

MOB GAMES: SCARFACE + THE GODFATHER

COMPUTER

The PC Gaming Authority

GAMING WORLD



WORLD EXCLUSIVE

UNREAL TOURNAMENT RETURNS

FIRST DETAILS ON THE SHOOTER
THAT WILL OWN YOU

ALSO INSIDE

TOP GAMES REVIEWED

FREEDOM FORCE VS. THE 3RD REICH
STAR WARS REPUBLIC COMMANDO
THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY AND MORE!

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA™



MAY 2005 ISSUE 258
\$7.99 U.S. \$9.99 CAN/UK

WWW.GOW.IUP.COM

Disable Unit May 05

PLAY BALL!



All 30 leavers and logos



Team Management



Fast ball high and inside for a strike!



Updated rosters with players from all MLB teams



Realistic baseball physics and game-play

JAMDAT SPORTS

MLB 2005



- MLB and MLB.com Licensed
- Major League Baseball Action

Play as your favorite MLB team — updated with the 2005 rosters. Features also include pitcher stamina, power/sim meters, team management capability, and sound effects. Behind-the-plate perspective puts you on the field for exciting mobile baseball action. Hit a 100mph fastball and go deep. Play a quick 5-innings or a weekend series. Download today at www.jamdat.com.

MLB.com



JAMDAT
mobile

www.jamdat.com



PARIAHGAME.COM

MATURE 17+
M Blood and Gore
Strong Language
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PC
GO-DM
SOFTWARE



XBOX
LIVE
ONLINE PLAY

COMING MAY 2005
CAN YOU SURVIVE?

©2005 Ubisoft. All rights reserved. Ubisoft, Pariah, Can You Survive, Blood and Gore, Strong Language, Violence, Xbox, Xbox Live, and Xbox Live Online are trademarks or registered trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and other countries. Ubisoft, Pariah, Can You Survive, Blood and Gore, Strong Language, Violence, Xbox, Xbox Live, and Xbox Live Online are trademarks or registered trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and other countries. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

"A NON-STOP EXPLOSIVE THRILL RIDE THAT'LL SHAKE YOUR PC AND XBOX TO ITS VERY CORE..."

GAMEDAILY.COM

"PARIAH IS READY TO STAND TALL AS THE NEXT BIG STEP IN SHOOTERS."

OFFICIAL/XBOX MAGAZINE

PARIAH

ATT:GAC CTC

Rear Through The War Wastelands of Earth
brashly exercise under the heads of your armored and heavily equipped vehicles

The Ultimate Arsenal of Upgradable Weapons
to suit your gaming style. Your already deadly rocket launcher becomes a quad-rearward craft-igniting anti-airship destroyer (inserted name)

New Twist On Classic Multi-player Action
with vehicles and upgradable weapons in Capture-the-Flag, Death Match and Team Death Match plus the all new **Food Line Assault** and **Brege** modes

Create Unlimited Battlegrounds
with the exclusive M.A.P. Editor and share them with your friends and the world via system link, inventory and in Xbox Live!

CONTROL IS THE KEY TO CONQUEST.



**CONTROL
THE MASSES.**



**CONTROL
THE MAP.**

From the series that reinvented historical real-time strategy comes an evolution of epic proportions – a powerful new interface puts you in control as never before. Relive the complete span of human history as you lead your civilization through 12,000 years of conquest.

www.empireearth2.com



Unprecedented Control
Real-time Picture-in-Picture creates
a whole new level of command.

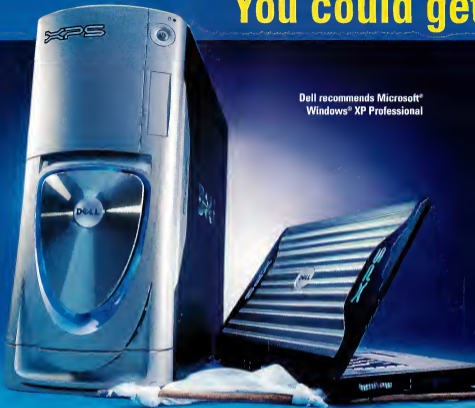
SIERRA



RULE AS NEVER
BEFORE WITH
INTEL TECHNOLOG

You could get

Dell recommends Microsoft®
Windows® XP Professional



...you could also surrender your weapon, expose your flanks and get spanked like the wannabe poser you really are

***PRICING/AVAILABILITY:** Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change, without notice. Taxes, fees, and shipping and handling charges are extra and vary. May be combined with other Dell offers or discounts. Valid for U.S. Dell Home Systems Co. new purchases only. Dell cannot be held responsible for pricing or other errors, and reserves the right to cancel orders arising from such errors. **PURCHASE PLAN/DELL PROGRESS ACCOUNT:** Offered by Dell Bank to qualified U.S. residents with approved credit. Conditions and restrictions determined by lender. Taxes, fees, and shipping and handling charges are extra, and vary. Minimum monthly payments of 5% or 3% of recent balance, whichever is greater. **HARD DRIVE:** For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes; actual capacity varies with pre-installed material and operating environment and will be less. **SERVICE:** At Home service provided via third-party contract with customer. Technicians will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting, after the next business day. Availability varies. Other conditions apply. **DVD-R/RW DRIVES:** Please note that discs burned with this drive may not be compatible with some existing drives and players. Using DVD-R/RW media provides maximum compatibility. **WARRANTY:** You can get a copy of our limited warranties and guarantees by writing Dell USA LP, Attn: Warranties, One Dell Way, Round Rock, TX 78682. To search our warranty only or for more information on other service options, please call 1-800-541-3535 or visit dell.com/dellwarranty. **TRADEMARKS/COPYRIGHT NOTICES:** Intel, Intel Inside, Intel Inside logo, Intel Celeron logo, Celeron, Intel Xeon, Intel SpeedStep, Pentium and Pentium II Xeon are registered or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. ©2005 Dell Inc. All rights reserved.

another machine...



NEW Inspiron™ XPS GEN 2

Take mobile gaming to a whole new level with powerful Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology with an Intel® Pentium® M Processor and super-fast video-card performance.

PROCESSOR

Intel® Centrino™ Mobile Technology – Intel® Pentium® M Processor 760
2GHz, 2MB Cache, 533MHz FSB) and Intel® PRO/Wireless 2915 Dual Band Internal Wireless (802.11a/b/g)

OPERATING SYSTEM

Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

MEMORY

1GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz

HARD DRIVE

100GB* Hard Drive

DISPLAY

17" UltraSharp™ Wide Screen UXGA Display with TrueLife™

GRAPHICS CARD

256MB NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 600 Ultra PCI Express™ x16 Graphics

OPTICAL DRIVE

8x DVD/DVD Burner (DVD±RW*)

SERVICE

1-Year Limited Warranty* with XPS Telephone Support; 1-Year Mail-In Service

\$3249

or as low as \$399/mo.*

E-Value™ Code: 03323-080432M



Dimension™ XPS GEN 4

Destroy your competitors with a super-fast 600-series Pentium® 4 Processor featuring HT Technology and an amazing video card from NVIDIA.

PROCESSOR

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 640 with HT Technology (3.25GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800MHz FSB)

OPERATING SYSTEM

Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition

MEMORY

2GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM

HARD DRIVE

500GB* SATA Raid D Hard Drive

MONITOR

17" Flat Panel Display (E173)

GRAPHICS CARD

256MB PCI Express x16 NVIDIA GeForce 6800

OPTICAL DRIVE

16x DVD-RW Drive; 16x Max CD/DVD Burner (DVD±RW*)

SOUND CARD

Sound Blaster® Audigy™ 2 ZS (D) Sound Card

SERVICE

1-Year Limited Warranty* with XPS Telephone Support; 1-Year At-Home Service*

\$3049

or as low as \$52/mo.*

E-Value Code: 03022-056436M



Some rigs have see-through sides and candy-coated finishes. Others have plastic robot heads sticking out of the top. But few can match Dell's elite Inspiron and Dimension gaming systems with their blazing-fast Intel® Processors. Both machines feature fast dual channel DDR2 SDRAM, excellent graphics cards and impressive thermal management for keeping cool in the heat of battle. So it's up to you. You can try to intimidate your opponents with a machine that looks like a carnival ride. Or you can choose a sleek XPS gaming machine and reduce them to a quivering, gelatinous blob.

GET MORE OUT OF NOW.



Shop online dell.com/cgw

Shop by phone **1-800-822-3438** For hearing/speech impaired; 1-877-DELL-TTY
(7 a.m.-11 p.m. CST)

"THE MOST DANGEROUS MOMENT
COMES WITH VICTORY"

- NAPOLEON BONAPARTE -



www.IMPERIALGLORY.com



Imperial Glory®/Puro Studios SL, 2005. Published by Eidos 2005. Imperial Glory is a trademark of Puro Studios, SL. Eidos and the Volence logo are trademarks of the Eidos Group of companies. All other trade marks are the property of their respective owners. All rights reserved. NVIDIA, the NVIDIA logo, NVIDIA: The Way to Play logo and other NVIDIA marks are the trademarks of the NVIDIA Corporation. Gamespy and the "Powered by Gamespy" design are trademarks of Gamespy Inc. Bink Video Technology. © 1997-2005 by FRODO Games. Frodo, Inc. The eidos logo is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association.

IMPERIAL GLORY



**VIEW FOR DOMINATION IN MULTIPLAYER
WITH 2-4 PLAYER HEAD-TO-HEAD**
Real-time battles allow you to pit your skills
as a Commander against your friends.



**CHOOSE FROM THE FIVE GREAT
EMPIRES OF THE PERIOD**
Great Britain, France, Russia, Prussia or
Austria, in your struggle for domination.



**SPECTACULAR REAL-TIME LAND
AND NAVAL BATTLES IN FULL 3D**
Authentic period formations and
maneuvers provide great tactical depth.

Contents

May 2005 Issue #251

14 Editorial

Our doddering, senile leader mumbles and yells at passersby while pushing his shopping cart of tin cans down the street. Our advice? Avoid eye contact.

22 Letters

We love letters. We really, really do. So this month, we added another page to our usual slew of nonsense. Lucky you!

32 Radar

We know that games have been evolving, but what's the hold-up? Why is it that games still aren't seen on the same level as books or movies as a form of entertainment? Read our in-depth look into the future of the game business. Also, we chat up Jack Emmert, lead designer and creative director for the *City of Heroes* franchise, in the AIM Game, getting the skinny on the latest news for the *City of Villains*.

56 Previews

We've gone preview crazy this month! To start things off, we've got an in-depth look at some of the cool psychic powers you'll be using in Majesco's sci-fi adventure *Advent Rising*. We've also got an early look at *Call of Duty 2* and some great-looking screenshots from Ensemble's next big RTS, *Age of Empires III*. After that, it's time to tune up the engine with *Auto Assault*, and then it's off to the mean streets with an imaginative sequel to everyone's favorite gangster film, *Scarface*.

86 Reviews

Just when you think you couldn't stomach another WWII game, along comes *Freedom Force* vs. *The 3rd Reich* to super-heroically save the day. *Star Wars Republic Commando* and *The Sims 2: University* also do their franchises proud. Hey, our Review section may be small, but it's grade-A stuff.



COVER STORY

THE UNREAL WORLD

Unreal Tournament 2004 delivered so big, it took CGW's 2004 Multiplayer Game of the Year award. So why is Epic Games already at work on a new *UT* game (and why the heck didn't the demos we saw have any art in them)? Because the development team wants to make the next *Unreal Tournament* the best *Unreal Tournament*—and they've told us how.



CGW HALL OF FAME!

Arguments and death threats thrill us. That's why we decided to induct new Hall of Fame games and developers. Some of them were shoo-ins, others weren't.



56



64

PREVIEWS

- 56 Advent Rising
- 58 Call of Duty 2
- 60 Bet on Soldier
- 62 Age of Empires III
- 64 Auto Assault
- 65 FlatOut
- 65 TrackMania Sunrise
- 66 Scarface
- 68 Dungeon Lords
- 68 Stronghold 2

REVIEWS

- 86 Freedom Force vs. The 3rd Reich
- 86 Star Wars Republic Commando
- 92 The Sims 2: University
- 93 NASCAR SimRacing
- 94 Lost Admiral Returns
- 94 Vendetta



86



90



THIS MONTH ON 1UP.COM



CGWFAME.1UP.COM

In honor of the newest (and oldest) titles we're inducting into our Hall of Fame this month, we have bestowed upon you, our readers, a great gift: the entire CGW Hall of Fame. Here you can vote for your favorite games and designers and bash our sorry undesired choices. We're so good to you.

BECKERS21.1UP.COM

Cough drop obsessions? Mary Rapping? Jabba's sluglike tongue? Apparently, our young intern has more time on her hands than she lets us believe. So we gave her a 1UP project to complain...er, blog about.



BOARDS.1UP.COM

If you ever go check out the 1UP boards, you'll find that since Half-Life 2's release, Counter-Strike's popularity has gone up. Whether you're simply looking for help or polling other gamers about their favorite weapons, you can always find something to enthuse or argue about.

96 Tech

Four incredible gaming LCDs, a killer SLI videocard, a brand new Killer Rig, iBuyPower's latest monster machine, Creative's newest gaming speakers, the triumphant return of Tech Medics, and more—our blegger, better Tech section launches with a bang!

T10 Tom vs. Bruce

Tom and Bruce battle for world domination in Laser Squad Nemesis while hordes of semiclothed cheerleader babes root on the sidelines. Does life get any better?

T14 Scorched Earth

Robert wakes poetic on the boundless joy his children bring to his life. Then he devours them like a caged gerbil.



Shoot to Thrill

Polygonal guns don't kill people



Way back when I was a kid (in the 1980s), I was not allowed to play with toy guns. My mom and dad were adamant on the point. No guns, no soldiers, no war toys of any kind. It wasn't that big a deal to me, because it was just as easy (and ultimately more satisfying) to just hit my little brother with a stick than to pretend to shoot him with a gun.

I bring this up because I have been thinking about how it is that now, as a grown man with a wife and daughter, I spend a great deal of my time shooting things on my computer. Part of it is the nature of my job. Someone has to get paid to kill all those Nazis and mutant zombies, and it might as well be me. I'm a public servant that way. But I'm also not a fraid or ashamed to admit that, hey, I just flat out like doing it. Shooters are not my favorite—I'll always be an RPG and fantasy-strategy dork first—but some of my most memorable gaming moments have come from shooters, especially online against other players in games such as *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament*, and *Battlefield 1942*.

Delayed reaction over not being able to play army as a boy? Maybe. I do know, however, that more than anything else, it's just a game. I'm playing to win, to try to be smarter and quicker and more devious than the next player. I don't really want to kill them—I just want them to lose. And when the game is over? Let's play again or grab some pizza or watch television or do any number of other peaceful, friendly activities.

In my real life, I've never owned a gun and have no intention of ever doing so. And as a father, I don't let my 11-year-old anywhere near any of these kinds of games—not even to watch me. And no, I don't feel it's hypocritical, in case you're wondering. She knows they exist, and she knows I'm playing them for my work. But I see a bit more clearly where my mom and dad were coming from. Yeah, they're just toys. Just games. Sometimes games are best left in the hands of adults.

JEFF GREEN @jrobbin-chief

CGW SQUAD LEADERS



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake



Player Name:
MistakeMistake

Team Name:
MistakeMistake

Difficulty:
MistakeMistake

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Editor-in-Chief: Jeff Green
Executive Editor: Robert Coffey
Managing Editor: Kristan Salavento
Senior Editor: Darren Davidson
Editor-at-Large: Stephen L. Gonsky
Associate Editor: Ryan Scott
Intern: Rebecca Gross

DESIGN

Art Director: Michael Jennings
Associate Art Director: Paula Springfield

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Chris Aelle, T. Byr Baker, Lloyd Carr, Tom Check, Bruce Geryk, Jeff Lindsay, Rachel Lichstein, Thomas L. McDonald, Scott Steinberg, Erik Wolpaw

Photo: David Ser

ZIFF DAVIS GAME GROUP

President: Scott C. McCarthy
Creative Director: Jonson Cox

COPY DESK

Copy Chief: Tom Edwards
Copy Editor: Greg Ford
Copy Editor: Susan Ochs

PRODUCTION

Senior Production Manager: Anne Marie Hagan
Production Manager: Monica Biant
Art Production Manager: Terisa Newton

CIRCULATION

Director: Nancy Schultz
Consumer Marketing Director: William Michalopoulos
Director of Retail Sales, Internet and Partnership Marketing Director: Chris Willes

SALES

Senior Director of Advertising Sales: Matt Yarnaguch

TERRITORY MANAGERS AND ADVERTISING SALES

GAMING ACCOUNTS

Southwest: Mary Gray, Regional Sales Manager
West: Matt Yarnaguch, Account Executive

Southwest

Southern California and Arizona
Rita Kline, Account Executive

East

AL AR CO CT DE FL GA IA ID IN KS KY LA MA ME MI MN MO NY NJ NC ND NE NH NI NY OH OR PA RI SC SD TN TX UT VA VT WA WI WY WY Canada

Ken Secker, Regional Sales Manager
Rita Kline, Account Executive

CONSUMER ACCOUNTS

Consumer West: Marc Callison, Consumer Accounts Manager
Consumer East: Michael Hagan, Consumer Accounts Manager

Consumer East: Matthew E. Pankonin, Regional Sales Manager
Consumer South: Candace Orr, Account Executive
Consumer - Central: Ken Secker, Regional Sales Manager

ADVERTISING

Editor-in-Chief: Tom Kennedy
Executive Director of Sales: Paul Fabbro
Chief Sales Manager: Whitney Spahn
Account Executive: Jessica Harbert

Senior Advertising Coordinator: Tami Lubliner
Advertising Coordinator: Jessica Harbert
Administrative Assistant: Lynn Fortissimo

SALES ASSISTANTS

Monica Biant, Tiffany Orr

MARKETING

Marketing Director: Ray Lindle
Research Director: May Tang
Marketing Coordinator: Jason Friedenthal

To contact Sales & Advertising, please call (973) 947-9600

The Call Has Never Been
So Powerful.



Asheron's CALL 2 LEGIONS



EPIC EVIL CHALLENGES ANCIENT MAGIC IN A BATTLE THAT WILL DECIDE THE
FUTURE OF A LEGENDARY RACE. AS THE PAST AND PRESENT CLASH,
ASHERON'S OWN LEGACY IS AT STAKE. WILL YOU HEED THE CALL?

<http://ac2.turbinegames.com>



Visit www.ssbj.org
for updated rating
information.



TURBINE, Asheron's Call, Asheron's Call Dark Majesty, Asheron's Call 2, Petals of Steel, Turbine Engine, Asheron's Call 2: Throne of Destiny, and Asheron's Call 2: Legions are registered trademarks or trademarks of Turbine, Inc. in the United States or other jurisdictions. Saban Publishing and the Saban Publishing logo are trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

UBISOFT



AMON TOLIN
CHRIS TERRY
Soundtrack composed by Amon Tobin



BRING THE BATTLE CLOSER. NOW!

What if an algorithm could crash the stock markets, black out New York, and hijack ballistic missiles? This is 2007. This is reality. The one programmer who has the key to this algorithm has vanished. Find him at any cost. Bring the battle closer to the enemy - bring it to their soil before the chain of chaos becomes unstoppable. You are Sam Fisher. You are a Splinter Cell.



All-new, shockingly innovative space vs. mercenaries online battles



Coordinate all-new co-op multiplayer interactions



High-adrenaline stealth kills, submission strikes, and takedowns



Literally dispatch enemy encounters through multiple levels



ROTATE 180°



**"IF YOU WANT TO BE
SOMEONE, BE YOURSELF.
1UP HAS PUT ME IN
TOUCH WITH OTHER
INCREDIBLE PEOPLE
FROM ALL OVER THE
WORLD WHO SHARE MY
PASSION FOR GAMES. I'VE
FINALLY FOUND A PLACE
WHERE I HAVE A VOICE. "**

[AMY]

[HTTP://ALUCARDNOKOIBITO.1UP.COM](http://alucardnokoibito.1up.com)

VISIT MY PAGE AT
[HTTP://ALUCARDNOKOIBITO.1UP.COM](http://ALUCARDNOKOIBITO.1UP.COM)



Games.Blogs.Clubs.Home.

UNPRECEDENTED
LEVEL OF AUTHENTICITY

THE CALL.

SWAT TACTICS
AND TERMINATOR
ON IN LEVELS



SWAT SITUATIONS
AND ACTION WITH
ONLINE MULTIPLAYER



SWAT EQUIPMENT
WITH LETHAL AND
NON-LETHAL
WEAPONRY



SWAT4

SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS

HEROES WANTED.



AWARD SEASON

As usual, our Game of the Year issue stirred up plenty of controversy and discussion. Here are just a few of the letters we received:

I just finished reading your Game of the Year award issue and had to write. I am shocked that you would give an MMORPG the Game of the Year award. I debbed in the original EverQuest for about six months, but I never thought it was GOTY award worthy. I don't think any MMORPG game is ever worthy of such an award, not even one made by Blizzard. I personally prefer single-player games. That doesn't mean I don't like to socialize. I love throwing LAN parties or meeting up with my buddies online for some great gaming, but to do it with total strangers, that's where I draw the line. I just don't see the attraction. Maybe it's because I'm an old-school gamer (since 1980), but I don't like to socialize in my games; I like to play them to get away. I'm sure many other gamers feel similarly. Many of us in the PC gaming community will never play an MMORPG game in all our PC gaming lifetimes. Based on this, you should give the highly regarded CGW GOTY award only to a worthy SINGLE-PLAYER game. Next year, I hope you get it right.

Eric Wendeler

Just because some gamers will never play an MMO shouldn't preclude such a game from garnering our highest award. A lot of gamers will never play an RPG or a shooter, but that shouldn't prevent those sorts of titles from contending either. We think we made the right call—but like every year, you and a number of other readers had bones to pick with our decisions. Read on.

So, let me get this straight: You choose as the No. 1 Game of the Year a game that I 1) have to pay \$50 for just to take home, 2) have to subscribe to for an additional \$13 a month just to play, and 3) can't play offline by myself at my leisure. What the hell is wrong with you guys? I don't care

Steam is a wonderful program, especially for someone who's ever lost a game disc or CD key!

—Matt Kendrick

I just wanted to say that I have had the most delightful time playing Sid Meier's Pirates! I was very pleased to see that it was a contender for Game of the Year.

—MOC-owlHOOT

I think any Star Wars game set in the same timelines as the movies is bound to disappoint.

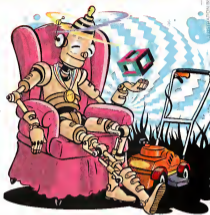
—TwinVibeir on IUP.com

Letter of the Month

You said that for the second year in a row, the NPC of the Year goes to a robot. (True. Last year's was HK-47.) I went back through my files, and as far as I can tell, HK-47 was the very first NPC of the Year. So every NPC of the Year so far has been a robot—all two of them!

Daryll R. White

Actually, after clawing through the midlevel brain matter suppurating in our skulls, we were able to come up with two more NPC of the Year notables: Morte, the floating disembodied skull buddy from Planescape: Torment, and the lovable lug Minsc from the Baldur's Gate games—all meat or bone, these guys, no circuitry. Though, now that we think about it, since they are essentially computer code, maybe they are robots. In fact, maybe we all are robots in some kind of cosmic PC game. And if grass had mouths and nerves, would our lawns scream and beg for mercy every time we mowed them? Whoa...we just blew our own minds.



how great an MMO it is; it doesn't deserve GOTY if it doesn't offer a single-player element. I may be part of a dying breed, but I like to immerse myself in computer games to GET AWAY from the people I have to deal with in everyday life. Give it the No. 1 spot for its category (best MMO), but save the big title for something more deserving and more accessible, such as Half-Life 2 or even The Sims 2.

Alex Nikolai

I can't believe you gave Painkiller the Single-Player Shooter of the Year award over Half-Life 2. Sure, Painkiller is fun at first, just hardcore killing and all, but that doesn't last long, because it's the same thing over and over. God knows I love killing hordes of monsters, but not over and over in a similar fashion every level. I'm sure this isn't the only letter like this

you'll be getting. Half-Life 2 = Amazing Painkiller = Monotonous

Ryan McGuire

Thanks for the square assessment of Half-Life 2. I think you were right on not to give it Game of the Year. Half-Life 2 is nice. Not spectacular, but nice. Not revolutionary, but nice. In particular, I personally thought the boat sequence was about three times longer than it should have been, I was cursing for it to be over. Good job, CGW.

Rich Fought

As I was reading through your latest issue I was appalled to see that World of Warcraft got Game of the Year! I mean, sure, it's a good game, but with stuff like Half-Life 2, Doom 3, and Sid Meier's Pirates! out there, how could you give the award to this?

Mail Bites



IF YOU SEE THEM



IT'S TOO LATE

MAGIC
The Gathering®
magicthegathering.com

Available Online

Betrayers
of kamigawa

Comparatively mediocre game? And on your personal most-wanted lists, not one of you listed HL2? And *Riddick* getting best action game? Sure, it has good graphics, but graphics do not a game make. And *Assassin's Creed*? Definitely not as good as *Doom 3*. I am disappointed in you.

PS: *WOW* did not make MMORPGs accessible for the first time. *City of Heroes* did that.

Rob Jones

Nice job on the Game of the Year awards. I agree with most of it, you rule.

Richard Rodriguez

Do you guys have some sort of grudge against Valve? *Half-Life 2* was barely featured in the 2004 Game of the Year awards, winning only in the minor category of Best Music. And for some strange reason, not one of your eight editors listed HL2 as their favorite game of 2004 lists. This, coupled with Steam's "win" for Coaster of the Year, has led me to believe that you have something against Valve. Or do you simply want to show the world that you had enough guts to deny the sequel to the greatest game of all time the GOTY award.

And as for *World of Warcraft*, there is absolutely nothing about it that makes it Game of the Year material. It is just an average (a rare quality in an MMORPG) game that was released about the time you were choosing the winners, so I must assume that the initial "wow factor" influenced your decision. The game may bring the genre to the masses, but in the end, it is just another MMORPG. It is a game that provides massive freedom at the expense of story, purpose, compelling characters, and engaging quests. And no game with a viewpoint of freedom with no direction deserves GOTY.

Daniel Singleton

I am having a really hard time understanding the Game of the Year awards in *CGW* #248. You guys have all of these nice categories to represent the different types of games, and then the winner for the best in that category. What kind of sense does it make to have *World of Warcraft* as a contender for MMO of the Year and lose out to *City of Heroes* but then win Game of the Year. You guys are essentially saying that *City of Heroes* is a better game (kill yourself now), but that of all the games played through the whole year, *WOW* was the best. If *COH* is better than *WOW*, how can *WOW* be better than any other game? And for the record, *COH* blows!

Justin Mitchell

To be honest, Justin, *City of Heroes* and *World of Warcraft* were the two games duking it out for the top honor. *WOW* came out on top like a giant game-eating kitty. However, our award criteria designates our eventual Game of the Year winner as a game that transcends its genre to be the best of all the titles released that year (for example, the year the original *Half-Life* won Game of the Year, our Action Game of the Year was *Battlezone*). With *WOW* getting the top prize, *COH* grabbed the MMO trophy.

STILL STEAMED
I completely agree with your review of *Half-Life 2*. The installation process was EXTREMELY annoying, and I personally downgraded the game because of it. Furthermore, here I am at midnight trying to play some *Half-Life 2*, yet Steam won't even work. I'm pretty sure I didn't buy an MMO game here.

Will Ranish

I just finished reading the review of *Half-Life 2* in issue #248, and while the review of the game made my mouth water at the thought of playing this masterpiece, the sidebar guaranteed I would NEVER buy this game... if you had to go through the registration process once before you could play it, that would be fine, but according to your article, you have to log on to your Steam account each time you boot your computer. Well, that's just p*** poor if I pay my money to buy a product, I shouldn't have to be hassled each time I want to play it. And the game should have been docked a full star for this.

BadAxe41

Best game ever made, they said. Well, I say it's BULL! *Half-Life 2* is the biggest headache I have ever had! I finally got it installed just night, and now I find out that this Steam account thing is an even bigger pain—it's almost impossible just to set up an account, let alone get the game to run. Tech support is even worse, I've sent three letters and still haven't gotten any help that works. My machine practically outclasses even a high-end machine on their list. While working on



this problem, I managed to finish two other games on the side. Until I can get some satisfactory help from these guys, I may as well just say adios and uninstall the darned mess!

Royally Steamed

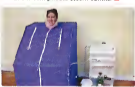
Your Coaster of the Year award was spot on. Steam is invasive, absolutely unnecessary, and a slap in the face to customers. It has no offline mode button (though some people claim to have made it work offline by uninstalling their LAN cards... Gee, great idea, Valve). It is merely an advertisement to "buy direct using Steam." (Gee, and to think normally I would have to open a Web browser to do that. But I guess Valve is still "working on" that.)

Most people don't realize where this is going. Imagine if all game manufacturers used this model, I would have dozens of little capitalist pseudo-spyware programs running at all times. How much of my total Internet bandwidth would be used just to keep "updating" all these companies' servers with my information? Then there would be the fun of having a company go under. Guess what—you would NEVER be able to play the game legally again because, as you know, if you were to use a patch to remove the spyware, you would be in violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act.

I will never buy any product that requires Steam or a Steam-like product. When I play *EQ* or *WOW* or *City of Heroes* or anything that is an online multiplayer game, I know what I am in for, but Valve's bait-and-switch tactic has started a disturbing trend in the industry that will gain momentum for a while until people speak out and express their opinion to Valve.

Sluggo

While we are not fans of the current incarnation of Steam, we fully recognize that digital delivery services are most likely the way of the future. We just hope they function better than this one. Until that day, we'll enjoy Steam the way God intended us to—in our own private Steam coffers. ☐



Mail Bites

I'd like to ask you something very personal. Where did Tracy Tspletas go?

