

TECH: HOW TO PLAY CLASSIC GAMES WITH WINDOWS XP

# COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

AUGUST 2002 ZIFF DAVIS MEDIA

SPECIAL  
100 REPORTS  
**DOOM  
III**  
FIRST SCREENS

HANDS-ON PREVIEW

## Neverwinter Nights

We play the ultimate D&D  
game from the creators  
of Baldur's Gate II

RATINGS REVEALED

## Morrowind Spider-Man

Plus 13 more games  
reviewed and rated

**SPECIAL  
EDITION  
COVERS!**  
COLLECT ALL 3

Hot Strategies for the Year's Best Games!



GAMETAP AND TELLTALE GAMES PRESENT

# THE WEDGIE IN THE UNSCRUPULOUS SHORTS OF CRIME



Their world is a skeezy cesspool of vile and demented miscreants. But funny! Sam & Max, the Freelance Police, keep the self-propelled guttertrash on the run — episode after episode, case after mind-boggling case. Grab your oversized band cannon and catch the debut of Sam & Max: Season 1 on Gametap.



Original, brand-spanking-new episodes released monthly.



Side-splitting interrogations, musical driving, and all-natural deductive puzzle-solving goodness.



Frishest animated shorts fill the agonizing 4-week gap between games.

## SAM & MAX™

SEASON 1

PREMIERING EXCLUSIVELY ON  
GAMETAP OCTOBER 17

[www.gametap.com/samandmax](http://www.gametap.com/samandmax)

GAMETAP  
EXCLUSIVES  
[gametap.com](http://gametap.com)



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

PC

TM & © Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., a Time Warner Company, or its licensors. All rights reserved.  
© 2009 Telltale, Inc. Sam & Max created by Steve Purcell. Sam & Max Copyright and Trademark Steve Purcell.

The #1 Computer Game Magazine

Lloyd Case  
On MMX Gaming

# Computer Gaming World

MAY 1997  
NO. 154

EXCLUSIVE!

## StarCraft

### Best Strategy Game Yet!

*Never-before-seen screenshots, secret designs, plus hands-on coverage of Blizzard's stunning new Sci-Fi mega-hit*

## Game of the Year Awards

*Our Premier Awards And Readers' Choice Winners*

### Which is the Best?



DIABLO



LONGBOW



QUAKE



NBA LIVE 97

\$7.99 USA \$7.99 Canada

05 &gt;



71486 01143

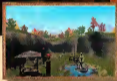
The makers of MYST invite you to tell the next story.



*This time, you are the storyteller. What happens next is up to you.*



*Solve puzzles by yourself, with friends, or with a whole group.*



*Wonderful, uncharted new worlds and puzzles are added as the story unfolds.*

*Massively organic, the next Myst adventure evolves every day. Your live expands and adapts as players act and react, creating new experiences for one and all. What story will you tell? Join in, explore and help forge an entirely new Myst story yours.*

*Explore the next Myst adventure this holiday exclusively on GameTap!*

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

MYST ONLINE  
**URU**  
— LIVE —

  
GAMETAP  
EXCLUSIVES  
[gametap.com](http://gametap.com)



PC

3.50  
90 Centimeters  
**100 Games  
Rated!**  
December 1990

Command HQ • Wing Commander • The Punisher

# COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

*The Definitive Computer Game Magazine*

## Lucasfilm's *Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe*



**Also in This Issue:**  
**Star Control Tactics**  
**Sound Board Survey**  
**DragonStrike**  
**Stormovik SU-25**



# SAM & MAX. MYST ONLINE. AND 700 OTHER GAMES.

YOU'LL NEED AN EXTRA LIFE JUST TO PLAY IT ALL.

*"It's like a genie agreed to grant you any wish."*  
—Electronic Gaming Monthly

*"A+"* —Computer Gaming World



Play the same great fighting game you've played for years.



Challenge players around the world with 100+ retro-style games.



Play exclusive titles like the Myst Online and Sam & Max.

Gametap is the only place to play hundreds of classic arcade, console, and computer games from 1970s-1990s. Our mission is to provide you with the best online gaming experience and it's all FREE for you. If we win, you win. That's how we do it.



**GAMETAP**  
AND YOUR PLAYGROUND.

PLAY FOR FREE AT [GAMETAP.COM](http://GAMETAP.COM)



PC

\$2.75

# COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



VOL. 1, NUMBER 1

NOV.—DEC. 1981



250.000 ACRES TO EXPLORE  
303 MISSIONS TO ACCOMPLISH  
89 VEHICLES TO COMMAND  
32 STUNTS TO MASTER  
**ONE REVOLUTION TO IGNITE**



MATURE 17+  
M  
Blood  
Drug Reference  
Intense Violence  
Language  
Sexual Themes

PC  
DVD-ROM  
SOFTWARE



PlayStation 2



avalanche



# SUPREME COMMANDER

EXCLUSIVE 4-PAGE PREVIEW  
INTERVIEW WITH CHRIS TAYLOR  
PLUS: ALL-NEW SCREENS AND INFO

# COMPUTER

The PC Gaming Authority

# GAMING

**25**  
YEARS OF  
GAMING  
P. 74

FOR 25 YEARS  
ISSUE 269

# WORLD

EXCLUSIVE  
WORLD PREMIERE

# ALAN WAKE

FROM THE MAKERS OF MAX PAYNE

THE NEW NAME IN TERROR

FIRST DETAILS

NEW SCREENS

PREVIEWED  
**HALO 2 FOR PC**

WHAT'S NEW,  
WHAT'S NOT  
PAGE 68

COLLECTOR'S ISSUE

# 25 YEARS OF CGW!

A LOOK BACK AT 268  
AWESOME ISSUES

PLUS: 4 CLASSIC COVERS





## **TAKE EVERYTHING YOU LOVE ABOUT TECHNOLOGY AND MULTIPLY IT.**

TAKE THE FUN, THE GAMES, THE CURIOSITY,  
THE EXPLORATION, THE CREATIVITY, THE EXCITEMENT,  
THE PROGRESS, THE LEARNING, AND THE PASSION...  
AND AMPLIFY IT.

NOW TAKE EVERYTHING YOU DON'T LIKE –  
THE LAG TIMES, THE LOCKUPS, THE STUTTERSTEPS...  
AND DELETE IT.

IT'S A NEW WAY OF COMPUTING.  
IN FACT, IT'S COMPUTING THE WAY IT WAS MEANT TO BE.



# INTRODUCING INTEL® CORE™2 DUO. THE WORLD'S BEST PROCESSORS.



Performance based on SPECint\*\_rate\_base2000 (2 copies) and energy efficiency based on Thermal Design Power (TDP), comparing Intel® Core™2 Duo E6700 to Intel® Pentium® D Processor 960. Actual performance may vary. See [www.intel.com/performance](http://www.intel.com/performance) for more information. ©2006 Intel Corporation. Intel, the Intel logo, Intel Core, the Intel Core logo, Intel Leap ahead, and the Intel Leap ahead logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries. All rights reserved.



Intel's new Core™2 Duo desktop processor multiplies everything you and your computer can do. Now you can experience performance up to 40% faster and over 40% more energy efficient. Learn why at [intel.com/core2duo](http://intel.com/core2duo)

For more information on why Intel® Core™2 Duo processors are the world's best overall processors, please visit [www.intel.com/core2duo](http://www.intel.com/core2duo)

ACTION-RPG REDEFINED

# Dark Messiah

## MIGHT AND MAGIC™

"THE LEGENDARY MIGHT AND  
MAGIC FRANCHISE GETS A MIND  
BLOWING MAKEOVER."

—COMPUTER GAMING WORLD—

MIGHT AND MAGIC™



ARKANE  
STUDIO



UBISOFT™





**SOLDIERS FIGHT FOR YOU.  
HEROES DIE FOR YOU.™**



"One of the greatest RTS games ever, period."  
PC Gamer

# COMPANY of HEROES

From award-winning Relic Entertainment comes the next generation in real time strategy gaming. Take command of America's finest troops in their finest hour. From the brutal landing at Omaha Beach to the heroic push inland, lead your men against the German war machine through some of the most crucial battles of WWII.



YOU'VE SENT 10,000 MEN TO THE HOLY LAND TO WAGE A CRUSADE.



YOUR SHIPS ARE RACING TO CLAIM THE NEW WORLD AND ITS RICHES.



AND AN ENEMY ARMY IS ABOUT TO LAY SIEGE TO YOUR NEW CASTLE.



© 2008 The Creative Assembly Limited. Total War, Ashes of the Sultans, and the Total War logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of The Creative Assembly Limited or the Creative Assembly and/or other countries. SESA is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. SESA and the SESA logo are either trademarks or registered marks of SESA Corporation. All rights reserved.



# WINNER

## BEST ADVENTURE GAME OF E3

— TeamXbox.com —

LIBERATION  
SOLDIER



# JUST CAUSE

COMING SEPTEMBER 2006

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

Just Cause © 2006 Eidos Inc. Developed by Avalanche Studios. Published by Eidos Inc. Just Cause, Eidos & the Eidos logo are trademarks of the Eidos Entertainment Group. Assassin is a trademark of Ubisoft Entertainment SA. All rights reserved. "The Wolf" and the "W" Eidos logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, and the Xbox and Xbox Live logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation or the United States Patent and Trademark Office and used under license from Microsoft. Software platform logo: © 2006 EA GAMES. EA GAMES. The term EA GAMES and the EA GAMES logo are registered trademarks of the Electronic Arts Company. The EA GAMES logo is not to be played, used or "MIMED" in any way without the express written permission of the EA GAMES Company. © 2006 Eidos Entertainment Ltd. The Eidos logo, eidos brand, Eidos and Eidos are registered trademarks of Eidos Entertainment Ltd. All other marks and/or other trademarks, the using marks a registered trademark of the International Software Association.





FIRST-PERSON MELEE COMBAT RENDERED WITH  
BREATHTAKING VISUALS AND EARTH-SHATTERING PHYSICS.



SWORDS, STEALTH, SORCERY.  
CHOOSE YOUR WAY TO KILL.



UPGRADE YOUR SKILLS IN ONLINE BATTLES WITH  
UP TO 32 PLAYERS IN THE EPIC CRUSADE MODE



Visit [www.ubisoft.com](http://www.ubisoft.com)  
for updated rating  
information.



[WWW.MIGHTANDMAGIC.COM](http://WWW.MIGHTANDMAGIC.COM)

© 2009 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Might and Magic, Dark Messiah of Might and Magic, Ubisoft, ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Developed by Arkane Studios and Floodgate Entertainment. Valve, Half-Life, and Source are trademarks or registered trademarks of Valve Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Online mode developed by Runic Games, the MIGHT, Eye Logo, and The Way It Moves to be Played logos are registered trademarks of Runic Games or the Ubisoft Entertainment and other countries. Software pictures logo TM and © IBM 2003.



Actual in-game screenshots.

# THE BATTLES ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING.

Once the shields have clashed and battles been won, there is still a nation to build. Manage your economy, spread your religion, and use assassins and princesses to cripple or seduce your enemies. Wage war with armies and agents to become the undisputed ruler of the medieval world.



NOVEMBER 2006



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

**SEGA**<sup>®</sup>  
[www.sega.com](http://www.sega.com)



# 82

## COVER STORY

### 18 Editorial

Before turning out the lights, Old Man Green pauses to weep quietly into his rice pudding.

### 24 Letters

Readers hate politics, readers hate console bashing, and readers hate readers who hate furries.



# 30

## 6 MILLION WAYS TO DIE



# 44

## SUPREME COMMANDER



# 52

## PIRATES



# 56

## OUTSOURCING



# 44

# 82

# 74

## COVER STORY **ALAN WAKE**

What's *Max Payne* developer Remedy been up to these past few years? We find out in this exclusive first look at the horror-thriller *Alan Wake*.

### 30 Radar

Is violence the only solution in games? Do PC gamers really need (or want) *Halo 2*? Could China be the next frontier for PC game development? Why is *Pirates of the Burning Sea* one of the most underrated MMORPGs of 2007?

### 74 25 Years of CGW

Join us for a stroll down memory lane as we reminisce about how the PC-gaming landscape has evolved over the course of *Computer Gaming World's* 25-year history.

### 91 Viewpoint

Get ready to have a really bad day (and we're not talking about the awful pop song, either) with *American McGee Presents Bad Day LA*.

92 American McGee Presents *Bad Day LA*

94 Madden NFL 07

96 Wings of Power II: WWII Fighters

98 *Sword of the Stars*

100 *DarkStar One*

102 Tom vs. Bruce: *Dominions 3: The Awakening*

### 106 Tech

Check out some of the winning case mods from ExtremeTech's case-mod contest, then find the perfect case for your next PC.

### 116 Greenspeak

This month, CGW hits the Blue Screen of Death—but stay tuned for next month's reboot!



SET YOURSELF FREE™

# VANGUARD

SAGA OF HEROES™



ESRB RATED  
**RP**  
RATED EVERYONE  
CONTENT RATED FOR ALL AGES

Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)  
for updated rating  
information.

**PC**  
DVD-ROM  
SOFTWARE

[JOINVANGUARD.COM](http://JOINVANGUARD.COM)

**SIGIL**  
BY SONY ONLINE

**SOE**  
SONY ONLINE  
ENTERTAINMENT

©2003-2005 Sony Online Games, Inc. Vanguard Saga of Heroes is a registered trademark of Sony Online Games, Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks and "Set Yourself Free" is a trademark of Sony Online Games, Inc. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners. All rights reserved.



70

**MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR**



74

**RETROSPECTIVE**



92

**BAD DAY L.A.**



100

**DARKSTAR ONE**



102

**TOM VS. BRUCE**

## GAME INDEX

- 82 *Alien Wake*
- 92 *American McGee's Prisoners Bad Day L.A.*
- 82 *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway*
- 100 *DarkStar One*
- 95 *Devastation Zone Troopers*
- 97 *Diablo Guns*
- 102 *Dominions 3: The Awakening*
- 98 *Europa Universalis III*
- 99 *Eve Online*
- 88 *Halo 2*
- 40 *The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II—The Rise of the Witch-king*
- 94 *Madden NFL 07*
- 70 *Medieval II: Total War*
- 92 *Pirates of the Caribbean: Struggle for the Crown*
- 95 *Ricochet Lost Worlds: Recharged*
- 99 *Shadowrun*
- 44 *Supreme Commander*
- 90 *Sword of the Stars*
- 98 *Ultima Online*
- 92 *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos*
- 95 *Wings of Power II: WWII Fighters*
- 94 *World in Conflict*



106

**TECH**

**THIS MONTH  
ON IUP.COM**



### CGWRADIO.1UP.COM

Hello and welcome...to the weekly CGWRadio podcast! Check the volume and hear what the intrepid editorial staff has to say about all things PC gaming-related.

### BOARDS.1UP.COM

Get the full details on our impending Games for Windows: The Official Magazine relaunch—as well as unfettered reactions from readers and editors alike—at the official CGWRadio message boards.

