early levels where the timer counts down slowly. For those who don't have quite that much patience, clicking on the "Hint" button takes off some time. It also takes away some points, but your moves give you more points-per-timebar-inch than the hints take, so you're still coming out ahead on score. It's easy to have 2,000 at the end of level 1, 6,000 at the end of level 2, and so on. —Michael Lwail

Here are a few BEJEWELED tips to get the highest possible score.

1. Luck—it doesn't all have to do with skill. 2. (This is the big one.) In the harder stages, have more than one person looking at the screen for matches. The person behind the "clicker" is screaming stuff while the clicker is doing their own thing. That way, there is always a match being made.
3. It really does have a lot to do with luck in the higher stages, because the only way you can survive is by making combos. Several times, the time bar was screaming at us when my brother managed to find a massive combo that scraped us from the pit.
4. If you take cookies out of the oven a few minutes before the time on the box, they will cool to perfection.
5. Always work from the bottom up. That is what sets off the chain reactions, which really helps.
6. By the time the animation of the jewels finishes switching, your mouse should be over the next combo.
7. If you are stuck, look at only one color at a time. You will be surprised at how many more matches you find if you look only at the reds, greens, etc. —William Jones

The Other Blizzard Corner

Here are some exclusive recipes for Runes straight from Blizzard. When you're bandying them about with your new Famine club or whatnot, being the envy of your buddies, just say "I saw it in CGW first."

Famine

Created with Axes or Clubs and requires the following Runes:

- Tal / Ith / Yex / Amn / Thul
- Stats:
 - +170%–210% Enhanced Damage
 - +9 to Maximum Damage
 - +150–200 to Attack Rating
 - 13–44 Cold Damage
 - 550 Poison Damage over 10 seconds
 - 7% Mana stolen per hit
 - 7% Life stolen per hit
 - 100 to monster defense per hit
 - Drain Life -20*
 - +5 to Hunger (Druid only)

* Drain Life -20 is a curse that causes the wielder of Famine to continually lose life.

Duros

Created with Body Armor and requires the following Runes:

- Thul / Hel / Um
- Stats:
 - 15% Faster Hit Recovery
 - +10%→25% Enhanced Damage
 - 37–133 Cold Damage
 - 15% Chance of Crushing Blow
 - 33% Chance of Open Wounds
 - +150% to 200% Enhanced Defense
 - 20% Faster Stamina Drain*
 - +15% Fire Resistance
 - +45% Cold Resistance
 - +15% Lightning Resistance
 - +15% Poison Resistance

* Faster Stamina Drain is a curse that causes the wearer to use stamina faster when running.

Pattern

Created with Claw Weapons and requires the following Runes:

- Eld / Thul / Ort
- Stats:
 - 30% Faster Block Rate
 - +60%→80% Enhanced Damage
 - 10% Bonus to Attack Rating
 - +75% Damage to Undead
 - +50 Attack Rating vs Undead
 - 12–32 Fire Damage
 - 1–50 Lightning Damage
 - 3–14 Cold Damage
 - +6 Strength
 - +6 Dexterity
 - +15% All Resistances

Send us your tips

Send your tips, tricks, and strategies to

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(please put cgtips in the subject line).

We'll publish three submissions each month. Please send genuine tips or strategies instead of cheat codes cut-and-pasted from the Internet.

One winner will get something pulled at random from the Computer Gaming World BozoBin!

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INSIDE **HOMEBREW**

by T. Byrl Baker • tbyrlbaker@msn.com

Maximum Overdrive

MAX PAYNE mods keep the bullet-time alive



MAX PAYNE doesn't talk the talk (the writing is atrocious), but it certainly walks the walk and kept me captivated throughout all its difficulty levels. It's one of the few recent games that somehow finds its way into my CD-ROM drive even when I should be working on something else. Judging from all the mods that started appearing only days after the game's release, I imagine things are going to stay that way.