—MOC-awh00t

You know, I used to think that Jeff was a dark. But the more I find out about him, the more I realize HOW ALIKE WE ARE!! Man, my self-image is just in the crapper right now.

—Cruel on TUP.com

If Master Chief took on Gordon Freeman, who would win?

—Davin Abrahams

BAKE PIES? WE DON'T THINK SO.

Fierce Player vs. Player combat keeps the action level INTENSE!
Massive Guild vs. Guild Battles involving hundreds of players!
Become the Emperor and Rule the Land!
Player-owned Fortresses and Real Estate
Commandeer Battering Rams and Catapults
Create Flying Siege Gliders
Hundreds of Quests to choose from
Customized Character Creation
Raise a Deadly Dragon for Combat



Pre-order
available in
local game
stores Now!

RYL™

path of the EMPEROR

A Truly Pvp MMORPG.

WWW.RYL.NET

PC CD-ROM ONLINE SOFTWARE

ESRB RATED RP (Rating Pending) Visit www.esrb.org for updated rating information.

Copyright © 2008 Treblehead Digital Co., Ltd., Gamasoft and PlanetSide Game
The orange icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association
The software platform logo (TM and ©) ESRM 2008. All Rights Reserved.

YoxiLand
a division of Gamasoft

[gamasoft](http://gamasoft.com)

PLANET WIDE games

O.R.I.P.

Your Check Out section bites. Really. Especially the one in Issue #244

Dennis

You'll be happy to learn that Check Out has passed on as of this issue. In its place is our new expanded Tech section. Hurray!

FASHION POLICE

Just noticed on the Staff page that you've FINALLY hired a woman (Paula) who has longer hair than the guys! Way to go, folks, way to go. About time.

Bryan Berkebile



Bad news, Bryan—as you can see, Paula has kinda changed up her overall look. On the plus side, Jeff is now sporting a delightfully feminine set of Heidi-style pigtails.

THE WRONG MAN

I believe that Robert Coffey messed the point in his Scorched Earth piece about the game *The Journey to the Wild Divine* [Issue #249]. I've played *The Journey to the Wild Divine*, and I loved it, and just to make things clear, you should understand that I've played and loved *Doom*, *Half-Life*, *Halo*, and other shooters with huge satisfaction and glee. That said, I feel that *Wild Divine* is a neat, new experiment that deserves more than just being shot down by someone who isn't giving it a fair shake. Granted, it definitely leans toward New Age-y sentiment, and if that puts you off, then it most certainly is not the game for you. But the interactive experience is truly cool; I've never before played a game where my own laughing, breathing, or relaxing caused things to happen on the screen. Also, it is designed as a learning

tool; it's for biofeedback, and all those interactive experiences are really just exercises to learn to control one's physical and mental states at will. If you're looking only to explore a pretty world through the solving of puzzles, it's *Myst*, you will likely be disappointed. But if you're interested in biofeedback and in the application of that technology to a gaming concept, I think you'll find it at the very least a really interesting and worthwhile experiment. Coffey just missed the point. He should probably learn to meditate.

Anonymous

Yes, he probably should learn to meditate. And we'd tell him that, too, if he weren't chewing through his lips. Frankly, we were hoping some actual feedback from that biofeedback device would have done the job the electroconvulsive shock therapy failed to do.

YOU-A CULPA

About a month or so ago I e-mailed you a pretty mean letter about how I thought you all were Intel fanboys because I never seemed to see AMD in the limelight. I was under the impression that Intel had bought you guys off, too. Then about three days later I got my issue with Mr. Vader himself on the front, and inside were pages and pages showing AMD systems. It was awesome and hands down the best issue so far. More people need to know that AMD kicks Intel in the kahunes and its products are cheaper than Intel's. So I apologize, and thank you!

Brandon Moore

Got a problem? Got a rant? Got a painful, burning itch? We want to hear about it. Write us at cgwriters@ziffdavis.com and you're guaranteed piece in heaven.

SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH

Remember the sweaty rave scene from the second *Matrix* movie? Here it is again! Only on a *Guild Wars* beta test server. Not such a bad shot, but c'mon—you guys can do better. Send your wild and wacky screenshots to us at cgwriters@ziffdavis.com and you too can enjoy 15 seconds of fame!

Mail Bites

I noticed in your review for *Pokémon: Battle Out of Hell* that the subheads were both titles of Meat Loaf songs. It's little touches like this that make your magazine the greatest.

—Julian Gluck

ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA™

Chairman & CEO
Robert P. Cohen
President & COO
Dart W. Canale
Chief Financial Officer
Derek Ingham
**Senior Executive Vice President,
Publishing Operations**
Tom Watters
Executive Vice President & Editorial Director
Michael J. Miller
Executive Vice President, General Counsel & Secretary
Gregory Borfas

PRESIDENTS

Scott C. McCarthy (Game Groups)
Susan Seymour (Compass, Tech Group)
Joan Young (Computer Tech Group & Ziff Davis America)

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS

Jessie Alexander (Technology & Sales Operations)
Tim Castell (PC Magazine Group)
Chris Caldwell (Corporate Sales & Business Development)
Dave Johnson (Business Development & Worldwide Learning)

VICE PRESIDENTS

Jo Becker (Internet)
John Davidson (Consumer Marketing & Database Management)
Sara DeCarlo (Game Group)
William Denber (Market Experts)
Aaron Goldberg (Unreleased Gaming)
Gerry Harigan (Market Experts)
Kathleen Holmes (Unreleased)
Michael Kruger (Unreleased)
Connie Lee (Children's Group, Internet)
Rick Luberman (Unreleased)
Jim Lusterbeck (Unreleased)
Rita Luyben (Unreleased)
Chris Mackin (Unreleased)
Heidi Mager Relfy (Unreleased Media & Corporate Sales)
Angelo Mendonca (Unreleased)
Ed O'Sullivan (Event Marketing Group)
Rand Postman (Unreleased)
Ruth Rapola (Human Resources)
Martha Schwartz (Academy-Conference Group)
John Spector (Business Development & International Licensing)
Tom Stearn-Tretheld (Editorial, Advertising Development)
Sophia Sutton (Unreleased)

Dixie Wile

Research & Market Intelligence
Advertising Group/Publishing Director
Games Marketing Group

Stephen Webb

Games Marketing Group

Monica Vile

Games Marketing Group

Senior Director, Financialing

Director of Corporate Communications

Carin Lugo
Randy Zane

Contact reprint on this material via e-mail: advertising@ziffdavis.com

PERMISSIONS

Copyright © 2004 Ziff Davis Media. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this article without permission is prohibited. Permission is granted to individuals to photocopy any article for personal or internal reference use only. For all other copying, contact the publisher.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

For a complete listing of our publications, visit www.ziffdavis.com. We also offer a variety of subscription options. For more information, please contact our Customer Service Department at 1-800-421-9511. We accept all major credit cards. Payment in US dollars only. All rates are for the United States. Rates for other countries are available upon request. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery of new subscriptions. We reserve the right to change rates without notice. We do not sell our subscriber lists to third parties. If you do not wish to receive our publications, please contact our Customer Service Department at 1-800-421-9511. We do not discriminate in advertising contracts on the basis of race, gender, or ethnicity. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer. © 2004 Ziff Davis Media. All rights reserved.

Adult Business of Circulation Member



ASCA

TRUE EVIL NEVER DIES

DOOM 3

EXPANSION PACK

RESURRECTION
OF EVIL

RELOAD FOR THE BLOODIEST BATTLE YET

TWO YEARS FOLLOWING THE UNEXPLAINED DISASTER ON MARS, THE UAC RETURNS TO THE ABANDONED FACILITIES TO INVESTIGATE A MYSTERIOUS BEACON BURIED DEEP IN THE RUINS OF THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATION.

A Game By



Requires
DOOM 3™ to play

Developed By
nerve

Distributed By
ACTIVISION.



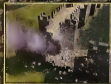
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence

©2004 id Software, Inc. All rights reserved.

Build. Battle.



THE MOST REALISTIC AND INNOVATIVE RTS CASTLE-SIM EVER CREATED.
IMMERSE YOURSELF IN THE MEDIEVAL LIFESTYLE, LIVE LIKE A LORD, DEFEND YOUR CASTLE FROM BARBARIAN HORDES...AND, IF YOUR CASTLE IS STRONG ENOUGH, BECOME KING.



www.stronghold2.com

© 2005 Firefly Studios, LLC. Stronghold 2 PC, Firefly Studios and the Firefly Studios logo are trademarks of Firefly Studios. 20 Games and the 20 Games logo, A Total Gaming logo, and Total Toy Software Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Total Toy Software, Inc. The online logo is a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other marks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Developed by Firefly Studios. Published by EA GAMES. All rights reserved.

Become a King.



FIREFLY STUDIOS'
STRONGHOLD 2


FIREFLY


2K
GAMES

BATTALION (AMD) *50*

- 17.0" Wide Screen WSXGA+ TFT LCD 1600x1050 Display
- AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport Technology
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Wireless Card
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 6700 PRO 128MB DDR Video
- 1024MB DDR-400 Memory
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 10/100/1000Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- 3x USB 2.0 and 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- Built-in Digital Web Video Camera
- 4-in-1 Media Card Reader
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year i-DataCare 24/7 Phone Support

Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1999
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1899
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1849
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1799
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1779

**\$ 1779**

- Provides leading-edge 32-bit performance for music, video, and games and is ready for future 64-bit software.
- Improves security against certain types of viruses, with Enhanced Virus Protection for Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2.
- Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n'Quiet™ technology.
- Features HyperTransport™ technology for improved multitasking performance.

**BATTALION (AMD) *5 Turbo***

- 15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
- AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport Technology
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 6700 PRO 128MB DDR Video
- 1024MB DDR-400 Memory
- Removable 8x DVD/8xRW / CD-RW Drive
- 60GB 5400RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Network
- 3x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year i-DataCare 24/7 Phone Support
- Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- Free Deluxe Carrying Case

\$ 1979

Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1619
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1499
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1459
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1409
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1379

BATTALION (AMD) *5 Turbo*

- 15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WXGA TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
- AMD® Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor with HyperTransport Technology
- Mobile ATI® Radeon™ 6700 PRO 128MB DDR Video
- 512MB DDR-400 Memory
- Removable 8x DVD & 24x16x24 CD-RW Combo Drive
- 40GB 5400RPM Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100Mb Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Network
- 3x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Free 1-Year i-DataCare 24/7 Phone Support
- Choice of 6 Exclusive Reflective Colors
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- Free Deluxe Carrying Case

\$ 1189

Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor	\$ 1399
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor	\$ 1289
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1249
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1209
Mobile AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor	\$ 1189

**Order Toll Free 888. 462. 3899**

IBUYPOWER NOW SHIPS TO CANADA!



ULTRA

IBUYPOWER Recommends ULTRA Power Supply

Note: Shown with Optional Drive HW-7200, 0.1 Gray Lighting Gaining Spins™

BARGAIN 64

\$ 559



- AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor \$ 259
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$ 299
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$ 339
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor \$ 469
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor \$ 789

Reaper™ 8 Bay Mid Tower Case
• See Through Window • Neon Light
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• Intel® C1200 Core™ E50 Memory
• 100GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
• 16x DVD-RW
• 320x102 CD RW
• ATI Radeon™ 9800 256MB AGP FX
• 4GB SDRAM
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• 107100 MHz Ethernet LAN
• 800Watt Surround Sound Speakers
• Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
• 4GB SDRAM
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• Full 1 Year 24/7 After Sales
• Technical Support • On Site Service

POWER 64

\$ 759



- AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor \$ 759
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$ 789
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$ 839
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor \$ 979
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor \$ 999

NEAT™ Tasty Mid-Tower Case
• See Through Window • Neon Light
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• Intel® C1200 Core™ E50 Memory
• 100GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
• 16x DVD-RW
• 320x102 CD RW
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• 107100 MHz Ethernet LAN
• 800Watt Surround Sound Speakers
• Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
• Microsoft Windows™ XP Home Edition
• Full 1 Year 24/7 After Sales
• Technical Support • On Site Service

GAMER FX

\$ 779



- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$ 779
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$ 829
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor \$ 919
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor \$ 1099
- AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor \$ 1339

Overtop™ Gaming Case
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• Intel® C1200 Core™ E50 Memory
• 100GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
• 16x DVD-RW
• 320x102 CD RW
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• 107100 MHz Ethernet LAN
• 800Watt Surround Sound Speakers
• Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
• Microsoft Windows™ XP Home Edition
• Full 1 Year 24/7 After Sales
• Technical Support • On Site Service
• Upgrade to Core™ E60 Series
• 1 Year 24/7 Support AOL 870

BACK TO SCHOOL 64

\$ 799



- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$ 799
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$ 849
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor \$ 939
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor \$ 1100
- AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor \$ 1350

NEAT™ Tasty Mid-Tower Case
• See Through Window • Neon Light
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• Intel® C1200 Core™ E50 Memory
• 100GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
• 16x DVD-RW
• 320x102 CD RW
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• 107100 MHz Ethernet LAN
• 800Watt Surround Sound Speakers
• Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
• Microsoft Windows™ XP Home Edition
• Full 1 Year 24/7 After Sales
• Technical Support • On Site Service
• Upgrade to Core™ E60 Series
• 1 Year 24/7 Support AOL 870

NIGHT DRAGONER FX

\$ 1279



- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$ 1279
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor \$ 1339
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3700+ Processor \$ 1419
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3900+ Processor \$ 1879
- AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor \$ 1809

Reaper™ Aquarium & Bay
• Upper Light Matted Tower Case with
• 400 Watt Power • See Through Window
• 8 Channel Ambient Neon Light
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• Intel® C1200 Core™ E50 Memory
• 100GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
• 16x DVD-RW
• 320x102 CD RW
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• 107100 MHz Ethernet LAN
• 800Watt Surround Sound Speakers
• Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
• Microsoft Windows™ XP Home Edition
• Full 1 Year 24/7 After Sales
• Technical Support • On Site Service
• Upgrade to Core™ E60 Series
• 1 Year 24/7 Support AOL 870

ZELLION FX

\$ 1479



- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$ 1479
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$ 1529
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor \$ 1619
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor \$ 1799
- AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor \$ 2049
- AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-52 Processor \$ 2269

Reaper™ Aquarium Gaming Case
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• Intel® C1200 Core™ E50 Memory
• 100GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
• 16x DVD-RW
• 320x102 CD RW
• NVIDIA GeForce™ FX 520 Ultra
• 8GB P3P Motherboard
• 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
• 107100 MHz Ethernet LAN
• 800Watt Surround Sound Speakers
• Multimedia Keyboard & Optical Mouse
• Microsoft Windows™ XP Home Edition
• Full 1 Year 24/7 After Sales
• Technical Support • On Site Service
• Upgrade to Core™ E60 Series
• 1 Year 24/7 Support AOL 870

WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM





Radars

A closer look into the things that matter



THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Star Struck

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORIES IN GAMING



Adult Ed
Instead of trying to "perfect" his, maybe just maybe we should each purchase



Celleb
There's a new CPU on the block. Check out why it should matter to you.



The Well-Built
The mind-bending world of Lego blocks has been created for Real Life 2. We talk to Barry Norman about a man and his mod



Hey Vin, quit your day job! If only the Riddick movie was half as good as the game.

Can a computer game make you cry? A tiny company called Electronic Arts posed that question back in a 1982 advertisement. Even now, as EA flings its platinum weight around Tinseltown, the challenge remains. Despite the number of movie scriptwriters game companies hire, no matter how many high-profile Hollywood talents line up to make a game more cinematically appealing, it still hasn't happened. With the exception of when we played the bungled *Enter the Matrix*, we still haven't cried. Why?

GAMING'S CITIZEN KANE

Most games just score you. "The next big step [for games]," according to Neil Young, "is being able to move people emotionally versus purely adrenally." That is a big push for EA LA's VP and general manager.

"The truth of the matter," says Young, "is that the game industry has yet to create its equivalent of *Citizen Kane*." Before *Kane*, films were shot like stage plays in front of a camera. But Orson Welles was the first person to use the medium to its full potential. That is part of the problem today. "The

biggest challenge is understanding how to tell a story in this new medium," says Young. After all, making an interactive game is not like creating a movie. It didn't work in the dreaded FNV era of the mid-90s (blame Digital Pictures) when publishers crinkled out movies and posted them off as interactive games and it certainly wouldn't work now.

Just ask Hollywood scribe David McKenna, who is currently working on '0U Games' *Scarface*. "The player controls the game, so you have to write ancillary scenes and dialogue for every possible scenario [instead of a straight plot]. That word, 'ancillary,' I will no doubt despise the rest of my life." This project is a labor of love for McKenna, but the usual MO in Hollywood is very different. Write a script, send it off, and you're done. Plus, the pay is usually much better. McKenna explains, "I made one-tenth of what I make on a movie for twice as much work. My first inclination is to say the gaming industry has to wake up a bit and start treating this like Hollywood before the two have any chance of getting closer." A developer on another game spoke of hiring an Oscar-winning writer, but when asked to redo or modify parts, the moody author



Here's one classic game that provides an amazingly entertaining experience.

stormed off the project. Translation: You want good scriptwriters that can evoke emotion? You get what you pay for.

THE EVOLUTION OF ENTERTAINMENT

Then you have examples like *Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay*, which shows that a licensed game created by developers who understand the medium and storytelling can create a better experience than the movie that spawned it. Mikel Selzer of Starbreeze Studios explains: "We started work long

"The next big step for games is being able to move people emotionally versus purely adrenally." —Neil Young, EA LA



before production began on [The Chronicles of Riddick]. When it started, two external scriptwriters were appointed to help us out. However, since making a game story is so extremely tied to the rest of the production and differs hugely from filmmaking, we had to keep the control of the script in-house. Any external input or revisions went through our internal processing and were adapted and rewritten before they went into the game." By understanding the interactive experience, Starbreeze was able to craft what went on to become our Action Game of the Year for 2004.

It's a start, but Professor Tracy Fullerton, codirector of the EA Game Innovation Lab at USC, thinks the idea of conventional storytelling needs to change. "Games are not going to be the next cinema. What people really want, though, is for [games] to have that same level of emotion, to get the same amount of respect and artistry." Today we may be able to get an experience equivalent to what's in theaters and on television, but, she adds, "People like us—we can't even imagine what [technology advances] lie ahead. We need people with a fresh take to imagine where games can go next." It also doesn't hurt that EA, the company investing heavily in this adjunct of USC's film school, gets a crack at cherry-picking the best to work on its next games.

VU Games is already married to Hollywood. Other publishers are being eyed for acqui-



EA has officially perfected an old method of storytelling in the *Lord of the Rings* games. Now they need to innovate new ways.



Enter the Matrix had the potential to bridge the entertainment gap. Too bad it stank.

tion by media giants. But EA seems infatuated with the idea of being crunched with other media as the game industry evolves. "All you need to do is see what is happening with games like *The Godfather*," says one analyst who requested anonymity. "EA really wants to be the next Disney or Fox."

There's nothing wrong with that and it's not far-fetched as the courtship of these entertainment mediums mature. A generation has grown up playing games, and according to Young, "They look at games as valid an entertainment form as film or television, but through a twist of fate found themselves working in Hollywood." These are the high-level creative thinkers who one day will be running things in the movie and TV biz. These are the people that will be in the high-level meetings, seeing the game industry as more than some get-rich-quick licensing opportunity (fingers crossed). This is just the start for creating whole new ways to play. **Darren Gladstone**



David McKenna, the man behind *American History X*, wrote the plot for VU Games' *Scarface*.



THE WAR IS INEVITABLE.

THE OUTCOME IS NOT.

Asheron's CALL. THRONE OF DESTINY™



RP
RATED
PARENTAL
STRONGLY
CAUTIONED
Some material may be
inappropriate for
children under
17 years of age

Visit www.esrb.org
for updated rating
information.

Your homeland is under siege. The Aluvian Queen and the Viamontian King rally their forces. Which side will you choose?

<http://ac.turbinegames.com>



TURBINE, Asheron's Call, Asheron's Call Dark Majesty, Asheron's Call 2: Fallen Kings, Turbine Engine, Asheron's Call: Throne of Destiny, and Asheron's Call 2: Legions are registered trademarks or trademarks of Turbine, Inc. in the United States or other jurisdictions. Stobon Publishing is not the Stobon Publishing logo or trademark of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

EDUCATION

Adult Education

In a nation gone censor-crazy, a sane solution for videogames and kids

This is an age of censorship. When confronted with unpopular or objectionable subject matter, some clown grabs his 15 minutes of fame, trying to guilt or scare people by telling them what they can view, read, or play. However, the flip side is hard to deny: The videogames we love so dearly are often not appropriate for children. How many of us would honestly play *Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude* in front of anyone below the age of 18 (or in front of anyone, for that matter)?

EDUCATION VS. CENSORSHIP

The National Institute on Media and Family, a nonprofit organization, focuses on the media's impact on children. We always knew there was a huge disconnect between parents and their children, which makes an educational approach the most logical. Many parents are simply out of touch with the videogames that cater to a more adult market. To this end, Mediawise (<http://www.mediafamily.org/>) was created to educate parents by providing articles, materials, and in-depth videogame ratings that address issues relevant to children. Mediawise's goal is to let parents make

informed choices, not have the government make informed choices on our behalf. No legislative solution can effectively protect children from videogames with inappropriate content while still affording parents the right to raise their children as they see fit—and, at the same time, protect gamers' right to play and allow game developers to express and profit from their art.

GET INVOLVED

According to Dr. Douglas Gentile, director of research for the National Institute on Media and Family, "Research is becoming clearer on two fronts: One is that games are effective teachers, capable of teaching both the good and the bad to children. The second side of research is that when parents are involved in helping to choose the game, that is a powerful mitigating factor—increasing benefits and minimizing harm." The moral of this story? Computer games are not bad. In fact, several can be beneficial to children. However, as with any other form of media, parents must step up, do their jobs, and be aware of and involved in what their children are doing. **Stephen Gehring**



Mediawise has positive and negative things to say about the industry. On one hand, the videogame industry has responded quickly to the public's demand for ratings and has continually refined its ratings system. On the other hand, industry leaders still opine that videogames have no harmful effect on children. Dr. Gentile of the National Institute on Media and Family asserts that this sends a mixed message to parents, who see a ratings system to guide their choices for their children but are simultaneously being told not to worry about the content of games.

DUMPSTER DIVER

Digging up gold in the bargain bins

If as a game, *Playboy: The Mansion* is the equivalent of an untouched, non-Photoshopped picture of a model with a bawdy, worthy grill. There's nothing pretty about it. Lame from start to finish, we were tormented with horrible design and even painfully bad music (Just ask Robert.) To that we say, "Enough!" Go back to *The Sims*, if you want your virtual people to hook up, send them out on a hot date. But if you really need to see women, just subscribe to *Playboy*. Instead, you'll be able to keep a little of your dignity—and honesty, the articles aren't bad.

SIMS DELUXE EDITION \$8

PLAYBOY: THE MANSION \$40



Where's-troika? A moment of silence for Troika as another great developer goes the way of the dodo. Exit the Matrix! Atari is working on another Matrix game. It follows the path of Neo. But are we skeptical?

The AIM Game

Statesman_Jack: CGW Instant Message

File Edit Insert People

Statesman_Jack has just entered the room

CGW: Hmm. Maybe it should be said, "Statesman_Jack just flew into the room" or something...ya know, keeping with the whole City of Heroes theme, since you're the lead designer and creative director and all.

CGW: Ahem. Anyhow, let's start off by asking something that you've probably been asked a million times: If you had one superpower, what would it be?

CGW: Not superspeed to meet deadlines? :-)

Statesman_Jack: I need mind control to meet deadlines, control the plebes.

CGW: Ha ha, I bet Jeff Green wishes he had that power as well. So, besides whipping plebes into shape with mind control, what's all the hubbub at the office right now?

Statesman_Jack: We're focusing on getting Issue 4, The Arena, out the door and kicking CGW into high gear.

CGW: Cool. How will arena combat work?

Statesman_Jack: You walk into [an arena] in Galaxy City, Peregrine Island, or Talos Island, then go to a terminal, set the conditions, choose a mix, choose Team or Free for all, then people join in and ZOOM...you're in.

CGW: So it works kind of like the X-Men's Danger Room? Oh, wait. You probably don't want to get sued for that...let's just forget what I said so. What's the incentive for arena fighting?

Statesman_Jack: Ahem... Anyhow, there are numerous ways to start a competition against chosen people, against all comers, etc. The incentive, besides bragging rights, is that you can bet influence on the outcome.

Statesman_Jack: After that, our big focus is City of Villains. Macro design is done as well as a couple of zones but now we need to focus on details. For instance, how many missions are there from levels 15 to 20...that sort of stuff.

CGW: One thing I've been wondering is if you can convert your hero over to the dark side? After all, heroes seem to go rogue in the comics all the time.

Statesman_Jack: CGW has four completely new archetypes: the stalker, mastermind, brute, and enforcer (though I'm not sure I like the enforcer name).

Statesman_Jack: Hero to villain and vice versa probably will be an update after release....

Statesman_Jack: At this point, all the villain archetypes are reversed versions of hero archetypes. The villain archetypes are gonna play A LOT differently than hero archetypes....

Statesman_Jack: You'll need to be a "bad" boy in order to find out how different the villain archetypes truly are.

CGW: Yep, the girls sure love them bad boys.

CGW: OK, so I've gotta at least ask, what do you think of the whole Marvel lawsuit against CGW? Are they just trying to kneecap you before Marvel releases its own MMO?

Statesman_Jack: Can't say...I'll let our statement do all the talking.

CGW: They've trained you well.

Statesman_Jack: :-|

CGW: All right. Now! One thing I've noticed about just about every MMO I've played: Because there are multiple world servers, you and your friends never seem to be on the same ones. How tough is it to let players jump their characters between servers?

Statesman_Jack: We're working on it now. Would like to get it into Issue 4 or 5.

CGW: Really?

Statesman_Jack: Really.

CGW: Would that be like a Crisis on Infinite Earths kind of plot element? :-p

Statesman_Jack: Heh...nothing so fancy. Just click and select your new server.

CGW: And no penalties for transferring between servers?

Statesman_Jack: No penalties. Perhaps a financial charge to cover the extra overhead that comes with this tech.

CGW: Ah. But obviously you still need to work that out.

Statesman_Jack: Yeah.

CGW: Jack, you're a champ for putting up with me this afternoon.

Statesman_Jack: Not a problem. Thanks...and see ya later!

Statesman_Jack has left the room.

CGW: Who was that random user?

Rich Text Editor toolbar with icons for Bold, Italic, Underline, Link, Unlink, Text Color, Background Color, Bulleted List, Numbered List, Undo, Redo, and other editing functions.

Quicker than you can say "Ho, ho, and away!" we're out of room here. That is why you need to go online to see what else Jack Emert has to say about the state of comics and MMOs. Check it out for yourself at <http://aimgame.tup.com>



■ SPLIT PERSONALITY

Splinter Cells

Top brainiacs at Sony, IBM, and Toshiba talk about the future of computing

The key to a new "supercomputer" is no bigger than a thumbtack. We're talking about the Cell processor. Sony, Toshiba, and IBM have been working together since 2000 to create this CPU. The goal is to "create a scalable multimedia-friendly CPU ready for broadband-rich media applications." Translation: the foundation for the ultimate gaming machine.

One of the first applications will be for Sony's next-gen console, which will be unveiled in Japan at the end of March, but Statewide our heads are spinning after a recent technology briefing where we got numbers—lots and lots of numbers. In fact, when IBM's Dr. Jim Kahle started talking about what makes this new processor so great, all we heard were ones and zeroes.

The whole framework behind Cell is shared computing between multiple CPUs. Eight synergistic processing units (SPUs) with a Power-based core can exceed 4GHz clock speeds. What the heck does that all

mean? Theoretically, this tiny solution could be 10 times more powerful than the current top-of-the-line processors. That was the finding of initial lab tests, at least. However, Masakazu Suzuki of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. warns, "It is not far to compare [the current processors] with the Cell. What we can say is that in some applications, namely digital media and entertainment, [the Cell] works much better." All Kahle could add was, "Stay tuned."

And as a scalable solution, you can expect to see these chips in a number of consumer electronics devices: cell phones, home media servers, computers, and even high-end workstations. The larger, overarching idea for Sony is that through a simple, unified interface, those devices will all be able to work together one day.

While intel lab numbers are available (see "By the Numbers" sidebar), there's still a lot that the companies couldn't talk about. For example, while they say the Cell is OS-neutral and can simultaneously run multiple operating systems, they can only confirm that the Linux OS works. And how

are they going to handle the asymmetry of the Cell? Multiple processors working together introduce new layers of complexity—and the possibility for errors.

Another big concern for the PS3, and future computers, for that matter, could be heat and power. While the Cell is capable of well over

STONED

GLAD



Is your brain hurting enough from the other story on this page? Look, before you start asking, "Why the hell is this jekass getting a column?" let me assure you that I am a bone fide dork—I just hold my liquor better than most. I'm going to try to use this space every month to continue asking the questions that nobody else is asking and making the observations that'll matter the most to you down the road. And here's the scary part: I'm actually gonna try to make some sense!

This is where you guys come in. What's buggin' you? What cool stuff are you trying to do with your computer? What games are giving you off? Want to invent a drink in honor of Microsoft? Whatever. Just drop me a line: Darren_Gladstone@ziffdavis.com.

One sidenote on these Cell developments: is anyone else out there noticing how the manufacturers are lining up? You've got Sony, Toshiba, and IBM in one corner trying to find a way to perfect the consumer experience in the digital living room. Microsoft, meanwhile, is aligning itself with Intel (as always) to bring the full PC experience to the home theater with media center PCs. It's like the Apple-Windows war all over again. FUN! Next month, let's delve deeper into what Microsoft has in store. ■

BY THE NUMBERS

The Cell—and we don't mean the J-Ho movie

8	synergistic Processing units (SPUs) working together
64	bit Power architecture with VMX runs the whole show
4.6	GHz clock speeds possible (compared to 3.8GHz clock speeds with Intel's current top-end CPU)
2.5	Mb of on-chip memory (512KB L2 cache and 6x 256KB) that can carry data to and from off-chip memory at speeds up to 100 gigabytes per second
254	million transistors on a 221mm square
250	billion operations per second (Cflops). Not quite top-500 supercomputer range (80+ Gflops), but still not too shabby

4GHz clock speeds, the amount of heat generated by it (and everything else in the machine) will require a lot to keep the processor cool under the hood. There may be 10 digital thermal sensors on die, but this bad boy still needs some breathing room. We'll need new cooling solutions or we'll wind up with monster machines that require wheels to move.