### CGWJEFF.1UP.COM

Jeff Green is still so mad about Paltrow not making it onto *Entertainment Weekly's* "50 Best Sidekicks" list that he hasn't blogged in a whole month. Stop by to point and laugh.

# RAISE AN ARMY. RULE THE WORLD.

## FOR THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE ARCHLORD!

THOSE WHO WOULD RULE THE WORLD OF CHANTRA ARE LEGION. THOSE WHO WILL RULE CHANTRA NUMBER ONLY ONE. WILL IT BE A HUMAN? OR AN ORC? OR A MOON ELF PERHAPS? YOU DECIDE.

Fashioned out of five elements, fire, earth, water, spirit, and air, Chantra's finely textured landscape provides an immersive visual experience. But it is the game play that breathes life into ArchLord.

In Chantra's beauty lie adventure, monsters, peril... and glory. For all must submit to the rule of the ArchLord. The ArchLord is the player who by cunning, deceit, skill, strategy, and sheer charisma bests all the other online players. You engage in universal Player versus Player combat or solo missions to level up and gather the skills necessary to dominate your guild. If you wish, you can join massive real-time battles between guilds. Or you can go lone wolf and embark on intricate quests (over 800 quest chains!). You gather power and followers and form alliances. And then, when the time is ripe, you challenge the ArchLord. If you're successful, you inherit the title and awesome powers that will help you rule Chantra and dominate the thousands of your fellow players worldwide.

Of course, your grip on the crown only lasts as long as you can fend off the challengers. Because even now, there is someone out there hungrier... smarter... more driven...

To become the ArchLord. •

The rich fantasy world of Chantra is the setting for ArchLord, the new MMORPG that will revolutionize online gaming. Three races, Orcs, Humans, and the mysterious Moon Elves, with eight different classes, live in this fully immersive environment.



#### The Humans

Traveling off the coastlines of their devious lord, Humans are forging a better and destiny on Chantra. Relentless and loyal, the Knight is the leader of the races. The Archer fights a poised ranged attack and offers tactical combat support from afar. Swift as a fox but stout as a bear, the Mage wields mighty magic to make even the strongest foe whimper.



#### The Orcs

Once considered the elder race on Chantra, the Orcs have occupied the world for a very, very long time. The vicious Berserker possesses great strength and surprising magic skills. No wonder they are relatively rare. Sharp-eyed and strong, the Hunter lives "on point" as the premier mission killer. The Barbarian is characterized by close combat with a mace, axe, but is feared in danger of losing his cool to his fiercest.



#### The Moon Elves

The Moon Elves have inhabited Chantra for ages and only recently have chosen to reveal themselves. They two classes are known: the Ranger and the Elementalist. The Ranger is the most well-rounded of all the ranged attack classes, with dazzling speed and mobility. Though weak physically, the Elementalist wields powerful elements to defeat his foes.



WWW.ARCHLORDGAME.COM



# XPS

experience

Dell recommends Windows®  
XP Media Center Edition.



Shown with 30" Flat Panel  
Display - add to your  
XPS 700 for \$1699.

XPS 700

XPS M1710

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor. "...the most impressive piece of silicon the world has ever seen."  
—Anandtech.com, July 14, 2006

For the first time, Dell is offering the XPS 700: Build Your Own series.  
Giving you the power to build your own system by purchasing only the core components of the XPS 700.\*

\*PLEASE NOTE: This Build Your Own series is specifically designed for those computer enthusiasts who enjoy building their own computers. To order to this customer, there is a minimum required hardware addition to build a complete system consisting of one year Premium Tech Support, a Sensor, Camera, Li-Ion and more from [Dell.com](http://Dell.com). [Dell.com/buildyourown](http://Dell.com/buildyourown) has additional information on this offer. There are NOT functioning systems. No specific system offer Build Your Own is included.





Dual-core.  
Do more.

# Built to your exact slaying specifications

Tweak your elite XPS™ system at [dell.com/dominate](http://dell.com/dominate).

Then watch your enemies drop like flies.

## XPS 700

This gaming juggernaut delivers an all-out visual assault, featuring stunning NVIDIA® 3D graphics capabilities. Arsenal also includes the new Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor, designed to improve speed and energy efficiency, AGEIA® PhysX™ processors and state-of-the-art thermal engineering. The XPS 700 Special Edition Formula Red Desktop starting at \$2099; XPS 700 Jet Black Desktop starting at \$1999.

## XPS M1710

Take your love of gaming anywhere you go with this mobile masterpiece. Includes up to 512MB of dedicated graphics power, the latest Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processor and a Dell™ Exclusive TrueLife™ display for a vivid gaming experience. XPS M1710 Special Edition Formula Red Notebook starting at \$2999; XPS M1710 Metallic Black Notebook starting at \$2299.

## The XPS Experience

All XPS products come with the support of a specially trained tech squad for ultimate peace of mind.

## Get your game on

Visit [dell.com/gaming](http://dell.com/gaming) - your one-stop shop for the latest games and gear, including Half-Life™ 2 Episode One by Valve.



If you build it, they will succumb. Call 1-800-433-2392 or visit [dell.com/dominate](http://dell.com/dominate). (for hearing/speech impaired: 1-877-DELL-TTY toll-free)

\*PRICING/AVAILABILITY Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes, fees, shipping, handling and any applicable packing charges are extra and vary. Dell may be contacted with other Intel offers or discounts. Offer for U.S. Dell Home Systems Co. only purchases only. Dell cannot be responsible for pricing or other errors, and reserves the right to correct any mistake from such errors. **RAM BENCHMARKS** [www.cpubenchmark.net](http://www.cpubenchmark.net). Please be advised that the CSDO rating book, "PC", "LAP", "N", "M", "MP", "XFP", and "XP" are copyrighted works and certification marks owned by the International Software Association and the International Software Edition Board, and may only be used with their permission and methods. Unless no circumstances may the rating term be used applied or used in connection with any product that has not been rated by the CSDO. For information regarding whether a product has been rated by the CSDO, please call the CSDO at 866-771-3273 or visit [www.csdob.com](http://www.csdob.com). For information regarding licensing issues, please call the CSDO at 312-779-4172. **TRADEMARK/COPYRIGHT NOTICES** Intel, Intel logo, Intel Inside, Intel Inside logo, GeForce, GeForce Inside, Core, Core logo, Intel Core, Core Inside, Intel SpeedStep, Intel vPro, Eudora, Eudora Inside, Pentium, Pentium Inside, Atom, Atom Inside are trademarks 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. Half-Life 2 is a courtesy of Valve Corporation. ©2006 Dell Inc. All rights reserved.



Purely You





# FORGE YOUR



# RAIL EMPIRE

**SID MEIER RETURNS TO REINVENT THE GAME THAT LAUNCHED THE "TYCOON" GENRE.**

Creators of the world's best strategy game, Sid Meier and Firaxis Games put you in charge of building the greatest rail empire in the nation! Manage trains, cargo and your bottom line while engaging in cut-throat corporate warfare against rival tycoons, slick entrepreneurs and robber barons!



*Build your dream railroad empire or dive into competition against J. Pierpont Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and others!*



*Lay track, expand towns and cities, transport goods and watch the world come to life.*



*Use creative transports and map editing support. Want to create a transcontinental railroad in 20 years using only steam engines? No problem!*

*Rollback LAN and online multiplayer sabotage your rival and monopolize the industry.*



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



Alcohol Reference



© 2004 MicroAxis Interactive Software and its subsidiaries. All rights reserved. Sid Meier's Railroads, Sid Meier, the 2K logo, Firaxis Games, the Firaxis Games logo and Sid Meier Interactive Software are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Sid Meier Interactive Software, Inc. Powered by Gamespy logo an trademark of Gamespy Software, Inc. The ratings are a trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. ESRB, the ESRB logo, and other ESRB marks are registered trademarks or trademarks of ESRB Corporation in the United States and other countries. All rights reserved. All other marks and trademarks are the property of their respective owners. ESRB is a rating and governing body.

DOES NOT  
require the original  
Warhammer 40,000  
game to play

# WARHAMMER 40,000 DAWN OF WAR

## DARK CRUSADE™

ANNIHILATE THE ALIEN, BURN THE HERETIC, KILL

- ★ Command two new playable races - the Tau and the Necron
- ★ Deploy your armies in 7 different non-linear single player campaigns



EVGA







ISSUE 268

# LETTERS

**ONE LAST BAG OF HATE FOR THE ROAD**

## LETTER OF THE YEAR?



**SERIOUSLY...HOW COULD PEOPLE** still be sending in letters and e-mails about the move away from numerical review scores? Here's my compromise: Start giving stars or percentages to the letters that people send in, so I know at a glance which ones consist of people whining about doing away with the ratings and can skip over them accordingly.

**Burdett**

This letter receives 5 out of 5 stars and a Letter of the Year nomination.

## COMPUTER PINKO WORLD

I am about to end my 20-year readership of CGW. During that period of time, I have liked and agreed with much of what you publish, and disagreed with some. The September issue (CGW #268) was the first that actually offended me—in this issue, you published two politically charged articles ["Islamogaming," pg. 38; "Guns and Roses," pg. 44].

All of us have our opinions regarding the happenings of the day, and many of us turn to gaming as an escape from bad news and partisanship. In my opinion, a magazine like CGW is not a place to start yet another forum on the Middle East or antiwar sentiment...especially when no counterbalance is offered. The articles are thinly veiled political commentary by proxy and are not appreciated by a number of us.

Never before have I been so motivated to express my extreme disappointment with a magazine as I am today. These articles have no business in a gaming magazine, and the "gaming" ties are just a thinly veiled way to express a political view. When I open CGW, I want to read about gaming, not politics.

**Beer**

Thank you for your "Islamogaming" and "Guns and Roses" articles. It is unfortunately rare for any media outlet to take such an honest and critical outlook on any subject, but it's refreshing to see that—even in the glitzy, here-and-gone world of PC gaming—a voice of sanity examines important issues from an honest point of view.

"Islamogaming" did raise a question for me, though...as games have matured, the best of them have become more complex, both from a human and moral standpoint—sometimes there may not be a clear "bad guy," or the "right" choice may be unclear and confused. Did you see any development like this in the Islamogam-

ing culture, or are developers there as locked into their views of the "right and wrong" sides as some developers here in North America?

**Steven Sadler**

I don't think you know your target audience very well. Either that, or you've officially and openly joined the political left. How else can you explain seven pages devoted to Islam, Iraq, and the War on Terror? Did they have anything to do with games? Only on the most superficial level...I think one paragraph of the "Guns and Roses" article had anything to do with the actual game itself. Were games even mentioned in the Islam article? Sure...but did you need that many pages to repeat the same basic ideas over and over? Did you somehow delude yourself into thinking that you were reviewing said games? What about Tom Chick's comment in "Tom vs. Bruce" about entering the war being a mistake? We want his opinion on games—not on unrelated current events.

I am not among those looking for political claptrap. Keep your opinions on the war...or Islam or Iraq or anything else political...out of the magazine, please. That is not what the vast majority of your subscribers pay you for: You owe me seven pages.

**R. Degarmo**

As we expected, we got lots of mail on the "Islamogaming" and "Guns and Roses" stories, both positive and negative. What we didn't quite expect was the level of vitriol and hate directed at us in many of the negative letters. For the record: Reporting on events happening in the gaming world does not equal a lack of patriotism. We stand by both stories.

## SPELLING AND GRAMMAR

On page 110 in the September issue, you spelled *Warlords—Expansion Pack* as *Clv 4: Warlords—Expansion Pack*. Notice the extra "r" in there?

**Jordan**

Congratulations! You passed the test! We put that in there just for you. Your reward? You can now look for spelling errors in this month's issue, too!

I have been reading your lovely magazine for a long time but one thing has persisted to bother me for since I can remember, and that's the whiney



bitch-catty and smart-ass-o-rama of everyone who rights in. I just don't get why people care so much about little grammar problems and where or not the US currency to some silly money rate is correct. Why don't people ask questions, like about release dates and possibilities of games or i dunno anything. It's like month after month it's just some super nerd bitching about this or that, rating system this magazine mistake that. You make a high quality magazine that has kept me interested and informed for years, you do the best you can and I appreciate it. Yes, I recognize the irony in me complain about complain but seriously is just me, can people just get over stuff once in awhile, is it worth time and effort. These people are Manxax.

**Preston**

## D3TH TO D3THF4RT



In response to CGW #268's interview with D3TH4RT, he is the most stupid and sad person I've ever heard of. How can he say anything negative about the 10-year-old who had a higher frag count than him at the Cizek tournament? He was at a tournament. Tournaments are about winning...how did he expect to win if his frag count wasn't higher? I think he should feel ashamed of himself, since he has all this great experience from spending all his time in his mom's basement [playing] games at his old age instead of spending time with his kids and tending to his wife like real men do. This meticulous, delusional, horrible sportsman is a disgrace not only to gamers but also to all men who work hard and actually stick around for their kids. >

## SPEAK UP!

You hate us. You love us. You will send us \$1 million in small, unmarked bills if you ever want to see your puppy again. Prove your blind devotion by sending some of your bills and e-mailing [cgwletters@dffdavis.com](mailto:cgwletters@dffdavis.com) today. You'll be a better person for it.

**MAIL BYTES**

F\*\*\*ing hell ya!nd Psychonauts is coming to Steam! —Dough with Fish

Playing *World of Warcraft* teaches kids a whole slew of important life lessons, which they can use to help them succeed when they become adults. —Aaron Cooperband



# AGE of EMPIRES *The* War Chief III

You are one with the land. Bury your enemies in it.

Defend the Americas as the mighty Sioux, Iroquois, or Aztec. As a WarChief, command beasts of the forest, strengthen units, and speed them to the point of attack. Wage fierce battles in your honor against encroaching European forces. Your power grows as you master new maps and a new single-player campaign. This land will bear your legacy forever. [www.ageofempires3.com](http://www.ageofempires3.com)



Games  
for Windows

Microsoft  
PLAY & CREATE

ENSEMBLE  
STUDIO

TEEN  
T  
ESRB RATING  
FOR AGES 13-17

Blood  
Violence

"People put too much emphasis on winning" is what he said. Well, of course they do! Isn't that the gauge by which success is measured? I've played videogames since I was old enough to hold a controller (back in the early 1980s), so it's not like I'm some old geezer. But when he said he feels like an inspiration to gamers, it made me want to hurt. The thought that anyone would be inspired by this fool sickens me, and I truly hope that never happens.

Ricky Estrada

I do hope this interview was a joke. If not, it's pathetic that a 36-year-old man sees riding around in a Camaro as a goal. Not to mention the fact that he moved back in with his mom! I'm 25 and play videogames a few hours a day, but I have a job, which comes with its stability, a house, and I see my 2-year-old daughter every night. What kind of immature idiot would quit his job to be a professional gamer even if it hurts his children? Bottom line, put this freak of nature next to Michael Vick, or even Jay Cutler, and he would be an afterthought.