The fine folks at Remedy Entertainment were kind enough to include editing tools with their latest creation, and threw in a menu on the launch screen that lets players choose the mod they want to apply without any fuss. The first mods for the game were simple things like level selectors and cheats that gave players unlimited bullet-time. Now we're getting amazing skins, weapons packs, and levels like the much-desired lobby from *The Matrix*. By the time you read this, there no doubt will be many total conversions available.

One of my favorite mods right now is Ultimate, a frequently updated combination of mods that tweaks the game in all the right places. It ups the gore levels along with the maximum number of decals, making places look like war zones after

Wow, third-person, bullet-time, black leather coat, automatic weapons—what's a logical 'first mod'? How about recreating the lobby shootout scene from *The Matrix*?

firefights. Sound effects are also pumped up. You shouldn't use the mod until you've completed the game, as it adds a level selector, a bullet-time meter that regenerates automatically over time, and slower slow motion that makes precision shooting even easier.

Once you finish the game in true cinematic superhero style with a mod like Ultimate, you can test your skills with something like Real Payne, which injects a dose of reality into Max Payne's world. It adjusts clip sizes, but the loss of ammo in some weapons is made up for with increased power and bullet velocities. While some weapons get much larger clips, the maximum amount of ammo Max can tote around is severely limited. Real Payne forces players to rely on marksmanship instead of spraying the greatest amount of lead around a room, and it adds features like the ability to shoot through couches, thin wood walls, and other objects that wouldn't impede a bullet in real life. Of course, the enemies benefit from the increased weapon



damage and they aim much better when this mod is loaded, so you should hoard those painkillers.

Be careful when playing around with all these add-ons. Often, saved games are mod specific. You must use the same mod you used when the save was made or the game won't load. If the game is crashing to the desktop when you test a mod, try starting a new game and it should work. The best places to download the latest add-ons are the Max Payne Center (www.maxpaynecenter.com) and Max Payne Headquarters (www.maxpayneheadquarters.com).

Roll Your Own RPG

Having neither the time nor inclination to



With any luck, this mockup of the COSMIC ENCOUNTER ONLINE game will be live by the time you read this.

learn any programming, it would seem my chances of creating computer games are nil, but thanks to the latest version of the RPG Toolkit, all of my excuses are gone. Designer Christopher Matthews has been improving this freeware product for years now, and his hard work has made it easier than ever to create a role playing game of nearly any size.

The toolkit uses a familiar Windows interface and comes with several editors for creat-

“The biggest drawback to Cosmic Encounter is that it’s tough to get enough people together to play it properly . . .”

ing tiles, characters, items, monsters, plot triggers, and animated special effects. You can import graphics or create them from scratch using the included tools, and a wealth of resources exist on the Internet where RPG Toolkit users can download content and learn some advanced editing tricks. Games can include music in any file format, including MP3s, just as long as the computer the game is loaded on has a player that can handle the file.

RPG Toolkit includes enough options to cater to anyone’s skill level. The tile editor is a terrific example, as beginners can create small 16x16 tiles using a limited 16- or 256-color palette to keep things simple, while seasoned artists can move up to 32x32 tiles

using 16 million colors. If you’re already familiar with another tile editor, you can create your content there and the RPG Toolkit will incorporate it with a few mouse clicks.

Characters are completely customizable, with separate walking and fighting animations, various sounds for different actions, equipment and accessory slots, and detailed stats. All of the animation and other editors allow previews that let you see how your final creation will look before you save the changes, with everything displayed directly in the editor. You don’t need to launch the game or a separate test program each time you want to preview your work. The

toolkit also supports plug-ins, so if you know C++, you can make your own using the downloadable plug-in SDK and overcome any limitations the default editor imposes.