■ Darren Gladstone

NEWS FEED

► Thanks, 2K Games! The Family Guy cartoon is eventually coming to the PC. Better still, Midway also has plans for most of Cartoon Network's Adult Swim stuff. Stay tuned. ► Xbox great, Fable is PC-bound in 2005 as Public Enemy's! ►

AREA-51

THE CONSPIRACY IS
NO LONGER A THEORY.

"4 OUT OF 5"

"...TECHNOLOGICALLY OUTSTANDING."

"...NOTHING SHORT OF GORGEOUS."

- OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"...ONE INCREDIBLE SHOOTER"

- GAME INFORMER

"...PLAYS LIKE THE BEST
FPS YET ON THE PS2"

- PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"...COULD BE YOUR SECOND HALO"

- ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

AREA51-GAME.COM



Battle an enemy unlike
anything you've ever faced.

Mutate and experience
amazing alien abilities.

Intensify the action with
online multiplayer combat.

Discover the mind-blowing truth about UFOs, Roswell, alien autopsies and more as you blast your way through the US government's most secret and secure military facility: Area 51.

MIDWAY



PlayStation 2



Area 51 © 2001 Midway Games Corp. All rights reserved. Area 51 is a trademark of Midway Games Corp. M2001 and the Midway logo are registered trademarks of Midway Amusement Games, LLC. Blood by permission: GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" logo are trademarks of GameSpy Interactive, Inc. All rights reserved. Distributed and published by Midway Home Entertainment Inc. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The Online logo is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Online play requires Internet connection, Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 and Memory Card (sold separately). Network, Game, Area 51 Live and Area 51 are registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries and are used under license from Microsoft.

POWERED BY
game spy

Board of the Damned

From polygons to plastic, *Doom* joins the ranks of *Chutes and Ladders*

The tension mounts. Pulse-raising. With a red key card in hand, that cardboard cutout door is easily bypassed. Then, a sound...heavy pounding (oh, it's just dice rolling). Then another...this time, a goony devil-bitch scraping plastic against board as he wobbles toward you. "Shoot, dammit, shoot!"

Welcome to hell—scale 1:1,000,000. Demons have hoofed through a portal and found their way from Mars Base to your living room. It's *Doom: The Boardgame* (\$54.95; www.fantasy-fightgames.com). That's right, it may cost as much as the PC title, but all those plastic figurines and board pieces you need to set up make it worth it. Kinda. All you need are dice and a dim remembrance of why you dropped \$600 on that Fatal1ty graphics card.

THE SETUP

Three geeks play matrices; another controls the demon hordes. The DM (*Doom* Master? Who knows...) lays out the customizable board in a scenario and manipulates the 62 two-inch hellions. The first marine to escape through the ventilation shaft wins. The losers pay for pizza.

THE DRAW

There are two decks of cards to pull from. First is the marine pile, being your special, ass-blasting skills that can make you a mariner marksman or a smarter scout. The DM draws the invader cards, which spawn demonic bastards and hellish events like rope, permitting multiple maulings during the same turn. Guess that makes it the board-game equivalent of "monster closets."

THE TOKENS

Scattered throughout are these convenient cardboard bits, slipping you with ammo, armor, weapons, and wounds, all stocked in your "equipment bin" (See, fancy name for flimsy paper thingy). **By Jan M. Gibson**

WOW (WORLD OF WARBOARDS)

Bitten by the board-game bug? *Tabletop Wizards Fantasy Flight* have a catalog that spans first-person shooters to real-time strategy—in all their cardboard glory. *WarCraft* was another recent addition to the game-maker's library of licenses, letting Blizzard aficionados ditch the digital world of PCs for dice. Surprise, surprise—there's even an expansion pack. **By**



CONSOLE CORNER

There are plenty of good games out there beyond what is on the PC. Whether you also own a PS2, Xbox, GameCuba (or, in our case, all three), we're here to help. So here's our pick for the best of the console games now shipping to store shelves.

XBOX

Jade Empire

The next RPG evolution to come out of BioWare, *Jade Empire* has all the trappings of the now-classic *Knights of the Old Republic*, but honed with an even larger degree of polish. What matters more, though, is an even bigger focus on the action.

Like in *KOTOR*, your character

evolves, but you're traveling through feudal China instead of hyperspace.

Magic and martial arts rule the day here. Inspired by the likes of *Five Venoms*, the game features over 30 fighting styles that your character can learn. Map different styles to your controller and you can change a fight's flow on the fly. As you progress in the game, so do your chances of swaying toward the good or evil side (as in *KOTOR*) through conversation and rash actions. We've heard that this game may come to the PC (hopefully in 2005), but to be perfectly honest here, we can't wait that long.



NEWS FEED

Activision is working on an expansion to *Rome: Total War*. *Barbarian Invasion* is set to come loaded and ready for combat by the middle of September. Not to be outdone, a *World War II* expansion for *Dawn of War* is due later this year as well.

THE chronicles OF EGGBERT

One gnome's journey through *World of Warcraft* BY JEFF GREEN

The only good thing about not playing *World of Warcraft* 24/7—other than the spouse loathe-o-meter going down a notch—is the “rested” bonus that Blizzard bestows upon you for your time logged out. It’s a bizarre reverse incentive thing that Blizzard has going, like the way the U.S. government pays farmers to not grow crops. Basically, the more you don’t play, the more experience you get. So, what I’m thinking right now is that if I never play again, I’ll get to level 60 faster than ever.

This is great news, because for much of this month, my other *CGW* responsibilities (like sleeping in a puddle of drool at my desk) kept me away from *WoW*. What could have been annoying was actually great. The bonus XP enabled me to breeze my way up to level 32 in no time at all.

HOURS 120-160

OK, well it wasn’t all because of the bonus XP. Finally, this month, I went and tackled some of the elite quests I had heretofore been avoiding due to my misplaced, misanthropic desire to play this massively multiplayer game by myself, with no help from others. (File that under: Missing the Point.)

So for a while, I spent a good chunk of time mopping up a pile of quests both in the stockades and at Gnomeregan. The bad part about waiting so long to tackle those quests was that most of the rewards were armor or weapons that were already too weak for me, especially the stuff in the stockades. But, hey, there was money involved, too, which never hurts, and it really is quite a different, and fun, game—out—when you find yourself facing tough enemies and need the help of others. Young Eggbert learned quite a bit about controlling his Voidwalkers who kept stupidly aggroing every enemy in sight, as well as the value of giving the group healer the soulstone, rather than hoarding it for himself so that the healer can quickly reincarnate upon death. Trying to tackle even the relatively “easy” dungeons with no healer turns out to be a quick trip to the graveyard. I can’t imagine ever having the patience to want to play as a healer, but, ya know, “big ups” to those players who do. We need you.

In other news, upon hitting level 30, I finally got my revenge on all those freaky Rogue Spreaders and other monsters in Duskwood who had been killing me repeatedly while in my 20s.

I also continued my personal quest to become the most pimped-out mack daddy in Azeroth, and with the addition of my Dread Mage hat and Silk Mantle of Gamm, let’s just say that this little gnome is going to be scoring beaucoup de babes in the very near future. **E**



3) Pardon me while I level up. Eggbert hits 31.



4) The view from above is much cooler now that I've made my Green Tinted Goggles.



5) As the sun sets in Azeroth, Eggbert enjoys a quiet moment. Alas!



6) Ladies Love Cool Eggbert.

ON THE DL

Freebies live and direct from the Web



Cosmos UI for World of Warcraft

www.cosmosui.org

DWith more than 600,000 people all trying to make level 60 at the same time, *World of Warcraft* has players looking for every edge they can get—if you’re one of them, the Cosmos UI is your razor. This mod gives you the ability to add additional toolbars anywhere and everywhere and stuff them with buttons, and that’s just the tip of the iceberg. This collection of user-interface enhancements lets you control everything from an in-game clock to a combat caller that automatically screams when your health dips to a predetermined level. Want to see how much damage that fancy new blue weapon you just equipped is doing? Turn on the DPS tracker and get detailed stats. The ability to mark the map with unlimited notes is also a godsend.

Want even more control? GypsyMod (gypsymod.themed.net) is another interface enhancement that is much more streamlined. Auctioneer (norgs.internutter.org) lets you get the best possible prices for your swag, and Gatherer (norgs.internutter.org) marks all of those scattered herb and ore spawn points. **D**

NEWS FEED

→ Sega and Monolith get *Confirmed*. The two are partnering up to bring a horror game to both next-gen consoles and the PC this winter that has you hunting down a serial killer; it follows on the heels of Monolith’s *R.E.A.R.*, which is also in development. →

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT



REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

JOIN THE REVOLUTION @ www.wasdsucks.com

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

May 2005



The Good Uwe Boll, a Critical Reevaluation

By handcrafting a steady stream of surreally baffling videogame-

licensed movies, maverick filmmaker Uwe Boll is the spiritual successor to Ed Wood. In a recent interview with the Horror Channel, Boll revealed that his next project, *Dungeon Siege*, will be a modest cross between "Conan, Braveheart, and *Lord of the Rings*." Should be awesome, but not nearly as good as *Alone in the Dark* or *The House of the Dead*.



The Bad First They Came for the Cheaters...

Online miscreants picked a bad week to not stop cheating at

America's Army. According to an article in *Information Week*, the game's producers have warned hackers that "The Army is angry, and we're coming for you." When combined with the words "Army" and "angry," it's hard to imagine "coming for you" as anything other than a euphemism for "going to murder you." Hopefully, there are no plans to go after people who don't play it.



The Ugly Hands Off!

Chastrest has introduced the world's first "Busty Mousepad."

Emblazoned with saucer-eyed anime cuties, the pad features an anatomically incorrect set of boobs to cradle your wrist in carpal-tunnel-defeating, extreme-embarrassment-creating luxury. How does it work? According to the official site (www.chastrest.com), "Wrist is supported by the valley between the two gelatin mounds." ❑

• SLEEP WITH FISH

MOB SCENE

EA's in Little Italy, the press kisses the ring

Down on Mulberry Street, New York City, the Joint is packed. Waiters in white aprons pass meatballs and calamari. On the speakers, Frank's crooning "Luck Be a Lady." A sterlet with cleavage deep enough to hide Jimmy Hoffa spears a wedge of mozzarella we had our eyes on. Then the lights dim. On a big screen, a familiar logo appears: a puppeteer's fist holding six strings over the words *The Godfather*. Then another logo: Electronic Arts.

You're still about six months away from getting your hands on Electronic Arts' new *Godfather* game, but EA is so excited about it, the company is giving a sneak peek to several hundred of its closest friends. It's even brought in stars from the movie to say a few words—James Caan and Robert Duval show up in person, while Brando speaks from beyond the grave in a snippet from the four-hour session he spent recording new dialogue as Don Vito Corleone. "Brando really got the interactive medium," insists a smarmy EA exec. And then comes the great man's voice, hoarse and magical, explaining how



EA execs were beaming as the gaming giant continues to edge into Hollywood's turf.

computer games work. "It's the audience that's doing the acting."

Well, maybe. The snatches of gameplay we were shown look limited and underwhelming. But when Nino Rota's lush score starts to play and the period street scenes appear, we're carried away in spite of our selves. Yes, there are plenty of things that could go wrong with this game, but we've been *Godfather* junkies for years, and the chance to spend hours or days inside the *Godfather* universe is just how do you resist it? Ah, yes an offer we can't refuse.

❑ Charles Arde



❑ The battle we expect EA's PR will use if we "disrespect" the game in any way.



❑ It's still early, but any game that lets you play as Michael and Al Pacino is OK by us.

NEWS FEED

❑ Brace yourself for a big shock: A *Half-Life 2* expansion is in the works. As expected, it features Alyx Vance as a playable character with a new weapon: a combination SMG, pistol, and sniper rifle. We'd still rather play as Dog.

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT



REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REBEL

JOIN THE REVOLUTION @ www.wasdsucks.com

SOE SORRY

mmo Beta Blues

The future is here: Behold the +5 pepperoni!

Hey, buddy! Wanna get some pizza? "Sure. No 'chovest!!" By typing "/pizza" in *EverQuest II*, a browser launches in which you can order grub directly from Pizz Hut. Not quite what we expected from the next developing stage of the MMO genre, but what the heck, you still need to eat, Right?

SOE president John Smedley recently released a 3,000-word missive to the MMO community (http://eqlive.station.sony.com/news_section/newsnewsp?story=49927). In it, he recounts the history of SOE, talks about Blizzard forcing SOE to bring its "A game," and raises some very valid questions about the future of online entertainment. Let's tackle these points one by one as we ponder the MMO evolution.

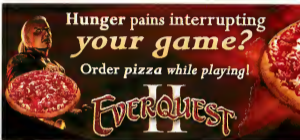
SOE asks: What if you could have families in MMOs? Virtual children. What if your characters could have children and pass on the family name?

Our answer: The concept isn't exactly new. The *MMO Mourning* (www.realmsoffire.com) already has that feature in the works, and word has it that *Saga of Ryzom* (www.ryzom.com) will be doing something similar by adding aging and children. We know *EQ2* has aging in the mix, but the real trick is providing players with a good reason to continue a familial dynasty. Will your pups gain extra powers?



SOE asks: What if players could build fantastic dungeons that become part of the worlds we create with tools we give them?

Our answer: This isn't actually unheard of. *Neverwinter Nights* (<http://nwn.blowers.com>), which has been out forever and a day, allows users to create maps and mods and open up servers, cities, and so on. But this is on a small scale. Can it be done on an MMO scale? That's a better question, to which we say, "possibly." You could likely create your own dungeons, but they'd have to be instanced off the main server. And it goes without saying that the quality of any user-created map is only as good as the creator's imagination and the tools he has to work with.



SOE asks: Can MMORPGs have skill-based combat?

Our answer: Of course they can. *PlanetSide* (www.planetside.com) sure tried hard to show that off. However, its setup had two flaws that became more obvious over time. First: It didn't fully reward skill. No matter how many sniper head shots you pulled off, a one-shot kill was impossible.

Second: Once *PlanetSide* added too many layers, variables, and rules, too much was taken away from the core experience. The real trick is in the implementation. Don't make the game overly complex. Or at least find a better way to remove the barriers of entry. Take a good, long look at *Guild Wars* (www.ncsoft.com) when it ships this month.



SOE asks: What if?

Our answer: Continue asking these questions and try to come up with some bold new ideas, because there are lots of hungry companies biting into the action now. Besides the obvious direct assault on the "classic" MMO from Blizzard's *World of Warcraft*, NCsoft has done a good job by reaching out to new audiences with some of its titles. Just look at *City of Heroes* and the upcoming *Auto Assault* as games that break the mold. What we do know is that to continue the evolution of MMOs, it's going to take more than offering pizza with cheese in the crust.

■ Darren Gladstone



REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT



REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

REVOLT

RESIST

JOIN THE REVOLUTION @ www.wasdsucks.com



Junkyard Wars

Half-Life 2 zoned for construction with new mod

Bailing wire, a rusted big block engine, corrugated sheet metal, and a bathtub for a seat—looks like someone's been playing that old board game *Mousetrap* a little too much. Actually, it's a ramshackle plane quickly built in *Garry's Mod* that isn't flying quite right. Not a problem. Just whip out some in-game tools and solder together the right parts till she's airworthy.

Garry Newman, the man behind the mod (www.garryto/garrysmod), has created a let-'em-build-it-and-they-will-come masterpiece that turns *Half-Life 2* in all of its Newtonian detail into a treatise on cause and effect. But instead of requiring map-editing tools and technical savvy, *Garry's Mod* does it all in-game. No texture alignment or exploit-proofing to fuss with. Equip-able, weaponlike construction tools handle

everything. One fires ropes for tethering junk together and creating pulleys, a second creates wheels and shortcuts to control them with, a third welds joints and sets pivot points, and so on. "Like Legos, I tried to keep it as simple as possible," Newman explains.

And his forums are filling with demo videos. One member displays the destructible Tower of Babel he built with wood pallets; another proudly



BLOCKLAND

B Concerned that *It's* bro might try re-staging *Calligole* with the cast of *Half-Life 2*? Free, firm-friendly downloader *Blockland* (www.squoft.com/blockland/ind.x.asp?b=home) lets you build whatever you want with Lego-like bricks.



B Modmaker Garry Newman passes off the few comic strips fans have made, saying, "Some are really awful, actually, most are awful." Still, the potential is there.



❑ This town needs an enemy! Want to make the Joker? Pose and position



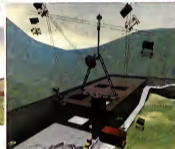
❑ Footrick bridges are for tykes—check out Ryan Williams' work. Williams'



❑ Transformers got nothing on me!



❑ Balanced, working motorcycle by "Glubags"; tank by Tyler White.



❑ Jeep Barnett's Ravenholm-themed fun house.

presents his working amusement park complete with Ferris wheel and Ravenholm-themed fun house. "The hours people spend on it always amazes me," says Newman, "but the Rube Goldberg devices are the greatest—a barrel blows up, which sends a wheel rolling, which knocks a door down, which pulls a rope—that sort of thing." (Watch http://suler.math.pacific.edu/~davi3246/rube_goldberg_2.avi to see this stuff in action.)

But there is more to this than manipulate objects. The mod also lets players

manipulate character models right down to their smiling/grimacing/shouting facial features. Newman's heard of some more unusual projects and requests: "A nude Alyx. That's what everyone seems to want, although I won't guess what for..." Meanwhile, less depraved types can create armies of artificially intelligent minions to fight one another: 20 zombies versus as many antlions, 30 humans against two striders—you want it, you got it.

What's next for the project? "I'm still

tuning axis constraints that allow you to build working doors and drawbridges, along with a slide constraint that restricts movement along one axis like a curtain rod. I've got it working with a messy melon guillotine." Newman reveals "After that, I'm hoping to see a few mods spring off of mine, maybe something where two teams have 15 minutes to build a fort before doing battle."

❑ Shawn Elliott



VALVE ON GARRY'S MOD



"Just about everyone here has checked it out, and we actually show it when speaking to students and folks interested in using the Source SDK to build games—it's a great example of thinking outside the box and how our tech is modular enough to support more than FPS-style applications. As for what else we'd like to see from it: 'More, please.'" —Doug Lombardi, director of marketing

• STUFF

Faces of Death

The five worst ways to die in games



1 Death by Jumping Puzzle

Can we agree on one thing? If a character in an FPS is strong enough to carry nine different types of guns, a rocket launcher, and a backpack full of grenades and still be able to sprint, then that character should be strong enough to manage a 3-foot running jump. We play shooters to shoot, not to satisfy some weird desire to replay as an Olympic track-and-field star. And while we're at it, let's make it so a hero who's blessed with the eye-hand coordination to take out a squad of bad guys with a rapid series of head shots from a small-caliber handgun is nimble enough not to slide off that inexplicably moving platform. Just do it, and no one gets hurt.



3 Death by Tank Rush

They could be tanks, they could be zerglings, they could be any pissant early-game unit you could name, but few things sting as sharply as watching your carefully nurtured economy and intricately built high-end base fall before a seemingly endless, infuriatingly artless wave of idiot melee units. When your insanely brilliant and devious plan for total late-game victory is undone by a 12-year-old pumping out archers, life just feels monumentally unfair.



4 Death by Ladder

The higher you are, the harder you fall, and until some genius designer figures out a foolproof way to negotiate climbing down ladders in first-person shooters, you can pretty much count on falling to a maddeningly unnecessary death at least three times in the single-player portion. As brain-bendingly tortuous as that is, it doesn't compare to ladder deaths in an online multiplayer shooter, where that one accidental plummet to the great digital beyond might be all that stands between bragging rights and irrelevancy.



2 Death by Poison

It just sucks. Bad.



5 Death by Quicksave

A subset of so many other aggravating ends, death by quicksave wrecks more havoc on game enjoyment than any other demise. Generally, it works like this: You receive a fatal dose of poison/start to fall/waste your last ammo or mana/get hit by a flamethrower or something worse and smack the Quickload key in order to finesse this treachery—but you hit Quicksave instead, forever dooming yourself to a Sisyphean cycle of torment as you're forced to witness your death again and again. God help the CD-ROM if you don't have a normal save somewhere near the bad quicksave.



TAKE ON THE ORIGINAL



AXIS OF EVIL!

ORDER NOW FROM
WWW.FREEDOMFANS.COM
AND RECEIVE 3 EXCLUSIVE
BRONZE AGE BONUS
CHARACTERS!

FREEDOM FORCE vs THE 3rd REICH

THE FREEDOM FORCE
IS BACK IN AN
ALL NEW ADVENTURE!

CREATE CUSTOM HEROES
AND SUPER POWERS—
EVEN TAKE CONTROL OF
ENEMY TANKS!

CLASH WITH TITANS
IN FULLY DESTRUCTIBLE
WORLDS!

COPYRIGHT 2008 AT&T GAMES.
FREEDOM FORCE AND THE FREEDOM FORCE LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF
AT&T GAMES. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. SIERRA AND THE SIERRA LOGO ARE TRADEMARKS OF SIERRA
ENTERTAINMENT, INC. IN THE U.S. AND/OR OTHER COUNTRIES. GAMESPY AND THE "POWERED BY
GAMESPY" DESIGN ARE TRADEMARKS OF GAMESPY PUBLISHERS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
ALL OTHER TRADEMARKS ARE PROPERTY OF THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS. COPYRIGHT 2008, AT&T
TECHNOLOGIES INC. AT&T AND THE AT&T LOGO ARE REGISTERED TRADEMARKS AND/OR
TRADEMARKS OF AT&T TECHNOLOGIES INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

www.freedomfans.com



SIERRA

POWERED BY
GAMESPY

PC
CD-ROM
RETAIL

TEEN
T
Fantasy Violence
Language
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

100 BUCKS

It's burning a hole in your pocket. Go spend it



BOOK
Bringing Down the House
 \$30.90, AMAZON.COM
 Ben Mezrich's "the geek shall inherit the Earth" true-life tale is about six MIT students

who figured out how to legally beat the blackjack tables. They walked away from casinos with millions. Sorry you didn't pay attention in math class now? Same here.



DVD
Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle
 \$18, AMAZON.COM
 Harold, Kumar: We dub thee brilliant. This movie goes right up

there with *Half-Baked*, *Dazed & Confused*, and countless other slacker classics. Maybe it's the random humor, maybe it's just the thought of those delicious little burgers with tiny onions that explode in your mouth like flavor crystals.



MUSIC
Kasabian
 \$14, AMAZON.COM
 Maybe Robert found it because this rock band was named after a member of the Manson family. (What?

Was "Squeaky" taken?) But we digress. Much ass was kicked with moody rock songs like "Club Foot." Hell, we got black eyes just listening.



COLORS
Gangsta Rap Coloring Book
 \$6, AMAZON.COM
 You know'n that Crayola rill, dawg? Umh, yeah. Anyhow, start your kids off on the right path: y'know, by coloring in pictures of famous rappers like Method Man.



FIGURES
Crazy Cat Lady
 \$10, URBANOUTLETTERS.COM
 Insane neighbors are always the best or, at least, the best for people-watching. If you

don't have a crazy cat lady living near you, NOW YOU CAN! Just buy this bleary-eyed "action" figure. Wild hair; check. Helter-skelter look in the eyes; yep. She's even got extra cats!



DVD
Star Wars: Clone Wars
 \$13, AMAZON.COM
 What happened during the Clone Wars after *Star Wars Episode II*? If you own remotely care, you

need to get volume one of this animated series. Gernsey Tartakovsky, the guy behind *Samurai Jack* brings his style to the *Star Wars* universe. Besides, the remastered digital print looks great and the action sounds awesome thanks to THX surround sound. Grab this—the second series should be starting soon.



RAUP
Madrox
 \$3, MARVEL.COM
 What would you do if you had the ability to create multiple versions of yourself? Madrox, over the

years, has seen clones of himself all over the world to learn everything from mental arts to medicine. Now, his detective agency is open for business. Good scripting and film noirish leanings makes this mutant book a must-buy.



MUSICIAN
William Shatner, Has Been
 \$13.90, AMAZON.COM
 The original rocket man is rocking out once again! The

biggest shock is that this CD isn't a musical mess. Ben Folds, the man behind the music, makes it actually work. But the best musical performance by a member of the USS Enterprise is still Leonard Nimoy's rendition of "The Delia of Bilbo Baggins."



RAUP
Bloodhound
 \$3, DCCOMICS.COM
 It's kinda hard to draw a bead on the badass bloodhound Clevenger. Smart, superstrong, and not someone to mess

THAT WAS THEN: MAY 1993

Looking back at the way we were



Happy May Day, everyone! Well, not exactly. It was a bit of a downer back in 1993. The president of Sri Lanka was assassinated during a parade. On the pop culture

scene, some fools released a movie based on *Super Mario Bros.* By the end of the month, the final episode of *Cheers* aired, and, we're sorry to report, *The Bodyguard* soundtrack topped the *Billboard* 200 for the 19th consecutive week. But there was at least one ray of sunshine. Let's turn to the pages of *Computer Gaming World*.

Long before Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six*, Electronic Arts was toying with the idea of having you control an elite squad of soldiers. In *SEAL Team*, each mission began with a planning session before you were inserted behind enemy lines in a first-person simulation. Gets you thinking, huh? This was an attempt to follow hot on the heels of *Wolfenstein 3D*, but the game was quickly overshadowed by the likes of *Doom*.

In these very pages was the article "How the Pentium Processor will 'Hot Rod' Gamers' Computers." We dug deep to explain how scorching fast a 66MHz processor really is (hint: it's a helluva lot slower than the CPU in your cell phone). And we covered the hot trend of the day with a massive section on telem gaming (playing a game over your phone lines—CRAZY!). That's right, before teh Interweb we called it telem gaming. Isn't that...quaint? ☹

With this former cap is now an ex-con who gets tapped to lay major beatdowns on supervillains. This comic is—how should we put it—not exactly for the squeamish. His no-nonsense approach to cracking cases usually leads to someone missing a couple limbs, but boy is it a good read!

VISION BLEP Wood Messenger

\$3, SUZANNEIS.COM
 After a long night at the office trying to make deadlines, we're tense. A good back massage is only a URL away, friends. We just don't know what to make of the design of this thing. Ummm...this is only supposed to be a messenger, right? ☹

Pocket Change: \$0.00

"Stealth with a sexy twist" XBOX

STOLEN

THEY SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE.

www.stolen+game.com



COMING SOON...



Blood
Violence



PlayStation 2

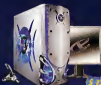


blue





\$ 999



\$ 1235



\$ 1499

GAMER DESKTOP DESKTOP

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6 Chipset MB w/ 16K PCI Express
- 6GB 50MB PCS300 DDR600 Memory
- 80GE 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 Hard Drive Powered by SATA
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 256MB DDI w/ TV Out
- LG 16X DVD-RW Drive & LG 16X DVD-ROM
- nForce 4 3i 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative CenterStage Desk Top Theater 5.1 5W60 5.1 Surround Sound System
- 58K V92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse
- nForce X-Nerada Tower Case 429Watt w/ MOO "See Through Windows"
- 3 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP 2
- Microsoft® Work 2.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Secure BIOS™, 5.1 Cozy Lighting Speakers System for \$100

GAMER DESKTOP DESKTOP

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Chipset MB with Dual 16K PCI Express
- 6GB 50MB PCS300 DDR600 Memory
- 80GE 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 Hard Drive
- 2GB NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 GE PCI Express DIME DDR3 Powered by SATA
- Over 200K Performance Giga Over Weble video card solution
- LG 16X DVD-RW Drive & LG 16X DVD-ROM
- nForce 4 3i 3-D Surround Sound
- 80GE Subwoofer System
- 58K V92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Logitech Optical Wheel Mouse
- A-10P X-SLIDE II Case 500Watt with See Through Windows
- 6 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP 2
- Microsoft® Work 2.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

GAMER DESKTOP DESKTOP

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 Chipset MB w/ 16K PCI Express
- 6GB 50MB PCS300 DDR600 Memory
- 80GE 7200RPM 8MB Cache Serial ATA150 Hard Drive
- 16K PCI Express NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 GT 256MB DDR3 Powered by SATA
- LG 16X DVD-RW Drive
- LG 16X DVD-ROM
- nForce 4 3i 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative CenterStage Theatre FM90 3D Surround Sound System
- 58K V92 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- 17" Viewonic Super Slim V1795 LCD Display
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Optical Intelli Explorer Mouse
- Abanaxis X-Navigator Serial Tower Case 400Watt w/ MOO "See Through Windows"
- 3 Cool Custom Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP 2
- Microsoft® Work 2.0
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor	\$ 1815	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor	\$ 1315	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1120	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 999	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 915	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 868	color

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor	\$ 1965	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor	\$ 1675	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1489	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1365	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1279	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1233	color

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor	\$ 2255	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor	\$ 2049	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 1865	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 1720	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1645	color
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1595	color

- Provides leading edge 32-bit performance for music, video, and games and is ready for future 64-bit software
- Improves security against certain types of viruses, with Enhanced Virus Protection for Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2
- Conserves power and operates quietly with AMD Cool'n'Quiet™ technology

Picture Shown w/ Optional Secure BIOS™, 5.1 Cozy Lighting Speakers System



CYBERPOWERPC.COM

AMD, the AMD® Arrow logo, AMD®, Athlon®, and Cool'n'Quiet™ are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.