David Leggett

Jeff Green got in touch D3th4rt, who sent in this response: "You n00bs are just jealous and afraid of me, just like L3metal4y. Once I hit it big and can move out of my mom's place, we'll see who's laughing then. Also, maybe my wife's lawyer will let me see my kids again. So who's lame now, huh? LOL!"

I am a total dork for asking this, but what vowels go with what numbers in computer handles? Professional Counter-Strike player Deathfart calls himself D3th4rt, and Fatal1ty calls himself Fatal1ty.

So, a=4, 3=a, 0=a, 1=i, and does 2=u? How did they ever come up with that numbering convention? An O looks like a 0 maybe, and an I looks like a 1. So why isn't Fatal1ty called F4m1l1ty?

Steve (or St3v3, maybe? I don't know...)

Depends on the dialect. The morphemes of the leet opher are often a function of irony as much as true leetness. We suspect the spelling "Fatal1ty" is an archaic neo-Quake-Ian Welsh aberration from the post-Rise of the Triad era.

## POUT AND CLICK

Am I dating myself horribly when I tell you how much I loved *The Last Express*? What if I expound on my cartoon crush, Gabriel Knight? No? What if I mention *Laura Bow*? I know adventure games aren't "where it's at" right now, but what's available right now is so subpar, I can't see how the genre will ever make it big again. Please prove me wrong—give me three or four (or five!) titles that will keep me enthralled for hours!

Lady K.



We hear you, Lady K. Many of us on staff are big-time adventure-game fans and years for the good old days, too. Sadly, we can't come up with three (or even two) adventure games that we're currently looking forward to, but we can give you one: *Sam & Max*, from Telltale Games.

## WHAT'S "EQ2"?

Every month, it's the same thing: WOW this, WOW that. What about that other little-known MMO/RPG, *EverQuest*? Yes, I'm an EQ zombie—I have been for years, and I'm sick of always reading about WOW. It seems as though EQ2 has fallen off the face of the Earth, as far as your magazine goes. I've played WOW, my wife was a beta tester and has several level 60 characters on WOW, and my kids play WOW, but only with strict parental supervision due to the punks on WOW. How about some coverage of a more developed, grown-up game? Is anybody in your office playing EQ2? Too difficult for you? If it is, I can understand—you're only magazine journalists. Maybe I need to go somewhere else to get my EQ fix in print.

Patrick Buck

Yeah, we're a bit WOW-centric here, we admit, but hey, so is most of the world. We write about what The People are playing. But we know you see People too (we think), and we hear you. Our monthly column *Crisis on Infinite Servers* covers multiple MMOs—and hopefully EQ2 will get some love there in upcoming issues.

## WHAT'S "ASHERON'S CALL 2"?

I miss playing older online RPGs that went under due to a lack of subscribers. I wanted to know if it's possible for the publishers of these older games—like *Asheron's Call 2* and *Earth & Beyond*—to sell their server-side versions of the game (with limits, of course) to the general public. I know the purpose of these games is to play online with masses of people, but the underlying games themselves are still interesting to me (and many others, I'm sure).

Ed Diechley

Great question. To which we have no answer. But if you find out, let us know, because we have a couple *Meridian 59* quests we're still dying to finish. Oh wait, that game's still going?

## WHAT'S A "MAC"?

I've been a Mac user for more than 10 years...and a few days ago, I ordered a Mac Pro...along with Windows XP and *Half-Life 2*. My mind boggles at the sheer number (comparatively speaking) of PC games I'll now be able to play. What have I done? Now that I've opened the Ark of PC Gaming, will the Angel of Death fly out and melt my face? Help!

Atticus

Welcome to the Dark Side. Mr. Gates would like you to put on this black eldoud now, please.

I recently picked up a copy of your magazine for the first time (CGW #268), and I was surprised at how much console bashing went on, from one



Yes, this...thing plays PC games. Quickly, turn away, lest yer eyes squely in their very sockets!

reader letter to even some reviews. You see, I'm in the Marine Corps, and I've played consoles for almost 20 years. I've never bashed PC gaming—in fact, I've always envied it. Consoles are a means for those who can't afford a high-end PC to get their gaming fix. I'll never argue the fact that PC gaming will always rise above consoles...just please remember that some of us can't afford a gaming-worthy rig.

B. Stephenson

## FURRY CORNER

I'd like to start with a simple declaration: I am not a furry. On that note, a lot of my friends are, and they run the gamut of anthropomorphic creatures. I'm writing this letter in response to the self-righteous writer of a certain letter in your October 2006 issue. He knows who he is; he went about listing four ways to "deal" with furies.

I do not agree with what he has to say, but I will not fame him for writing such a disgusting and hateful letter. Nor will I fame CGW for publishing it. In this regard, I've decided to compose a rebuttal to his letter.

Furies, as a whole, are no more dim, irrational, self-righteous, easily offended, or quick-to-anger than any other group or fandom. Yes, they will defend what they believe, but no more so than a religious man would defend his beliefs.

Of course, there is a large portion of the fandom that supports anthropomorphic erotica, though nowhere near as many as support the "clean" artwork and stories. Just like an anime fan might love anime and also enjoy hentai, a furry fan might enjoy yiffy art as well. But to say that all furies are perverted is irrational.

No, furies are not a "race" or an "ethnicity," so no, racism doesn't apply. Another word does, though, and that word is prejudice, and at times discrimination. Yes, they choose to be a part of the community, but so did fans of baseball or other such sports.

All in all, your statements about the furry community show your prejudice for people who have different interests than yourself. You mock a community you obviously know little about, without regard to those who follow it.

Before you mock a group of people for their respective interests, think about your interests and/or beliefs and see how people mock those. Would you not defend your right to express yourself, when you are in no way affecting others? If furry art offends you, don't visit furry archives. I know that simple statement is used far too often these days, but the fact remains—if you can't see it, it shouldn't bother you.

Jack Kahn

# Tired of waiting for your character?



Introducing a blazing fast 8 Mbps connection from Comcast High-Speed Internet, helping make lag a thing of the past. Along with lightning speed you also get full access to Game Invasion™ and exclusive content from IGN, like betas, clips and the latest news. Comcast gives you an incredibly fast connection and content you won't find anywhere else, so you play better.

Upgrade today and game like you mean it. That's Comcast!™  
[comcast.com/8Mbps](http://comcast.com/8Mbps)

**comcast**

# QUEST WITH THE BEST!

Extend your game with *Echoes of Everquest*™ -  
the latest expansion - offering exciting content  
for players of all levels, from 1 to 70.

Explore a new *Amalur* Alpha style of city and  
experience arena play in the exotic and dangerous  
shifting sands of the Desert of Flames™.



Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org)  
for updated rating  
information.



[WWW.EVERQUEST2.COM](http://WWW.EVERQUEST2.COM)

A BOLD NEW ADVENTURE AWAITS THE BRAVE AT HEART.

Experience the intense action of the Pinger vs. Pinger servers - the heart-pounding adrenaline rush of hunting and being targeted by other like-minded players.

Expand your horizons with Kingdom of Sky's achievement system, which differentiates skills and abilities and introduces soaring dragon levels.

EverQuest II is the adventure of choice for true MMO enthusiasts. Celebrated, steadfast and content-rich, it's the MMO that has it all. Now every EQII adventure can be yours with the all-in-one pack. For a taste of the action, download the free 7-day trial at [www.trialoftheisle.com](http://www.trialoftheisle.com).

# EVERQUEST II

Echoes of Faydwer™

INCLUDES ALL THREE EXPANSIONS RELEASED TO DATE!



To many outsiders, violent videogames degrade society. To many insiders, they simply degrade the medium, turning it into a one-sided, emotionless beast. Is violence the default mode of operation for interactive entertainment, or are we simply stuck in the digital Dark Ages?



# SIX MILLION W

## TRENDS

▶ DOES EVERY GAME NEED TO BE ABOUT punching, shooting, or otherwise inflicting deadly harm upon aliens, zombies, vehicles, and/or human beings? It's a question most of us have asked ourselves at some point along the road of virtual life. Somewhere between zapping space invaders, gibbing Doom's cacodemons, or giving Vice City's police department a collective ulcer, it has occurred to many of us that incessantly maiming bad guys is getting passé.

OK, so a slight adjustment to that exaggeration is in order. Many of the most successful titles on the market—*The Sims*, *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, *Guitar Hero* (*PlayStation 2*), to name but a few—are nonviolent. But when it comes to character-driven, narrative games—whether they be first- or third-person, online or off, single- or massively multiplayer, fantasy, science fiction, or present day, open- or closed-world—they're nearly all, with a mere handful of

not-so-recent exceptions, intensely, exhaustively violent.

Many of us simply enjoy inhabiting the mind and body of a character when we pick up a controller or keyboard—that's precisely why we play games. Neither the role-playing narrative component nor the intense physicality of this kind of experience can be communicated in, say, *SimCity*; it's the difference between being in the shoes of a human being and in the shoes of God (or, for that matter, those of a railroad tycoon). Aside from, say, *Indigo Prophecy*, when was the last time you directly controlled a character in a virtual world without violence being your primary means of interacting with it? And more importantly, is the dependence merely a bump in the road of a maturing medium, or is the physicality and drama of violence simply what videogames are best at communicating? And what kind of shoes do you think God actually wears? (Twenty bucks says they're not Nikes.)

It's also true that videogames are often much more complex than they might seem to the

untrained eye. Usually, more goes on beneath the surface of even the most violent games than the majority of nongamers care to understand. Plus there's something slightly crotchety about asking why videogames are all so violent—it's a bit like asking why all rap music sounds like a bunch of black guys yelling. But we digress.

The point is not that videogame violence is turning those who play it into raging sociopaths. Nor is it that violence in videogames is, in itself, necessarily a bad thing; the visceral charge you get from crashing through a fruit stand in *GTA* or the rhythmic, zenlike state you can achieve through any number of FPSes represent the upside of unrepentantly violent videogames. But when violence has proper context in similar media—as repeatedly demonstrated by the likes of *Scarface*, *Tarantino*, and *Poe*—it reaches an emotional summit that *Quake* and its ilk haven't quite achieved.

"Violence has been a major component of games for a very long time," says David Cage, creator of last year's experimental, critically ac-



PREVIEW

## World in Conflict

Cold War superpowers clash in a resource-free RTS unlike any other.

34



PREVIEW

## Supreme Commander

Exclusive hands-on with Gas Powered Games' gem.

44

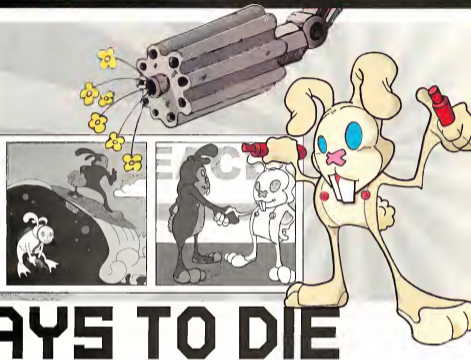


CULTURE

## China Syndrome

Gaming in the "Chinese Century."

54



## WAYS TO DIE

claimed, and generally nonviolent *Indigo Prophecy*. "The reasons behind this phenomenon are multiple and complex. One of them is probably that, initially, games were designed by teenagers, for teenagers—an age where we have a very different relationship to violence and where we try to test the limits."

Another, more age-agnostic reason: Shooting stuff is, like, *totally freaking sweet, man*. "I think that a lot of games are based on 'instinct emotions'—provoking physical reactions from the body like fear, anger, frustration, domination, at *café*," says Cage. "They are known to generate a strong body response through adrenaline or dopamine—higher heartbeat, sweat, increased attention, more sugar in the blood, et cetera. Through this physical response, the user feels intense but primitive emotions. Other media like literature, theater, or movies managed to explore social emotions like empathy, sadness, joy, love, jealousy—but most games today are still stuck in the limitations they created for themselves."

Essentially, it's much easier to "perform" violent, physical action than it is to perform dramatic action... particularly when the input mechanism in your hand is built around the former. The only remotely subtle "acting" you're able to perform in *Grand Theft Auto*, for example, is walking past the cops instead of running. The rest is purely the stuff of action movies.

We're also a very easily affected lot. Most of us have been using those same tools [mouse/keyboard combo for the PC-heads, control pad for the console junkies] to perform the same or similar violent actions for some 20 years. Handing someone a DualShock controller and asking them to make their character emotio is like handing someone a turkey baster and asking them to make pudding. The tool may be equally adept at performing both tasks, but one process is ingrained in our muscle memory, while the other requires unlearning. And one is like making pudding with a turkey baster, which is moronic.

## OUT OF HARM'S WAY

But maybe that's missing the point—maybe we perceive videogames' relative lack of emotional diversity as a limitation only because we bring to them baggage from other forms of media. So contends *Galactic Civilizations* creator Brad Wardell: "Violence is just one type of play. Violence occurs in games because the people who play games recognize that they are pretending. So we do things in games that we can't do in real life—race cars, go on adventures, and yes, shoot zombies."

Certainly, violent instincts are part of what make us human (particularly those of us cursed with testicles), and videogames do a superb job of placing the physical element of violence, quite literally, in our hands. "The real question is what the audience wants," says Wardell. "It's not as if gamers were a bunch of pacifistic flower danciers who one day got sucked in by the dark overlord of id to play *Wolfenstein 3D*. Quite the opposite—kids were pretending to be violent in their play long before there were videogames."

and the game industry catered to their existing tendency."

Cage has a different perspective. "Think about cinema: There are still movies with 90-minute shooting or fighting sequences, but they are far from being the main game, just because this is very boring for most people. We all love the epic battle scenes of *The Lord of the Rings* because they tell us something about the characters and contribute to tell the story. Two hours of repetitive battles may have been a less engaging experience. The same thing will apply to games. Shooting zombies for 10 hours is not appealing to most people. Violence was convenient from a game-design point of view because it was entirely based on patterns—pressing the right buttons with the right timing—and because it was structurally easy to manage—obstacle, get rid of the obstacle, move to the next obstacle. Interactive narrative requires a much more complex approach not based on success/failure states, but on choices having consequences. I believe that, as designers, we will have to find ways of interacting that are not based on repetitive patterns but on varied contextual actions, exactly like in real life."

**SIR TYPES-A-LOT**

The one character-centered genre that has been able to sidestep the crutch of violence is the point-and-click adventure—the *Grim Fandango*s, *King's Quest*s, and *Sam & Max* of the world. The slower pace and more methodical, introspective brand of storytelling meant that nearly every LucasArts and Sierra game between 1987 and 1995 rose to the challenge of nonviolent, character-driven gameplay. And while many of these games are undeniable classics, their interfaces and A.I. were limited. Choosing from a list of canned (if consistently well-written) responses was glacially entertaining 10 years ago, but perhaps lacks the procedural oomph to keep us emotionally engaged in 2008.