For all of the editor’s power, there still aren’t enough good games out there that use the engine, although there are many available at the RPG Toolkit site that you can use to better understand how the program works. One of the most promising projects is FORGOTTEN LEGENDS (www.8op.com/forgottenlegends), which is slated to be complete by the time you read this. For resources like tile sets, real-time battle engines, and tutorials, go to The Toolkit Zone at toolkitzone.virtualslave.net

Can You Thuy Thoth?

Back in our June issue I discussed a free wargame called HOPUTES that’s played with cards. That game continues to grow, with new card sets, backgrounds, and even sound packs created all the time. Now Gottardo “Zak” Zancani, designer of the game, has released a new version of his other project, the Thoth engine (diglanderio.it/zaak965/thoth). Thoth lets players conduct card games in real time over the Internet and comes with a wizard to aid in the creation of new game files.

If you have neither the time nor the skill to create or convert an existing card game, there are plenty of Thoth files freely available on the Internet. Many of these come from Warp Spawn Games (www.warpspawngames.com/games2/warpspawn/index.html), which has a complete repository of free game rules and Thoth card sets. Most are two-player contests, but a few like Zulu Spears, Winter War, and Space Scouts are designed for solo play and are excellent for learning the interface.

Cosmic Encounter Online

Cosmic Encounter is one of the most beloved board games of all time, and soon it will have a new home online. Richard Garfield claims CE inspired him to create MAGIC: THE GATHERING, and it’s easy to see why. Cosmic Encounter uses cards and has a simple rule set, but its genius lies in the fact that each player can bend the rules in a unique way. Effectively exercising these special powers to gain an advantage over other players adds a great deal of challenge to the basic gameplay, and with lots of players wielding lots of special powers, the rules get turned on their heads. With hundreds of alien races to choose from, each with a special power, replayability is high and the level of tactical finesse that’s possible is unmatched.

The biggest drawback to Cosmic Encounter is that it’s tough to get enough people together to play it properly, but that should soon change with the introduction of COSMIC ENCOUNTER ONLINE (www.cosmicencounter.com). At the time of this writing, the developers, Future Pastimes and Quicksilver, had only a basic Java version of the game online, but the potential was clear. Once their full-featured Shockwave game appears, it’ll likely be coughing up the \$5.50-to-\$8.50 monthly fee for the opportunity to get into a CE game whenever I want. A limited “guest” version also will be available, but it includes only six alien races. The subscription game will have about three times as many aliens to begin with, and the game is open-ended so you can add new aliens regularly. The designers plan to release versions for a variety of platforms ranging from consoles to handheld PDAs that all can interface with the online game, letting players enjoy CE regardless of their hardware. **CGW**

by Gordon Borg • gorgonard@concentric.net

I Hate Flight Sims

Our sim columnist loses it in public!



IL-2 STURMOVIK

When former sim columnist Denny Atkin first recommended me for this job, he said that flight sims really needed a cheerleader. I couldn't have agreed more, so I promptly performed a few leg locks and tumbling rolls to prove my appreciation and enthusiasm. Today, however, the pom-poms came off (but I'm keeping the skirt and tight sweater).

It's time to come clean: I think I hate simulations.

Okay, maybe *hate* isn't the right word intellectually. I know that I probably don't really hate them *per se*. But emotionally? Yeah, hate pretty much sums up how I feel about 'em right now. Contempt, disgust, and loathing also apply. What's worse, I think that's how I've felt about sims for some time without realizing it. That's scary. I feel so dirty inside. What the hell happened to me?

Obviously it wasn't always like this. After all, flight sims were the reason I bought my first computer. I ultimately didn't become a doctor because of the damn things (thank God), and this is how I show my appreciation: And talk about biting the hand that feeds me. If this is how I really feel about sims, what does that say about my body of work as a reviewer or any future writing that I might do? On second thought, let's not go there and hope Jeff Green isn't reading this.