ORDER TOLL FREE [800] 707-0393



\$2099



\$579



\$1325

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 9600 GT PCI Express with Dual 1GB PCI Express
- Cool 512MB PC3200 DDR40 Memory
- 250GB 7200RPM SATA2 Serial ATA-150 Hard Drive
- (2) NVIDIA® GeForce™ 9600 GT PCI Express 256MB DDR3 Powered by 975
- Over 80% Performance Gain Over Single video card solution
- 16X DVD-RW Drive & 16X DVD-RDM
- Creative Lab 5E-Audigy 2 ZS 3D Sound w/ EAX
- Creative Cambridge Inspire P7600 X1 Surround Sound System
- 54K 102 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Optical Intelli Explorer Mouse
- Asus Verbo 3600 Storage Gaming Case w/ 500Watt Power Supply
- 3 Cool Colors Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP2
- Microsoft® Work 70
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ Chipset 960 w/ 960 PCI Express
- Cool 512MB PC3200 DDR40 Memory
- 250GB 7200RPM SATA2 Serial ATA-150 Hard Drive
- 16X PCI Express NVIDIA® GeForce™ 9600 GT 128MB Video Card w/ TV Out & DVI Powered by 975
- 16X DVD-RW Drive
- 16X DVD-RDM
- nForce 4 71 3-D Surround Sound
- Creative Cambridge Desk Top Theater 5.1 565 960 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers
- 54K 102 Modem & 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Logitech Digital Wheel Mouse
- Asus® X-Merits Tower Case 435Watt w/800D "See Through Windows"
- 3 Cool Colors Colors to Choose From
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP2
- Microsoft® Work 70
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Ultra 3-Connect 100W AXZ Power supply w/2 80mm Fans - Back w/UA Upgrade for \$95

- SIS Athlon™ 64 Chipset Motherboard
- 512MB PC3200 DDR40 Memory
- 16GB Ultra ATA-100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI™ Radeon™ 9700 Pro 128MB Video
- 3-in-1 WGA/WDVD Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 16X V92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-In Media Reader
- 1 Firewall IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.36 lbs
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP2
- Free Carrying Case
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From
- One Year 24/7 Toll Free Tech Support

- AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor \$2099 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor \$2699 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3900+ Processor \$2225 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor \$2095 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$1845 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$1665 CPU/MS

- AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor \$1680 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor \$1385 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3900+ Processor \$1180 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor \$1075 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$989 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$930 CPU/MS

- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3700+ \$1919
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3400+ \$1495
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+ \$1365
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+ \$1325
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+ \$1295



\$545



\$1195

- GeForce™ G4-KM9 nForce™3 250MB w/ 64 AGP
- Cool 512MB PC3200 Dual Channel DDR40 Memory
- 16GB 7200RPM Hard Drive
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ FX 5200 128MB G4 AGP Video Card Powered by 975
- 16X DVD-RW Drive
- nForce 3 51 3-D Surround Sound
- 80Watt Switcher System
- 1.44MB Floppy Drive
- Logitech Deluxe 104 Keyboard
- Logitech Digital Wheel Mouse
- Asus® X-Power Case 420 Watt w/800D "See Through Windows"
- 5 Cool Colors Colors to Choose From
- Free First Year On Site Service plus 24/7 Tech Support
- Upgrade to Silver RW16486 3.1 UJ48g Speakers System for \$75
- Upgrade to Ultra 3-Connect 100W AXZ Power supply w/2 80mm Fans - Back for \$95

- SIS Athlon™ 64 Chipset Motherboard
- 512MB PC3200 DDR40 Memory
- 4GB Ultra ATA-100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI™ Radeon™ 9700 Pro 128MB Video
- 3-in-1 WGA/WDVD Combo Drive
- 10/100 Network Card & 16X V92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G 54Mbps Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-In Media Reader
- 1 Firewall IEEE 1394 & 3 USB 2.0 Ports
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- Weight only 6.36 lbs
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition w/ SP2
- Free Carrying Case
- 5 Custom Colors to Choose From
- One Year 24/7 Toll Free Tech Support

- Features HyperTransport™ technology for improved multitasking performance



- AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor \$1295 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$810 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$740 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor \$699 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3400+ Processor \$639 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor \$606 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor \$559 CPU/MS
- AMD Athlon™ 64 2800+ Processor \$529 CPU/MS

- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3700+ \$1309
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3400+ \$1279
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3200+ \$1259
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 3000+ \$1199
- AMD Mobile Athlon™ 64 Processor 2800+ \$1169

ULTRA
CYBERPOWER RECOMMENDED ULTRA POWER SUPPLY

CyberPower Inc.

4900 Little India St. Balaire Park, CA 91706
Tel: (924)2813-7730 • Fax: (924)2813-3830
Technical Support: (877)978-0565
Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30A.M. - 6:00P.M.
Sat 9:30A.M. - 3:00P.M.



By Jason D'Amico

Days/Of/Week

Adventure

Rising to the occasion

Myth is the world's most enduring storytelling device. Think about it: The legends of ancient Greek gods, The Epic of Gilgamesh, and even *Star Wars* are among our greatest stories. But what sorts of myths does the future hold? In *Advent Rising*, the answer is simple: tales of an apocalyptic race known as "humans."

Renowned author Orson Scott Card takes a deep dive into his sci-fi closet with this, the first chapter in a monumental action-adventure trilogy that spans the breadth of the known universe. Not only will the consequences of your actions carry over from game to game, but the main character—you, Gideon Wyeth—will grow and evolve during his spiritual, intergalactic journey. The right choices you make during *Advent Rising* are just the beginning...and if that's not the scariest thought of things to come, you're going to be in for one hell of a ride.

Renowned author Orson Scott Card takes us deep into his sci-fi closet.





Call of Duty 2
It's the sequel to Activision's acclaimed military shooter...and we've got all the details.

58



Auto Assault
NCsoft continues its trend of delivering wildy imaginative MMOs with this Mad Max-esque thrill ride.

64



Scarface
Al Pacino's infamous Tony Montana returns in this imaginative sequel to the fan-favorite film.

66

RELEASE DATE: May 2005

nt Rising



WIELD

With this power, Gideon can use surrounding energy particles to levitate free-standing objects. This could potentially be used to solve environmental puzzles—or, of course, to send heavy objects flying at your enemies, Darth Vader style.



NEGATE

This power conjures a field of pure energy, which Gideon can use as a handy force field. Projectiles that collide with this wall are deflected back toward their point of fire at full velocity, though the field dissipates upon any type of organic contact.



TIMESHIFT

Thanks to Gideon's ability to wield a powerful gravity shield, not only can he achieve lightning-fast speeds and leave his foes in the dust, but he can also slow the action to a momentary crawl when the situation calls for precise moves.



SURGE

Gideon's telekinetic talents include dominion over gravitational energies. He can hurl waves of force, which should send even the toughest enemies flying. Surge can also be used to yank the guns right out of your enemies' hands.



AEON PULSE

Gideon can focus the waves of electromagnetic energies coursing through his body, sending them out in a crackling burst of radial energy as they reach near-unstable proportions. It's great for toasting a few marshmallows...or an oncoming wave of alien scum.



SHATTER

With this chilling power, Gideon creates a flurry of unstable ice spikes. These frozen crystals home in on the biosignature of a nearby enemy, whose energy they feed off of before exploding in a bright, violent mess. **By Ryan Scott**

THE WORLD: AWAKENING



SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

D The PC screen isn't the only place you'll be seeing *Advent Rising*. King's call for a tie-in comic series courtesy of *Echo 3 Worldwide*, which also publishes comics based on Hideo's *BloodRayne* games. The comic will be written by Orson Scott Card, with art by penciler Will Conrad (*Angel*, *Bully the Vampire Slayer*) and colorist Rain Beredo (*Conan*, *Galaxy Girl*). Hideo is also serious about the game's music, with a soundtrack orchestrated by Emmy Award-winning conductor Mark Walters and performed by a 70-piece Hollywood orchestra.



DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward

SHOOTER RELEASE DATE: Q4 2005

Call of Duty 2

Like in the first game, you don't fight alone. But this time, your squad is smarter. You had the enemy's intel, too.



We loved the cinematic intensity and nonstop action of the original *Call of Duty*—so much so that we're finding the wait for the sequel excruciating, especially after getting a firsthand look at the dramatic changes the brand-new game engine and more open game design are bringing to the title. This series of screenshots vividly captures all the drama and beauty from one of the game's early campaign levels.

1 SMART TEAMWORK

While the graphics enhancements are obvious, the A.I. squadmates operating underneath may result in the biggest difference in gameplay. When making an assault on a village, your squadmates will intelligently seek cover, utilizing multiple pathways to reach an objective—don't expect them to slavishly follow you. Even more, they'll alert you to the actions of the enemies in great detail, making comments like, "Get that guy behind the car!"

2 A WIDE-OPEN WORLD

Every level offers multiple objectives, giving you the opportunity to beat them in any order you want. Here, the player has opted not to flank the village and is instead pushing on for a more frontal assault. The improved enemy A.I. might send reinforcements (there're no endless spawning bad guys) to repel you—possibly making another objective vulnerable. The bigger world will also accommodate battles up to five times larger than those in *CoD*.

ALL-OUT ACTION

Get ready to support the troops!



Most overlooked new feature? Saucy soldiers in short pants. Oh yeah...



The levels may be larger and more open, but you'll still have to deal with a few tight—and deadly—spaces.



You can expect more realistic vehicle interaction, such as escorting tanks during the North African missions.



2 Do you make the frontal assault or try to flank? The choice is up to you—just don't expect these guys to follow.

3 **SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES** Visibility is a huge factor in deciding A.I. behavior, and here you can see how graphics can influence gameplay. With the brilliant new smoke grenade effects providing cover, the Allied troops make their charge. Blinded by the slowly dissipating smoke, the Axis soldiers hold their fire—until it is too late.

by Robert Colley

The Word: **SUPERTROOPERS**



☐ The soldiers don't like the falling snow, but us gamers sure will.



3 The new smoke effects add a great realistic feel to the game, but it's how they influence the A.I. that really matters.



My money's on the guy snatching up from behind.

Few games have titles more literal than *Bet on Soldier*. It's not just some clever phrase: You actually bet on yourself, Pete Rose style, in the game. That's the big twist in this new FPS from neophyte developer Kylonon, but don't mistake it as an attempt to create a cookie-cutter Unreal Tournament-style sports arena. In *Bet on Soldier*, the action revolves around the story.

You play as a mercenary thrown into the middle of a war that's been raging for the last 80 years. "Nobody really knows why it began," claims publisher Digital Jestahs. But that's fine by us—it's a great excuse to pit a handful of mercenaries against each other in bloody televised battles. It gives off a

sort of *Running Man* vibe, which does a great job of conveying the competitive gameplay style.

GENTLEMEN, PLACE YOUR BETS

At the beginning of each level, you'll visit a screen that shows you the boss characters you'll fight, and you can use your money to bet on which of those enemies you think you'll be able to take down within 60 seconds of encountering them. Each boss has weak points for you to exploit—for instance, if your foe is holding a shield, you'll have to wait for him to drop the shield while he reloads, at which point he'll be vulnerable to attack. Obviously, the bigger the threat a given boss poses, the more lucrative your potential winnings. You can take risks by betting more on the difficult challenges or play it safe and put your money on

the easy guys. The money's not just for bragging rights, either; you'll need it to buy armor and upgrade your weapons, meaning that your progress directly correlates with your performance.

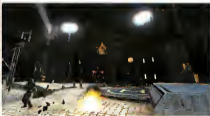
The betting idea extends to the multi-player modes as well. Similar to the setup in the single-player game, you'll pick out which players to go after ahead of time and see how well you can do against them. To prevent experienced players from taking advantage of newcomers in online battles, the game includes a ranking system that rewards players for taking down higher-ranked opponents.

It's always risky for an unknown development team to tackle a technology-driven genre like the first-person shooter, but Kylonon seems to have found a very creative hook—and it's got a nice physics engine and impressive visuals to boot. Our money's down. **—Matt Leone**

The Word \$\$\$\$\$



You actually bet on yourself, Pete Rose style, in the game.



PUBLISHER: Microsoft DEVELOPER: Ensemble Studios GENRE: Real-Time Strategy RELEASE DATE: Q4 2002

Age of Em



P We all knew it was coming...it was just a matter of when. But rest assured: *Age of Empires III* is well underway. The long-awaited sequel to *Age of Kings* picks up right where its predecessor left off, taking place between the years 1500 and 1850 and

pires III

putting players smack dab in the middle of a European power struggle between eight civilizations—each with its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, Spanish forces receive heavy homeland support, while the British army claims economic superiority in its mission to conquer and colonize the New World.

Beyond all the expected statistical innovations, AOE3 also promises some eye-opening visuals, as you can see from this beautiful screenshot. Developer Ensemble Studios is pulling out all the stops here, leading the next generation of RTS games with what many consider to be the biggest name in the genre. ■



It looks like it's gonna be a hot day in hell.

BY TONY COLE, NCSOFT, JAMES LUTHE, NETDEVIL, CLARE HINDRICH, AND GREGORY LEE

Auto Assault

Redefining the term "road rage"

NCSOFT came out of nowhere with last year's award-winning *City of Heroes*, exploding onto the MMO RPG scene with a stellar product that dared to differentiate itself from the typical fantasy-RPG fodder. And the company's next big project, a postapocalyptic car-combat MMO aptly titled *Auto Assault*, is ready to defy expectations once more. "You might say it's our MO with MMOs," jokes NCSOFT representative Janna Bureson. For this project, Jumpgate developer NetDevil has been tapped to create what can only

be described as the MMO equivalent of *Mad Max*. Here are just a few reasons to get revved up for what is sure to be one of 2005's most unique RPGs.

1 POSTAPOCALYPTIC CHAOS

Alien invasions, nuclear explosions, and robots... does it get any better than this? *Auto Assault*'s world is a complete wreck—and that's a good thing. Contaminated, overzealous mutants engage in road wars with cold, uncaring brooms, while the humans who hit the nuclear panic button now struggle to

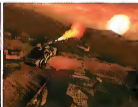
regain a foothold in a world largely devoid of their corporate influence. Their money's no good here—especially when giant lasers and plasma cannons do most of the talking.

2 MASS DESTRUCTION

As you've probably guessed, most of the game is spent rolling around in tricked-out rides that are armed to the teeth. Sure, you'll take a quick run into town every now and then to buy a new chain gun for your latest four-wheel death machine, but the



Get to town, get some loot, and get gone.



Flamethrower? Check. insane jump? Check.



On the mean streets, your guns do the talking.

majority of your time will be devoted to cruising the mean postnuclear streets, smashing up anything and everything in your path, and wreaking general havoc in an effort to get your mitts on whatever valuables you can. Cars are fast, handle loose, and include separate aiming controls for your myriad weapons. Just don't let your trigger finger get too itchy—an overheated gun won't do you much good.

3 A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

For all the highways and byways that litter the world, you'll never find yourself getting lost. Waypoints direct you toward your destinations, with plenty of color-coded mission text.

Giant lasers and plasma cannons do most of the talking.

Highway exits lead to instanced mission areas, which you'll periodically revisit, lending a sense of continuity to your actions. Not only do your malicious efforts earn you fistfuls of cold, hard "kink" (the game's currency), but they also net you valuable experience points and crafting materials. Need to reinforce your vehicle's armor or add a few intimidating decals to it? Snag some scrap metal from the building you just knocked down and get cracking!

4 PLAYER VS. PLAYER COMBAT

We don't know much about this yet, but hey, in this kind of world, you're sure to meet more than your fair share of troublemakers. Sure, there are



They call themselves biomechs for a reason.

safe havens among your own people, but once you leave your safety net, you'd better be ready for a fight. There are even a few tournament arenas for the truly bloodthirsty types—and plenty of repair stations for all the unlucky SOB's who can't cut it. **B Ryan Scott**

The Word: CAR WARS



Developer: Empire Interactive **Publisher:** Bigfish Games **Genre:** Racing **Release Date:** June 2008

FlatOut

Definitely not the next *Burnout*

It's saying something when a racing game's standout feature is a crash angle that sees your character flying through the windshield and, in an impressively slick display of rag-doll physics, cartwheeling over a concrete barrier before landing in a pile of skinned limbs. *FlatOut*'s no slouch as a racing game, and it's not nearly pretty enough for our tastes. But using your character as a crash test dummy practically constitutes a "Whose body can fly the furthest?" minigame. **B Kristen Salvatore**

The Word: FLAT



During this race, you'll be jimmie' to the music of the Killer Bees.



It's unlikely this will turn out well.



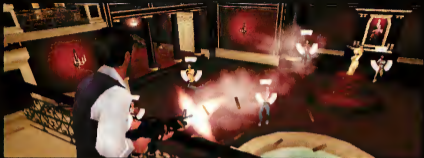
Publisher: Enlight Software **Developer:** Hedon **Genre:** Racing **Release Date:** June 2008

TrackMania Sunrise

Everything old is...still old

There's something to be said for crazy-ass tracks with first-person-perspective loop-de-loops, races that begin with a sort of automotive cell millos that generates your competitors, fast cars with no damage modeling, and a soundtrack strongly reminiscent of late-'80s techno-pop. And just like its predecessor, crashing or running off the track in *Sunrise* means your car stays where it lands—for example, floating bottom-up in the middle of a pretty juggy ocean. Unusual and unrealistic race tricks and physics make this one a very weird, very cartoonish arcade racer—but for now, I'm sticking with NFS:U2. **B Kristen Salvatore**

The Word: LOOPY



PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal DEVELOPER: Radical Games GENRE: Action RELEASE DATE: October 2006

Scarface

Say hello to our leedle preview

You bunch of f***ing cock-a-wooshes! You think you can kill off Scarface that easily? Ahem.

Ever since the seminal '80s gangster flick hit theaters, Tony Montana has been a cult icon, enduring well beyond his rise and inevitable fall. "In the hip-hop world, where Tony is still celebrated to this day, people conveniently forget the ending, where he's betrayed by his friend Susa and then killed," says Stephen Van Der Mescht, producer on Scarface.

Tony isn't known for keeping a cool head.

BACK FROM THE DEAD

Radical Games makes one teeny supposition for this game: Tony never died at the end of the movie—in fact, the very first level of the game begins with that infamous shoot-out. We know, it's a little hard to swallow. Still, Tony survives with nothing but the shirt on his back and an M-16 in his hand. Does this mean Pacino will reprise his role? Spookypeople could neither confirm nor deny this, but at least we know the game promises to deliver a regular clawing-your-way-back-from-bloody-rags-to-riches story. After spending several years underground, Tony resurfaces, only to find that his once-great criminal empire is gone. He's on the streets again—and he has to get back into business.

THE GRAY AREA

After recent Radical efforts such as *The Hulk* and *The Simpsons: Hit & Run*, the source material seems staggeringly racy. Bloody killing, rampant drug use...will this stuff make it past the ESRB? "We won't make the game extra gory just for the sake of blood," says Van Der Mescht. "Tony doesn't kill civilians [like you can in a certain other thug-life game]...it will make sense with his moral code. As for drug usage, you won't see him snorting lines or selling drugs to innocent people. He buys the drugs and sells them to dealers." This admittedly crosses into a bit of a gray area, but considering the intended mature audience, parents have little cause to complain.



☐ You DARE to take my parking spot, you lousy piece of %\$*!?

☐ It may be "No wite, no kids" on the streets, but not in the clubs.

PLOTTING AND SCHEMING

Q David McKenna has a solid résumé on the silver screen, having penned movies such as *SWAT*, and *American History X*. He's currently working on *The F-Ring* with Jerry Bruckheimer and Taylor Hackford for NBC next fall. We caught up with him to ask about the movie script that was turned into a game...and the 30,000-plus lines of dialogue he wrote.

CGW: Can you talk about your decision to pick up at the end of the flick?

McKenna: Obviously, Tony dying at the end of the movie creates a bit of a problem. But I think the game is so funny and entertaining that players won't have any problem looking past it. When I first made my pitch for the project, I had Tony in the Jacuzzi tub addressing a bunch of studio executives. He's chastising the "f---ing cock-a-roachas" for always killing the bad guy in the end. Tony then pulls out a machine gun, wastes them all, escapes the mansion, and we're into the game. I don't think the upper brass at VU were amused, but we were.

CGW: What's your favorite moment or line from your script?

McKenna: That's easy. I hope it's still in the final cut. After Tony escapes in the beginning, he tells his lawyer that he wants Sosa's head on a platter. His lawyer replies, "Sosa? That's impossible." Tony says, "Why? Is there a shortage of platters?"

McKenna: *Had much more to share about his experience working on Scarface. Check out "Star Struck" in this month's Radar section (pg. 32) and at IGN.com.*



The obvious question is how *Scarface* will translate to the PC screen. After all, *GTA: Vice City* borrowed liberally from the film's '80s-era Miami. How will *Scarface* compare years after the fact?

THE (INTERACTIVE) WORLD IS YOURS

The fictionalized setting of Miami, the Keys, and the Bahamas is vast...and it's yours to explore right from the start. As in *GTA*, you'll move the story forward at your own pace, avoiding rivals (and the DEA) while smuggling drugs Stateside. If you just want to relax on the high seas between shoot-outs, there's even a real-time ocean wave simulation.

THE FEAR FACTOR

Whether you're orchestrating a business deal or a bloodbath, you're in full control. Passive and aggressive conversation abilities flesh out Tony's character—he can get information, negotiate deals, or just intimidate enemies in battle. Believe us, nothing's more satisfying than hitting the Taunt button and watching rivals flee as Tony spouts off a string of profanities. Subtle, it's not. But what do you expect?

GETTING EMOTIONAL

Tony isn't known for keeping a cool head. Recall the end of the movie, when he seems right oblivious to bullets. This scene was the inspiration for the Repe meter, which causes time to slow

slightly, giving Tony a razor-sharp focus and opening up opportunities for precision sharpshooting. To counterbalance this, Tony is governed by a strict moral code—you can't target civilians, women, or kids. In Tony's own words, "I never killed nobody that didn't have it coming."

THE WAY WE RIDE

Though you'll remain on foot for most of the game, plenty of vehicles are at your disposal. But why resort to conjoking when you can whip out your back-sized '80s-style cello and call your limo driver? You'll also find several other kinds of rides—including boats and seaplanes. **Darren Gladstone**

The Word: Final



1 All Tony wanted was a quiet night at home watching TV.



2 There are lots of offshore havens for black market operations.

GAMER EX

- Realtek® Surround Gaming Card
- Intel® i915 C/P Year Multichannel with 16X PCI-Express, USB 2.0, IEEE 1394
- 1024MB Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 5.4in. 16000 7200RPM Hard Drive
- ATI® Radeon™ X800 256MB 16X PCI-Express Video
- 16X DVD-ROM Drive, 82432x32 CD-RW Drive
- 6 Channel Surround Sound
- Onyx RW-6010 5.1 Surround Speakers
- 10/100/1000 Mbps Network LAN
- Multimedia Infrared Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Professional Edition

\$ 1269

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology	
660 (3.6 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1729
650 (3.4 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1499
640 (3.2 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1349
630 (3.0 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1289



Microsoft
Windows xp
Professional

WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM

GET MORE DONE AT WORK WITH A NEW
IBUYPOWER GAMER EX PREINSTALLED
WITH MICROSOFT® WINDOWS® XP
PROFESSIONAL.



GAMER-SLI

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6-SLI Chip Dual PCI-Express Motherboard
- Realtek® Surround Gaming Card
- Dell 1024MB DDR400 Memory
- 5.4in. 25000 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±RW + CD-RW Drive
- 16X DVD-ROM Drive
- 2X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800GT PCI Express 256MB Video Cards
- 6 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- Creative Loudspeakers Desktop Theater 5.1 2500 Surround Speakers
- 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- Optical Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Professional Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 1-Care Diskette Technical Support + On-Site Service

\$ 1899

AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-55 Processor	\$ 2699
AMD Athlon™ 64 4000+ Processor	\$ 2479
AMD Athlon™ 64 3800+ Processor	\$ 2229
AMD Athlon™ 64 3500+ Processor	\$ 2039
AMD Athlon™ 64 3200+ Processor	\$ 1959
AMD Athlon™ 64 3000+ Processor	\$ 1899

DREAM 2005

- Deluxe Gaming Case
- 1024MB Dual Channel DDR400 Memory
- 16000 7200RPM Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±RW + CD-RW Drive
- ATI® Radeon™ 9800XT 256MB 6X Video Card
- 6 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- Onyx RW-6010 5.1 Surround Speakers
- 19" WideGaze 995 23in. mm Monitor
- 10/100 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- Optical Mouse & Multimedia Keyboard
- Microsoft Windows® XP Professional Edition
- Free 1-Year 24/7 1-Care Diskette Technical Support + On-Site Service

\$ 1229

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology	
660 (3.6 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1669
650 (3.4 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1449
640 (3.2 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1299
630 (3.0 GHz, 2MB L2 Cache, 800 Mhz FSB)	\$ 1229

IBUYPOWER RECOMMENDS MICROSOFT® WINDOWS® XP PROFESSIONAL.



Order Toll Free 888.462.3899



DIGITAL UNDERGROUND

The best games you've never seen

FROM U-235 Studios AVAILABLE Q2 2005

Retribution

Word on the street: Imagine, at age 12, watching your parents croak in front of your eyes... Pretty traumatic, right? Guess again: It's not half as horrific as the revenge you plan on exacting upon their killers throughout this cinematic shooter. Hiring and equipping intelligent associates who'll fight at your side, you'll storm Marine camps, tropical hideouts, and drug compounds. Planned activities also include training allies, hacking boats, and hacking hostages to fund your insane enterprise.

Sounds kinda best: Australian newcomer U-235 promises the world gorgeous graphics, co-op support, and a movie-like experience. We've heard similar claims before. For now, all anyone's seen or heard of the title—due for the next-gen Xbox as well as the PC—are a few screenshots and claims of an advanced game engine—specifically Artificial Studios' Reality system. For now, it's just too early to call the outing's eventual fate.



FROM 7FX AVAILABLE Q2 2005

Loco Mania

Word on the street: Hallelujah! Aspiring dispatchers, your prayers have been answered. Now anyone can live the dream: Controlling switches and tracks at mountain, valley, and desert depots, you'll guide 22 lovingly rendered locomotives through railways as efficiently as possible. Details make all the difference here, with meticulously animated backgrounds sporting delicious smoke, steam, and real-time weather effects. It's a puzzlingly original take on train spotting...and a potentially great way to kill spare time.

Sounds kinda best: Czech creator 7FX put forth a rather poor showing in its initial effort, *Team Factor*, and sophomore release *Rapid Gunner* didn't burn up the shelves, either—so forgive us if we're somewhat dubious about *Loco Mania's* potential. However, a loyal fan base does exist for this type of title, as evidenced by the success of PopTop Software's similar products. If it's afforded a decent distribution, this game could certainly be carried into a comfortable chart position through strong word of mouth.



FROM Digital Reality AVAILABLE Q2 2005

1944: Battle of the Bulge

Word on the street: *Dug Desert Rats vs Afrika Korps and D-Day?* Then you'll love the trilogy's conclusion: a ridiculously well-endowed war game touting 20 single-player missions, multiple perspectives on each conflict, and historically accurate environments. In a novel twist, your units—who engage adversaries atop snowy landscapes—are affected by the wintry weather. Forget scraping ice off your Buick before work, you don't know the meaning of road rage until you've seen a much-needed *Nebelwerfer's* engine heave its dying breath.

Sounds kinda best: How to put this delicately... Let's just say those who answered the above question with a resounding cheer are in the minority. While good looking, Hungarian developer Digital Reality's designs are notorious for their topshored quality and unremarkable replay value. Naturally, we applaud endeavors at dragging games for grognards screaming into the 21st century. Whether punts will actually appreciate the gesture, however, depends entirely on how well the simulation's execution pans out.

**"TARGET, 2 CLICKS OUT.
LOCK N' LOAD.
LET'S LOOK ALIVE,
GENTLEMEN."**

DELTA FORCE

: NEXT GEN



Powered by today's gaming technology, Delta Force: Next Gen brings the classic Delta Force game back to life to face the enemy once more. As a member of the elite Delta Force, prepare yourself to take on over 60 levels of frantic single and multiplayer FPS action, including graphically enhanced missions from the original game, new maps, improved game features, STATS and much more - ALL FOR JUST \$20*!

For further game information check out www.novalogic.com

*\$20 price is publisher's recommended retail price only.

NOVALOGIC



Novaworld

PC
CD-ROM
SOFTWARE

TEEN
T
MILD LANGUAGE
ESRB

Violence
Blood



I'm looking at a level from the next *Unreal Tournament* game, and it's not pretty. In a darkened conference room at Epic Games' North Carolina offices, lead designer Steve Polge, lead level designer Jim Brown, and producer Jeff Morris are walking me through a level that appears to be made of the equivalent of digital cement blocks—and gently explaining to me why this is a good thing.

"The programming is ahead of the art right now, which is kind of intentional," Steve calmly notes. "We really wanted to focus on gameplay before art." I can see why this statement makes sense, but it doesn't do much to erase the look on my face as I watch Jeff maneuver through a bunch of blocks masquerading as a level from the next iteration of one of the biggest multiplayer shooters ever. I realize that I'm looking stunned and try to lighten the mood.

"Don't worry, I'm not scared. I'm not going to write a story that says, 'It's the craziest thing, there's no art in this game—it's all bricks!'" I chuckle brightly.

And because neither Steve nor Jim nor Jeff looks convinced, I become privy to the details of just how the next *Unreal Tournament* is being made.

THE UNREAL

HOW EPIC GAMES WILL MAKE THE NEXT *UNREAL* TOURNAMENT THE BEST *UNREAL* TOURNAMENT

PRETTY ON THE INSIDE

Considering the number of games whose pretty faces hide less-than-stellar gameplay, Epic's plan sounds refreshing: build each level without any art, use those level shells to hone gameplay, and then when every hallway, ramp, and jump is doing exactly what it should to deliver perfect gameplay, "stick the pretty stuff on top of it."

But why pull apart a great game so drastically, and just a year after its release?