There have also been successful attempts at drama in games, but they have generally been wedged into other (violent) genres. *Sam, Brothers in Arms* has its moments of grand redemption, *Grand Theft Auto* its moments of guilty pleasure, and *Knights of the Old Republic* its moments of guilty guilt: "You feel camaraderie and sometimes question your own loyalty in *World of Warcraft*, and weigh the loss of other human lives against your own in *Halo: Life 2*. But in every one of these games, you will kill hundreds, likely thousands of Bad Guys™ on your way to dealing with said emotions, which—even for real-life Jedi, mobsters, and night elves—just isn't very realistic.

So aside from punching, kicking, shooting, and secondarily firing, what actions are videogame characters actually good at performing? If you're a forward-thinking videogame designer, what do you replace all the violence with? Cage, whose *Indigo Prophecy* was largely spent speaking with other characters, exploring environments, and thinking about what exactly to do next—in many ways a modern update to the point-and-click adventure—realizes this is still a major stumbling block.

"Our main issue is that the ways of interacting without shooting still have to be discovered," says Cage. "How can we create a game where interacting with the environment or talking to other characters could be the main aspect of the game? Once people discover convincing answers to these ques-

tions, they won't want to shoot in videogames anymore, because they will know that there are more exciting things to do. This is really the direction I try to explore in my work."

And that's the hard part: figuring out what's more "fun"—in the sense of being physically or psychologically more rewarding—than pistol pulls. The verbs come quickly: cooking, finding, grabbing, cooking, finding, grabbing, pulling, kayaking, hugging, kissing, and high-fiving...to name a few. Each of these activities is fully capable of being translated into physical gameplay. But, taken alone, none of these individual mechanics can be used on its own to create truly compelling, emotional drama. Rather, the need to combine these disparate parts into one varied, unified whole of an experience will be part of the challenge. And they need to be combined with one more adjective: speaking.

**LEVELING UP**

So how can we stray from such well-established norms? New forms of interaction—from input devices to onscreen interfaces—will almost certainly enter the equation. Something less artificial (something that's already starting to happen with the release of Nintendo's Wii) will replace control sticks, and speech recognition will eventually replace the keyboard—but such technology still seems years away from successful implementation.

"Physical action is the default mode of today's videogames—running, jumping, manipulating objects or game pieces, and so on," says Andrew Stern, whose game *Façade* has explored and pushed the boundaries of interactive drama.

"Games are about competition and conflict; in that space, the most interesting physical action game designers have come up with is violence, akin to violent action movies. One solution is to come up with other types of physical action that still allow for interesting competition and conflict. Some already exist—playing poker, slugging a virtual gaur, or nurturing a virtual pet.

Says Stern: "The true frontier is in non-physical-action-oriented games: competition and conflict using natural language, i.e., conversation. This is largely unexplored in games, but of course is the foundation of interaction between characters in the best movies, books, and TV sitcoms. I think many game designers want to move beyond the action genre but are stuck in this rut due to constraints of interface and the lack of A.I. required for a non-action-oriented interface." A quick jump through *Façade*—an enlightening (if primitive) vision of things to come—quickly makes you realize that a visibly, convincingly angry friend screaming at you



can be every bit as frightening as a zombie lurching toward your neck.

**HARD SELL**

If figuring out how to make these games compelling is the Holy Grail, convincing the powers that be that people actually want to play them will be the last crusade. "I am always amazed to see how conservative our industry is," says Cage. "We are used to changing our software and computers every month, but a lot of people seem to change their preconceived ideas only every 20 years. For some gamers and designers, the only possible way of interacting is punching, driving, or shooting. They are OK if there are other activities in between, but a game has to be about killing someone. This is not only absurd, it is also an insult to our medium to consider that this is all it can do."

Cage remembers shopping *Indigo Prophecy* around to various publishers and having the same dialogue with nearly every one of them.

**Cage:** "Mmmm, well, in fact, there is no weapon. The hero does not shoot."

**Publisher:** "So how many cars can we drive?"

**Cage:** "Well, in fact, you cannot drive."

**Publisher:** "Then it's not a game?"

Sadly, not much has changed in the two years since—Cage says he recently had the exact same discussion with the head of a huge publisher, who simply could not understand what else one could do in a videogame. Stern agrees: "Game publishers are pretty conservative, and many are doing just fine sticking with the action genre," he says. "I think innovation in other game genres will come from risk-taking independents, probably with financing from outside the game industry."

"I can no longer play a game where all I have to do is to kill hordes of enemies just for the sake of killing them," he continues. "When I was 16 years, I bought this game called *Barbarian*, where you could cut off the head of the enemy with a sword. For my friends and me, this was the key feature, and we laughed each time a head fell on the ground. Now I'm 37, and I [expect] more from this medium than cutting off heads." —**Ivan Shamoon**



**"WE HAVE TO FIND WAYS OF INTERACTING THAT AREN'T BASED ON REPETITIVE PATTERNS"**

—DAVID CAGE, FOUNDER QUANTIC DREAM



FIVE HEROES, ONE FATE, INFINITE ADVENTURE

# MAGE KNIGHT

## APOCALYPSE



FULLY EXPLORE A WORLD BEYOND IMAGINATION WITH DYNAMIC SCALING FOR NEVER ENDING CHALLENGES.



ADAPTIVE SKILL SYSTEM ALLOWS YOUR CHARACTER TO BECOME AN EXTENSION OF YOUR PLAY STYLE.



THOUSANDS OF UNIQUE ITEMS PROVIDE LIMITLESS CUSTOMIZATION OPTIONS.

COMING FALL 2006



©2006 Wizards of the Coast. Mage Knight, Apocalypse, and Mage Knight: Apocalypse are registered trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. in the United States and/or other countries. All rights reserved. Licensed by Wizards of the Coast, Inc. to Ringside Games, Inc. for the PC CD-ROM. Mage Knight: Apocalypse is a trademark of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The PC CD-ROM logo is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. In 2007, Canada's Entertainment Software Association (ESA) will be the Canadian counterpart of the ESRB. Intel, X-Phi, EAX, Advanced HD, and DirectX are registered trademarks or trademarks of Intel Corporation or Microsoft Corporation. Gamemspy is a registered trademark of Gamemspy, Inc. All other trademarks and registered trademarks are the property of their respective holders.

# WORLD IN CONFLICT

Cold War conflagration

## AIR

World in Conflict producer Mike Schneider on the ups and downs of joining the air force: "Air support, especially fast and fatal attack helicopters, which punish opposing armor and infantry, is essential to any successful offensive. An air commander zips from firefight to firefight but pays big time for his offensive benefits with costly units and an inability to capture perimeter points... not to mention the source of hostile anti-air units. A first-rate air commander moves into combat with strong ground support and is quick to support over-whelmed allied armor at the front lines."



## INFANTRY

"A Delta Force infantry squad is pinned in an open field. Viable sitting ducks, exposed to enemy fire without a tree or building around for cover, they should call in a transport helicopter or ground vehicle to get them into crucial cover."

Infantry is vulnerable, and rewarding, and in the package, it's all its most powerful weapons are directly available: the houses and forests, with anti-tank troops and equipment taking advantage of unsuspecting enemy units. At the same time, infantry is easily mowed down, crushed under the tracks of opposing tanks. Work together, people. Call for cover."



PUBLISHER: Vivendi Universal Games DEVELOPER: Massive Entertainment GAMES: Real-Time Strategy RELEASE DATE: 2007

**SUPPOSE GORBACHEV STAYED A LAWYER.** IN HIS stead as Soviet leader, another Brezhnev, Andropov, or Chernenko—another dangerous option. Glasnost, perestroika, free-market flexibility never come, the USSR's command economy continues to teeter, and the Kremlin turns Cold War into conflagration. Koehler still, the Russian initiative is nonnuclear: Its amphibious force strikes Seattle first, somehow ducking satellite detection and what all on the way into Puget Sound. Suspect that disbelief for *World in Conflict's* real revisionism, though, as it's an RTS as un-RTS-like as any. Where FPS camera control and the ability to enter and exit servers at any time (even midmatch) chisel convention, *World*

in Conflict's de-emphasized resource management sledgehammers it. No need to accumulate ammunition and fuel. Instead, a "replacement number" serves as a population cap, permitting players to spend when—and on what—they want (although new assets are available only after foes trash those already in the field). The idea, in fact, is to breach the Berlin-esque wall dividing genre-dedicated RTS and FPS gamers. Hence *WIC's* class equivalents—each player picks and commands either his army's air, infantry, support, or armor group, much as FPS gamers opt into medic or sniper roles. Producer Mike Schneider explains how it plays out in 4-on-4 online face-offs. /Shawn Elliott



### ARMOR

"An armor commander has the rolling thunder of the battlefield at his fingertips. M80A3s rumble into an enemy-controlled territory while allied air support whirlycopts overhead for helicopters as well as enemy infantry garrisoned in defensive positions lining the roadway. Armor units take intense punishment before going down and are unattached when it comes to capturing and holding perimeter."

### MASSIVE OPS

Developer Massive Entertainment is no stranger to strategy. Their second strategy series focuses on tactical-only scenarios.



### SUPPORT

"A deployment of 2S7s drops heavy artillery support, hammering enemy troops deep within their territory. No doubt the Russian artillery officer is chugging a glass of vodka while his boys pound the enemy's back line. Support commanders have enemy capabilities devastating arty strikes from afar, and antiair support. Pounding the enemy from behind the front line may seem safe at first, but that can change at any time when an enemy tank group rolls around the corner or a tactical nuclear strike comes down from above."

# TOTAL WAR (HAMMER)

Hands-on with Black Hole's *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos*

**THAT'S OLD IN  
ORC YEARS**

Originally released  
in 1983, *Warhammer  
Finger Battle* just  
unveiled its reworked  
edition rules

PUBLISHER: Neocore Games DEVELOPER: Black Hole Entertainment  
GENRE: Real-Time Tactical RELEASE DATE: October 2006

## PREVIEW

ASK AROUND AND YOU MIGHT FIND three gamers who'd remember *Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat*—one of the industry's first real-time "tactical" games—if their lives depended on it. You heard right: "tactical," not "strategy." No bases or buildings...just you, a half-dozen regiments, and the lay of the land. Set in the *Warhammer*-but-not-*40K* "game of fantasy battles" universe, *SoHR* and its sequel *Dark Omen* briefly channeled fantasy tabletop gaming to the Windows 9x masses. And then, inexplicably, the fantasy videogame franchise vanished, put to pasture while its sci-fi sibling nabbed the spotlight.

Say hello to Black Hole Entertainment, the guys behind 2004's *Armies of Exigo*. *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos* is project number two, and the first *Warhammer* fantasy PC game in eight years. For the uninitiated, *Warhammer* plays in a vaguely "old world" European milieu, where invading "chaos" (think radioactive magic) and Machiavellian infighting turn the planet into a ragged proving ground for exactly the sort of army-sized havoc *Mark of Chaos* hopes to portray. Can Black Hole pull off the franchise equivalent of *Ralle's* acclaimed *Dawn of War*? No promises, but after wrapping our fingers around preview code, we can say things are looking respectably *Warhammer-y*.

### BACK IN BLACK

Nothing spells "doomed" like an apocalyptic sunset, rust-stained terrain, craggy pine forests, storm-wracked skies, and a fine layer of grit clinging to everything like a three-pepper rub. *Mark of Chaos* has the whole "grim and grimmer" thing pretty well nailed at this stage. From a Tactical Map (technically, it ought to be called the strategic map), you're treated to a grab bag of Germanic towns and resource

points as low-hanging clouds roll over the grungy landscape and cellos punctuate the silence with ominous thrums. You march your army by turns, gathering gold, camping to rest, and spending experience points on hero abilities in combat, duel, and command categories.

Hit a battlefield and your options multiply. You can twack units in the Army Composer before combat, then position them around your side of the battlefield. Hate games that lock your view top-down and close enough to see whiskers? Position *Mark of Chaos's* camera anywhere you like, or invoke an indispensable bird's-eye view similar to the one employed in *Star Wars Empire of War*.

We were only able to play as the Empire, so our choices were limited to Helbruders, Swordsmen, Bright Wizards, and Handgunners (for the opposition, Night Goblins, Orc Boys, and Trolls—the final game promises to include dozens more). Units can be assigned to "super groups" or attached/detached as desired, and you set waypoints by Shift-clicking. Formations are limited to tight versus loose and line versus column, which seems a bit skimpy at this point given the tabletop pedigree. But that's offset somewhat by the ability-focused hero system with its 1-on-1 battlefield dueling.

It's tough to gauge how environment (rain, mud, snow) will factor in the final version, but terrain and facing elements were functional. Position light-armored Empire Handgunners atop a hill, for instance, and watch them assault a lumbering Orc Boyz charge, then speed away at the last minute as you spring your Swordsmen to flank the Orc morale to hell. The prize for handiest feature goes to the tall banners arrowing above each regiment, allowing quick hit point and morale assessment. Better still, it's a nifty way to follow the action when a half-dozen regiments morph into a single fleeing mob—almost like having "tactical" and "strategic" views combined.

The folks at Black Hole still have miles to go before they sleep, but the good news is that their extremely close partnership with Games Workshop seems to be paying off. You need only wait until October to rub Skaven and Goblin snouts in the dirt./Matt Peckham



▲ Climb the here kill tree, as you gain experience, adding combat abilities alongside special doubling and unit command bonuses.



▲ *Mark of Chaos* seems set to include a full-on unit customization tool so you can mod colors, banner emblems, uniforms, and more.

➤ **MARK OF CHAOS HAS THE WHOLE 'GRIM AND GRIMMER' THING PRETTY WELL NAILED AT THIS STAGE**

# RAISE AN ARMY. RULE THE WORLD.

AVAILABLE NOW FROM **GameStop** **EB GAMES**



# ARCHLORD

[WWW.ARCHLORDGAME.COM](http://WWW.ARCHLORDGAME.COM)

## OUT NOW

BE THE ARCHLORD! EMBARK ON AN EPIC TALE OF CONQUEST  
AND GLORY IN THE SEARCH FOR ABSOLUTE SUPREMACY



BECOME THE ARCHLORD



3 PLAYABLE RACES



AMAZING IN-GAME VOICES



©2009 Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved. Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. is the sole and exclusive owner of the rights and title in and to the game ARCHLORD. All other marks are the property of their respective owners. Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. is not responsible for any content on the Internet or any other electronic medium that may be accessed through the game. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.



Warner Bros. Entertainment

NXZT



nbn

PC DVD

# EUROPA UNIVERSALIS III

One 3D Nation, Under You

**CARING AND SHARING**  
Cooperative multiplayer will allow several players to work as one, controlling the same nation.



In the new Holy Roman Empire screen you can follow elections, scan member states, and check who's up-and-coming in the standings.



EU3's interface helps you focus on the most important demographics by wrapping critical information into aggregate info screens.



Europa Universalis III's revised battle summary shows terrain modifiers and a new "tactical" overview.