As despicable as my crimes against simmanity may be, I don't believe I'm entirely at fault... or entirely alone in my feelings. Sims have come a long way and, as I've discussed before, have gotten away from their gaming roots and lost what made them fun to begin with in their pursuit to become more realistic. For a while, that was okay. Each new level of realism with each new generation of simulation introduced something innovative and kept us satisfied. But simulations have become victims of their own success, and not solely because of the expensive nature of "feature-creep," a term

applied coined by producer Andy Hollis of Kane's fame. You can only raise the bar so high before you hit the ceiling—not the ceiling of possibilities, but of enthusiasm.

Once I realized this, a few things clicked into place for me. Obviously it's absurd to say that simulations can only go so high or so far. That logic was used by the patent clerk who quit his job back in the '80s, because he thought nothing of further significance was ever

going to be invented. What I mean to say is that I've reached a point at which I don't care what comes next. Because sims have experienced feature-creep and not taken a quantum leap forward, because they have become more realistic and less gamelike, because at their core they involve the same gameplay mechanics each and every

Flight sim fans still have some games to look forward to, like *XTREME AIR RACING*, *LOMAC*, and *IL-2 STURMOVIK*, but don't look for our flight sim columnist to be playing 'em. Like many gamers these days, he's had it.



LOMAC



“... sims have experienced feature-creep and not taken a quantum leap forward, because they have become more realistic and less gamelike . . .”

time, I've simply become tired of them all.

There are plenty of analogies to this elsewhere in life: You can eat only so much of the same food before you get sick of it (except pizza). You can stand to read only so many Stephen King books before you need a breather. A breather that needs to last for a few years. Say 10, or 15. Relationships need to grow and adapt if they are to carry on, but sometimes a relationship needs a break. Simulations and I are still on speaking terms and I have hope for the future, but we've separated for the time being and I've sought legal counsel.

The other thing I've realized is the two-way, cyclical nature of gaming genres. Those of you like me should understand that we're half the reason why genres rise and fall. Genre popularity shifts as generations of fans and consumers come and go, probably for reasons similar to those I've listed above. So it's not just the fault of studios and developers, but of gamers as well. I'm sure this has something to do with that whole supply-and-demand thingy I slept through in economics class.

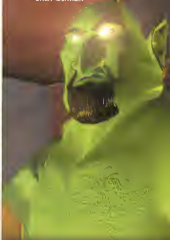
Everyone lamented over how RPGs were dead (look at them now), how adventure games were dead (tell that to Europe and Dreamcatcher Interactive)—and now over how flight sims are dead, too. Yes, Virginia, flight sims actually are dead, and if this

magazine says one more time that they aren't, I'm flying out to San Francisco and doing some serious ass-kicking. Um, CGW is going to have to pay my way out there. Would it ruffe of me to ask to be seated in first class?

What does “dead” really mean anyway? Only that there aren't many sims in development compared to what used to be, and current sims don't sell like they used to. So “dead” doesn't necessarily mean *dead*. Maybe we should just say the genre is “resting.” Those of you keeping the faith have IL-2 STURMOVIK, XTREME AIR RACING, and LOMAC to look forward to. As for me, I doubt that flight sims will ever be as prolific as they once were, but I no longer count because I've apparently “moved on.”

If I'm worried about one thing, it's that I might never come back to simulations of any kind, and that would be a shame. I'm staring at my recently purchased copies of DIABLO 2: LORD OF DESTRUCTION and MAX PAYNE. Then there's my ever-growing stack of Infinity Engine games, and I'm hearing the siren call of just one more round of DAY OF DEFEAT—and I think to myself that I could walk away forever and be okay. But just as I re-read Stephen King's *The Stand* after a 15-year hiatus, maybe I'll come back one day and think sims aren't so bad and maybe I'll even admit to myself that I missed them. **CGW**

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by Bruce Geryk • ceremony@net66.com

A Farewell to . . . Ah, Forget It

It's time for the Rout Phase

Time and time again over the past few years, I've heard people ask if wargaming is dead. While I have no doubts that wargaming is and will remain alive and well for the foreseeable future, this is unfortunately the last "Inside Wargaming"—at least in its current incarnation. CGW is unveiling a new look next month, and that new look includes a different way of handling columns. I got a chance to publish only a few responses to my question about tactical battles in strategic wargames, but of the many responses I received, there seemed to be a consensus, so I thought I'd comment on it, even if I can't print more replies. Thanks very much to everyone who responded—I read every email even though I still haven't finished replying to them all.