"Actually, we don't think *2K4* was very successful," Steve offers. Jim and Jeff nod their heads in agreement, while I'm certain mine is spinning in disbelief. Steve continues, "It wasn't a bad game...I just wish it had been a better game than it was."

Apparently, members of the hardcore *UT* community agree. "We've paid...a lot of attention to what the guys in the community are saying, and we take that feedback to heart. We've got guys that troll the forums every day [and read feedback]," Jim says. What's their biggest critique? "I would say mobility. Mobility and weapon balance. That's more for the hardcore guy who plays every day or on a regular basis, but balancing that out overall will make the whole game feel better, and so everybody will benefit."

As someone who consistently enjoys *UT2K4* but also consistently eats the fruits of other players' rocket launchers, I'm not


going to argue—for any but the most hardcore, *UT2K4*'s learning curve is a painfully steep one. Certainly, more balanced movement and weapons will help that. So why even show us these bare-bones level shells at all?

"The original *Unreal Tournament* was on the threshold of being a great game," Steve says. "If we had done *2K4* without having to feel kind of in the box of what we had started in *2K3*, I think it would have been a much better game than it was. We think there's a lot we can improve. This is a completely new game, new engine. All the code is really being rewritten. No assets from *UT2K4* appear in here again. In fact, in terms of how the games have evolved, this is more of a leap. I would say, than the original *Unreal Tournament* to *UT2K4*."

It's not that these guys have pulled *UT2K4* apart. They're rebuilding the game altogether. No wonder there's no art in the demo—we're looking at the frame of the house before the Sheetrock has even gone up.

UNREAL MAKEOVER

This is not an iteration, it's an entirely new game—which is why it's entirely possible it won't be called *Unreal Tournament 2005*. "Yeah," Steve says, "It's a real generational change."

The polygon jump is going from thousands to millions. 

AL WORLD

BY KRISTEN SALVATORE



■ courtesy of the Unreal Engine 3. New technology, new engine, new gameplay...new everything. "You can tell from our [demo] levels," Steve says, "we're not trying to make a prettier *UT2K4*. We're really trying to make a very new game."

We've already discussed why link-gun fodder like me will likely appreciate this the most, but aren't there a lot of people out there who really, really like the franchise the way it is?

"It's a weird balance," Jim admits. "You want to keep those people who have been playing for a long time, but you still want to innovate and do new things for new people."

Steve agrees. "We're having our cake and eating it, too. We're giving people something that's an improvement over familiar game types but also evolving them in different directions."

This philosophy shows at the deepest levels of the process—namely, in the creation of those level shells, which can be built in a matter of hours and are actually built from parts of earlier Unreal titles.

"We use the gameplay of 2004 as a base," Jim explains. "We wanted to start off with a known quantity so that as we made changes to it, we knew that they were [quantifiable] improvements—it's not just

"WE'RE NOT TRYING TO MAKE A PRETTIER *UT2K4*. WE'RE TRYING TO MAKE A VERY NEW GAME."

different, it's different in ways we can point to specifically.

"The level we brought in first is called Deck 17, which is kind of 'the level' people associate with *UT2K4*, because we knew if we made changes and tweaked the movement, everyone would be able to see the difference and the improvements because they knew what the level felt like before. It's those kind of subtle things [we're changing right now], things that are not real sexy but are really important to the feel of the game."

"Pretty much every day, we play either the original Unreal Tournament or Unreal Tournament 2004, or some other popular Internet games, and then we'll play the new *UT* and compare and contrast and try different things," Steve explains.

Jim continues, "And we'll keep going back and forth [between the old games and the new one], saying what we like and what we don't like about each in terms of balance, movement speeds, those sorts of things. After we're happy with the way a level feels, we sit down with the artists and come up with a theme, and then we start populating it. It's a lot easier to change a map [when it's] like this, where you can make a corridor wider and not have to worry about 'are the textures in line, it's going to mess with my lighting.'"

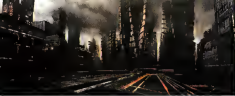
"Building a shell before we actually had artists trying to pretty it up was always a good idea," Jim says, "but now it's really mandatory with the amount of time it takes for the new engine technology assets to be created. It just takes so much longer to build these million-poly models that you'd better be damn sure that what you build

Unreal Art and Artistry

■ Considering the time and money involved in producing the million-poly assets that the Unreal Engine 3 is capable of, putting in the time up front on detailed models and artist renderings makes a lot of sense. Like the levels themselves, every character, vehicle, and weapon gets conceptualized and refined before it's created in-game.



■ Before every scar and tattoo are rendered on the red team leader's face, he's modeled and conceptualized by a freelance artist.



gets used and that everybody likes it before it gets made."

Imagine what would happen if a gorgeous-looking level was discovered to have a game-breaking exploit. Most likely, you'd end up with a retail copy that included that very pretty, very broken level. Not here. Daily adjustments, tweaks, and all-out rebuilds of what are already the best parts of a great franchise should mean that by the time they look good, they play even better.

TOTAL WARFARE

So what's now? Not that there's a shortage of amazing levels and game modes already, but the changes in the works are impressive—particularly a new as-yet-unnamed mode (currently code-named "conquest") set to replace assault mode. Imagine a multiplayer map potentially as large as three onslaught maps with assaultlike objectives and even a limited form of resource management planned. But it's so early on, says Steve, that "we only have conquest on paper at this point" (For more details, see sidebar, page 80.)

But Epic is focusing on far more than just the game's multiplayer aspects—namely, creating a far deeper single-player game.

"Statistically speaking, more people play offline than they do online," Jim explains. His bit of trivia momentarily slays me, until I consider the number of times I've abandoned an online ass-kicking in favor of honing my skills with the relatively safer A.I.

"The single-player game has always been about giving the multiplayer experience offline," Steve says, "but we see a lot of room for improvement." Right now, it's a disjointed set of maps—you play a match here, you play a match there—and this tournament story kind of ties together why you're playing these different matches. We want to tie it together more by giving a lot more personality to the bots."

So much for the relative safety of the A.I. Does this mean I'm now going to get my keister handed to me offline as well as on? That I will, and it'll probably be accompanied by a healthy dose of trash talk, too. You'll still move through the single-player game as a team leader hiring and firing members of your tournament squad, but this time, those team members will have personalities that make them better suited for some roles than others. How will you know what each guy is like? They'll be interacting with you throughout the single-player campaign—and with each other, too.

"I think a really good way of bringing out their personalities is having them interacting with each other, bantering with each other,"

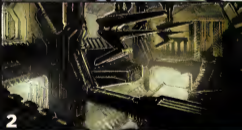
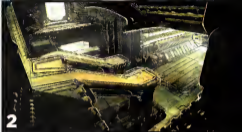
MAKING WAR

While we didn't see any completed in-game levels, these shots give a great view of the development process—and an idea of how amazing the game will likely look. Here, you're seeing steps 1 and 2 in a multistep process: The screens labeled 1 show level shells; the 2s are the concept artist's rendering of how those very same areas may look with "the pretty stuff" in place. Only after both are perfected does step 3—creating actual assets in the UE3 engine—get started.



Behold, the new and improved version of the Scorpion, in concept form and as a kick-ass in-game render. Unlike the previous Scorpion, this one is enclosed, so driving it is less likely to get you picked off, and additional rocket launchers make for a much meaner mode of transport.

The Goliath tank is back, and may have destructible treads this time around.



says Steve. "So if you're doing a flag run, you can hear what's going on back at your base because guys are shouting to each other where the enemy's coming from and what they're doing to prevent it."

That's right—shouting to each other. Voice command will play a much bigger role in the new game. Rather than simply a means of executing menus, as it is in *UT2K4*, it will offer you an actual interface for commanding bots.

"In *2K4*, the voice-command stuff would basically take the stuff in the voice menus and allow you to speak it instead of do it. But here there are a lot of things that I'd like to be able to have that would be hard to ever do in a menu. For example, each level will have specific locations that you'll be able to use voice command to tell the bots to act on, so you can say, 'Go cover the cavern,' and they'll know what that means. They'll also be a lot more responsive, so you'll be able to ask them questions about their status: 'Is there anybody down in the

"YOU WANT THE A.I. TO DO THINGS THAT SURPRISE YOU."



THE REAL THING

Epic considers Malcolm to be the representative character of the *Unreal* franchise. He's made appearances in every game since the original *Unreal*—but he's never looked so good onscreen as he will in the new game. That's right—these aren't artist renderings or Photoshop images, these are actual in-game renders...

...which show you better than possibly anything else here just what amazing feels the *Unreal* Engine 3 is capable of.

cavern? No, cavern's all clear! Or you can throw out warnings like, 'There's a sniper on the tower. Go get the sniper.'

"The main thing is that they understand what you're saying. The more words you add, the more processing power you have to dedicate to getting it right—and right now we have the processing power to really do that on the PC," Jeff notes. "Of course, there are little tweaks you need to make. I read one usability report in which the player told the A.I. to go left and he was so amazed that they actually did it, he said, 'Wow, they did the right thing!' And suddenly, the A.I. says, 'Going right!' So you have to tweak it, but given the choice between a menu that they navigate through to give orders versus actually using language, as long as it's not frustrating to use, almost universally, players prefer to [speak rather than type]."

Altogether, the idea is to make players more invested in the single-player experience—and more challenged by it. "With *2K4*'s free agent system, you really didn't have players you got attached to," says Steve. "They weren't personalities at all. Here, they will be. We're going to use that to build tension, so, for example, you know the team you're about to play is really, really good, not just some other team of random-looking guys." You'll know more about them and about their personalities, but if Steve and Jeff have their way, not so much that their moves won't surprise you.

"You never want the game to feel like it devolves into 'Oh, I know the A.I. can't handle this tactic.' When you find a tactic that the A.I. can't handle, then the game is broken. You want the A.I. to do things that surprise you so that you feel challenged in terms of your reaction time, your strategies, and your tactical skills."

DOWN WITH THE HIP-HOP

Also expect to see a big change in player movement, with a lot of *UT2K4*'s bounciness dialed down. "You want the player to feel very powerful and free and able to do all kinds of cool stuff—but it's not so cool when you can't hit the people you're playing against because they're doing [so much jumping around]. And there are also network considerations, especially since [a big part of this game is] internet focused, it's hard when you've got some latency," Steve says.

Not to mention the fact that only experts can ever draw a bead on their prey: "Yeah, [in *UT2K4*] you miss the feeling you get from being in someone's face and fighting with them,"

Jeff chimes in. "Definitely," says Steve. "In the original *UT*, it was possible to engage people close up; it felt much more personal. You'd get in someone's face and kill them, and that's really kind of intense. With *2K4*, because of the mobility, the firefights tended to be at kind of a medium distance."

Does this mean the double-jump is going away? No, it just means that instead of entire deathmatches in which you strive to shoot one another out of the air like clay pigeons, you



THE LG FLATRON IS FLAT-OUT THIN.



WALL MOUNTED (front view)



Slim SCREEN



INTEGRATED SPEAKERS



90° TILT (auto image fix)



PORTRAIT

INTRODUCING THE NEW 80 SERIES LCD FLATRON™ MONITOR FROM LG; the slimmest flatscreen in its class. Its *f-ENGINE™* technology features the first LCD picture-enhancing chip to provide not only astounding color, but superb contrast and image quality. With an 8 millisecond response time, the FLATRON 80 Series meets the visual quality demands of 3D gaming and high-speed graphics. To see all the LG LCD monitors in sizes ranging from 15"–30", visit LGusa.com.

Life's Good  **LG**



80 Series model shown

"WE CAN PLAY THROUGH AND MAKE TWEAKS WHILE IT'S CHEAP, BEFORE THERE'S PRETTY STUFF SPLASHED ALL OVER THE CONCEPTS."

█ I should expect to do more up-close-and-personal fighting with your foes.

"One of the big problems we saw with *UT2003* and *2004* is the huge learning curve, the huge difference between expert players and novice players," Steve says. Rather than intimidate first-time online players, Steve wants to "reward people for expertise, but you don't want to completely make it not fun for the novice player."

But experts and noobs won't necessarily be forced into combat with one another—the next *Unreal Tournament* is slated to include a matchmaking system based on persistent player ratings, so as you strive to better your overall rating and keep track of how you're doing against the rest of the *UT* world, you can also use your stats to find similarly abled worthy opponents.

"It's more fun for the experts and it's more fun for the novice players if everybody else playing with them is about the same level." Steve explains. "We'll have a quickswitch kind of thing, where you hit a button and it finds a server that's about the right level with the best ping and sticks you on there. Or we'll have lobbies where you can go in and talk to people and join a game. People in the lobby can say, 'Hey, I want to play a capture-the-flag match on this map,' and you'll sit it up from there and boom, you'll all go off and play it."

Expect more of that kind of community building through deeper in-game integration in the next *UT*. Examples? Automatic downloading of mod content if you choose, perhaps in the form of a check box that allows for daily downloads of new content for a particular mod. Or support for clan pages built into the game's menus, such as a simple HTML browser that will allow clan pages to be viewed in-game. Or the ability to enter your clan ID in the stat server, so you can view the stats of clan matches in a global rating system of how clans have done against each other.

The philosophy at work here mirrors that of the overall game: support longtime fans and recruit new ones. "The guys who are already

in clans are already in clans. What we want to do is try to introduce new people. There are a lot of people who play online but know nothing about that whole part of the community. We want to make that stuff more evident," Steve says.

MANY MILESTONES TO GO

The finished product is still well over a year away (there are 13 "milestones" in the creation process, and we're sitting just after the completion of No. 3), but that suits everyone at Epic just fine. Long before the entire game world gets prepped up, Steve and company plan to have put together a gameplay framework that's tweaked to within an inch of perfection.

"We want to have all [the parts of this game] working for probably about a year before we ship. I think a big part of the success of *Unreal Tournament* will be that we've had such a long cycle of playing the game and improving it based on the idea. This is fun, but it would be more fun if... and then really refining it—tweaking weapon balance, tweaking movement, tweaking vehicles, tweaking gameplay mechanics," Steve says. "We have to have a lot of time where we really playtest it and try all the different kinds of things you can do."

"That's the thing with the level shells—we can play through and make tweaks while it's cheap, before there's pretty stuff splashed all over the concepts." Jeff notes. "We already have everything this game will have in terms of movement, weapon selection, range of motion, things you can do—everything is already there." Everything but the visuals, that is. But, according to the team, the AI and the gameplay are already better than *UT2K4*'s—and most other things currently out.

"Our goal is to make a much better *UT* than anything anyone's ever seen," Steve says. Cement blocks notwithstanding, we're on board with that. █



█ Look for a number of new teams in the new game (check out the next page for a list), a few of which you see here in the concept-art stage.

SYNC™

STUFF FOR A MAN'S LIFE.



LIVE IT.

LEARN IT.

GET YOUR FREE TRIAL ISSUE AT:

<http://order.syncmagazine.com>



What's the 411?

The lowdown on the next Unreal Tournament

Will the new UT include a software renderer like the last game did? Not necessarily, although there will be something that allows lower-end systems to run the game reasonably well.

Which of the following is not an announced Unreal Engine licensee?
 a) Midway
 b) BioWare
 c) U.S. Postal Service
 d) The nation of Taiwan
 Answer: c) U.S. Postal Service. Taiwan wants to distribute copies of UT in order to foster more interest in math and science programs.

GAME MODES

- IN**
- Onslaught
 - Deathmatch/team deathmatch
 - Capture the flag
 - Conquest
- OUT**
- Bombing run
 - Domination
 - Assault

SKAARJ
 NOT APPEARING IN THE NEXT UT

BOOM!

The Scorpion vehicle is now enclosed and has rocket boosters affixed to it that allow for bigger jumps (and midair tricks). Combine the rockets with the Eject button to turn the Scorpion into a giant self-destructing bomb.

Kismet is a script sequencing tool that allows for more-than-rudimentary level prototyping without the need for a math degree. Usage: "Who needs a bunch of programmers to create this mod? Using Kismet, the level designer can just do it himself and jump in and out of the game to see if it works."

ENVY
 Epic's code name for the next Unreal Tournament game

Nomel mopping
 is graphics process in which a low-poly model and a super-high-poly model are used to make an asset that looks like the higher one but runs like the lower one

8 Teams, each with unique armor: Nekhti, Necris, Juggernauts, the Corrupt, Iron Guard, Krall, Jakob's team (actually the UT2K4 team, unnamed), and player's team (whom you play as in the single-player campaign, also unnamed)

18 **VEHICLES:** nine Axon vehicles from UT2K4; *Editors' Choice DVD Edition*, nine new Necris vehicles

11 **Weapons:** rocket launcher; Flux Cannon, redeemer, ink gun, shock rifle, AVRIL, translocator, sniper rifle (complete with pull of smoke that occludes vision), dual enforcer pistols (replacing the assault rifle) "Tindum Stinger" (instead of the minigun), and a conister gun (tentative name), which houses a grenade launcher, mine layer, and goo gun

CODE NAME: CONQUEST

According to the Epic team, the biggest addition to the next Unreal Tournament is a game mode currently code-named conquest, in which two teams battle to take control of one another's bases. Considered onslaught mode's successor but bigger, conquest will take advantage of the Unreal Engine 3's ability to seamlessly stream maps by putting you in a battlefield the size of several maps stitched together. Players will battle on one of two teams, each of which holds a certain amount of territory at any given time—and each side's territory will actually look physically different, so as you take territory, it'll convert from, perhaps, the Necris' neo-gothic towers (check out the kick-ass concept art for this in the background) to another team's more lush surroundings.

As in onslaught, you'll vie for strategic objectives scattered around the maps—take out a bridge to cut off a supply route or capture a bunker to occupy the territory surrounding it, for example—but while you'll be able to make forays into the other team's territory, a limitation on how long you can be there without losing health will keep combat focused on the front lines. Conquest will also include a resource

management aspect: Certain bunkers will house tridium resources that determine how quickly your team can build assets such as vehicles and turrets. But controlling the lion's share of the tridium doesn't automatically secure your team victory. The number of bunkers you control directly opposes the speed at which your resources regenerate, so the more bunkers you control, the slower your resources appear. It's a good way to ensure that a successful push on one team's part doesn't essentially end the game.

Conquest should look more like a progressive game than the limited-time deathmatches and CTF games populating many current Unreal servers. There may be the option to treat a conquest match like a long-term war, so you can play, take a break, and then go back and play more later. This should allow for improved strategic opportunities.

If things turn out how Epic described them to us (the mode exists only on paper right now), conquest should appeal to a wider gaming audience and provide a place where longer-term strategy, teamwork, and face-to-face fragging all meet.



the all new Trinity from NZXT

just sexy.

temperature display
stealth side panel
screwless design
steel plated
silent

NZXT.
WWW.NZXT.COM

TRINITY
Classic Series



iBUYPOWER
WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM

TigerDirect.com
WWW.TIGERDIRECT.COM

MICRO CENTER
WWW.MICRO-CENTER.COM



PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Activision
GENRE: Shooter
RELEASE DATE: 1997

tweaking salvaged weaponry and car parts between missions, but once you get behind the wheel, it's pure action. *'76* inspired more than one editor around here to upgrade to a "bizzoz" Pentium 90, because it was the first game that truly felt the funk. Imagine *The Road Warrior* as if it were shot for some '70s action TV show à la *Starsky & Hutch*. Then drive tricked-out wheels through the sand-blasted American deserts and blow the hell out of anything that gets in your way. *'76* oozes style in ways that most games don't ever attempt. All that, combined with a wholly original '70s funk soundtrack, makes this a classic.

Interstate '76

In a time when every game publisher was trying to jam you into the cockpit of a plane or giant robot, *Interstate '76* was the only good PC game that strapped you into the driver's seat of tricked-out muscle cars with hood-mounted machine guns. It has you

No One Lives Forever

No One Lives Forever is like the dream version of a blind date, funny, good-looking, clever, and riotously fun. At a time when first-person shooters were virtually defined by dank and foreboding environments and tough-guy heroes, *NOLF* broke the mold with an eye-popping swingin' '60s setting; dialogue that, while occasionally corny, often elicited out-loud laughs ("Do not be apprehensive about this apprehension?"); and, in the sultry and whip-smart Cate Archer, a videogame heroine who actually did the tribe of two X chromosomes proud (take that, Lane). Yet for all its surface gimmicks, *NOLF* delivers solid gameplay, with missions that take real brainpower to crack and actually grow tougher as the game progresses. Take a break from turning monsters and zombies into Bolognese sauce and reinstall this one—it stands up to the test of time.



PUBLISHER: Fox Interactive
DEVELOPER: Monolith Game
GENRE: FPS
RELEASE DATE: 2000

Hallof

AD&D "Gold Box" Games

Easing the painful transition from shut-in AD&D geek to shut-in AD&D computer geek, 55+ fantastic games set a standard for party-based Dungeons & Dragons gaming that resonates to this day. Composed of two sprawling franchises—*Forgotten Realms* (*Pool of Radiance*, *Curse of the Azure Bonds*, *Secret of the Silver Blades*, *Pools of Darkness*) and *Dragonance* (*Champions of Krynn*, *Death Knights of Krynn*, *The Dark Queen of Krynn*)—and one minor misfire (the *Buck Rogers* games), these games tell enormous stories that spread across each installment. Combat in these games is incredible, a virtually nonstop combat-based tactical challenge of fantastic depth that would be evoked later in *X-Com*, *Icewind Dale*, and BioWare's brilliant *Baldur's Gate* series. It's a pedigree of influence that few other games enshrined in our Hall of Fame can match.



PUBLISHER:SSI
DEVELOPER:SSI
GENRE:RPG
RELEASE DATE:1984-1992



PUBLISHER:PopCap Games
DEVELOPER:PopCap Games
GENRE:Puzzle
RELEASE DATE:2001

Bejeweled

William S. Burroughs once said that "language is a virus from outer space." He might have revised that had he ever been exposed to *Bejeweled*, one of the most insidious games to ever infect the gaming populace. It would be easy

to dismiss *Bejeweled* as just another simple puzzle game, but fellow Hall of Famer *Tetris* is a simple puzzle game, and there's no denying its brilliance. What's amazing is that *Bejeweled* virtually came out of nowhere, a shareware game from a modest little online start-up peddling modest little games for a modest little price. The game became a viral, word-of-mouth obsessional hit, consuming both hardcore and casual gamers. Why? *Bejeweled* is elegant in its simplicity, and therein lies its particular genius—it simply distills everything that gamers love about games to its essence. Attractive? Not bad for a downloadable puzzler. Rewarding? It's tough to top the satisfaction of setting off a huge cascade of gem destruction. Addictive? Well, let's just say that had Burroughs known about it, *Naked Lunch* might have had a whole different substance controlling the lives of its characters.



Tim Schafer

Tim Schafer

Before this man came along, most graphic adventures were strictly business. Grab sword, go east, save princess. Leather Rinses Repeat. Not discounting the *Space Quest* and early *Leisure Suit Larry* games, but what Tim Schafer brought to this industry was a mature (or immature, depending on how you look at it) and often side-splittingly funny way to tell stories. Roberto Williams may have birthed the graphic adventure genre, but Schafer infused it with a whole lot of life. When you think of classic LucasArts

games, more often than not you're thinking of Tim Schafer's most beloved stuff: the hilarious *Monkey Island* sequel, *Day of the Tentacle*, *The Secret of Monkey Island*, which kick-started one of the most popular series in PC gaming history,

the roughhousingly good *Ful Throttle*, and *Grim Fandango*, which many people regard as one of the last great "traditional" adventure games. Just take a good look at the bottom of this page—you'll notice that a bunch of Schafer's greatest works are already sitting pretty in our Hall of Fame. We say it's about damn time he joins them. And as he enters our hallowed halls, we continue to expect great things from his upcoming action-adventure, *Psychonauts*, which blends his unique storytelling style with action and platforming. Schafer still has loads of twisted thoughts and innovative game ideas afloat all these years. That alone proves that there are still plenty of virtual worlds to conquer—and ways to crack us up.

VISIT CGW'S HALL OF FAME!
That's right—the CGW Hall of Fame is now online. Visit <http://cgwfame.com> and stroll the virtual halls of our own computerized Cooperstown.

FAME

THE CGW HALL OF FAME

PEOPLE

Dani Burton Berry, Game Designer
Jon Van Canagham, Game Designer
John Carmack, Programmer
Richard Garriott, Game Designer
Ron Gilbert, Programmer, Game Designer
Sid Malar, Game Designer
Roberta Williams, Game Designer
Will Wright, Game Designer

AMES

Alone in the Dark (E-Motion, 1992)
Age of Empires (Microsoft, 1997)
Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn (Interplay, 2001)
The Bard's Tale (EA, 1985)
Battle Chess (Interplay, 1992)
Bedtimegood series (Gameloft, 1995-present)
Batrazyl at Kronador (Dynamix, 1992)
Chessmaster (Schneid Electronics, 1992)
Civilization (MicroProse, 1991)
Command & Conquer (Wojan/Westwood Studios, 1995)
Counter-Strike (Valve, 1999)
Crusader: No Remorse (Origin, 1995)
Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight (LucasArts, 1997)

Day of the Tentacle (LucasArts, 1993)
Diablo (Blizzard, 1996)
Doom (id Software, 1993)
Dungeons Master (id Software, 1987)
Earl Weaver Baseball (EA, 1994)
Empire (Interplay, 1992)
EverQuest (Sony Online, 2003)
F-19 Stealth Fighter (MicroProse, 1988)
Felicon 3.0 (Spectrum/Interplay, 1992)
Fallost (Interplay, 1991)
Front Page Sports
Football Pro (Dynamix, 1992)
Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within (Sierra, 1994)
Gattysburg: The Turning Point (EA, 1995)
Grim Fandango (LucasArts, 1998)
Gunsling (MicroProse, 1992)
Half-Life (Valve Software, 1998)
Harpoon (SSI Pacific, 1983)
Heroes of Might and Magic II (New World Computing, 1997)
High Heat Baseball 2000 (2000, 1999)
John Madden NFL Football series (Electronic Arts, 1988)
Kampgrünge (SSI, 1992)

King's Quest V: The Revenant King (1990)
Lemmings (Proxima, 1991)
Links 365 Pro (MicroProse, 1998)
M-1 Tank (MicroProse, 1992)
Master of Magic (MicroProse, 1994)
Master of Orion (MicroProse, 1993)
Madieval: Total War (Activision, 1997)
Heck Brigade (SSI, 1992)
MechWarrior 2 (Sublime, 1995)
Night and Magic (New World Computing, 1992)
N.U.L.E. (EA, 1982)
Myth (Blizzard, 1997)
Penzer General (SSI, 1994)
Planescape: Torment (Beambox, 1999)
Pirates! (MicroProse, 1992)
Quake (id Software, 1996)
Railroad Tycoon (MicroProse, 1990)
Red Baron (Dynamix, 1991)
The Secret of Monkey Island (LucasArts, 1990)
SimCity (Minds, 1990)
The Sims (Maxis, 2000)
StarCraft (Blizzard, 1998)
Starflight (EA, 1984)
System Shock 2 (EidosArt, 1999)

Tetris (Electronic Arts, 1991)
Their Finest Hour (LucasArts, 1995)
TIE Fighter (LucasArts, 1994)
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six (Red Storm Entertainment)
Tomb Raider (Eidos, 1996)
Ultima III (Orion Systems, 1982)
Ultima IV (Orion Systems, 1985)
Ultima VI (Orion Systems, 1987)
Ultima Underworld (Digital Systems, 1992)
Unreal Tournament (Epic Games, 1999)
War in Russia (SSI, 1994)
WarCraft II (Blizzard, 1995)
Wasteland (Interplay, 1992)
Wing Commander (Origin Systems, 1990)
Wing Commander II (Origin Systems, 1990)
Wing Commander III (Origin Systems, 1990)
Wizardry (Sir-Tech, 1980)
Wolfenstein 3D (id Software, 1992)
X-Com (MicroProse, 1994)
You Don't Know Jack (Scholastic Systems, 1995)
Zork (Infocom, 1981)

WHERE BUSINESS GETS FUN

TEAM PLAYER



COMPANY CAR



REGISTER TODAY AT WWW.E3EXPO.COM

LESS GETS FUN

SALES PITCH



CONFERENCE MAY 17-19 | EXPOSITION MAY 18-20 | LOS ANGELES CONVENTION CENTER

There's no better place to experience the latest PC, online and video game products than E³ 2005. *Plus*, you'll have a unique opportunity to hear **DIRECTLY** from the experts at E³'s in-depth Conference Program.

- ◆ Learn about the latest trends and **THE strategies you need** to take your game to the next level **STRAIGHT** from the **industry's best and brightest minds**.

E³ is a trade event - only qualified attendees will be admitted. No one under 17 will be admitted. E³'s non-discrimination policy is strictly enforced. Visit www.e3show.com for registration guidelines.



Reviews

Four chords and the truth

Whip-wielding half-man, half-gorilla monstrosities. Yep, it must be a secret underground Nazi lab.



PUBLISHER: Sierra **DEVELOPER:** Irrational Games **GENRE:** RPG **ESRB RATING:** T **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 733MHz, 128MB RAM, 700MB install, 54MB videocard **RECOMMENDED:** Pentium 4 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 128MB videocard **MULTIPLAYER:** Internet, LAN (2-4 players)

Freedom Force vs. The 3rd Reich

Once more...for freedom!



Has Time Master switched sides to fight alongside our heroes?!



So that's what happened to all the Checker cabs.



Star Wars Republic Commando
You're a clone without a heart of your own.



The Sims 2: University
Also Newbie Jr. goes to college.



NASCAR SimRacing
Turn it up, get it up, and start turning left.

Better up!



Duke it out in the rumble room and you can recruit villains like Rising Sun to fight with you.



Why is it that the giant floating tentacle eyeballs always fight for evil?



This game is almost impossible to resist. If you love comics, then you will love this game. If you love great, stylish game-play, then you will love it. If you love to laugh, if you love a good story, or if you just love to have a really good time, then you will love it. Like a great movie, *Freedom Force vs. The 3rd Reich* is the rare product that leaves you glowing with delight long after you've finished it. Twice.