PUBLISHER Paradox Interactive DEVELOPER Paradox Interactive GENRE Real-Time Strategy RELEASE DATE Winter 2007

## PREVIEW

**CONFESION: THE ORIGINAL EUROPA** Universals (2000) nearly convinced me to switch majors after it debuted at fresh and board gamey and, well, frankly a bit weird-looking. A real-time version of *Risk* with the intricacy of *Civilization* and sufficient historical panache to stoke the hard little hearts of stodgy academics? Get real, sad most of us, and boy were we ever wrong. Here, at least, was one-handed gaming for those bored with hex maps, smartass arcs, Tesla coils, and anything WWII. (Hey, one on the mouse, the other on a history book—what were you thinking?) With over a dozen games notching its belt,

Paradox is finally back to its bread and butter with *Europa Universalis III*. I spent a week with an early build and, while it's predictably roughshod, I can assure Paradox loyalists that EU3 is, if anything, shaping up to be even more nuanced than its predecessors.

The first thing that grabs you isn't the big 3D switcheroo but that you can launch, literally, in any year (even month) between 1453 and 1789. Instead of scenarios, Paradox added what it's calling "bookmarks"—helpful recommendations to get you straight to hotspots like the Thirty Years' War or the American War of Independence. Maybe you'd rather play a tiny nation like Lithuania and reset the Lithuanian-Polish Union of Lublin in 1569? By

all means, go for it. Taking over the world isn't really the primary goal—just hauling your national briches (petite or XXL) through some of history's noteworthy peckles can be reward enough.

Of course the switch to 3D is indeed a bit amazing (after six years of 2D, after all) and, while it's not quite *Civilization 4*, it's still an Olympic pole vault over EU2. Instead of a flat map snaked with province lines and covered in cramped low-res sprites, EU3 sports steep mountains, rolling forests, and rippling oceans, as well as fully polygonal units and cities. Necessary? Not really, but neither are Revlon and L'Oréal, and the new 3D engine certainly isn't interfering with anything at this point.

Moreover, EU3 is teeming with new features—"national ideas," for example. Maybe you're a seafaring nation (Naval Glory yields extra prestige in naval battles), or theocratically inclined (Divine Supremacy boosts your yearly missionaries). Cribbing from *Hearts of Iron II*, you can now add leaders (from a pool of more than 1,000) to your military forces or call in historical advisors like Bosch, de Vinci, or Descartes to supplement attributes like land tech or national stability. And much improved over EU2's infantry, cavalry, and artillery trio, you now can select from dozens of different army/navy traditions, say "Gaelic Galloglaigh" or "Western Medieval Infantry," to improve your shock and morale values.

Talk about scratching the surface. I'd need a thousand words at least to convey all of the tweaks and subtle additions in the preview build. In fact, Paradox's biggest challenge won't be impressing feature wonks but stomping bugs and balancing all that dizzy minutiae. Rest assured the company that still occasionally tweaks EU2 will no doubt continue refining EU3 long after it's released early next year. **—Matt Peckham**

THE FIRST THING THAT GRABS YOU ISN'T THE BIG 3D SWITCHEROO BUT THAT YOU CAN LAUNCH IN ANY YEAR (EVEN MONTH) BETWEEN 1453 AND 1789.

## OVERRATED/UNDERRATED YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE OVERHYPED AND OVERLOOKED

### GAME TECHNOLOGY

#### OVERRATED: PHYSICS

The one "gimme" feature that even the snobbish game boogie-physical. Now the bulk of almost every box tells of wonder worlds where "every time you play, it's a dynamically different game"—it only because the fool hiding behind the formidable barrel never lands in the same spot twice.

#### UNDERRATED: BUILT-IN VOIP

Since the first caveman grunted, "Hey, what's that fire stuff all about?" our lips have done the talking. Voice is a natural way to communicate, and it's a helluva lot faster to focus on playing when you don't have to type, "L337Gunn3r? Is a n00b."





AS REAL AS IT GETS

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU'VE RIGHTED YOUR PLANE. NEXT UP, EMERGENCY LANDING IN THE JUNGLES OF THE CONGO.



After that, let's see you rescue an injured climber on Mt. Kilimanjaro. Or take on the world's best pilots in the Red Bull Air Race, with 23 different and over 50 race-and-missions. It's the most realistic version yet. Whole cities and airports have been faithfully recreated, with a 16x zoom limit. We didn't invent terrain graphics. Suddenly, calling it a "simulator" just doesn't seem right.

THE NEW GAME SECRET KNOT

Microsoft  
game studios

Microsoft  
Games  
for Windows



# THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH 2:

# THE RISE OF THE WITCH-KING

**APPENDIXES**

Check out the appendixes that are included in *Rotwk*! A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z, The Appendixes, and the Appendixes.

The Mouthful of Sauron



● **ROTWK** allows players to move units in formation. "Every RTS fan has felt the pain of giving a large group of units a move order and watching them collapse into an ant line," says producer Amir Rahimi.



● A dozen new multiplayer maps slot into a brand-new version of the strategic War of the Ring map. War of the Ring adds persistent armies, siege weapons, a basic economy, a fourth hero army, and more.

PUBLISHER Electronic Arts DEVELOPER EA GAMES Real-Time Strategy RELEASE DATE Winter 2006

## PREVIEW

WERE LORD OF THE RINGS AUTHOR J.R.R. Tolkien alive today, bets are he'd be a little iffy about Electronic Arts' *The Battle for Middle-earth 2: Witch-king in the North*. Free-range Balinogs? Shoblo the goblin-hero instead of snacker? Aww, who cares? If you want fidelity, read the books. If you just want more film-filtered war toys, you'll be interested to learn that, for its encore, EA's reaching back, as in literally to the very back of the trilogy—namely those stuffy academic sections called "appendices." Never poked around in those? And you call yourself a Tolkien fan.

"We're filling the 3,000-year gap between Isildur's death and Gollum finding the Ring for the first time," explains producer Amir Rahimi, noting the focus in *The Rise of the Witch-king* is on the 500-year war between Angmar (northwest of the Misty Mountains) and Arnor (big swath of land north of the Shire and Bree). One thousand years after Isildur's death, the Nazgul reappear, led by

a horse-mounted version of Mr. "No Man Can Kill Me." The Lord of the Nazgul is known exclusively as the Witch-king here, and he heads the new Angmar faction.

"Think of Angmar as the evil counterpart to the Dwarves," says Rahimi. Meaning they'll be relatively slow moving, have very powerful units, walls, and defenses, and be, well...evil. They're also pretty hot in the magic department. "The Witch-king himself was known as a sorcerer, and sorcery was an important part of his arsenal," says Rahimi. "Therefore, the Angmar faction will have access to powerful spells." Take Angmar's sorcerers, support units that cast hoodoo-like Black Ice (slows the enemy), Fell Strength (augments friendlies), and your choice of a third: Soul Freeze (freeze an enemy), Well of Souls (raises units, turning any it kills into rights), or Corpse Rain (downpour of exploding cadavers).

Angmar also gets a unit called the Thrall Master, who runs around the battlefield and, on the fly, can summon basic infantry to fight for him. Rahimi says this works a bit like a game of rock-

paper-scissors, with players assessing a tactical situation and reacting by calling either Gundabad Warriors (rock), Wolf Riders, Rhudaur Spearmen, or Rhudaur Axe Throwers. Elite units will include Dark Dunedain (extra-extra evil men), Hill Trolls with siege hammers (Angmar's pikeman), Snow Trolls (cavalry), and four new heroes: Hwalidar, chief of the Rhudaur halmen; Rogosh, a giant troll with a jump attack that trumps Gmili's; Morgomir, another Nazgul and the Witch-King's right-hand, or, wraith; and "The Whisperer," a man who's basically suffered Frodo's fate, had the Morgul blade sent our favorite hobbit over to the dark side.

Finally, existing factions get two or more new units and heroes, plus an entirely new "somewhere-between-elite-and-hero" unit type, while the Create-a-Hero feature gets a new troll class and more flexible economics, allowing you to build lower-cost heroes you can bring out sooner. And as for Angmar's Ring powers, try "Shadow of the Wolf," which summons the spirit of a giant werewolf (think sprin, snarler Balinog). "All the new content stays as true as possible to what may have happened in the Tolkien fiction," says Rahimi. Including werewolves (look it up, o ye of little faith). And look for all that new content before the end of 2006. **Matt Peckham**

THINK OF ANGMAR AS THE EVIL COUNTERPART TO THE DWARVES.



# IBUYPOWER RECOMMENDS WINDOWS® XP MEDIA CENTER EDITION

More fun while you get more done.

Get the power to do more at once with Intel® Core™2 Duo processor's dual execution cores in the IBUYPOWER Dream 2006



Dual-core.  
Do more.

## DREAM 2006

Blackout Ninja Gaming Case  
**GENUINE Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300 with SP 2**  
 IBUYPOWER® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology  
 Intel® 965 Chipset PCI Express Motherboard  
 Corsair 1024MB DDR2-660 Memory  
 Serial-ATA-II 250GB 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive  
 16x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 16x DVD-RW II Drive  
 NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7300GS 512MB DDR3 16X PCI Express Video Card  
 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound  
 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN  
 600 Watt Surround Sound Speakers  
 Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse  
 Free Wireless 802.11g 34Mbps Network Adapter

\$989

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300	\$899
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400	\$1039
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600	\$1129
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700	\$1269

## GAMERS POWER

NEX™ Apollo Gaming Case  
**GENUINE Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300 with SP 2**  
 IBUYPOWER® CPU Liquid Cooling Technology  
 Intel® 965 Chipset PCI Express Motherboard  
 Corsair 1024MB DDR2-660 Memory  
 Serial-ATA-II 300GB 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive  
 16x Double Layer DVD±RW Drive, 16x DVD-RW II Drive  
 NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7950GT 512MB 16X PCI Express Video Card SLI Eyebolt  
 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound  
 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN  
 Logitech X-530 5.1 Surround Sound Speakers  
 Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse  
 Free Wireless 802.11g 34Mbps Network Adapter

\$1199

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6300	\$1199
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6400	\$1249
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6600	\$1339
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor E6700	\$1599

## HEL-80 TURBO

\$1239

Intel® Core™2 Duo Mobile Technology  
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7600  
 Intel® 965 Chipset  
**GENUINE Windows® XP**  
**Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2**  
 15.4" Wide Screen WGA TFT  
 LCD 1280x800 Display  
 NVIDIA® GeForce™ Go 7600  
 256 MB PCI Express II Video  
 1004MB DDR2-667 Memory  
 Serial-ATA II 80GB Hard Drive  
 Removable 6x DVD±R/±RW Drive  
 8-in-1 Web 2.0 I/O Cases  
 GB Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem  
 3x USB 2.0 Ports  
 1x FireWire IEEE 1394 Ports  
 3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader  
 High Performance Ultra Battery  
 Easy Deluxe Carrying Case

**FREE SHIPPING**

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7600	\$1079
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7400	\$1449
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7300	\$1299
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T5600	\$1239

## 9964 NOTEBOOK

\$1219

Intel® Core™2 Duo Mobile Technology  
 Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7400  
 Intel® 965 Chipset  
**GENUINE Windows® XP**  
**Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2**  
 15.4" Wide Screen WGA TFT  
 LED 1280x800 Display  
 Mobility 256MB ATI™ Radeon X1600  
 PCI-Express 3D Video  
 1004MB DDR2-667 Memory  
 Serial-ATA II 80GB Hard Drive  
 Removable 6x DVD±R/±RW Drive  
 GB Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem  
 3x USB 2.0 Ports  
 13 FireWire IEEE 1394 Ports  
 3-in-1 Built-in Media Card Reader  
 High Performance Ultra Battery  
 Free Deluxe Carrying Case

**FREE SHIPPING**

Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7600	\$1699
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7400	\$1429
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T7300	\$1379
Intel® Core™2 Duo Processor T5600	\$1219

Order Toll Free 888.462.3899 [www.IBUYPOWER.COM](http://www.IBUYPOWER.COM)

Intel, the Intel logo, Intel Core and Core Inside are trademarks or registered trademarks of Intel Corporation or its subsidiaries in the United States and other countries.



- Run all your gadgets quickly, seamlessly and simultaneously.
- Run all your applications at the same time with increased performance.
- AMD PowerNow!™ technology for longer battery life.
- Enjoy superb video playback, edit videos on the fly and deliver Super - fast graphic performance - all while on the go.



### GAMER FX

**\$999**

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ SLI Chip
- Dual PCI Express Motherboard
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- NZXT Apollo Gaming Case
- 3Wayover™ CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
- Corsair 1024MB DDR2 800MHz Memory
- Serial ATA-6 25GB 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±R RW Drive
- 6in-1 Media Card Reader
- 2x NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600GS 256MB
- 10x PCI Express - SLI Enabled
- 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- 600Hz Surround Sound Speakers
- Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter

5000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1149
4600+ (Socket AM2)	\$1089
4200+ (Socket AM2)	\$1019
3800+ (Socket AM2)	\$999
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$1379



### NIGHT GAMER FX

**\$1269**

AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 770 SLI Chip
- Dual PCI Express Motherboard
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- NZXT Address Gaming Case
- Baypower™ CPU Liquid Cooling Technology
- Corsair 1024MB DDR2 800MHz Memory
- Serial ATA-6 30GB 7200RPM 3GB Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD±R RW Drive
- 16x DVD-RM Drive
- 2x NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7800GS 256MB
- 10x PCI Express Video Card - SLI Enabled
- 6Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- Logitech 8.390 SLI Surround Sound Speakers
- Logitech Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter

5000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1469
4600+ (Socket AM2)	\$1379
4200+ (Socket AM2)	\$1299
3800+ (Socket AM2)	\$1269
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$2029

## BATTALION 5550 TURBO



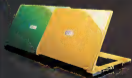
- 15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WRGB TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- AMD® Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology
- AMD® PowerNow! Technology
- HyperTransport Technology
- Enhanced Virus Protection Technology
- Mobile ATI™ Radeon™ X240 128MB DDR Video
- 1024MB DDR2-400 Memory
- Removable 6x DVD±R/RW/CD-RW Drive
- 85GB 5400RPM Ultra-KA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100Mbps Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Network
- 4x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- 3-in-1 Built-In Media Card Reader
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- Free Deluxe Carrying Case

**\$1179**



AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-24 Processor	\$1179
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-37 Processor	\$1199
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-40 Processor	\$1229
AMD Turion™ 64 Mobile Technology MT-46 Processor	\$1269

## BATTALION Z92T



- 15.4" Wide Screen 16:10 WRGB TFT LCD 1280x800 Display
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- AMD® Turion™ 64 X2 Mobile Technology
- AMD® PowerNow! Technology
- HyperTransport Technology
- Enhanced Virus Protection Technology
- Mobile nVidia GeForce™ 7000 256MB DDR Video
- 1125MB DDR2-567 Memory
- Removable 6x DVD±R/RW / CD-RW Drive
- 40GB 5400RPM Ultra-KA100 Hard Drive
- 10/100/1000 Mbps Ethernet LAN & 56K Modem
- Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Mini-PCI Network
- 4x USB 2.0 & 1x Firewire IEEE-1394 Ports
- 4-in-1 Built-In Media Card Reader
- High Performance Li-Ion Battery
- Free Deluxe Carrying Case