It's clear to me that most wargamers want the ability to fight battles in as detailed a manner as possible, regardless of how complex or lengthy this would make the game. Maybe I'm thickheaded, but I

don't see the point of this. The one thing that has bothered me about computer wargames (and I've expressed this concern in these pages before) is how everything is turning into a giant quantitative war simulator with TePsyOps and ELINT and any other acronym you can think of.

I am not a general. I am some guy. I just want to play a game, at the end of which the person who performed the best game analyses without solving a third-order differential equation wins. I don't want to be trained in modern military tactics, even though I know this will be important later when the United Nations makes and someone has to figure out how to recapture Cleveland. I want to have fun playing a game, and if the 180th Volksturm Regiment couldn't really get to Dinant and sometimes the Allies lose the war, I don't feel hurt or disillusioned. I feel this way even though I know it makes me crazy and a jerk. Thank you and good night. **CGW**

No Trumpets, No Drums



John Tiller has opted not to use historical leader names and unit organizations out of respect for veterans.

I wondered how long it would be before someone finally developed a tactical Vietnam game. HPS Simulations recently released SQUAD BATTLES, VIETNAM, which is the first in a new series of games designed by John Tiller (of PANZER CAMPAIGNS fame). I asked Tiller why he decided to take the "squad battles" approach to Vietnam. He replied, "Some years ago, I started reading books by Keith Nolan on the Vietnam War. I was struck by how there were so many actions in the war that could be portrayed as a small-unit action. As my reading progressed, it became clear that anything above the squad level would simply be too high a level to portray these actions in sufficient detail. And as the military scale increases, you find a growing sense of futility in the overall scheme of things."

This is an interesting observation that might explain why Vietnam scenarios designed for other game systems (like YOAIV) feel so off. As far as I know, Victory Games' VIETNAM is the only serious attempt to model the operational aspects of the war in detail. Everything else I've seen has just seemed tacked onto whatever game system was being used. Now maybe someone will design a game system to model the whole war with all of its unique elements. Or maybe someone will just make another Battle of the Bulge game.

Panzer Rollen in Afrika Vor

Lately I've been playing around with a COMBAT MISSION mod called DESERT FOX, DESERT RATS, which (as the title suggests) takes place in North Africa. There are some problems—not all the units have full desert textures, for example—but it's a good change of pace while our lives are on hold in anticipation of COMBAT MISSION 2 and the Russkies. I

remember how long it took for SQUAD LEADER/ASL to finally get a North Africa module and love the fact that with something like COMBAT MISSION, impatient fans can simply come up with their own module while they wait for the official one. You can benefit from their impatience by going to www.dfdr.net and downloading the mod.

Sure, it looks like some Red Devils in a jeep in the Sahara. Because it is.



by Stefan "Desslock" Iznicki • cw_letters@tildavis.com

Realistic Fantasy

Desslock wants to see more life in his fantasy worlds



Realism has a bad rap in role-playing games. A lot of gamers believe that a more realistic gaming world just means less fun. After all, the more time developers spend making a gaming world seem realistic, the less time they'll have to create involving gameplay. There's some justification for those beliefs, as the developers of games such as *TREASASSER* seemed more intent on developing a cool physics engine than ensuring that their game was actually enjoyable. But making games more realistic is a worthwhile goal that has been unfairly maligned due to a handful of bad design decisions. It's the lolo factor, of course.