DIABLOLISTO!

You needn't have played the first game in order to enjoy this continuation of the series—indeed, as with any great comic book, you can jump in right here. (And, as with any great comic book, you'll probably find yourself wanting to buy the "back issues" to satisfy your hunger for more.)

3rd Reich retains the original characters and early Silver Age time frame, putting you in charge of a team of superheroes, each with his own unique abilities and personality. As the game begins, it seems that the protectors of Patriot City are all too efficient at their job, so efficient that the team has all but disbanded. The call to regroup goes out when the Freedom Force is alerted by the deputy director of the CIA that the body of Time Master—their original archen-

emy—has been stolen. The few remaining members jet off to missile-crisis-era Cuba to recover Time Master from another returning foe: Nuclear Winter.

PEACHES AND CREAM!

But *3rd Reich* isn't a simple rehash of the first game, and you'll realize that as soon as the Cuba missions begin. The first thing you'll notice is the huge graphical upgrade, while the game retains its color-drenched comic-book style, the game world is so much more intricate and vibrant this time around. Character and object shadows inject a greater sense of life into the environments, animated neon signs blaze at night from atop skyscrapers, and object textures are much more detailed, as evidenced in the weathered buildings and sun-blasted landscape of Cuba.

The world is also much more interactive. While superstrong heroes such as Minuteman and Super Collider can still hurl cars at their foes or wrench lampposts from the ground to smother evil minions, the environments are packed with many more items and structures—which means even more deeply satisfying collateral damage. The beefed-up game engine can now animate countless pieces of fruit spilling from a clattered cart, as well as partially collapse a building to reveal interior wreckage. There are fences to tear from the ground, trees to

uproot, chunks of fractured statues to sling, and more. In no other game do you have such a sense that the levels exist purely as playgrounds for your enjoyment.

THE POWER OF THE GRAVE COMPELS YOU!

As nice as graphical and environmental enhancements are, it's the rich game-play and incredible style that really power this game. The *Freedom Force* franchise continues to enjoy some of the best voice acting in PC gaming. From the throaty stentorian proclamations of Minuteman, to the "aw-shucks!" Jimmy Stewart drawl of Sky King, to the straight-from-the-crypt rasp of Tombstone every voice is simultaneously a loving tribute and a sly satire of comic archetypes.

Then again, it's easy to sound good when you're blessed with dialogue as sharp as this. Like its predecessor, *3rd Reich* manages to poke fun at comic-book conventions through witty repartee, snappy one-liners, and wildly preposterous plots. Somehow Irrational Games has crafted a game chock-full of **D**



It's easy to sound good when you're blessed with dialogue as sharp as this.



☑ Microwaves is still superior, but his radiation powers are incredibly effective.



☑ Whiteyman rallies the troops.

Laugh-out-loud moments, while still telling a classic story that sends the Freedom Force back in time to battle Nazis alongside Golden Age-style gadgeteering heroes such as the fearless swordswoman Tricolour and the jetpacking Sky King. Each of the new heroes has a great origin story, told in cut-scenes that play out as lightly animated comic panels. And just when you think the story is winding down, an incredible twist sends the narrative spiraling dramatically in another direction. It's a great comic conceit, and it's executed perfectly.

RINGS OF REXOR!

The nuts and bolts of the game are executed just as well. Each character's powers are beautifully balanced, making each and every team member (even that annoying Sea Urchin) both viable and vital as they level up, gaining new abilities and improving upon existing ones. *3rd Reich* also features a revamped interface, which helps you make the best use of

your team members by cueing you in on your enemies' strengths and weaknesses and which attacks might be most effective in thwarting them.

Or you could just practice! The new "rumble room" feature lets you pit a team of heroes and/or villains against waves of attackers or against a set group of enemies

YOUR EVIL IS UNWANTED HERE!

But just as Superman has his kryptonite, *3rd Reich* is not without some weaknesses. Pathfinding can be faulty at times, trapping a hero behind an open door—a door he should, in theory, be able to bear from its hinges. While the camera control is pretty good, the action is so beautifully realized that it would've been nice to get in closer and angle the camera up once in a while, if only to bask in the view.

The villains are, as expected, brilliantly imagined...but they have no origin movies.

How Two-Face become Two-Face is a huge part of that character, and the lack of similar background on the villains is a regrettable omission and a missed opportunity (though it should be noted that one particular villain's genesis is detailed, since it's an important plot point). Finally, at the Normal difficulty setting, it's fairly easy to blow through the game in a rather short period of time.

Then again, it just might have felt short *Freedom Force vs. The 3rd Reich* is so outstanding you never want it to end. I'm hoping that the great—and totally appropriate—cliff-hanger ending means more adventures to come. As with any great comic, I can't wait for the next issue.

☑ Robert Coffey

Verdict ★★★★★
Once again, *Freedom Force* is a triumph.

Just when you think the story is winding down, an incredible twist sends the narrative spiraling dramatically in another direction.

MARVELOUS TEAM-UP

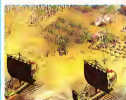
One of the few shortcomings of the original game was its lack of multiplayer. Not this time out! *Freedom Force vs. The 3rd Reich* is packed with multiplayer options for two to four armchair superheroes. Game modes include the expected deathmatch and team deathmatch, but it's the other modes that really make multiplayer interesting. Arena/team arena mode puts players through five deathmatch rounds, with a point going to the last man standing; whoever has the most points at the end of five rounds wins. Massacre/team massacre is a timed mode; points are scored by KO'ing opponents or lost by having your heroes KO'd. Knockouts are also scored in leader mode, where a point is garnered for every KO'd opponent, and 10 points are awarded for every designated "leader" hero you cream. In destruction mode, one team defends an object while another tries to destroy it. Finally, tag mode lets you swap heroes in and out, again racking up points with knockouts. Just one caveat: There's no Pause function in multiplayer, so you might want to practice your marathon battling skills in the rumble room before you go online.



Rewind 100

What should you play today? Names in red indicate Editors' Choice games.

GAME	ISSUE	RATING
Alien	Holiday 04	★★★★
Alexander	03/05	★★★★
Alpha Black Zero: Intrepid Protocol	12/04	★★★★
Scrapland	Holiday 04	★★★★
Arena Wars	Holiday 04	★★★★
Armies of Exigo	03/05	★★★★
Aura Fate of the Ages	10/04	★★★★
Ash & Allies	06/05	★★★★
Badger	09/04	★★★★
Beyond Divinity	08/04	★★★★
Call of Duty: United Offensive	12/04	★★★★
Campaigns on the Danube	12/04	★★★★
Catwoman	11/04	★★★★
Chaos Legion	08/04	★★★★
Chris Sawyer's Locomotion	Holiday 04	★★★★
The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay—Developer's Cut	03/05	★★★★
City of Heroes	08/04	★★★★
Codename: Panzers	11/04	★★★★
Conflict: Vietnam	01/05	★★★★
Conspiracy	05/04	★★★★
Crusader Kings	03/04	★★★★
Crystal Key 2	03/04	★★★★
CSI: Crime Scene Invok.	03/04	★★★★
Dark Fall II: Lights Out	Holiday 04	★★★★
D-Day	01/05	★★★★
Dead Man's Hand	08/04	★★★★
Dead to Rights	04/04	★★★★
Docuave Battles of World War II: Battles in Normandy	01/05	★★★★
Doom 3	10/04	★★★★
Evil Genius	12/04	★★★★
Far Cry	05/04	★★★★



© Alexander

GAME	ISSUE	RATING
FIFA Soccer 2005	Holiday 04	★★★★
FireStarter	06/04	★★★★
Full Spectrum Warrior	Holiday 04	★★★★
Galactic Civilizations: Alien Prophecy	12/04	★★★★
Gangland	06/04	★★★★
Grand Control II: Operation Exodus	10/04	★★★★
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	11/04	★★★★
Hitmen: Contracts	06/04	★★★★
Horizons: Empire of Ice	05/04	★★★★
Immortal Cities: Children of the Nile	01/05	★★★★
Jack the Ripper	05/04	★★★★
Joint Operations: Typhoon Rising	06/04	★★★★
Kohan II: Kings of War	12/04	★★★★
KumaWar	09/04	★★★★
Lilaure Salt Larry: Magna Cam Lead	Holiday 04	★★★★
Lizeage II: The Chaotic Chronicle	06/04	★★★★
Madrix: NFL 2005	Holiday 04	★★★★
Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault	01/05	★★★★
Men of Honor	01/05	★★★★
Missing: Since January	10/04	★★★★
Nyct IV: Revelation	Holiday 04	★★★★
NFL Live 2005	03/05	★★★★
NHL 2005	01/05	★★★★
NHL: Eastside Hockey Manager	03/05	★★★★
Paralyzer	09/04	★★★★
Pillars: The Last Expedition	01/05	★★★★
The Political Machine	11/04	★★★★
Port Royale 2	12/04	★★★★
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	01/05	★★★★



© NHL 2005

GAME	ISSUE	RATING
Rome: Total War	Holiday 04	★★★★
The Saga of Ryzom	01/05	★★★★
Secret of the Silver Earring	01/05	★★★★
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury	Holiday 04	★★★★
Shadowbane: Rise of Chaos	04/04	★★★★
ShellShock: Nam '67	09/04	★★★★
Shrek 2	09/04	★★★★
Sleazeball 4: The Room	01/05	★★★★
The Sims 2	11/04	★★★★
Singles: Pick Up Your Life	09/04	★★★★
Soldiers: Heroes of WWII	11/04	★★★★
Soldier: Secret Wars	10/04	★★★★
Spider-Man 2	11/04	★★★★
Splinter Cell	06/04	★★★★
Pendent Tomorrow		
Star Chamber	05/04	★★★★
Star Wars: Battlefront	Holiday 04	★★★★
The Suffering	10/04	★★★★
Thief: Deadly Shadows	09/04	★★★★
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	Holiday 04	★★★★
TrackMania	10/04	★★★★
Tribes: Vengeance	Holiday 04	★★★★
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	09/04	★★★★
Universal Combat	10/04	★★★★
Urbane: Tournament 2004	06/04	★★★★
Virtual Skipper 3	10/04	★★★★
Wanted: A Wild Adventure	Holiday 04	★★★★
War in the Pacific	11/04	★★★★
War Over Vietnam	Holiday 04	★★★★
War Times	08/04	★★★★
Warlord: Battleground	04/04	★★★★
World Soccer Winning Eleven 7 International	10/04	★★★★



© The Saga of Ryzom



PUBLISHER LucasArts **DEVELOPER** LucasArts **GENRE** SHOOTER **ESRB RATING** T **REQUIRED** **Platform** PC, PS2, XBOX **RAM**, 64MB **videocard**, 256MB **install** **recommended** **Platform** 4 GB, 512MB **RAM**, 128MB **videocard**, 2.5GB **install** **MULTIPLAYER** internet, LAN (2-6 players)

Star Wars Republic Commando

Tom Clancy's Clone Wars

Between generally respectable recent titles such as *Knights of the Old Republic II*, *Battlefront*, and the *Jump to Lightspeed* expansion for *Galaxies*, the *Star Wars* license has been rejuvenated across a wide variety of genres. *Republic Commando* continues this trend by successfully combining the inherent goofiness of *Star Wars* and the hard edge of a tactical, squad-based shooter.

Well, sort of. "Tactical" might be too strong a word. Though you do control a four-man squad of elite commandos, the action has more in common with recent highly scripted shooters like the *Medal of Honor* series. The game's focus is clearly more on fast-paced combat than the skulking deliberateness of a true tactical shooter. Which is fine, since the action is constant and satisfying, with some robust squad control options that add a little brainwork to the nonstop blasting.

ATTACK OF THE CLONES

The game takes place sometime during the Clone Wars, for those of you who don't follow the goings-on in that galaxy far, far away. This also means it occurs during the same period as the most recent two movies that ruined everybody's childhood and the upcoming film that nobody's gonna like either. Luckily, most of the crappy parts of the universe are ignored, and you'll see the occasional R2 unit and a few of those wheeled black lunchbox droids just to remind you that it's still *Star Wars*. But for the most part, the game focuses on the two things to survive George Lucas' every misstep more or less intact: Wookiees and Boba Fett.

You play as "35," the leader of a four-



Close-in fighting with a Geonosian warrior.

man commando squad—the *Star Wars* equivalent of an elite Special Forces unit. Technically, you're all clones underneath your Boba Fett armor, though oddly, each member of the squad has a distinct personality and a wildly unique accent. Each also has his own specialty: There's a sniper, a hacker, and an all-around gung-ho demolitions expert who sounds a whole lot like *Seinfeld's* Puddy.

Left to their own devices, your squad members act intelligently; they'll press

forward, take cover, and attempt to kill whatever gets in the way without becoming a nuisance. You can give simple orders to the entire squad, such as "Fire on my target," "Form up," "Search and destroy," and "Secure area." Scattered throughout the levels are maneuver points, preset positions where certain actions—such as sniping, tossing a grenade, healing at a bacta station, or simply setting a detonation charge and blowing the snot out of something—can be initiated. Though it's not as flexible as being able to order your men to set up positions arbitrarily, given the often furious pacing of the combat and the ease of the interface (just point your reticule at the position and press the Action key), it works well in context. Within a given combat area, there are usually enough maneuver points to force you to think at least a little bit about how you'll want to utilize them.

SCUM AND VILLAINY

The action (a roughly 12-hour trek through 17 levels spread across three distinct missions) is, generally speaking, a linear corridor crawl punctuated by frequent stops for combat. Enemies are a mix of droids, Geonosisan bug people, lizardlike Trandoshan slavers, and a few surprises. What they lack in A.I., they make up for in numbers. For instance, droids often stream out of spawners; these must be destroyed to staunch the endless flow of robots, which leads to plenty of tense moments as you're forced to protect whomever is setting the demo charge while simultaneously fighting off enemies coming from various other directions. It's hectic, but the game consistently stays on the good side of the fine line between challenge and frustration.

Republic Commando's visuals are powered by the Unreal Engine, and while it's no *Far Cry* or *Half-Life 2*, it's not bad looking. The character models are a little chunky, but they're well animated, including some



Everyone looks cool when they're wearing Boba Fett helmets.

For the most part, the game focuses on the two things to survive George Lucas' every misstep more or less intact: Wookiees and Boba Fett.

very cool deaths. The level architecture is less successful—for every notable sight, there are at least three nondescript caves, or that *Star Wars* staple, the featureless gray corridor.

Still, given the intensity of the combat, you won't have a lot of time to brood over the sometimes monotonous environments. Somebody deserves credit for making a gritty, Jedi-free *Star Wars* game without any fruity Force powers or lightsabers. **Erk Wolpaw**

Verdict ★★★★★

A unique, intense *Star Wars* shooter—without Jedi!



Lightsabers are for fancy-lads. Now a shotgun—that's a man's weapon.

THE FORCE IS WEAK WITH THIS ONE

Republic Commando's multiplayer doesn't live up to the single-player experience. It's a bare-bones affair that features deathmatch and two variations of capture the flag for up to 16 players. Without squad-based mechanics and interesting little interludic novelties like the maneuver points, there's not much that will keep anyone's attention for very long. And even though we were bad-mouthing fruity Jedi Force powers up above, the arsenal of standard weapons could stand to have a little more variety.



PUBLISHER: Electronic Arts **DEVELOPER:** Maxis **GENRE:** Strategy **ESRB RATING:** T **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 500MHz, 256MB RAM, 5GB install, The Sims 2 **RECOMMENDED:** Pentium 4 2GHz, 512MB RAM, 64MB videocard **MULTIPLAYER:** None

The Sims 2: University

Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor?

Fans of the Sims games might be the world's largest cult. Despite the franchise's incredible popularity, it is still something that many people—hardcore gamers in particular—just don't get. "A game where I have to get a job and go to the bathroom? Fun!" Me, I haven't totally swallowed the Sims Kool-Aid, but I still admire the games tremendously for their humor and creative energy. The Sims 2: University is the first of what will no doubt be a gazillion expansion packs, and the bottom line here is the same as it ever was: If you love The Sims 2, you'll be happy. But if you still don't get what this is all about, the expansion will not change your mind.

ASSUME THE POSITION

The core of this expansion is in the title: You now can send your teenage Sims to college, where, like all college kids, they will learn the fine art of doing as little as possible while still getting by. The college game is a self-contained one, like an extended minigame. You either create a college-age Sim or take one of your existing teenage Sims and enroll him in one of three universities. All the subsequent gameplay then takes place in the new college living areas (dorms, private homes, or Greek houses if you can get in) and surrounding campus neighborhoods until you either graduate or get expelled. Then the Sim moves back to the regular Sims 2 neighborhood.

At root, it's not very different from the main game. You spend almost all of your time at home, working on your wants and needs, vanishing for part of the day to go to class instead of your job. Each "semester" lasts three days, after which there is a final exam. If you want to succeed, you'll have to spend a lot of time completing assignments, writing your term paper, and doing research. The more you do, the better your GPA will be, and the more scholarship money you'll be rewarded.

Successfully graduating opens up four new careers for that Sim—paranormal, show business, artist, and natural scientist—that you can pursue back in the main game.

DOUBLE SECRET PROBATION

As in real life, you can just goof off instead, but here the expansion is something of a letdown. If my actual college experience had been this G-rated,



Here's what I majored in at UC Berkeley.



Insert level treadmill joke here.

If my actual college experience had been this G-rated, I wouldn't have bothered taking seven years to graduate.

I wouldn't have bothered taking seven years to graduate. There are "pranks," but they are toothless ("joy buzzers?"), as are the opportunities to destroy your life and/or brain. I know Maxis needs to keep The Sims safe for a mass audience, but more depravity and irresponsibility would have gone a long way.

Still, there are many pleasures (like trying to sleep with a professor) to be had. I never did successfully get into a frat, but that's about par for the course for me anyway. You can now "influence" other Sims to do things for you, though I never really got why I should care about that. The new objects, which also show up in the main game, are lots of fun—I spent tons of time playing the bass, hustling

pool, and dancing to my MP3 player. As usual, the accompanying animations for these new objects are awesome. This is the only game I know of where zooming in and sitting back and watching is just as entertaining as actually playing.

The Sims 2: University preaches to the converted. Fans should go ahead and get it. There's nothing transcendently brilliant here, but there's enough new stuff to keep you happy. Everyone else, you can keep scratching your heads.

Jeff Green

Verdict ★★★★★
More yummy Sims Kool-Aid for cult members.

PUBLISHER EA Sports **DEVELOPER** EA Tiburon **GENRE** Racing/Sports **ESRB RATING** E **REQUIRED** Pentium III 30MHz, 256MB RAM, 3GB install
RECOMMENDED Pentium 4 2GHz, 512MB video **OS** Windows XP **MULTIPLAYER** Internet, LAN (2-64 players)

NASCAR SimRacing

Roll over and tell Papyrus the news

NASCAR SimRacing is the best-looking, most realistic, most in-depth NASCAR game on the market today. Aside from the put-you-into-the-wall graphics, realistic sound, and authentic driving feel, the game gives you real-world drivers, sponsors, and race teams—it's authentic right down to the decals on your left fender. If you hear "Papyrus" and think stock cars instead of Egyptians, get happy.

MOONSHINE SONATA

Among NSR's strong suits is its huge variety of options and tweaks. You get multiple driving realism settings, allowing for everything from hyperwacky deathbaps to invulnerable bumper cars. While this affords even neophytes a chance to enjoy the game, it's time to face facts: The eludes who are going to lay cash on the barrelhead for this one are into hardcore racing—which is where NSR really shines.

Boasting one of the most comprehensive garage modes ever, NSR even sports its very own integrated telemetry suite. Want to see how many shifts you made with that new gear set? Want to compare engine temperatures from lap to lap at Martinsville? It's all here, the virtual keys to the teeny-weensy pearly gates of micromanagement heaven. And it's not just about the guys in hard hats. The career mode includes some natty "owner" elements that allow you to invest your team's winnings (or proceeds from sponsorships) into improvements for your car or even into merchandising. Of course, the owner feature isn't exactly Capitalism in its complexity (win races and people buy your stuff; lose and they don't), but it's nice to see the designers trying to add some twists among all those left turns.

DROP THE HAMMER

While you'll need a pretty powerful graphics card to see NSR's Castrol-slick graphics at their best (make sure you turn on hardware antialiasing), I'd be remiss if I didn't single them out. Drive from one side of the track to the other and watch the shadows move across the cockpit. Or, if two speed demons get a little over-



Real-life sponsors, real-life-quality graphics—thank goodness you can't actually feel the crashes.

friendly, hoods and tires could very well come flying right into your windshield. In a sport where you're likely to see a lot of the same stuff go round and round, NSR's graphics are detailed and gorgeous enough to keep you mesmerized.

Still, the game has its flaws, the annoying load times between races first among them. It's one thing to have to wait between venues, but sitting for half a minute between qualifying and racing at the same damn track can really get your goat. And loading the telemetry suite sometimes caused me to crash—into my desktop. Also problematic is the fact that the game gives you essentially the same level of guidance for the garage mode as the old man from Zelda gave you for defeating a dodongo. It's neat to have so many tools to choose from, but NSR could benefit from some integrated tips (or at least a tutorial) on how to make use of them.

Even considering the drawbacks, though, it's a no-brainer that NSR is the best stock-car racing game on the market. The checkered flag goes to EA Sports...again. **By Eric Neigher**

Verdict ★★★★★

EA Sports continues its tradition of dominance with this fine offering.



Eye-candy extraordinaire: Note the cars of the leaders way ahead, as well as the weather's effect on the lighting in the rearview mirror.



NSR's level of detail in both its graphics and physics engine is really impressive: Roof flaps come up during a spin to prevent your car from flipping over.



It's all here: the virtual keys to the teeny-weensy pearly gates of micromanagement heaven.

PUBLISHER: GIGAWATT **SOFTWARE DEVELOPER:** GIGAWATT **GENRE:** MMO **ESRB RATING:** T **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 1GHz, 256MB RAM, 200MB install
RECOMMENDED: ST200 RAM, 64MB videocard **MULTIPLAYER:** PNO

Vendetta Online

At least no one can hear you scream

You get to fly a variety of spaceships in a persistent universe, explore the galaxy, and find fame and fortune through mining, trading, piracy, and bounty hunting. It sounds like *Free lancer*, but this game's online, it has some RPG elements, and there's a monthly subscription fee.

Vendetta Online is the first space-based action-MMORPG, and it stands out from other MMO games by having combat that's completely "twitch" (unlike *Earth & Beyond*'s turn-based space combat). Instead of character sheets and dice,

Much like the gameplay, the graphics are very average.

your performance in battle depends on your skills as a pilot. The leveling treadmill is slow and unrewarding. Instead of improving your abilities, leveling up simply gives you "certificates" that allow you to purchase better equipment.

Vendetta's execution lacks truly engaging elements. Missions are pretty dull and are often of the FedEx variety. You'll waste much of your time just flying from system to system. Combat against bots is monotonous, proving challenging only if you are attacked in great numbers.

In *Vendetta*, traveling through space is a pretty lonely and solitary experience—there's very little player interaction beyond the occasional duel. The teamwork that makes so many multiplayer games engaging is largely absent. With so little to make it stand out, playing



❑ This is as exciting as it gets in *Vendetta*.

through *Vendetta* is like eating a thin greuk blend, but not revolting. **❑ Di Luo**

Verdict ★★☆☆☆

A lot like *Free lancer*, only boring and with a monthly fee.

PUBLISHER: Foghorn Games **DEVELOPER:** Foghorn Games **GENRE:** Strategy **ESRB RATING:** None **REQUIRED:** Pentium III 600MHz, 32MB RAM, 64MB install **RECOMMENDED:** None **MULTIPLAYER:** None

Lost Admiral Returns

Return of the good old days

Back in the days when 386 computers were state of the art, Thurston Searless and GQP made a living on simple strategy/war games that played like a cross between chess and *Stratego*. Though titles like *Lost Admiral* and *Conquered Kingdoms* lacked flash, they offered rich gameplay and a lot of replayability. It's been 14 years since *Lost Admiral*, and *Searless II* back with a sequel.

LAR plays almost exactly like its predecessors. All the maps are archipelagos dotted with cities; control of these cities provides resources and facilities to buy reinforcements as well as victory points. Before the invasion begins, you get a predetermined number of points to purchase your fleet with. There are only eight different units in the game, ranging from aircraft carriers to PT boats. Smaller ships excel at sneaking and raiding, while capital ships provide firepower. Once your ships enter the same square as an enemy unit, combat occurs.

Battles are completely predictable and use neither dice nor luck—unit capabilities have a distinct "rock, paper, scissors" quality, with each unit designed to counter a certain ship.

A destroyer will always kill a submerged sub but remains useless against battleships. Transports are necessary for city conquest but have little combat ability. The aircraft carrier is vulnerable but adds firepower to nearby ships through air support and also provides extended scouting range.

Without the luck factor, your success is wholly dependent on your tactical acumen and the wisdom of your unit selection. Though sometimes predictable, the enemy A.I. can be quite challenging at higher levels. It's very methodical, rarely makes mistakes, and will aggressively exploit your weaknesses, even making daring raids behind your lines.

LAR also boasts a few improvements over its predecessors. You can now perform missions (such as reconnaissance or escort duty) to live up to the usual "conquer the world" scenarios. There is also a role-playing element. Your officer profile earns perk points you can use to purchase flagship units with special abilities. With a campaign, a dozen maps, and a random map generator, you get plenty of gameplay for your money.

Unfortunately, *LAR*'s presentation is



❑ The tactical setup displays archipelagos as interesting and cluttered.

super. The interface is un intuitive and clunky and lacks an Undo button to rectify mistakes. The ugly graphics are forgivable, but the displays are overly cluttered, and navigating the map can be difficult.

Still, *LAR* is a pretty good choice for strategy gamers looking for deep gameplay without a lot of unnecessary fluff. *LAR* is only available for purchase at www.foghorngames.com, where you may obtain a free month-long trial. **❑ Di Luo**

Verdict ★★☆☆☆

A deep strategy game with charmingly simple mechanics.



Tech

Like you've got better things to spend your money on



GPU MANUFACTURER: CyberPower
PRODUCT: Gaemr Ultra SLI Pro | **PRICE:** \$3,299.99

PHOTOGRAPH BY RACHELYN RAOUL



Enzo Ferrari
Always crashing in the same car.

98



Alienware Laptop
It's not actually come from outer space, but its performance is out of this world.

99



BFGTech 8800 Ultra OC PCI Express
Double your pleasure, double your fun, double the cost.

105

BADA BING!

CyberPower Gamer Ultra SLI Pro



CyberPower jumps right smack in the middle of the NForce4 SLI arena with its new Gamer Ultra SLI Pro. This rig offers the right combination of performance and price for gamers looking to increase their frag counts while making their hard-earned dollars go a long way toward a built-for-speed system primed for years of high-quality gaming.

Compared to VoodooPC's Rage SLI UGM-winning system, the Gamer Ultra SLI Pro packs a similar punch—but for \$800 less. Both rigs share a number of high-performance components such as the AMD Athlon 64 FX-35 CPU with HyperTransport technology and the Asus NForce4 SLI MCP PCI Express-based ABN-SLI Deluxe motherboard for top-notch computing power. CyberPower's rig also mimics the Rage SLI with a pair of Western Digital Raptor 10,000 rpm HDDs in RAID 0 but ups the ante by adding a Maxtor 250GB SATA hard drive for file backup and more file management. Just as in the Rage SLI, matching this superior set of components leads to ultrastart gaming, as evidenced in our 3D GameGauge and real-world benchmark testing.

For the most part, the Gamer Ultra SLI Pro roped through *Doom 3* and *Halo* at more than 100 frames per second while using the standard 3DGG 1280x1024 2x AA and 4x AF test parameters. With a pair of EVGA's GeForce 6800 Ultra PCI Express videocards and a full gig of Geli's DDR PC3200 RAM clocked at 400MHz, this rig barely broke a sweat when running through ExtremeTech's *Half-Life 2* benchmark with everything maxed. The system also uses the Asus ABN-SLI Deluxe onboard eight-channel audio instead of the high-end standard Creative Audigy 2 card, but the ALC850 codec easily played various games, music, and DVD media like Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No. 2 with exceptional clarity and soundstage presence.

The Gamer Ultra SLI Pro's only blemish revolves around the Aspire X-Navigator server case, which uses poorly designed and breakable swappable facelates, along with a rather noisy (78 decibels) enclosure. Compare this to the Rage SLI's higher-quality brushed aluminum chassis, and you can see why spending the extra money for good looks can pay dividends. However, the case



Oh, *Doom 3* how scary you are when powered by a fire-breathing SLI system.

does have an LED thermal temperature display, three extra LED fans, cold cathode ray tube, and fan-control dial for notable enhancements in both functionality and modicum aesthetics. Fortunately, buyers have a number of alternative case choices when purchasing the Gamer Ultra SLI Pro. And gone is the messy wiring scheme found in CyberPower's UGM Titanium entry.

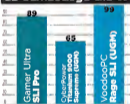
The Gamer Ultra SLI Pro employs a couple of optical-drive solutions, including Samsung's dual-layer DVD-ROM drive for cranking out *Half-Life 2* or burning your favorite music to DVDs. Add CyberPower's one-year on-site tech support warranty just in case the system goes down, and you have a high-end gaming machine you can afford to keep for a long time. If you crave NForce4 with SLI horsepower for improved *Half-Life 2*, *Prezios*, or *Home* Total War gaming performance, then the Gamer Ultra SLI Pro's priced-to-move value is difficult to pass up. But unless you covet the X-Navigator's swappable facelates, you're better off choosing a better case for your system.

By Raphael Libertore

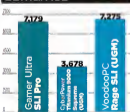
SCORE: ★★★★★

The Ultra SLI Pro's superior set of components leads to superfast gaming.