**\$1259**



AMD Turion™ 64 X2 Mobile Technology TL-34 Processor	\$1259
AMD Turion™ 64 X2 Mobile Technology TL-36 Processor	\$1299
AMD Turion™ 64 X2 Mobile Technology TL-40 Processor	\$1299

Order Toll Free 888.462.3899

**\$635****BARGAIN 64**

- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 4 SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- NVIDIA® 750i Mid-Tower Case - See Through Window
- Neon Light
- Corsair 512MB DDR2 600 Memory
- Seagate® 4TB 160GB 7200 RPM 3.5" Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD-R/DL RW Drive
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7100GS 256MB 16X PCI Express Video Card
- 6 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 30700/1300 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- 600 Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- Logitech® Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse
- A&V ViewSonic® 19002 19" LCD - Remote Zero video for ultimate gaming @ \$295

**\$999****VALUE ULTRA**

- NVIDIA® nForce™ 570 SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
- GENUINE Windows® X™ Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- Cooler Master® Temno-533 Gaming Tower Case
- Corsair 1024MB DDR2 800 Memory
- Seagate® 4TB 160GB 7200 RPM 3.5" Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD-R/DL RW Drive
- NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7900GS 256MB 16X PCI Express Video Card
- 6 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- 600 Watt Surround Sound Speakers
- 30700/1300 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- 17" ViewSonic® Q7B LCD Monitor
- Logitech® Deluxe Keyboard & Optical Mouse

**\$1529****GAMER SLI**

- NVIDIA® nForce™ 570 SLI Chip Dual PCI Express Motherboard
- GENUINE Windows® XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- Rokinon® FX-9 Gaming Case
- iBuyPower® CPU Liquid Cooling System
- Corsair 1024MB DDR2 800 Memory
- Seagate® 4TB 160GB 7200 RPM 3.5" Hard Drive
- 16x Double Layer DVD-R/DL RW Drive, 16x DVD-R/W Drive
- 2X NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7900GT PCI Express
- 512MB Video Card - SLI Enabled
- 8 Channel Surround 3D Premium Sound
- Creative® Inspire 5 Channel Surround Sound Speakers
- 10700/1300 Mbps Ethernet LAN
- Logitech® Deluxe Keyboard, Optical Mouse
- Free Wireless 802.11g 54Mbps Network Adapter

**AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor**

5000+ (Socket AM2)	\$775
4600+ (Socket AM2)	\$715
4200+ (Socket AM2)	\$655
3800+ (Socket AM2)	\$635
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$1335

**AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor**

5000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1195
4600+ (Socket AM2)	\$1095
4200+ (Socket AM2)	\$1035
3800+ (Socket AM2)	\$975
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$1745

**AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 dual-core Processor**

5000+ (Socket AM2)	\$1445
4600+ (Socket AM2)	\$1345
4200+ (Socket AM2)	\$1285
3800+ (Socket AM2)	\$1225
AMD Athlon™ 64 FX-62 (Socket AM2)	\$2275

**iBUYPOWER**

We Build It, You Play It

**iBUYPOWER RECOMMENDS****WINDOWS® XP MEDIA CENTER EDITION**

- The world's ultimate processor for PC enthusiasts.
- Discover the true potential of your PC. Break the speed limit.
- Enhanced Virus Protection, enabled by Microsoft® Windows® XP SP2.
- Cool 'N' Quiet technology means whisper quiet operation and significantly reduced power consumption.

**WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM**



ORDERS: Request units, upgrades, and tech research without wasting time! So simple, it's genius.

# SUPREME COM

An exclusive chat and multiplayer session with Gas Powered Games' Chris Taylor

PUBLISHER THQ DEVELOPER Gas Powered Games GENRE Real-Time Strategy RELEASE DATE Spring 2007

## PREVIEW

"YOU MIGHT NOT WANT TO PICK THE AEON ILLUMINATE THE first time you play," warns Gas Powered Games founder Chris Taylor as I sit down for a session of *Supreme Commander*. "That faction is the hardest one because it's so different." But since when has common sense stopped anyone? The United Earth Federation comes with familiar warheads and futuristic offshoots of conventional craft—been there, nuked that. The Cybran Nation is composed of self-actualized super-robots that clearly cribbed notes from *The Terminator* or Will Smith's magnum opus *Wild Wild West*. The Aeon Illuminate, a religious order, uses some weird alien technology that—I'll admit now—takes a lot of getting used to.

## WARTIME ECONOMIES

Any RTS mastermind knows there's a science to build order. Do you churn out a tank rush, become an economic juggernaut, or go scouting? In my case, you try doing everything at once—and fail miserably. *Supreme Commander*'s maps

are huge—even the two-player battlegrounds here measure 400 square kilometers—and encourage thought and exploration. The best course of action: Quickly get an economy off the ground and send out scouts to gather intel.

An army needs energy and mass (the two in-game resources) to operate, and a quick look at the map shows where to set up mass extractors. Some key advice: Select your first engineer, hold down the Shift key, and start stacking orders. Look for the mass collection hash marks on the map, and for every mass extractor you erect, order at least one generator. Quickly tag resource spots and let your engineers work in the background while building your army.

Stacking orders early enough—and smartly enough—is half the battle. Let's say you drop down a factory and want to upgrade it to tech level 2. Click the upgrade button, and you can place a build request for ten-two tech. Then order some more units and request the ten-three upgrade. Instead of waiting around for idle engineer units or monitoring every individual event on the battlefield, you only need to focus on giving general directions while the AI follows through on the orders.

**DE-FENSE!** The enemy's shield generator is active. They must be guarding something...

**THE VIEW:** The zoomless zoom system really does an amazing job of not only giving you the big picture, but also allowing you to quickly and intelligently traverse the whole map. Just point your cursor somewhere and scroll the mouse wheel. Get down close to the ground or pull back for a view from space (like we did for the second monitor). The only other recent game that adds the win/lose/control-center feeling is *Duke*.

**BATTLEZONE:** That sweet-looking battle on the other screen? This is how it looks zoomed out.

# MANDER

## RANDOM OBSERVATION 0-42

This game uses a strategy of simultaneous-protection that allows for placing resources and buildings near each other, but you must face the risk of being hit yourself by a bigger target. This feature may be worth a lot of thinking out.

The way Taylor puts it, "Patton has to say to a guy, 'Drive the tank over to the hill.' And the guy comes back and says, 'Now what?' And Patton goes, 'OK, now fuel it.' And the guy comes back and goes, 'Now what?' 'Put some bullets in the gun.' He comes back later and says, 'And now what?' Patton goes, 'Take those tanks, get 'em all ready, and attack that small town to the north.'" You're supposed to be a supreme commander, not a babysitter.

"Here, the commander is able to say all that in one fluid sentence while the guy says, 'Yes, sir. And I'll be there by tomorrow afternoon.'" Supreme Commander instantly gives an estimated time of arrival for all your commands.

Meanwhile, I create my first scouting party to gather intel on my wily opponent—it's time to set a course into unknown territory. I create a full loop by setting various waypoints, and an ETA timer tells me how long the loop will take to complete. Oops. I forgot to send a scout out to the northeast corner of the map. No prob. Hold down the Shift key and just drag a waypoint out to adjust the route. The ETA timer updates automatically, and I'm back in business.

Of course, that's until I screw things up and make idiotic demands of my troops. Remember that whole butt-order thing I was just talking about? Stu-

pidly tapping a couple of upgrade buttons too often and too quickly sent my economy into a tailspin. My mass extractors all received orders to upgrade to level-three technologies right from the game's start. Sure, it'll yield a matic as-ton of mass once completed, but it was too much, too soon. With my first-

## DUAL-SCREEN DESTRUCTION

Gas Powered's demo setup probably isn't what you have at home—two 24-inch Dell LCD panels attached to a tricked-out PC—but you might consider reclaiming desktop space for an extra display just for *Supreme Commander*. Dual-screen play adds a new dimension and some authentic war-room flavor to RTS gaming. Taylor reveals that the demo is running with a single GeForce 7800GTX card pushing pixels to both screens, impressively enough—and the screens above on these two pages look exactly like what you'd get.

few scouts on patrol destroyed, I was out of cash, short on troops, and running out of time.

Forced into a turtling position, I quickly shut down the mass-extractor upgrades (and watch as the economy jumps back to life) while erecting some walls and point-laser defenses. Using my supreme commander unit as an extra set of engineering hands, I clear-cut some trees to build mass and energy collectors to stockpile resources for the fight ahead. I was about to get swarmed and had little time to react. Defensive positional Laser turrets, tier two. Start producing shields for the inevitable nukie strike. Build a radar system. Start upgrading my supreme commander unit for battle (yes, command units can also be upgraded—be a better engineer or develop personal shields, for example). Order up some tech-level 3 Siege Assault bots to light back.

With my head back in the game, it was easy to appreciate everything happening. My artillery and defensive turrets tag anything entering radar range—or at least scare 'em away. When you target one unit to attack another in Supreme Commander, there's no guarantee you'll hit it. Taylor chimes in, "You don't know if you're going to miss, hit something else, or hit a tree and then the tree catches fire, falls over, and hits a shield system instead." Proper physics decide the battle—physics that I wished to God would work in my favor right about now. I finally clear a path for my assault bots to locate and take out the missile silos. Launch detected. Crap.

My shields absorb some of the damage, but it's over. All but a few ragtag units get wiped from the map. I will have my revenge, but there is one thing I can promise: Losing the first round won't influence my opinion of the final game. Much. **—Darren Gladstone**



• **Total Annihilation's** robo-centricism returns.



• **Spidey Cybran** naval units sprout legs.



• **Look for WWII** inspiration everywhere.



The rifle game has an amazing sense of scale. Watch as the Galactic Colossus crushes units.

## MUTUALLY ASSURED DESTRUCTION

The superpowers' superweapons

Every major war has its conflict-ending experimental technology. World War II had Fat Man and Little Boy. The future holds Voltron-like robots and cannon-bristling, trundling dreadnoughts. Here's a quick debriefing:



### UNITED EARTH FEDERATION: FATBOY

**Intel:** This Mobile Land Factory is a superior support unit, featuring four battleship cannons and a powerful shield generator mounted on a heavily armored frame. An internal construction bay permits troop reinforcements in the field.

**Tactics:** The Fatboy is ill-prepared for small, fast-moving targets. Penetrate the shields and avoid the limited firing arc of side-mounted riot guns to inflict significant-to-serious damage.



### CYBRAN NATION: "MONKEYLORD"

**Intel:** This monstrous spiderbot houses an extremely powerful microwave laser for short-range destruction. Prepped for resistance, it also has extremely thick armor and short-range anti-air/anti-ground countermeasures.

**Tactics:** The "Monkeylord" (which doesn't look anything like a monkey, by the way) is a slow-moving unit that's especially vulnerable to long-range bombardment or when traveling through water.



### THE AEON ILLUMINATE: GALACTIC COLOSSUS

**Intel:** The Colossus focuses quantum energy through its eye into a highly destructive, short-range beam attack. Upon death, the chest cavity breaks open and releases a highly unstable, incredibly volatile quantum energy "being" that quickly dissipates.

**Tactics:** The Colossus is extremely vulnerable to air end naval attacks.



# TAYLOR MADE

Time out with *Supreme Commander* creator Chris Taylor

**▶** AFTER A FEW MORE ROUNDS (I DID eventually get my revenge), Gas Powered Games founder Chris Taylor gave a tour of his company's offices while chatting about his *Total Annihilation* legacy and what's on the horizon.

**Computer Gaming World:** How does it feel coming back to RTS games after *Dungeon Siege*? Have your tastes or expectations changed?

**Chris Taylor:** If you think of me as an artist, I'm going to paint with the same brushstrokes. I'm not going to suddenly go off and create a *Command & Conquer*-type game. I can only do things that fit my own personality style. Big nukers, big theater of war—those are all things that match my design tastes.

**CGW:** And what would you say is one of those defining tastes—besides the big nukers, that is?

**CT:** One thing that I loved [in *Total Annihilation*] was the ability to add new things to the game after the fact by simply dropping in new data, without recompiling the executable. Every game made should be data-driven because if you have to recompile, then you have to update the executable, increment the version number, and you're probably invalidating e-wel games. You're gonna make it so every dingle person who wants to play a multiplayer game has to go out and upgrade to that version.

**CGW:** And it works so well with *Battlefield 2*. On that topic, are you thinking of creating an online community—a "gpg.net" of eorts?

**CT:** Well, we're making an online matchmaking solution. I just wish that we had a

final name for what it is, because it's more a community pillar. It's a meeting place with friends lists and chat rooms. There's a ladder ranking system, and we've got plans to allow people to be ranked locally so you can see where you sit with everyone in your hometown versus everyone in your state versus everyone in your country.

**CGW:** What about a *Supreme Commander* online metagame?

**CT:** Well, we've toyed with the idea. We haven't got anything official on that yet. But



that could be something we do in the future, because we really love the idea.

**CGW:** Talking single-player for a sec, you'd mentioned in interviews that you're working on a personality-archetype system.

**CT:** Yeah, we really want to see our A.I. opponents play with personality. Unfortunately, we may not get as far down that road as we wanted to for now. Most people, when

they first unwrap the game, aren't going to say, "Oh, I really want to play against you, know, 17 different A.I.s." So I'll give people a chance to warm up to the game. Our expansion pack will probably be where we roll the personality A.I. out in a big way.

**CGW:** What do you think of other tech? Like, say, Windows Vista promising to make PC gaming easier, more like consoles. Will this make your job any easier?

**CT:** Vista's got a refreshing angle, but aside from the glitz, what's cool is the prioritization on making PC gaming easier. Drop-and-play is a step in the right direction, but I also think the developer has a lot of responsibility. Like right now, *Supreme Commander* plays right off the DVD drive. Believe it or not, all the no-load stuff, all the streaming predictive caching stuff—it loads right off the DVD drive. There's performance cost involved with making it work like a console, but we can do it. It's completely within our grasp. It's not the open architecture of the PC that has caused it entirely; it's actually probably more a function of dollars in the development, and we can do it because we can be clever, we can be resourceful, and we can make it happen. And we will make it happen.

**CGW:** One last thing I'd been moaning to ask: TA consisted of robots fighting. *Supreme Commander* has maybe two humans on the battlefield. Is there a philosophical statement you're making here?