Until *ULTIMA VII*, all the games in that legendary series required characters to regularly indulge in a hearty repast in order to sustain their strength—they had to eat to survive. Very few gamers ever complained about that requirement, which was a fixture of early computer RPGs, until lolo and his comrades started consistently bleating for nourishment in *ULTIMA VII*. Although your companions in that game were capable of dispatching towering dragons with ease, they were unable to sufficiently chow down on the food stocked in their backpacks. The passage of time in the game varied with the speed of your computer, so on a bleeding-edge system your party members' demands for sustenance would be

almost constant. A terrible design decision caused mighty warriors and mages to precisely mimic cranky infants bawling for their next meal and, as a result, you'll never need to feed characters in a role-playing game again. No lolo.

For some reason, however, developers seemed to interpret the understandable outcry against the ludicrous requirement for you to constantly feed your companions as a demand for less realistic fantasy worlds. That's a ridiculous conclusion, since the game's culinary system wasn't exactly the epitome of realism. Gamers were just objecting to a nonsensical requirement that detracted from gameplay. Yet lolo's unquenchable hunger obscured the merits of a realistic fantasy world for many developers. It's time to dismiss the lolo factor and highlight why computer RPGs should strive to create more realistic environments.

Tabletop RPGs embrace realism. From their inception, tabletop RPGs have offered incredibly realistic, immersive worlds in which players have the freedom to take any reasonable action. Even if their environments are ruled by magic and populated by fantastic creatures, tabletop RPGs try to give players the ability to assume an alter ego role in as plausible and immersive a manner as possible. More realistic environments inherently create richer role-playing

MORROWIND's interactive environment makes it easier to relate to your role-playing alter ego. Time for some dark elf stew.

opportunities because the additional context makes the role-playing more meaningful.

Computer RPGs will never be able to offer environments as open-ended as those in their tabletop counterparts, but computer RPG developers should strive to create realistic worlds if they want to offer more involving role-playing experiences. This wouldn't be as onerous or intimidating a task as you might think. A gaming world can be more realistic and immersive simply by being logically designed and arranged.

BioWare's *BALDRICK'S GATE* games do a great job of making environments more interesting simply by populating them with ambient life. Instead of stocking only the areas that you expect characters to reach near the end of the game with powerhouse opponents, throw in creatures that would seem natural at any point. Put a few rats in the sewers or some deer in the forest, and avoid having incongruous groups of enemy types banded together. If there isn't a reasonable explanation for why an ogre would be hanging out with a pair of ghouls, keep the critters apart.

It may be unrealistic to expect developers to take on the burden of giving nonplayer characters more personality by giving them daily schedules, as *ULTIMA V* did way back in 1988, but RPG developers should at least try to create less artificial environments by having creatures and characters interact with each other. *ULTIMA VII*'s Britannia was incredibly immersive because players could interact with any item or object realistically. And similarly, one of the reasons Bethesda's upcoming *MORROWIND* is so promising is its completely interactive world.

Developers don't have to be that ambitious, however. *POOL OF RADIANCE: RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR* will allow some interaction with objects such as furniture, but otherwise uses an isometric graphical perspective very similar to the *BALDRICK'S GATE* games. Aside from introducing additional tactical choices, environments with even limited interactivity are more interesting than flat, painted settings.

An unrealistic gaming world discourages role-playing. For RPGs, realism is good. Realism works. **GGW**



Requiem for a Dream

One company falls. One journalist weeps.

Game historians and collectors should do themselves a favor and seek out a copy of the December 1997 issue of *Computer Gaming World*. If you can't find one in your closet or on eBay, send me an email and I'll sell you one for, oh, let's say \$50. Better yet, just go ahead and send me the \$50 now. I'm sure I'll get back to you eventually.

The December 1997 *CGW* remains a landmark issue for at least two reasons. First, if you can actually lift the thing, you'll notice that it weighs in at a hefty 488 pages, making it not only the biggest issue we ever published, but also a formidable instrument to use for beating your little brother. Looking at this humongous issue now, it's hard to believe that we ever published magazines this big, but that's the difference between a healthy economy and the wheezing Abe Vigoda-like one we've got right now.