3D GameGauge Lite 10



3DMark05



ALL TESTS RUN WITH 2X AA (ANTIALIASING) AND 4X AF (ANISOTROPIC FILTERING) TURNED ON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

MANUFACTURER: Thrustmaster
 PRODUCT: Enzo Ferrari Force Feedback Wheel PRICE: \$60

YUGO RACING

You wouldn't find this in a real Ferrari

Thrustmaster has tried hard to reproduce the world-famous Enzo Ferrari steering wheel for PC racers. Aesthetically, it has succeeded at creating a model worthy of the Ferrari tradition. However, once you're behind the wheel, the experience feels more like it's from a kit car than a sports car costing more than a half a million bucks.

Any racing-sim enthusiast will tell you a wheel's clamping system and pedals make all the difference, especially when driving the intense Daytona 500 in a Papyrus NASCAR sim. The Enzo Ferrari's clamping system is well made—it keeps the steering wheel secure to the bench even when you're whipping around hairpin turns. The same cannot

Undersized and lightweight, the pedal platform constantly slips during aggressive racing.

be said of the Ultra-small Mini Cooper-quality pedal setup. Undersized and lightweight, the pedal platform constantly slips during aggressive racing, while the pedal's spring mechanism feels rigid and lacks pedal flow.

Thrustmaster's force-feedback implementation proved smooth and responsive during a tour on the NASCAR circuit. But after moving from the track to the street in *Nitro for Speed Underground*, the force-feedback effects became jerky and overbearing even after recalibrating the wheel, a process that proved problematic. During force-feedback driver calibration, both the gas pedal and button accelerator fought for control, even-

tually crashing the system numerous times. Disabling force feed-

back altogether fixed the problem.

The Enzo Ferrari's layout offers loads of buttons for a customized racing experience. With an eight-way D-pad, nine action buttons, gas and brake controls, and a pair of wheel-mounted gearshift levers, you won't have to peck at your keyboard during the race. At \$60, this wheel is priced to move—but that doesn't mean you should be moving it to your PC. **Raphael Libertore**

SCORE: ★★☆☆☆

MANUFACTURER: EDimensional PRODUCT: AudioFX headphones PRICE: \$50

NOW WITH HEAD MASSAGE!

AudioFX headphones

Historically speaking, I've had only a few simple requirements for gaming headphones: high-fidelity sound, sturdy design, and please, God, don't let me look like a complete idiot when I strap them on. Enter

EDimensional's attempt at gaming gear.

The AudioFX is a solid pair of stereo headphones that warrants attention based solely on one gimmick: deep, meaty bass coupled with back-breaking, booty-shaking vibrations that practically make the headphones jump off your head.

Flicking the toggle on the wired remote kicks the force feedback into action, and mercifully, it isn't too obnoxious. The bass response is solid and appropriate enough for all of *Half-Life 2*'s explosions and *World of Warcraft*'s majestic orchestral pieces. Keen ears will quickly notice, though, that all this emphasis on the bass reproduction and head-bangin'

leaves you with slightly flat highs and hollow mids. Voices get lost over the roar of just about every deep sound. It didn't help that I heard a little crackling between audio tracks when I plugged the headphones directly into a Creative Audigy 2.

More disturbing (and maybe this is just me being shallow) are the lame blinking lights on the sides of the ear cups. That's right, tiny flashing lights blinking on your head are supposed to signify "Busy playing games. Do not disturb!" It just makes you feel like a nerd who desperately aspires to be a Decapicon.

Designwise, though, other companies could learn at least one thing from EDimensional. AudioFX scores high for comfort. The padded cups sat on my dome for hours during tests and were totally unobtrusive. Points also go to the noise-canceling microphone that worked exactly as advertised. If only the rest of it did the same.

Darren Gladstone

SCORE: ★★☆☆☆

ENHANCED BY ATI Alienware PRODUCT Area-51m 7700 Notebook PRICE \$3,499

A TOUCH OF CLASS

Alienware Area-51m 7700 Notebook



Alienware's latest gaming laptop is jam-packed with innovations, making it one of the fastest notebooks we've had

the pleasure of testing. Weighing in at just over 13 pounds and measuring 16-inches long by 12-inches wide, it's a hefty notebook for sure, but the trade-off is it provides plenty of space for a vibrant built-in 17-inch Clearview widescreen SXGA LCD display. This screen allows for awesome gaming and movie playback at a whopping WQXGA 2048x1536 resolution—in spite of being supported only to a 1600x1024 aspect ratio. Alienware also adds a host of TV In/Out and DVI connections, along with an integrated 300k-pixel Bison webcam for a multitude of viewing options. The Area-51m is a looker too, with rubberized grips and Alienware eyes for showing off your rock-solid Clevo notebook chassis.

And it plays just as good as it looks. Designed with gaming in mind, the Area-51m 7700 houses a slew of high-performance components while offering the essential high-end features we've come

It's hard to name a laptop more serious about gaming.

ATI MOBILITY RADEON X800

ATI's Mobility Radeon X800 ups the ante in mobile graphics by offering a PCI Express architecture based on the .15 micron, low-k fabrication manufacturing process. The Mobility X800 provides blisteringly fast video performance without sacrificing battery life during off-peak 3D usage, courtesy of ATI's PowerPlay technology. This chip also offers a 12-pixel pipeline, a 400MHz engine clock (faster than the GeForce GO 6500 300MHz engine clock), a 400MHz GDDR3 memory clock, DirectX 9 support, and breakthrough image-enhancement technology. An integrated high-definition encoder provides the ultimate video and HD experience in a notebook design.



to expect from the king of boutique PC manufacturers. The main attraction is the ATI Mobility X800 256MB DDR3 PCI Express video-card (see sidebar), which pushed Doom 3 scores past the 60fps mark at 1400x1200 resolution with 2x antialiasing and 4x anisotropic-filtering enabled. Matched with the Intel "Grantsdale" i9SP chipset Clevo motherboard is an Intel Pentium 4 3.6GHz processor with Hyper-Threading technology and 1GB of DDR2 533MHz RAM (upgradeable up to 2GB)—this system packs the kind of raw power needed for processor-intensive games such as *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *Painkiller*. It's hard to name a laptop more serious about gaming when your UT2004 game runs seamlessly.

Our Area-51m 7700 came with SATA HDD in a Raid 0 striped configuration for faster read/write speeds. There's also a removable PCMCIA DVD-R/RW combo drive bundled with PowerDVD and Nero software for your media essentials, such

as burning DVDs or watching your favorite DVD movies. There's also space for an additional optical drive.

The goodies list is filled out with a 7-in-1 memory card reader, a headphone jack, USB 2.0, FireWire, parallel, printer, and dual-infrared ports, and the usual networking essentials such as Gigabit Ethernet, a 56k V.92 modem, and an 802.11b/g mini-wireless card. As for a power source, the smart lithium-ion 12-cell 6600mAh battery lasts just under two hours. Keeping the 180-watt AC adapter nearby is a smart move, just in case a *World of Warcraft* session goes longer than expected.

With quality and performance neatly compressed inside a rugged, feature-rich chassis, the Area-51m 7700 provides mobile gamers with a rig bursting with unprecedented speed. **Raphael Liberatore**

SCORE: ★★★★★

3D GameGauge Lite 1.0



3DMark05



ALL TESTS RUN WITH 2X AA (ANTIALIASING) AND 4X ANISOTROPIC FILTERING TURNED ON

MANUFACTURER: NEC-Mitsubishi PRODUCT: MultiSync 1970GX 19-inch LCD Monitor PRICE: \$599

THE BIG PICTURE

MultiSync 1970GX 19-inch LCD Monitor



At first glance, the MultiSync 1970GX 19-inch LCD comes pecked with the kinds of features gamers want in an LCD monitor. With a great 8ms response time, a 700:1 contrast ratio, a .294 dot pitch, superbright OptiClear screen technology, an integrated USB 2.0 hub, color saturation, Ambix dual-input technology, a swivel stand, and multifunctional NavKey, the 1970GX would seem like gaming nirvana. In some ways, it is. But during testing, the 1970GX, while generally performing well, was unable to steer clear of the occasional image anomaly.

At 8ms, this monitor offers the fastest LCD response times available for gaming. Shooters like *John's Ops* and action-heavy DVDs like *The Matrix* ran

fine, with none of the blurry images, jagged pixels, and ghosting effects that plague slower-refreshing LCDs. Additionally, the MultiSync 1970GX deftly balances a very insistent 700:1 contrast ratio with a notable brightness level for improved black-level performance and greater color palette range while decreasing color dulling in beautifully rendered games like *Far Cry* or the darkest of environments in *Lord of the Rings* DVDs. At 400 candela (or nits), this monitor shines brighter than any other LCD.

Unfortunately, the MultiSync 1970GX fell flat a couple of times while connected to the fastest gaming PC set-up around: an NVIDIA SLI system utilizing two GeForce 6800 Ultra PCI Express videocards. For some reason, the monitor had trouble handling higher frequency settings in certain games—problems ranged from artifacts, split screens, and rise/fall bandwidth issues to blink screens and out of sync errors.

Still, NEC-Mitsubishi has designed a state-of-the-art LCD monitor for gaming, if not for the weird frequency glitches, this would be an almost-perfect monitor choice.

—Richard Libertore

SCORE: ★★★★★

The 1970GX generally performs well but is unable to steer clear of the occasional image anomaly.

MANUFACTURER: Sony Corporation PRODUCT: Sony SDM-P234 PRICE: \$2,000

FLAT-PANEL HEAVEN

Sony SDM-P234

Other than my ongoing sordid love affair with my iPod, I do not just alter hardware devices.

But the arrival of Sony's 23-inch widescreen flat-panel SDM-P234 monitor changed all that. Did I want to use this monitor, Sony asked, while I played *Half-Life 2*? Oh yes. Yes I did. And now that I'm done, do I want to give the monitor back? Oh no. No I don't.

The SDM-P234 is a beauty, but for \$2,000, it better be. With a thin black bezel atop a circular metal base, it's got a cool, minimalist feel. The controls are nearly invisible along the monitor's right side but light up upon touch. A sliding panel in back hides the three connector ports (two VGA, one DVI). There are no built-in speakers (just an audio-out jack) or USB ports. You want flats? Spend less.

What you do get is a phenomenal viewing experience. The huge width

allows for what feels like two monitors of real estate—I could run a Word doc on half the screen and still have Outlook, iTunes, or even *World of Warcraft* running in the other half, with everything remaining crystal clear. The monitor's native resolution is 1920x1200, which is way too high for me, but even down to 1024x768, detail was sharp and contrast was quite good across the board. I tested *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2*, and these graphics hogs looked amazing, even in extremely dark or monochromatic areas where I was expecting to see ghosts and/or jagged. Clearly, the CRTs are doomed.

Do you need this gorgeous \$2,000 monitor? No. But are you wrong for wanting one? No you are not. —Jeff Green

SCORE: ★★★★★



Now that I'm done, do I want to give the monitor back? No I don't.

MANUFACTURER: Dell PRODUCT: 2405FPW LCD Monitor PRICE: \$1,200

HIGH STYLE, LOW PRICE

Dell 2405FPW LCD Monitor



THE BEST
OF THE
BEST
GAMING



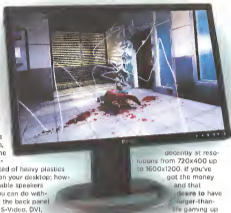
Three out of four techno-fetishists agree: The bigger the LCD monitor, the better. If it's a solid performer, that's a bonus. But if you can nell these two things and still come in at a reasonable price, you've got yourself a winner.

I didn't know what to throw at this 24-inch widescreen monitor first after plugging it into the DVI input of a GeForce 6800 Ultra card, so let's start with the basics: The 1600x1200 native resolution of the 2405FPW is sharp and bright, and for the important stuff (y'know, like actually trying to read text onscreen), this monitor is a star.

With a 12ms response time and good refresh rates for an LCD panel, this monitor will tempt gamers. That's why I was surprised when I started firing up the games. The 90-degree viewing angle removed ghosting concerns, but on more than one occasion in *Doom 3* (running at 1024x768), I noticed the occasional line streak and outcropping of jaggies. At least the monitor managed to

deal with the dark, dank halls on Mars and the wreckage in the Ravenholm level of *Half-Life 2*.

The rest of this package, though, is bulletproof. The no-nonsense display is constructed of heavy plastics that look good on your desktop; however, the detachable speakers are an option you can do without. Underneath the back panel are component, S-Video, DVI, and VGA inputs, and two powered USB 2.0 ports. On the side, behind the screen lie a 9-in-1 card reader and two more USB ports. Overlooking some slight flaws, the unit did well, performing



recently at resolutions from 720x400 up to 1600x1200. If you've got the money

and that

desire to have

larger-than-

life gaming up

in your face, then the

\$1,200 price tag makes this monitor a good deal. **Darren Goddard**

SCORE: ★★★★★

With a 12ms response time and good refresh rates for an LCD panel, this monitor will tempt gamers.

MANUFACTURER: Philips PRODUCT: Brilliance 190P5EB PRICE: \$350

LASTING VISION

Brilliance 190P5EB



Philips' Brilliance 190P5 LCD has the kind of feature-rich properties gamers crave. First on the list of gaming goodies for this 19-inch monitor is exceptional build quality. At a hefty 16-plus pounds, it's a sturdy unit with a larger than normal base, which steels the monitor for adjusting height, swivel positioning, or for a complete 180-degree rotation when toggling between landscape and portrait-view modes.

The Brilliance 190P5 also provides a wide viewing angle for those moments when you're peering at the monitor from odd angles or when a group of friends is huddling around the monitor watching DVDs.

A fast 16ms response time and .25mm dot pitch mean the 190P5 doesn't stut on displaying the finer details in the fast-moving

environments of games such as *Half-Life 2* and *Far Cry* at a max 1280x1024 native resolution. Since overall image quality is the 190P5's main highlight, neutral tones tend to stand out as more realistic when compared to competitive 19-inch monitors. Contrast-heavy games such as *Aliens vs. Predator 2* and *Doom 3* are completely playable due to the monitor's ability to show black levels and dark hues is sharp detail—a 700:1 contrast ratio will do that for you. Overall, colors appear noticeably crisp across the color spectrum, although subtle brightness variations suffer perfectly.

Add in a set of integrated speakers, audio and headsets jacks, and both analog and DVI interface connections, and the 190P5 is a great choice for gamers looking for an LCD monitor of its hefty price tag. If Philips would just lower its price by \$50, it'd be looking at an Editors' Choice rating. **Raphael Liberator**

SCORE: ★★★★★



▶ **WHAT FACTURES:** Creative PRODUCE | GigaWorks ProGamer G500 5.1 Speaker System PRICE: \$250

SMALLER, LOUDER

GigaWorks ProGamer G500 5.1



Priced much lower than its more potent MegaWorks and GigaWorks siblings, the GigaWorks ProGamer G500 5.1 THX-certified speaker system isn't an upstart youngster trying to catch a ride on the back of the rock-solid Creative speaker family name. On the contrary, the ProGamer G500 represents the family well by closely reproducing the signature sound quality of the Creative speaker line without depleting your wallet.

ALL TOGETHER NOW

Like most PC speaker systems available today, the ProGamer G500 comes in a typical six-channel (5.1) analog flavor. With convergence making a big roar in

PC, home theater, and gaming console circles, I would have been willing to drop some extra cash if Creative had added the DTS-100 Digital Decoder to this system. Without a speaker decoder and the accompanying digital coaxial and optical jacks, analog speaker systems like the ProGamer G500 must rely on both a multichannel soundcard such as the Creative Audigy 2 and a software decoder program like

CyberLink's PowerDVD for digital surround sound reproduction, and there's a noticeable sacrifice in sound quality. The system also comes with a poorly placed auxiliary input jack (in the rear of the sub) for plugging in your favorite MP3 player.

Like its siblings, the ProGamer G500 produces impressive sound in everything across the board. Rated at 36 watts RMS, the G500 uses five Flared DynaPort satellites sporting 3-inch drivers for

conveying high-resolution sound with little to no distortion, even with the volume cranked to a whopping 95 decibels. The G500 reproduces smooth tonal characteristics, which were evident when listening to the horns in Glinka's classical masterpiece, *The Russian and Luchnik Overture*. Midrange is crisp and enveloping, which was evidenced during my favorite Gladiator DVD playback clip, where Maximus defeats the former gladiator champ before thousands of frenzied Romans. Jeri Southern's classic female vocals come across as vibrant and enveloping. During a Norah Jones listening session, however, highs lacked detail and, in some stanzas, sounded slightly bright. But these are minor annoyances.

BOOM, BABY

The real highlight of the ProGamer G500 is an impressive 185-watt RMS subwoofer built around an 8-inch front firing woofer and twin Flared DynaPorts for tighter airflow resulting in loud and deep bass. Booming lows rival those produced by the excellent subwoofers from both Klipsch and Logitech. Shotgun blasts from Doom 3 rattled my windows, while hefty after-shock rumbles caused by the explosions of an Unreal Tournament Redeemer rocket sent me into a giddy sensory overload. It's the same with DVDs, with the ProGamer G500 busting out the deepest tones of high-resolution audio from movies such as *Jurassic Park III* and *The Matrix*. The subwoofer's only weakness is in reproducing extremely deep bass music above 100 decibels, with some slight distortion heard past the constant rhythmic pounding of a Moby house track.

Despite a couple of sound-quality dings, the ProGamer G500 sets the bar for gaming speakers at the sub-\$250 price point. Crank it during *Half-Life 2*, and you'll probably wonder why you even considered dropping \$500 for a high-end speaker system from Logitech, Klipsch, or even Creative. If you're serious about great-sounding speakers but can't afford the high-end decoder types, this bad boy is a great choice. **By Raphael Libertore**

SCORE: ★★★★★

The ProGamer G500 produces impressive sound across the board.



Photo: COURTESY Corsair Memory / XMS Xpert
 TWSP1024-3200XL 512MB PC3200-00R Memory
 Model# CM3200-512M

LONG-TERM MEMORY

Corsair XMS Xpert PC3200 RAM



As a longtime hardware enthusiast, I've always put Corsair RAM high on my cool-factor list. Why?

Because its memory modules, encased in cast-aluminum heat sinks for improved heat dissipation, exemplify the convergence of performance, innovation, and style. Corsair memory is designed specifically for gamers wanting to achieve the best possible performance while still maintaining good looks.

Here, two 512MB 184-pin DDR XMS Xpert RAM modules come packaged in the 1GB memory upgrade kit. Thanks to some cutting-edge technology, it provides blisteringly fast performance in a dual-channel configuration; the 400MHz clock speed coupled with 2-2-2-5 low latency values provides substantial performance gains. While the XMS Xpert RAM uses Corsair's nifty LED color activity meters for displaying memory usage, its best feature is a built-in microcontroller designed for measuring memory voltage, temperature, and frequency settings, all of which are displayed in real time on cool 10-digit LED marquee that reside along the tops of both RAM modules right beside color activity meters. The marquee's cycle and scroll-speed display outputs can be customized using Corsair's Memory Dashboard

software utility. Who would have thought RAM could get so tricked out? As an added bonus, the software provides the cool capability of adding personal messages of up to 23 characters.

True, this XMS Xpert RAM with LED is not cheap. But with a lifetime warranty, the ability to add more PC3200 RAM for additional performance gains, and cool factors galore, the XMS Xpert is perfect for deep-pocketed gamers wanting the best.

By Raphael Liberatore

SCORE: ★★★★★

As an added bonus, the software provides the cool capability of adding personal messages of up to 23 characters.

Tech Commando

Command from the hardware front lines



I recently replaced a friend's moth-board and vidocard that were damaged by the effects of electrostatic discharge (ESD). While attempting to add more RAM, he suddenly lost both components because he neglected to take the necessary ESD precautions. Unfortunately, this isn't unusual. Most computer users scratch their heads in bewilderment whenever I suggest that triboelectric charging or ESD might be the culprit behind damaged hardware components. Others insist ESD is hogwash and upgrade their systems without taking precautions. Their luck will eventually run out.

Triboelectric charging (or tribocharging for short) is a serious yet little understood threat to computer components. Believe it or not, the majority of computer component and system manufacturers consider ESD to be the primary reason behind component damage and/or system failure; it affects components and devices directly or indirectly due to improper handling during installation and removal.

Basically, particles are attracted to various silicon wafers and electrical component surfaces; the charged surfaces attract and hold contaminants, resulting in random wafer defects and reduced product yields. In some instances, ESD causes latent defects—random crashes, reboots, blue screens, etc. Virtually all materials, even conductors, can be triboelectrically charged—material type, speed of contact, uncontrolled environment, board separation, and humidity are all factors that can determine whether this problem occurs. In most cases, static discharge is subtle and largely goes unnoticed until it's too late.

In order to minimize ESD, I recommend using materials and procedures that dissipate tribocharging—simple precautions like grounding wrist straps and antistatic mats (read this month's Tech How To on page 104 for more). Considering the cost of all the components in your PC, why wouldn't you? Raphael Liberatore

GEEK SPEAK LCD technobabble de-babbleized

EXGA	Super extended graphics array is the term for an LCD monitor capable of supporting a 1280x1024 resolution or 1.3 million pixels.
QXGA	Quantum extended graphics array is the term specifying an LCD monitor capable of supporting 2048x1536 resolution or 3.2 million pixels.
DPI	Dots per inch refers to image resolution. The more dpi, the higher the resolution.
NTSC	The National Television System Committee definition of a video signal is incompatible with most computer video protocols utilizing a RGB video signal. An NTSC-capable video adapter or graphics card can convert the NTSC-standard signal in a computer.
BR map	An image represented as rows and columns of dots, typically stored in memory in one or more bits of data. The density of the dots (the resolution) determines image sharpness, expressed as dpi by the number of rows and columns, i.e. 640x480. The more bits used to represent a dot, the more colors and shades of grey can be represented.
Vector graphics	Vector graphics use a sequence of mathematical formulas to define shapes and lines within a two- or three-dimensional space. Vector graphics are more flexible than bit-mapped graphics because they look the same even when scaled to different sizes.

How to Avoid Electrostatic Discharge

Stop your shocking behavior By Raphael Liberatore



STEP #1

Environment

Components and devices should be properly packaged in anti-static materials or bags and shielded during transportation. It's also wise to work on a clutter-free bench rather than on carpet or a desk sharing various electronic components. Also, don't wear just socks or ugly boots while working. Keep the environment static free and maintain dissipative control when unpecking, touching, or handling ESD-sensitive components and devices. Provide the appropriate layer of input protection, while unpecking and repackaging boards, devices, or whatever silicon you come in contact with. Finally, make sure your workspace is above 40 percent humidity.



Have you ever experienced a static shock after walking across the room or when simply changing your T-shirt? This is known as triboelectric charging, or ESD (electrostatic discharge), and it can occur when two neutral but highly conductive surfaces (positive and negative) come in contact and then separate, causing a discharge of static electricity. Since virtually all materials, especially silicon and semiconductor-board surfaces, attract and hold electrical contaminants, even the slightest static discharge can adversely affect and even destroy system components and devices. Sensitivity varies significantly, depending on the environment and a variety of other factors such as material type, speed of contact and separation, and humidity. This is why it's extremely important to take antistatic measures when upgrading or installing system components.



STEP #2

Grounding

Grounding is the most important factor in minimizing ESD. By providing proper grounding or shunting, both to you and your components, you should be able to dissipate ESD away from the device and/or component. Antistatic products—such as ESD bench mats, grounding cords, and wrist wraps—are worthwhile expenditures if you want to avoid the troubles related to ESD. Combine all three if you spend a lot of time inside the chassis upgrading your system.

STEP #3

Alternate choice

If you lack the funds to acquire appropriate ESD tools, simply touch the unpainted metal portion of your case while it's grounded (plugged into an AC power supply with a ground-fault circuit interrupter) before working with a system to minimize ESD. Though it's not a foolproof method, it is a far better alternative to zapping your silicon wafer with static electricity.

ESD can be reduced if you follow these failsafe steps. When tinkering with your system's insides or upgrading system components and/or devices, minimizing the effects of ESD should be a primary consideration in your performance-upgrade venture—you're not going to be able to exchange that expensive video card because you got sloppy, forgetful or no receipt.

BY DAVID BRISNER FOR ASUS **DIFFICULTY** A8N-SLI Deluxe NForce4 PCI Express Socket 939 motherboard **PRICE** \$179

BIG BAD MOBO

A8N-SLI Deluxe NForce4 PCI Express Socket 939 motherboard



The team of mad scientists at Asus is setting itself up to reap the benefits of Nvidia's powerful NForce4 PCI Express chipset and Scalable Link Interface (SLI) technology, as

Asus is the first major manufacturer to release a motherboard sporting both innovations. And that's just the beginning.

The A8N-SLI Deluxe offers tremendous storage options, with eight SATA channels, including the new SATA II 3.0 Gb/s standard and two IDE channels ripe for multiple RAID configurations. There are also external SATA power and cable connectors for providing hot-swapping SATA drives without opening your case.

Most important, the A8N-SLI Deluxe supports AMD's flagship Athlon 64 FX-55 Socket 939 processor, provides 400MHz dual-channel RAM module support for a focus on high-end gaming, and incorporates

Nvidia's SLI technology to combine two PCI Express GeForce 6000 series GPUs for a substantial increase in raw 3D-gaming muscle, which gives the motherboard a way above average *Half-Life 2* benchmark score of 103.77fps. Of course, two GeForce 6000 series cards along with an expensive Asus motherboard could cost more than \$1200. In my mind, the performance gains are worth the financial discomfort when you consider that Asus provides an extensive software library of overlocking utilities, allowing your rig to belch out *Doom 3* benchmarks at an incredible 109.77fps.

Rounding out the feature set are two Gigabit network connections using both Nvidia's and Marvell's PCI controller chips; several USB 2.0 and FireWire connections for connecting multiple controllers, devices, and media; and high-fidelity audio courtesy of a Realtek ALC1250 onboard eight-channel audio codec with optical and SPDIF output



support, which allows for crisp and detailed digital surround sound capability.

Considering all this, is it any wonder this year's Ultimate Gaming Machine sported one of these? Not at all. **Raphael Liberatoro**

SCORE: ★★★★★

BY MATT MURPHY FOR BFGTECH **DIFFICULTY** GeForce 6800 Ultra OC PCI Express **PRICE** \$599

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE

GeForce 6800 Ultra OC PCI Express 256MB GDDR3 RAM GPU



BFGTech manufactures some of the fastest gaming-ready and over-clocking-friendly GeForce 6000 series graphics cards, and its customer support and lifetime warranty are simply the best in the business. With PCI Express fast becoming commonplace, BFGTech takes advantage of the faster architecture in its new flagship GeForce 6800 Ultra OC PCI Express videocard. Add another for an Nvidia SLI-configured setup, and it's love. If you can live with the \$1,100 price tag.

BFGTech basically transfers the DirectX 9.0 and superscaler performance features from its AGP Ultra OC card into a PCI Express version with excellent results. I tested the BFGTech 6800 Ultra in an SLI configuration and found that the overclocked 625MHz engine clock coupled with its overclocked 1000MHz memory clock pushed the envelope for substantial framerate gains across the board (especially when compared to the earlier AGP boards). Even with the resolution moved to 1600x1200, both *Doom 3* and *Far Cry* benchmark tests showed impressive results, with *Mao* scores at 1280x1024 (3x

AA, 4x AF) moving well past the 100fps barrier. *Half-Life 2* not only plays fast in SLI but looks good, too.

The Ultra OC is a monster, with a huge heat sink and fan for optimal cooling, it also features dual DVI, HD, and S-Video ports. But like its previous OC Ultra AGP product, you'll need a minimum 480-watt power supply in order to use it. This shouldn't be too much of a concern for gaming enthusiasts building an SLI rig, since most computers come with a 24-pin EPS 12V ATA power supply and 6-pin PCI Express connectors capable of handling this gear.

Best of all, the 24/7 lifetime tech support, lifetime warranty, and new BFGgaming.com gaming portal for dedicated game server support and contests make the GeForce 6800 Ultra OC PCI Express videocard a hard deal to pass up. Yeah, you could use this card by itself and expect great results, but since the fastest PCI Express mobo supports SLI, why would you? **Raphael Liberatoro**

SCORE: ★★★★★

The Ultra OC is a monster of a card.





▣ The SLI Nemesis Revisited is fast, and it looks good, too.

KILLER RIG

SLI Nemesis Revisited



Last issue, we scored what was arguably the biggest gaming enhancement for a PC since the 3dfx Voodoo graphics card: an Asus A8N-SLI Deluxe NForce 4 PCI Express motherboard (see review, pg. 103). If

you've been reading Tech, then you already know Nvidia's NForce4 PCI Express chipset with SLI leads to the fastest framerates, and Asus has perfected it with this feature-rich mobo design. The SLI architecture provides double the performance with two identical videocards linked via dual PCI Express x16 slots (two x8 in SLI).

Combine this with AMD's very powerful Athlon 64 FX-55 processor and you'll find yourself at the top of a hardcore gaming mountain.

Our SLI Nemesis rig returns mostly intact but with a graphics overhaul and audio swap. The highlight comes from ditching the two previous XFX Force GeForce 6600 videocards in favor of two Ultimate Gaming Machine-level graphics cards. The BFGTech GeForce 6800 Ultra OC SLI-ready videocards installed in the SLI Nemesis Revisited

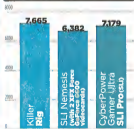
offer the absolute best framerates in any gaming system, and the incredibly high benchmarks it achieved support this claim.