**CT:** I am. To make war games is almost like saying that war is cool. War is not cool. Real war is terrible. I think when soldiers die, it's bad enough, but when children die because a missile hits kids sleeping in a hospital, it's absolutely the worst thing ever. We don't need our entertainment to be more of the worst part of being human. So why not focus on the intellectual exercise of strategy, mitigate all the human suffering, and reduce it to vehicles, equipment, and stuff like that? Like chess. /

**▶▶** MAKING WAR GAMES IS ALMOST SAYING THAT WAR IS COOL. WAR IS NOT COOL.

—CHRIS TAYLOR, GAS POWERED GAMES FOUNDER

ABS® Gaming machines are carefully hand-crafted by experienced ABS® Engineers to give you the frame rate shattering performance you crave. AMD processors offer smarter features, smarter performance, smarter innovation and smarter value. So make the smart choice and ensure that your next PC is powered by AMD's smart technology.

- True multi-tasking capabilities and increased performance on digital media, content creation, video & photo editing and audio mixing.
- Run all your gadgets quickly, seamlessly and simultaneously
- Run all your applications at the same time with increased performance
- Can handle anything you throw at it



- AMD Athlon® 64 X2™ AM2 Socket processor (3800+) with HyperTransport™ Technology
  - AMD Make's Smarter Processors
  - Microsoft® Windows® XP Home with Service Pack 2
  - ABS Stealth Black ATX Aluminum Chassis
  - ASUS M2N50-SLI Deluxe NVIDIA® GeForce™ 590 SLI X16 Socket AM2 Motherboard with True Dual X16 SLI Slots & IEEE802.11b/g Wireless Integrated
  - 1GB Corsair XMS2 Extreme DDR2 675(PC2 5400) Memory
  - Dual NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7600 GT 256MB Video Cards with SLI™ Technology Enabled
  - ADI AD1985B 8 Channel Audio
  - Dual 200GB 7200RPM SATA Hard Drives in RAID 0 (400GB Total)
  - Antec True Power 2.0 550W SLI-Ready Power Supply
  - 16X DVD-ROM Drive
  - 16X Double-Layer DVD±RW DVD Recordable Drive w/ Light Scribe
- \* The model number indicates relative software performance among it's processor family.

Regular price ~~\$1,699~~

\$100 Instant Off!

Online price

**\$1,599**



Also Available At:



\*Image shown may be with upgraded options

**ULTIMATE  
M6 SNIPER**

The ABS® Ultimate M6 Sniper posted a **"record-breaking score"** in the PC World Test Center World Bench 5!

**PC WORLD** January 2006  
Ultimate M6 Sniper

**Get the Frame Rate Shattering**



# abs

- AMD Turion™ X4 Mobile Technology MT-32\*
- AMD PowerNow™ Technology for longer battery life
- HyperTransport™ Technology for multitasking
- Enhanced Virus Protection
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition with Service Pack 2
- 15.4 WXGA Widescreen Gloss TFT display
- ATI Mobility™ Radeon™ X1600 w/ 256MB VRAM
- 80GB 5400rpm Hard Drive
- 512MB DDR333 memory
- BX Double-Layer DVD±RW DVD Recordable Drive
- SD/MMC/MS/MS-Pro/XD/SM 8-in-1 Card Reader
- Built-in 1.3 Mega Pixel CMOS Camera
- 802.11a/b/g WLAN/ Bluetooth

\*This model number includes relative software performance among the processor family

ABS® Recommends Microsoft® Windows® XP

- \* Power, speed and battery life in a thin and light notebook.
- \* Leading-edge performance for today's 32-bit software and 64-bit emulators, so you don't have to upgrade your notebook to benefit from new 64-bit applications.
- \* Stunning multi-media performance of AMD64 technology in a thin, light end mobile package.

Regular price ~~\$1,499~~ Online price  
**\$250 Instant Off!** **\$1,249**



\* New! Now \$5 80088-70000 P01  
Call 80080-5-2000 P01

\* New! Limited Parts & Labor Warranty

Visit **abs.com** or call **800.876.8088**

New, specifications and prices are subject to change without notice. For current pricing and specifications, visit <http://www.abs.com>. Businesses may not necessarily represent exact configurations priced. ABS is not responsible for errors in typography and/or photography. Certain services may be provided by a participating third party provider. Services will be discontinued if necessary following phone support. © 2006 All rights reserved. AMD, AMD Ather logo, AMD Athlon, AMD Turion, Cool'n/Quiet and combinations thereof are trademarks of Advanced Micro Devices. HyperTransport is a licensed trademark of the HyperTransport Technology Consortium. Microsoft and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and other jurisdictions. Other product and company names are for identification purposes only and may be trademarks of their respective proprietors. ABS logo and all ABS trademarks are copyright ABS Computer Technologies, Inc.

\*Image shown may be with upgraded options

## MAYHEM G3 eclipse XT



**Six Month Rating Of 9.19**  
RESSELLERRATINGS.com Platinum Award

**For Customer Satisfaction**

ABS	9.19
ALTERNATE	6.95
Dell	3.81

### Performance You Crave!

# SHADOW-RUN-

FASA Studio reshuffles the teampay shooter

PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game Studios DEVELOPER: FASA Studio GENRE: FPS RELEASE DATE: February 2007

BY NOW, YOU'VE PROBABLY READ about—yes, it's true—Shadowrun coming back as a first-person shooter, so let's get this out of the way: Either you're kinda hazy on urban-cyberpunk role-playing game Shadowrun, or you're a fanatic, ready to tar, feather, and torch any game translation that's not an RPG. Never mind what folks were saying about Tolkien as an RTS, or, for that matter, an RTS like *WarCraft* as an MMORPG. (Did you know *Shadowrun* was also an award-winning card game?) With a team collectively talking *MechWarrior*, *MechCommander*, *MechAssault*, *Crimson Skies*, and, of all things, *Halo*, you'd think *Shadowrun* fans would cut FASA a break.

"We're action-game developers, and we're focused on the things we're best at doing," remarks studio manager Mitch Gitelman. "If I sound passionate, it's because I've heard so many vocally fervent FPS reviewers lament repeatedly that no one is innovating in the FPS genre. Here comes *Shadowrun* with the ability to teleport through walls, summon creatures, turn to smoke, glide through the air, return dead friends to life, and lots more—and all anyone wants to talk about is that we're not making an RPG."

Set in Brazil, 2031, *Shadowrun*—the FPS—is still grounded in the paper game's cyberpunk trappings, only taking place a couple of decades earlier—a time when magic's returned but society's still on edge. Metahuman races like elves and trolls stride the planet, megacorporations coil or clash in the open, and, in FASA's version, two factions—one a dehumanizing monetizer (RNA Global), the other quasi-demonistic (The Lincage)—vie for control of urban combat arenas. "We originally planned to set the game in 2021, but *Shadowrun* fans felt some of our choices diverted too heavily from the fiction," explains Gitelman. A quick call to Jordan Weisman (*Shadowrun* creator) helped the team slot the game more comfortably into existing canon.

Fidelity or no, FASA's *Shadowrun* certainly seems to plumb unorthodox territory. "You start off choosing to play a human, elf, dwarf, or troll," says Gitelman. "All your tech and magic abilities thereafter are persistent for your character, which allows you to customize them based on your play style." Humans are predictably the jock-of-all-trades, elves are turbo hit-and-runners with regenerative abilities, dwarves absorb magical "essence" from their surroundings, and trolls are large and slow-moving tanks with skin that hardens when hit.

Matches proceed in rounds, which Gitelman describes as "like an arms escalation." In the first round, most players have enough cash for one ability and maybe a weapon, which encourages diligent teampay. With each round, you gain more abilities, leading to increasingly complex tactical choices and snap judgments. "When someone summons a minion (think *mail-Balrog*), the other team launches an antimagic grenade to neutralize him," explains Gitelman. "When someone gets blown off the edge of a building with a magical gust, he turns to smoke before he hits the ground and just drifts away. People are teleporting and gliding around the map, making friends from the dead, getting caught in vines, and whooping it up."

Intriguingly, Gitelman says tech and magic aren't really weapons in *Shadowrun*. "Anyone can make a weapon like a rocket launcher, put FX on it and call it a fireball... boring. When I look at other FPS games, I see a lack of defensive abilities. You can duck or take cover or run away." Alternately, every tech or magic ability in *Shadowrun* changes the way the game plays. Instead of health packs, for instance, you might summon a Tree of Life for proximity-based healing. "But these abilities also have tactical components to them," stresses Gitelman. "The tree doesn't cure who it heals, so where you place it's important. In addition, you're summoning a solid object and getting cover. I've seen teams set up defensive positions behind small magical groves."

Other double-edged abilities include raising the dead: Resurrect friends, and they'll live as long as you do—if you bite it, they'll bleed out. Or take smokes: "Lots of players will turn to smoke when they're overrun by enemies," says Gitelman. "But clever players will realize that weapon fire goes right through them." Imagine leading an enemy's shotgun fire toward one of his friends—at the right moment, you turn to fumes and the blast passes through you, nailing his friend. While they're screaming at each other over headsets, you rematerialize and "say hello" with your SMG.

Gitelman says the team's making a game for the current generation of gamers, many who don't know *Shadowrun* at all. "We want the world of *Shadowrun* we all know to come back and thrive. But in order to do that we've had to evolve our approach and not make decisions based on games that came out over 13 years ago." Fair enough, and a chink of reasoning we can get behind if the FPS dynamics measure up. / Matt Peckham



▶ A magical power like teleportation lets you pop through walls, floors, ceilings, solid objects—even other players, where a tech ability like gliding lets you coast from heights or float up short distances for better shooting angles.

SHADOWRUN IS STILL GROUNDED IN THE PAPER GAME'S CYBERPUNK TRAPPINGS.

# AND-GUN

## HUMAN META-HUMAN VAMPIRIC VIRUS

Humans, ghosts, or vampires as opponents? "Totally, 100% says Gileman. "There are fewer than Shadowrun... but I love to wall and see."



Additional tech skills include Vision Enhancement (identify friend/foe, race, and weapon type through walls), Smartlink (improve accuracy and caps friendly fire), and Wired Reflexes (lets you run and reload faster and deflect bullets with a katana).



Story mode's out, but you can play each of Shadowrun's maps and game types against bots, or just train with them. "Our bots don't cheat," claims Gileman. "They use tech and magic and change weapons just like you do."



Weapons previewed so far include katana, submachine guns, shotguns, and sniper rifles. "The most 'out there' weapon in the game is the minigun, like the one Jesse Ventura used in Predator," says Gileman, adding that it takes some skill to wield due to its spin-up time. "There's something chilling about hearing that little mechanical whirr. It means someone's about to open up a can of whup-ass."



Shadowrun supports PC-versus-Xbox 360 cross-platform roughhousing out of the box. "We were definitely concerned that the mouse would dominate when we started but that hasn't been the case," says Gileman. "Mouse/keyboard has a slight advantage with long-range shooting, but the controller seems to have the advantage in close-quarters combat."



KNIGHT

ALYPSE



MAGE

APPOCA





©2005 Namco Bandai Games, Inc. All rights reserved. Content is protected under the Creative Commons License. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners. ESRB rating: T (Teen). The Partially Reality Dependent Content Filter is a trademark of Namco Bandai Games, Inc. The ESRB rating is an advisory trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. © 2005 Creative Commons License. The Creative Commons License logo is a trademark of Creative Commons. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.









# WARHAMMER MARK OF CHAOS



© 2004 Games Workshop Ltd 2004. All Rights Reserved. Games Workshop, Warhammer, Warhammer: Mark of Chaos, and all associated logos, are logos, marks, names, characters, likenesses and/or design for the Warhammer: Mark of Chaos game and the Warhammer world as within ©. TM and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2004. TM, marks registered in the US and other countries owned by Games Workshop Ltd. All Rights Reserved. The logo and is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.



# PIRATES OF THE BURNING SEA

This sailboat's no Disneyland ride

PUBLISHER: EA DEVELOPER: Flying Lab Software GENRE: MMORPG RELEASE DATE: Summer 2007

## PREVIEW

▶ NOT EVERYONE WANTS TO PLAY WORLD OF Warcraft. Sure, the theme park-style conventions (get on the ride, see the sights, kill the big bad, and exit the ride, see the next group can rise and repeat) work well enough for more casual-minded MMORPG fans who crave an online Final Fantasy-like experience...while more immersion-oriented genre geeks stick to the oddball Eve Online or Shadowbane that occasionally surfaces. The design philosophy of Flying Lab Software's *Pirates of the Burning Sea* reads like a love letter to this oft-neglected minority, while also steering the pirate subgenre into previously uncharted waters.

### YO HO HO, CAPTAIN BLOOD! PLEASE RETURN HERE AFTER SACKING 10 MERCHANT VESSELS!

"The truth," says producer John Tynes, "is that a lot of our staff doesn't like the MMORPG genre much. We all see the potential of the medium, but don't like the kinds of gameplay that have arisen from that potential. What we're trying to accomplish [with POTBS] is to create an amazing swashbuckling adventure. We're looking at the classic movies of the genre, the classic literature, and the great actors—Errol Flynn, Douglas Fairbanks—and we're asking ourselves, 'How can we give the players that experience and make them feel like those heroes?'"

▶ "MY INSPIRATION FOR SYSTEM DESIGN STARTS WITH ISLAND OF KESMAI AND HAS A HEAPING SPOONFUL OF EVERY OTHER MMORPG I'VE EVER PLAYED."

—JOHN TYNES, PRODUCER

One thing's for sure: Errol Flynn was certainly never told to sail out to sea, kill 20 pirates-in-training, and return to the harbormaster for his 100 XP reward—nor does POTBS treat players this way, says Tynes. "We're not starting with a lot of the ground-level assumptions other games seem to. We're opposed to the idea of a 'levelball' because it includes the assumption that all the stuff you do until you hit the level cap is worthless and you don't really start the game until you're maxed out. We went a different route; we wanted even the early ships and low levels to be useful and important. A cannonball is a cannonball, whether fired by a level 1 or a level 50. Not to say that advancement isn't beneficial...but we don't need to artificially inflate the power of a high-level character."

Every player acts as master and commander the moment they set foot in port, beginning a seafaring career (ranging from bloodthirsty pirate to honest merchant to shipwright) in a small schooner, and gaining access to bigger and badder ships over time. "We're very much about player empowerment," Tynes explains. "We want people to feel larger than life...to take up heroic roles and do amazing deeds."

This empowerment also applies to the game's player-powered economy. As players traverse 18th-century England, France, and Spain (along with a fourth pirate "nation"), they pay player-defined prices for player-made goods. According to Tynes, "Every significant



▶ "PVP is world-relevant. You're not just ganking; you're trying to take ports for your nation and conquer the whole Caribbean."



▶ "We expect pirates to be both hunters and prey—sacking merchant cargo to sell, and in turn being hunted by the navy."



▶ "Our role model for character customization has always been *City of Heroes*, which raised the bar for the whole industry."

aim in the game is player-created." Indeed, POTBS places a high priority on player interaction of all kinds, from the economy to PVP (though we're assured that the game "totally supports solo play"). Says Tynes: "Nobody plays WOW for the monster-killing; they play WOW because of their friends, their guilds, their *duels*, and their enemies. The game is a context—the other players are the real content."