Anyway, once you get a hold of this massive tome, you should flip immediately to page 58, where a small, sad piece of gaming history unfolds before your very eyes. There, in living color, is a mute relic of a bygone era, is the very first print advertisement for a brand new game company that promised to take the world by storm.

"We're Ion Storm," they declare. "A bunch of misfit, zealot freaks who tried to rest on our past successes, but just didn't find it comfortable." It goes on like this for two pages. Sassy text descriptions of each of the six main freaks, with five photos apiece. Todd Porter, we learn, is "a mandolin-playing, natty OG type who thinks games should be as stylish as he is." John Romero, Tom Hall, Mike Wilson, Jerry O'Flaherty, and Bob Wright all get their turn, too—paraded before us like rock stars, like savors, like idealistic visionaries who were gonna turn gaming on its head.

"We had all lived on the edge," they said. "But we were ready to jump off." Four years later, I guess you could say they did just that.

I suppose it might seem like overkill

to pick on Ion Storm now, what with the doors closed, the windows shuttered, and the company corpse rotting in the warm Dallas sun. And really, I had finished with these guys a while ago. But I find myself writing about them one last time for a wholly unexpected reason. I just played their final game, *ANACHRONOX*, released almost simultaneously with the company's closure, and I loved it. Here,

Eidos Interactive, who shut the place down. And who could blame them?

But what I discovered this month, and what I'm happy to admit, is that it turns out they really had it in them after all. *ANACHRONOX*, Tom Hall's homage to classic console RPGs like *CHRONO TRIGGER*, is, in my mind, one of the best games of the year, and is easily the best console-style RPG ever made for the PC. It's a generous,

"Emperors must be overthrown. The status quo must be spanked." —Ion Storm, 1997

finally, after four years of crowing, after four years of missed deadlines and underperformance and endless public buffoonery, was a game that lived up to the hype—only now the company is dead. It's the final joke in Ion Storm's four-year comedy of errors—only now it doesn't seem so funny.

Ah, Ion Storm. If only they'd really listened to themselves: "Design is law," they proclaimed in that December 1997 ad. Design was so not law at Ion Storm that it's just sad. If design had been law, then their first two games—the woefully mediocre *DOMINION: STORM OVER GIFT 3* and the spectacular train wreck known as *DAIKATANANA*—would have been found guilty and sentenced to death. If design had been law, neither of those games would have made it past product testing without major, serious revisions. Instead, for four long years, hype was law. Ego was law. Gits and parties and a fancy, futuristic office in a way-too-posh Dallas skyscraper were law.

By the time their third game, *ANACHRONOX*, was finally, belatedly released this summer, pretty much everyone had already given up on Ion Storm, including their own publisher,

entertaining smorgasbord of a game, bursting with creativity, talent, and humor, with some of the funniest dialogue and cut-scenes in any game in years. Design, at long last, was law—it just showed up a little too late.

In a way, Ion Storm serves as the perfect poster child for a happier, more innocent time in the gaming biz. A time when wallets were open, and possibilities were limitless. Ion Storm would never happen now. Publishers and investors are too cheap, too scared, and too conservative now to give a hodge of money to a group of "misfit, zealot freaks." Everyone's just looking nervously for the next big hit—and the gaming world is more boring for it.

So I guess this is so long, Ion Storm. We haven't always gotten along, but I'm gonna miss you. Thanks for the easy jokes. Thanks for the horrible ads and cranky emails. And thanks, finally—and sincerely—for *ANACHRONOX*. Your company's dead and your game is orphaned, but you finally turned me into a fan. Bastards! **CGW**

In his dreams, Jeff will be killing robot frogs forever. Ride his boomstick at jeff_green@ziffdavis.com.

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