When it comes to finding the best surround-sound PC system available, scaling up from the Logitech Z-5500 digital speaker system is almost impossible. However, the Creative ProGamer G500 5.1 speaker system's deep and compact bass provides a worthy challenge to the Z-5500's LFE, so we went with it. Replacing the gorgeous Apple 23-inch LCD was next by swapping it with the NEC 1970GX 19-inch LCD, which improved game performance due to its faster refresh rates and better black and brightness levels. Based on the scores, our upgrade process perfected the rig, making it the fastest gaming PC to grace this magazine. ▣ **Raphael Libertore**

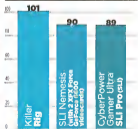
The Guts

	COMPONENT	PRICE
Case	NOXIT Nemesis Elite Edition midtower case	\$100
Power supply	Thermaltake Silent PurePower 680-watt with active PFC power supply	\$110
CPU	AMD Athlon 64 FX-55	\$100
GPU	Zalman CNP7700-Cu heat sink and fan	\$15
Motherboard	Asus A8N-SLI Deluxe	\$190
Memory	Two Kingston HyperX KHX6400D3 1GB DDR memory module kits (G&R total)	\$100
Hard drive	Two Seagate Barracuda 7200.7 SATA 200GB 7200 rpm hard drives with 8MB buffer	\$210
Optical	Two BFGTech GeForce 6800 Ultra OC 256MB GDDR3 RAM PCI Express videocards	\$100
Video drive	Hard Dog HyperSODR 6-in-1 160GB/40GB Layer DVD/CD/RW internal drive	\$99
Cooling drive 2	LG S24/32x/48x CD-R/RW drive	\$25
floppy drive	Sony floppy drive	\$12
Monitor	NEC 1970GX 19-inch LCD monitor	\$199
Keyboard	Sabelt Gamers Keyboard	\$40
Mouse	Razer Diamondback optical	\$60
Speakers	Creative ProGamer G500 5.1 speaker system	\$140
OS	Cold cathode ray tube	\$1
TOTAL COST		\$1,051

3DMARK05



3D GameGauge Lite 1.0



ALL TESTS RUN WITH 3X AA (ANTIALIASING) AND 4X AF (ANISOTROPIC FILTERING) TURNED ON UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

EXTREME TECH

Tech Medics

ExtremeTech.com's big brains answer your questions



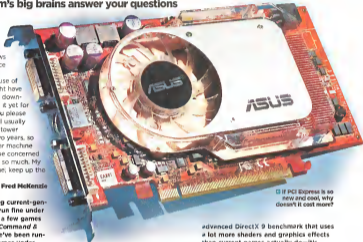
I seem to remember an article in your magazine several months ago on the newest Windows updates, particularly Service Pack 2 and whether it was advisable to install it because of the negative effects it might have on gaming. I have kept my download but have not installed it yet for this very reason. Would you please advise me on this matter? I usually purchase a new computer tower every year and a half to two years, so my games on any particular machine are fairly recent. Should I be concerned about this update? Thanks so much. My son and I love the magazine; keep up the outstanding work.

Fred McKenzie

Lloyd Case: If you're playing current-generation games, most will run fine under Service Pack 2. There are a few games that have issues, such as *Command & Conquer: Generals*, but we've been running a large number of games under SP2 with no problems. Occasionally, a dialog box will pop up asking you if you want to keep blocking network access to a game or enable it. We usually just click "enable" and move on.

I noticed a glaring anomaly when I started researching videocard. All of the PCI cards are selling for substantially less than the AGP cards. Isn't PCI Express supposed to be the new "gotta have it" graphics tech? I'm not a Gen-Xer, I remember when Pong was the coolest platform system anyone could have. Heck, I remember when computers were called Univacs and grad students ran inside them pushing shopping carts full of vacuum tubes so that they could swap fresh tubes for the ones that burned out with astonishing regularity. And no, I wasn't one of those guys—I was still in high school. In all this time, I have never seen the new "with it" tech sell for less than the old, soon-to-be-abandoned tech. So what's the deal here? Are the manufacturers getting ready to abandon PCI because it has some terrible drawback they're keeping mum about? Or is it all just hype?

Cal Morrison



□ If PCI Express is so new and cool, why doesn't it cost more?

Lloyd Case: PCI and PCI Express are two quite different things. What you're probably seeing are actual PCI cards that plug into 32-bit PCI slots. These are typically very lowball cards, so they would be cheaper. Now, to cut you a little slack, it is true that the graphics card companies shipped entry-level and mainstream PCI Express graphics cards first, mainly to fill demand from the big guys, such as Dell and HP. But we are now seeing high-end PCI Express cards, and they cost every bit as much as or more than the AGP spread.

Hey guys, great mag, accurate reviews. Where can I get benchmarking software for games on my computer and how much would it cost? By the way, thanks for sucking my life away and turning me into a complete nerd.

Joe Bohannon

Jason Cross: The simplest gaming benchmark you can get without spending any money is 3DMark. Head to www.futuremark.com and download the free version there. There are two benchmarks: 3DMark03 primarily tests DirectX 8-class hardware and is modeled after games of the last year or so. 3DMark05 is a more

advanced DirectX 9 benchmark that uses a lot more shaders and graphics effects than current games actually do—it's designed to gauge performance with future games. There are pay versions of both benchmarks that let you change around a lot more options.

Beyond that, some games have built-in benchmark functions. *Doom 3* lets you run benchmarks very easily. Simply bring down the console by holding down Ctrl and pressing the Tilde key (that's the one with the - on it to the left of the 1 key). Type "timedemo demo!" and the game will run through a recorded gameplay demo using the current graphics settings, then give you an average frames-per-second score. There's a bit of I/O activity on the first run, so you may want to run it twice and take the second reading. There are quite a few other games that have some form of built-in benchmarking: *Half-Life 2*, *Unreal Tournament 2004*, *Far Cry*, *Spinter Cell*, and *PenkWar* are some popular choices. Detailed instructions on how to benchmark your system with each of them would take a lot of space, but we have lengthy how-to articles for some of these at www.extremetech.com, and some Google-fu will help you find the rest. □

Got questions? Send them to Tech_Medics@extremetech.com

A-LIST

The latest and greatest gadgets you gotta get

By Darren Gladstone

BUY www.audiovox.com PRICE \$200

AUDIOVOX SMT5600 SMARTPHONE

T I'm a digital couch potato. There, I said it. It started simply enough with TiVo: I'd record a show and watch it whenever I wanted. Next came the TV tuner card for my PC, the inevitable recording of *Chappelle's Show*, and the ability to drop an entire season on a notebook. Now, I'm taking nerdism to whole new frightening levels with Audiovox's SMT5600.

The smallest smartphone around does a whole lot more than hit the Web and stash all your Outlook contact info. This snub-nosed cell is the first to pack Windows Media Player 10. Just imagine how hardcore you'll be when you're watching last night's shows on your morning commute thanks to the Mini SD card slot. Did I get any cock-eyed looks on the bus? Who cares? I'm too busy watching *The Daily Show* on my phone.



T The only thing that could make this more MacGyver-y would be constructing it yourself out of lightbulbs, puppies, and gum.



BUY www.skullcandy.com PRICE \$200

SKULLCANDY MACGYVER WATCH

T MacGyver, the mallet-sporting supergeeky superspy of the 1980s, finally has a product worthy of his name. It's about time! At first glance, you might blow off this bit of gear as some oh-so-trendy, ruggedized sports watch. I did. So imagine my surprise when I found a hidden USB plug to the 1GB thumb drive lurking in this timepiece's guts. Plug it into your PC to stash whatever files you've got and charge up the watch at the same time.

Ready to roll? Grab your favorite headphones and the MacGyver also works as an MP3 player. It has a five-mode equalizer and rocks relatively hard for about five hours before crapping out. Back on the spy tip, use the built-in mic for covert conversation recording. ("Hey Jeff, what was that about a raise? Just speak into my watch...") I can officially say right here, right now: Who needs an iPod Shuffle when you have something this cool rocking your wrist? Just knowing you've always got some tunes on the backup (and a hard drive on your wrist) makes this sucker worth its price tag. The best part is people won't know how much tech you're flossing.

TECH REWIND

18 months of Tech scores at your fingertips

PRODUCT	MONTH	SCORE
ASUS Playlum G1	05/04	★★★★
ARIS Ultimate M6	03/04	★★★★
ActiveMedia 54Mbps Wireless Cable/DSL Router	11/04	★★★★
Allenware Aurora	01/04	★★★★
Alienware M5501	03/04	★★★★
Asus Extreme AX800 XT 256MB GDDR3 PCI Express	09/05	★★★★
Asus Radeon 8800 XT	04/04	★★★★
Asus V9800 Ultra graphics card	05/04	★★★★
Asus V9899 Gamers Edition Nvidia GeForce 6800 GT AGP 256MB GDDR3 GPU	01/05	★★★★
ATI 5600 XT	05/04	★★★★
ATI All-in-Wonder 5600	10/03	★★★★
ATI Radeon X300 XT and XT Pro	03/04	★★★★
ATI Radeon X800 XT PCI Express 256MB GDDR3	01/05	★★★★
ATI Radeon X830 XT Platinum Edition PCI Express	03/05	★★★★
ATI X800 XT	10/04	★★★★
Belkin Wireless Pre-N Router	03/05	★★★★
Belkin Nxtormo SpeedStar n82	04/05	★★★★
BFGTech Nvidia GeForce 6800 Ultra OC AGP 256MB GDDR3 GPU	01/05	★★★★
BFGTech Nvidia GeForce 6800 GTOC 128 MB DDR AGP Wireless	04/05	★★★★
Boox Companion 3	03/04	★★★★
Boox Technologies GameBox	03/04	★★★★
Creative Labs Decade DDT9-100	04/04	★★★★
Creative Labs GigaWorks 5750	04/04	★★★★
Creative SoundBlaster Audigy 2 ZS Notebook	03/05	★★★★
Cyberpower Gamer Ultra 5500 Pro	05/04	★★★★
Cyberpower Infinity 5500 Extreme	04/04	★★★★
Dell Dimension 8300	05/04	★★★★



BFGTech
Nvidia GeForce
6800 Ultra OC
AGP 256MB
GDDR3 GPU

PRODUCT	MONTH	SCORE
Dell Generation 3 Dimension XPS	10/04	★★★★
Dell Inspiron XPS	09/04	★★★★
Dell W30040 LCD TV	09/04	★★★★
D-Link DGL-4300 Gamer Lounge Wireless Router	03/05	★★★★
D-Link GigaExpress DG8-10000 8-Port Gigabit Switch	05/05	★★★★
EMachines H8607	06/04	★★★★
Falcon Northwest FragBox	10/03	★★★★
Falcon Northwest FragBox 2	11/04	★★★★
Falcon Northwest FragBox Pro	05/04	★★★★
Falcon Northwest Mach V	06/04	★★★★
Gateway 3DD ARC	08/04	★★★★
Gateway 7100 Gamer	06/04	★★★★
Gateway 710AL	01/04	★★★★
Gateway FMC-50K	05/04	★★★★
Gateway M675	02/04	★★★★
Gigabyte N62T500H Nvidia GeForce 6800 GT AGP 256MB GDDR3	01/05	★★★★
Hercules Prophetelux 830 Pro DV	03/04	★★★★
Hypersonic Aviator AX6	05/04	★★★★
Hypersonic Cyclone	01/04	★★★★
iBuyPower Bank to School Machine	08/04	★★★★
iBuyPower Gamer Extreme	03/04	★★★★
iBuyPower Titanium XP	10/03	★★★★
iBuyPower Z-Eon-FX	05/04	★★★★
iBuyPower Z-Eon-Pro	04/05	★★★★
Ideason Zbeard keyboard	12/04	★★★★
Intel DS230CV	10/04	★★★★
Legitech HX300 Performance Optical Mouse	07/04	★★★★
Legitech X820 6.1 Speakers	02/04	★★★★
Legitech Z-2000	04/04	★★★★
Legitech Z-3	04/04	★★★★



NaturalPoint
TrackIR 3-Pro

PRODUCT	MONTH	SCORE
Legitech Z-3300	02/04	★★★★
Legitech Z-9900	12/04	★★★★
Legitech Cordless Rumblepad 2	04/05	★★★★
NaturalPoint TrackIR 3-Pro	04/05	★★★★
Nvidia 128MB GeForce 6800 GT PCI	12/04	★★★★
Nvidia GeForce 6800 Ultra	08/04	★★★★
Nyko PC Air Flo EX	12/04	★★★★
Philips Brilliance 230WSVS 23-inch LCD	01/05	★★★★
PC Laptops Amplifier 967	03/05	★★★★
ProStar 5005-10	03/05	★★★★
Razer Diamondback Mouse	04/05	★★★★
Saitek Gamers' Keyboard	04/05	★★★★
Saitek X52 Flight Control	04/05	★★★★
Tapewave Zedlic	02/04	★★★★
Thrustmaster 2-in-1 Dual Trigger Gamepad	04/05	★★★★
Toshiba Grande ES-AV101	10/04	★★★★
Toshiba Satellite 5205-5705	06/03	★★★★
Toshiba Satellite P25-S670	06/04	★★★★
Totally Awesome Computers Silicoously Intense PC	01/04	★★★★
U.S. Robotics URS470 54Mbps Wireless Network Kit	03/05	★★★★
Velocity Micro Gamers Edge	01/04	★★★★
Velocity Micro Vision 64	10/04	★★★★
Vicous PC MM H80A 665	08/04	★★★★
Vicous PC Ninja	05/04	★★★★
Voodoo Moxi c355	05/04	★★★★
VoodooPC Envoy H860	11/04	★★★★
VoodooPC F1	01/04	★★★★
VoodooPC F50	10/04	★★★★
VoodooPC Voodoo Doll	02/04	★★★★
Widow PC The Sting	03/05	★★★★
XFX Force Nvidia GeForce6800 GT 128MB GDDR3 PCI Express	05/05	★★★★
Zalman ZM-806P Theater 6 headphones	03/05	★★★★



DGL-4300
Wireless Router

Codo Technologies P.R. / Codo Technologies Strategy

Laser Squad Nemesis

The fight for control of the universe continues



Tom: *Laser Squad Nemesis* is basically multiplayer X-Com. The developers at Codo Technologies are some of the folks who did X-Com, including the Gallop brothers, Nick and Julie. We're playing an HQ game, in which the winner is the first player to destroy the other player's HQ. Bruce sets up in the north and I set up in the south. In the tradition of X-Com, I chose the greys. Since Bruce gets nervous playing any nonhuman race, I told him to just take the Marines.

My force consists of sentries and two guardians in the center. I have a warp gunner hidden in a building at either end. The sentries are my basic troops, they have an energy reserve that powers their weapons and their shields, so energy serves as both ammo and health. The guardians are unarmed fellows on tracked skids with shield generators that provide protection and cloaking in a radius around them. Warp gunners are little guys with powerful guided missiles that I can plot to explode anywhere on the map.

Bruce: I'd like to give you an involved backstory kind of like the one Tom just told you, only with lots of slashfic and whatnot. Sadly for everyone, but most of all for me, which is all that matters anyway, I can't do that because I have no idea

what's going on. Tom said we were going to play multiplayer X-Com. That sounded great—gave me a chance to play one of my favorite games ever in multiplayer and you can basically convince me of anything, like the fact that it has multiplayer when, in fact, it does not. Like all things that are too good to be true, this X-Com doesn't even have a story. What happened on Cydonia? Who shot the president?

Tom: We're moving out cautiously, since I need to keep my sentries close to their guardians. I've split them into Alpha squad, which is on point, and Beta squad, bringing up the rear. We're working our way up toward the east side of the building in the middle of the map, which I'll call the relic building (the map is called Retic, so I figure if there are any relics here, they're inside that building, which has a force field you can turn on to protect you once you're inside).

Bruce: In case you were thinking all that slashfic I wrote just now was a joke, I want to make it clear that I honestly truly have no idea what is going on. I made the mistake of thinking I could just figure it out as I went along, while Tom is apparently deep into a massive NIH study of the capabilities of Retic guardians. At least he's naming all of his little dudes, as he did when we played *Avatars*. Some things stay consistently fruity



Tom's greys move out to conquer the universe.

Tom: Forty-three seconds in and I see one of Bruce's units. But it's not a Marine! It's an exterminator, which is the basic soldier for the robot race, called machina. Bruce must have misheard me when I told him to be the Marines. He's also got a couple of tanks up here: a tank that can fire devastating missiles and an A.I. tank that can heal machina units and fire a heavy rapid-fire plasma gun.

Bruce: Contact! That's either one of Tom's guys or a riot policeman on a little scooter. At the point I should probably have read the manual about how to make my robots



Tom
Last month:
Tom's Protoss kicked
Bruce's Terran arse old-
school style in a retro
match of StarCraft.



Bruce
Last month:
Bruce blamed his
defeat on the game's
low resolution, as eff-
sies will do.

shoot. Fortunately, they don't seem to need my help and they start firing some kind of robot laser guns without me even telling them to.

Tom: Bruce gets off the first shot. An exterminator pings my advancing guardian in Alpha squad and knocks four points off its shield, which is down to 56 from 60.

Bruce: I'd like to point out to the audience right now that according to what I just read, one of us has shields. Incredibly enough, that person turns out not to be me. Can you believe it? What are the chances that Tom would have some amazing advantage and I wouldn't?

Tom: Alpha squad has stopped, but they're all clustered behind the guardian, so they can't return fire! Beta squad is coming up and spots a hunter that Bruce must have rushed to the relic building.

Bruce: My guys are shooting, but they don't seem to be able to get past those cute little riot policeman shields on Tom's scooters. He obviously read the manual, figured out which race had the best shields, and gave me the crappy leftovers. I'm not mad, though, because that gives me the moral high ground. Kind of like the UN, except without Angelina Jolie.

Tom: Bruce's missile tank is heading off to the west side of the map, away from my advance, right toward one of the warp gunners I have creeping up the edge of the map to find his HQ.

My sentries get the first kill of the game when they take out a hunter. The guardian with Alpha squad is depleting his energy reserves, so I switch off his shield and retreat him and his three sentries into the relic building. We'll turn on the building's force field and hole up in there to recharge. Meanwhile, on the west side of the map, I plot a pair of shots from my warp gunner to detonate where I anticipate his missile tank will be.

Bruce: I'm not saying the Gollips aren't total geniuses, but someone might have mentioned to them that if you're going to call a unit a "hunter" without making it good at hunting, you need to include a long, involved backstory about how it was once really good at it but then the Burning Legion came, yadda yadda. Otherwise, how am I supposed to figure out that instead of hunting, my "hunter" is going to get blown up by the first international law enforcement official it happens to run across?

Tom: As Alpha squad is entering the relic building, it's confronted by an exterminator and another missile tank to the north.

Bruce: I send my guys into whatever Tom has named that building with all the crazy dials to trade shots with his motor scooters. Unfortunately, I don't quite get the line-of-sight rules because my exterminator fires at him repeatedly but just hits a tree. Nice work. My exterminator gets wasted. Tom is winning 2-0, and it's

**Bruce's
hunter is the
first casualty.**



Alpha squad tries to take out Bruce's missile tank, but it dodges behind a tree.



Bruce fires at Alpha squad and forces it to vacate the relic building.

pissing me off. Tom obviously even knows what those crazy dials do.

Tom: We hold the relic building, but I got caught with my cloaking shield down, so one of Alpha squad's sentries is completely stripped of his shields and is slightly injured.

Bruce: One of Tom's sentries is "completely stripped"? Sounds sexy! However, basic math tells me that because Tom started out with shields and I didn't, this means we're now exactly even, even though I just shot the heck out of him with an invincible robot. Later I find out the robots aren't so invincible.

Tom: As near as I can tell, my warp gunner in the west gets two direct bursts on Bruce's missile tank, but doesn't kill it. On the east side of the map, my other warp gunner is working his way around the fire-fights to slip into Bruce's rear and probe for his HQ. Meanwhile, two more exterminators penetrate the relic building and succumb to Alpha squad's five Beta squad, still out-doors, is going toe-to-toe with an A.I. tank and is getting pounded, its guardian's shields are stripped and its two sentries are outmached in this message à trois.

Bruce: Ever notice how half of Tom's game descriptions end up being sexual innuendo? As you can tell from the screenshots, his units are not hot. In fact, they look like Pillsbury doughboys. So imagine them stripping and so forth doesn't really do anything for me.

Tom: Beta squad's guardian is depleted and useless, so it falls back, leaving the sentries exposed. They die shooting it out with Bruce's A.I. The warp gunner to the west fires off two more shots in the vicinity of

Bruce's advancing missile tank. Since this depletes his energy, he holes up to recharge. Meanwhile, the gunner on the east side of the map has slipped past the fighting and is peeking into the ruined buildings to look for his HQ. Hopefully, I can keep Bruce busy in the middle while this little fellow goes for the win.

Bruce: I think my robots' energy must be low. Unless they don't have energy at all, which would make that another thing Tom's units have that mine mysteriously don't. To be fair, my units could all have 88mm antitank cannons and I wouldn't know it, since I still can't figure out how to make them do basic things like shoot at Tom. They seem to just do it on their own, which is OK, I guess. They're robots—they probably know what they're doing.

Tom: From the relic building, my sentries advance to take a few shots at the missile tank to the west, which has been badly damaged by my warp gunner.

Bruce: It looks like Tom has a doughboy sneaking around my HQ, although I guess he doesn't see it. He's taking a bunch of potshots at a missile tank of mine on the left, which is weird because the tank just sits there like it's fine for him to be doing that. Never send robots to do the job of scary aliens from space.

Tom: My greys in the relic building are grouped so closely that a single missile could take them all out, since the guardian's shield is barely holding out and it's recharging very slowly. But just as the missile tank is almost dead, it disappears behind a tree without even firing at us. I'm guessing Bruce doesn't know that. ■

missile tanks begin a game in the Hold Fire setting, so you have to manually fire their missiles. This is a great help to me, and I can imagine that all wars would be easier if your opponent didn't know how to shoot his guns.

Bruce: I hate to constantly harp on this, but the Gollops really need to come up with some kind of better naming scheme. You'd think something called a "missile tank" would have missiles, or at least rockets. I'm not saying guns would be bad, either. Instead, all my missile tank does is sit around while Tom shoots at it. Well screw that—at least I know how to move it. I send it to hide behind a bush to await for further orders.

Tom: The AJ that decimated Beta squad now engages Alpha squad in the relic building, only this time it's accompanied by two hunters. We're flanked by machina tanks, and the guardian has only one point of energy left to power his cloaking shield. This will get very messy if Bruce figures out how to fire missiles. So on the off chance that Bruce deigns to look in the manual, Alpha squad evacuates the building and takes cover in the trees.

Meanwhile, the warp gunner that crept up the east side of the map has checked all the buildings but one, which is where Bruce's HQ must be. He plots a shot at the building, which should put me on the path to a win.

As for the warp gunner that had pounded Bruce's missile tank, he finally gets up enough energy to pop off another shot, which manages to find Bruce's crippled tank and destroy it in a massive explosion and cloud of smoke. Those things make a big bang when they're fully loaded with ammo.

Bruce: I hope the country we're fighting in has already had free elections, because you know the one thing Tom's going to get rid of when he takes charge is any semblance of democracy. For example, who voted to play this game? Not me. Instead, I got some kind of secret "challenge" from an anonymous game server probably controlled by the government.

Tom: My warp gunner at Bruce's end of the map blew open what I thought was the building where Bruce had hidden his HQ. Yet, no HQ! Like the Bush administration, I must have gotten bad intel. Time to



Tom's warp gunner whaling away at Bruce's HQ.

work my way back across the map to check the other buildings more carefully.

Bruce: I think my units are getting wise to Tom's electoral plans for after the game because they're actually starting to fight back. Thanks to the dynamic story arc that Codo updates daily, my hunters can now actually hunt, and one of them kills a riot policeman in self-defense. That makes it 9-3, but this is like the eighth or ninth inning or something. Or at least it is until Tom outlines baseball.

Tom: Alpha squad isn't going to last long. We're taking heavy casualties and we're low

Tom: Ah! My infiltrating warp gunner manages to stumble across a perfect line of sight through one building into the building past it to spy Bruce's HQ in a corner I hadn't checked. The warp gunner dashes toward it, since warp guns do more damage at close range. This war will be over soon.

Bruce: At this point it's Tom 10, Bruce 3. I still really haven't read the manual, but my guess is that means I'm losing. At this point, I start wondering if maybe that HQ I have does something, or if maybe Tom has one, too, and what

At this point it's Tom 10, Bruce 3. My guess is that this means I'm losing.

on energy. But the warp gunner that just took out Bruce's missile tank plots a shot directly into the relic building, which I vacated just as his units charged in.

Bruce: Let's examine the facts. My whole army seems to be armed solely with light pens, half of which must be broken, since they never shoot anything. Tom, on the other hand, has secret weapons that he imported from the WarCraft universe, because that sure looked like one of those night of wisps that just flew by one of my tanks and into a building. And then totally blew up the building.

might happen if I were to, you know, blow his up. That would be sweet: "Hey Tom, sorry about the score, but I blew up your headquarters, and you know what that means?"

Tom: Holy crap, Bruce has that other machina missile tank up near his HQ. I'd forgotten about it! It comes charging unexpectedly out of the smoke of the warp gun explosions, ready to fire at my defenseless little warp gunner.

Bruce: You probably expected Tom to make a *deus ex machina* joke right there, right? I know. I thought it was a great game, too. I have no idea what Tom was thinking.

Tom: Luckily, Bruce's missile tank just sits there and watches as my warp gunner destroys his HQ.

Bruce: Tom blew up my HQ. I'm just counting on the possibility that because the Gollops decided to call it an "HQ," that really means it's a latrine and has no effect on the game whatsoever.

Tom: Four warp-gun shots later and I've won. The greys have saved the world from robots. And I, for one, welcome our benevolent alien overlords. ☺



Beta squad is heavily outgunned.



And victory!

COMPUTER
GAMING
WORLD

COMPUTER
GAMING

▶ Coming Next Month...



JUNE 2005 ON SALE **MAY 10**

AD INDEX

ACTIVISION Doom III	27	Midway Games, Inc. Area 51	39
ATI TECHNOLOGIES INC. Redeon	95	NC Soft Corp. Guild Wars	116
Cyberpower's Systems Cyberpower PC	54-55	Nova Logic, Inc. Delta Force: Next Gen	71
Dell Computer Corp. Dell Home Systems	78-9	Planet Wide Games RYL: Peth of the Emperor	25
Eidos Interactive, Inc. Imperial Glory	10-11	Sony Online Entertainment Asheron's Call	15, 35
Electronic Entertainment Expo E3 2005	84-85	Take 2 Interactive Close Combat	61
Groove Games Periah	74-5	Take 2 Interactive Stronghold 2	28-29
Hip Interactive Corporation Mortyr 2,demo		TJHG Inc. Werhemmer	41
Hip Interactive Corporation Stolen	53, 116	Ubisoft Entertainment Splinter Cell Chaos Theory ..	16-17
iBuyPower ibuypower PC	30-31, 69	Vivendi Universal Games Empire Earth 2	6-7
iBuyPower NZXT	81	Vivendi Universal Games Freedom Force vs. The 3rd Reich ..	51
Ideason Inc. Zboard	43, 45, 47	Vivendi Universal Games SWAT	20-21
JAMDAT Mobile Inc. MLB	2-3	Wizards of the Coast Magic Betrayers	23
LG Electronics USA, Inc. IT Monitors	77		

STOLEN

INFILTRATE STEAL VANISH

WIN!

HIP GAMES IS GIVING YOU THE CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE **STOLEN**™ WITH ALIENWARE™'S AREA-51™ 5550 ULTIMATE GAMING RIG!*

ENTER TO WIN BY LOGGING ON TO www.alienware.com/CGWSTOLEN AND ENTER THE CODE: **AWSTOLEN**

THIS \$2,055 PRIZE PACKAGE INCLUDES: **WARRANTY:** 1-Year AlienCare Toll-Free 24/7 Phone Support with Onsite Service
OPERATING SYSTEM: Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition with Service Pack 2 **CHASSIS:** Alienware® Full-Tower Case (480-Watt PS) — Conspiracy Blue **POWER SUPPLY:** Alienware® 480 Watt Power Supply **PROCESSOR:** Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor 540 with HT Technology 3.2GHz 1MB Cache **MOTHERBOARD:** Alienware® PCI Express Motherboard with Intel® 925XE Chipset 1066/800MHz **FSB MEMORY:** 1GB Dual Channel DDR2 SDRAM at 533MHz-2 x 512MB **GRAPHICS PROCESSOR:** NVIDIA® GeForce™ 6800 GT **PCI Express 256MB DDR3 with Digital and S-Video Out** **VIDEO COOLING:** Alienware™ 2.0 Video Cooling System-Astral Blue **SYSTEM DRIVE:** High Performance-Serial ATA-80GB Seagate® Barracuda 7,200 RPM with 8MB Cache **OPTICAL DRIVE ONE:** NEC® ND-3520 16x Dual Layer DVD±R/W Recorder **FLOPPY DRIVE:** 3.5" 1.44 MB Floppy Disk Drive—Black **SOUND CARD:** Creative Sound Blaster® Audigy® 2 ZS High Definition 7.1 Surround Firewire (IEEE® 1394) **NETWORK CONNECTION:** Integrated High Performance Gigabit Ethernet **KEYBOARD:** Microsoft® Multimedia Keyboard—Conspiracy Blue **MOUSE:** Microsoft® IntelliMouse Explorer 4.0—USB—Conspiracy Blue **DESKTOP ENHANCEMENTS:** Exclusive AlienGize Theme Manager **PLUS FREE ALIENWARE™ T-SHIRT AND ALIENWARE™ MOUSEPAD.**



PlayStation 2



* See www.alienware.com/CGWSTOLEN for complete contest rules and guidelines. © Hip Interactive Corp., 2005. Each of STOLEN, HIP GAMES, HIP and HIP design are trademarks of Hip Interactive Corp. Alienware, and the Alienware logo are registered trademarks of the brand of Alienware Corporation. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox and the Xbox logo are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners. Sony Computer Entertainment Alienware takes no responsibility for this offer.

The Revolution Is Coming

GUILD WARS

IN STORES APRIL 28, 2005



www.GUILDWARS.COM



© 2005 NC Interactive, Inc. All Rights Reserved. NCSoft, the NCSoft logo, the NCSoft Guild Wars and all associated NCSoft and ArenaNet logos and designs are trademarks or registered trademarks of NCSoft Corporation. All other registered trademarks or trademarks are property of their respective owners.