▶ Ryan Scott

NOW SHOWING  GAME VIDEOS  
watch now, play later

From official promos to original content, get it all at GameVideos.com. See these viral vids and more at [www.gamevideos.com/cgw](http://www.gamevideos.com/cgw).



**BURNING CRUSADE: KARAZHAN**  
Intrepid hecker (or Blizzard insider?) tows an unsleased and unpopulated World of Warcraft: *The Burning Crusade*.



**XBOX 360 CRAZY LADY**  
Hilarious casting clip for unleased Xbox 360 commercial showcases an Italian hunchback going *Me Frotell!* with imaginary guns.



**SILENT HILL: THE LONELINESS OF PYRAMID HEAD**  
The *Silent Hill 2* spook takes a day off from horror to feed the cat, mow the lawn....



COLUMN

# FREELORDER

Scoring free games without that icky "pirate" aftertaste

ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL LEONARDI

YEAH, YEAH, YOU KNOW THE DEAL. I'M LAZY AND SHIFTLESS. WATCH ME TRY TO BE A BETTER MOOCH EACH MONTH. HA. HA.

Very funny. Well, my shick finally bit me in the ass. Happy?

Yeah, I don't check my mail that often. Letters get "sorted" into three piles: "opened," "unopened," and "I-really-know-I-should-open-but-don't-want-to-open." It's getting to the point where I'll need a Sherpa to help navigate the mailing ML Rainer forming at my doorstep. Anyhow, I just accidentally kicked a stack over while playing *Frets on Fire* (more on that in a second) and slipped on the notice that this is my last issue of CGW.

I'd been meaning to pay my bills—really. It's just that, well, L...I forgot. OK? I've been so busy rocking the free games, I ignored just about everything else I needed to do this month. Look, the check's in the mail. Promise! Just cut me a little slack. If you were playing these games, you'd forget about your deadlines (and bills), too. /The Freelorder

WWW.FREELORDER.COM

Want to find these deals  
and other awesome stuff  
right here? They're all online  
at [www.freelorder.com](http://www.freelorder.com)



THE GAME: *Frets on Fire*  
THE LAUNCH: **BARRE!**

I'm tired of hearing about *Guitar Hero* from all those cooler-than-thou PS2 jackasses. Feh, what-figgin'—event I found this totally sweet rhythm game and it can rock your socks off, gratis—mash buttons to the beat and make sweet, sweet music. Since the few songs that come with *FOF* are kinda weak (but the tutorial is hep-larious), this open-source game allows people to import versions of popular songs.

There's just one small problem: Nobody looks cool playing a guitar game with a keyboard. Wait...is there a way? Following the lead of visionary bend Frankie Goes to Hollywood, I'm gonna slap on a guitar strap and become a Keytar Hero!



THE GAME: *Extinction Disco Nation!*  
THE LAUNCH: **Monty Python Dance Revolution**

Like any couch-potato nerd worth his TiVo remote, I can quote *Life of Brian* line for line. So imagine my joy when I found the sunnily stupid *Extinction Disco Nation!* Someone at the Experimental Gameplay Project created a game in which a bizarre picture of a dude's foot clams down and squishes little stick-figure men into paste, in true Monty Python fashion. That's it—that's the whole game. Just your foot, tiny dancing targets, and a goofy faux-disco song that'll camp out in your brain long after you're done playing. All this game needs is a *Dance Dance Revolution* dancepad. Y'know, this reminds me—I really need to clean between my toes more often. Who says games aren't educational?



THE GAME: *Every Extend*  
THE LAUNCH: **PSP-Free**

I got this one buddy who's a big huge show-off (yeah, I'm looking at you, Gladstone). He's the kind of ass monkey who has to get everything before anyone else and then brag about it to everybody. Yeah, you know the type. So there's this sick action game for the PSP in Japan called *Every Extend Extre*. In it, you build explosive chains with some kamikaze geometric shapes and just try to last as long as you can. Like the trance-inducing PSP puzzler *Lumines*, *Every Extend Extre* is simple and addictive. Well, congrats, you dumbass. That Japanese import you just blew over \$60 on has been available for the PC for a couple of years now—as a free download.

## DEVELOPER'S DESKTOP

What games are they playing?



Jason Kapelka has swapped our ability to get work done with games like *Bookworm* and *Zuma*. What incalculable times kill his productivity when he isn't making his next casual game?

### TITAN QUEST

"I feel a little guilty about this one, since it's such an egregious *Diablo II* clone. But everyone needs a little click-and-drag. Besides the fancy new graphics, though, it actually makes me a bit nostalgic for *Diablo II*'s elegance and punch."

### ANCIENT DOMAINS OF MYSTERY

"This is my favorite *NoHack/Rogue*-like ASCII-graphics game, and it's been on my desktop for nearly a decade. I've never even come close to finishing it and I probably never will."

### MAPLESTORY

"This is a casual 2D RPG MMO where the game itself is free but you have to pay for in-game power-ups, upgrades, extras, and so on. *MapleStory* is what might happen if *WOW* mixed with an old *Mario Bros.* title."

### HALF-LIFE 2 AND EPISODE ONE

"Shamefully, I never finished *HL2* when it came out...I'm going back to complete it so I can try

*Episode One*. The best thing about the *Half-Life* games is how they never ever spill anything out with an "exposition dump" they just incorporate you into the plot. The story line of the first *Half-Life* isn't different from the plot of *Doom*...but instead of stoking it in a three-paragraph block of text in the README file, HL brilliantly let you participate in it as an "actor."

### CIVILIZATION IV

"I never get tired of this modern Sid Meier game classic. It's probably the only computer game around today (besides *Terria*) that we'll all still be playing in the year 2050. If we haven't been replaced by cybernetic work units."

SPECIAL REPORT:  
GAMES IN CHINA

# CHINA SYN

A rapidly changing nation finds its own ways to game

## CULTURE

CHINA'S ECONOMY, NOW THE FOURTH largest in the world, has outstripped those of both France and Britain, and the nation's ongoing experiment in blending capitalism with communism has created a rapidly expanding middle class with discretionary income. The rise of Chinese gaming is part of this transformation. Though for many years the growth of mainland videogame companies was hindered by widespread software piracy, the recent popularity of online subscription-based games has worked around the black market, since the software itself is often distributed for free. Chinese government statistics state that there are between 20 million and 30 million online gamers among its citizens: That means almost one in every four people in China, with internet access use it to play games, and state agencies predict a 35-percent annual growth rate for the online gaming sector in the next half-decade. World of Warcraft alone boasts more than 3 million players in China—more than 40 percent of all WoW players worldwide—making it a bigger phenomenon there than even in the U.S., which supports a mere 2 million.

As it attempts to meld Maoism with free markets, China is evolving a game culture all its own, one in which state controls and post-Marxist propaganda campaigns mix with entrepreneurship gone wild.

## FARMING AND FATIGUE

So much manufacturing has been outsourced to China, where cheap labor churns out everything from toys to sneakers for hungry consumers around the world, it was probably inevitable that online economies would follow suit. As a result, China has become the global leader in "gold farming," a notorious practice in which

PC-laden "virtual sweatshops" of low-paid gamers grind away through World of Warcraft, Lineage, or other lands of adventure, then sell their loot for gold which can be exchanged for real-world cash. Other firms, some with hundreds of players toiling away at a time, offer services to level characters for impatient players in the West, zipping their Paladins or Druids from 1 to 60 for a fee. At the end of 2005, The New York Times estimated that there were "well over 100,000 young people working in China as full-time gamers, toiling away in dark Internet cafes, abandoned warehouses, small offices, and private homes," most garnering less than 25 cents per hour wages, often in addition to room, board, and unlimited gameplay; a low paycheck, perhaps, but many see the work as a step up from factory labor.

Yet China's government also fears the loss of labor to the online world through "Internet addiction." Newspapers run sensationalistic stories about teenagers failing their studies, going blind, or even dying from fatigue after many hours of extended play. In response, online publishers signed a "Beijing Accord" at the government's behest to create in-game limitations to extended play. Three hours has become the cap for normal gameplay within China's biggest titles; those who play beyond the "healthy" three-hour mark find their experience and loot value greatly reduced. After five hours of play, a nagware pop-up announces a warning every 15 minutes: "You have entered unhealthy game time, please go offline immediately to rest. If you do not, your health will be damaged and the benefits you can win will be cut to zero."

The government has also censored the content of games imported from abroad—not an unusual practice in a country that regularly blocks websites containing what the government considers questionable information or opinion.

For the past two years, strict Ministry of Culture regulations have overseen the inspection of all games manufactured outside of the country, in order to ensure that their "content accords with Chinese national conditions and has positive effects on young people's mentality," according to Ministry officials. A number of strategy and military-themed games have been banned based on their depiction of the Chinese army. For example, Electronic Arts' 2003 title Command & Conquer: Generals Zero Hour expansion became forbidden to sell or download for "smearing the image of China and the Chinese army," according to state-issued press releases.

## LIKE AMERICA'S ARMY, BUT RED

In the U.S., politicians have attacked the violence in games, even as the American military is using its own game titles for recruitment and training. The U.S. military has met with great success with America's Army, so it's perhaps no surprise that China has similar plans for its own government-backed patriotic online games: new-media extensions of Party-backed propaganda campaigns.

China's state news agency Xinhua reports that a "patriotic" game called Chinese Heroes is in development with Shanghai-based firm Shanda Interactive Entertainment. The country's biggest online gaming company, Shanda launched numerous popular MMORPGs such as World of Legend, Magic Land, and The Age, and also imports localized versions of Dungeons and Dragons Online and South Korean superhit Legend of Mir II. Designed to instill "traditional values"—and compete with games like World of Warcraft—the new game is planned to feature 100 different national heroes fitted from Chinese history and fable, including Zheng Chenggong, a 17th-century military leader who successfully battled Dutch colonists for control of Taiwan,

# DROME

and medieval admiral Zheng He, the celebrated explorer. Many of these characters have long been deployed in state propaganda, such as Lei Feng, a People's Liberation Army soldier who died at age 22 in the early 1960s and has since been trotted out regularly as the epitome of model citizenship, beginning with Mao Zedong's own "Learn from Lei Feng" campaign.

If early reports of Chinese Heroes hold true, the game will likely prove ineffective in stemming the tide of mass defection to *Azoth*. According to the government press release, the game will feature a "cute cartoon" style and involve "tasks like moving bricks and catching rindrops on a building site" as well as quizzes about the heroes' life stories—which sounds more like dismal educational software than the next big craze. Even Xinhua voiced skepticism by quoting the reactions of teenagers to the game at the Beijing Internet Addiction Treatment Center, who said it sounded "boring" and "too simple." (Though perhaps their lack of enthusiasm merely indicates the effectiveness of their anti-Internet addiction treatments.)

Chinese Heroes isn't the only state-sponsored game project. The China Communist Youth League has announced numerous historically based war titles, including *Anti-Japan War Online*, created with Shenzhen firm PowerNet Technology, which plays into a long pedigree of Chinese nationalism expressed through anti-Japanese sentiment. In this game set in the 1930s and '40s, players take on the role of everyday citizens who join the real-life Eighth Route Army to combat the invading Japanese. Developers say the game "will allow players, especially younger players, to learn from history.

They will get a patriotic feeling when fighting invaders to safeguard their motherland."

For younger gamers, there's already a Lei Feng title available, the state-approved *Learn From Lei Feng Online*, aimed at elementary school kids. Designed to teach "hard work, a plain life, and willingness to help others" according to government press reports, *Lei Feng Online* includes a treasure hunt whose prize is a virtual signed copy of Mao's Little Red Book.

## ONLINE NATIONALISM

Yet even without government prompting, a new wave of nationalist sentiment has become visible in China within the imaginary kingdoms of online gaming worlds. Last summer, controversy brewed within NetEase's massively popular *Fantasy Westward Journey*, a cartoon-style commercial adventure game set in the heroic Tang dynasty of the early medieval period. Game masters placed one high-level player in virtual lockdown (within a structure called "The Great Tang Permanent Incarceration Prison") because of the name he gave his character and guild. The player's character was called "Kill the Little Japs," and his guild "The Alliance to Resist Japan."

In response to queries, a NetEase administrator explained on an official company site that this wasn't the first time they'd removed a player due to potentially offensive in-game names. One guild called the "Fried Society," named for the infamous Hong Kong-based international crime syndicate, was removed, as was a guild named "Al Qaeda" which boasted a leader named "I am bin Laden." One player with the alias "Kill all. Loot all." oversteered a guild called "Unit 731,"

which was also disbanded. The name refers to a unit of the Japanese army that secretly performed medical experimentation and biological research using human subjects during the Second Sino-Japanese War and the subsequent years of World War II. (Such censorship isn't limited to China, of course. In the West, *World of Warcraft* administrators may delete character and guild names they deem obscene or racist.)

Whether NetEase feared that these names would offend the government, other players, or both isn't clear, but its crackdown on "The Alliance to Resist Japan" may have to do with in-game protests previously fomented by the guild. "The Alliance" caused a ruckus over what it perceived to be a graphic of the Japanese Empire's Rising Sun flag on the walls of a structure representing a Chinese government building. Over 10,000 players gathered their characters in an area known as the Summer Palace in collective fury, typing in obscenities and complaints until the screen filled with angry text. Some players speculated that the Japanese flag indicated that NetEase had been taken over by foreign investors.

NetEase, however, responded by explaining that the red sun image was based not on the Japanese flag, but a Chinese painting called "Green Mountain Ocean Water Morning Sunrise," found historically in government offices, which was meant to remind officials to "always maintain a clear mind, never mistreat the people, never betray the nation."

A little over a decade and a half ago, the world witnessed brutal government response to prodemocracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. Today, a thriving private high-tech firm squashes virtual protests stemming from nationalistic, anti-Japanese rage inside a virtual world, even as China's government encourages such attitudes with their own anti-Japan videogames. / Ed Haller



THOSE WHO PLAY BEYOND THE "HEALTHY" THREE-HOUR MARK WILL FIND THEIR EXPERIENCE AND LOOT GREATLY REDUCED.



# SILK ROAD

Game developers head East for bigger, faster, cheaper **BY MATT PECKHAM**

**SPECIAL  
REPORT:  
GAMES IN  
CHINA**

## TRENDS

➤ "MADE IN CHINA," A PHRASE AS RECOGNIZABLE AS COCA-COLA, is stamped on everything from welding masks and perfume sprayers to porcelain holiday plates depicting painted snowmen that smile and wave under loquacious snow. In 2005, China's economy topped \$2.2 trillion, just ahead of the U.K. and ripping at Germany's heels. Take the CIA's latest estimates based on "purchasing power parity," a theory that adjusts for exchange rates, and China's GDP jumps to \$8.8 trillion, second in the world and four-fifths the size of either the United States or the European Union. Columbia University professor and economist Jeffrey Sachs estimates that by 2050, China will surpass the absolute size of the

ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA REYNOLDS





U.S. economy by as much as 75 percent, and during a 2004 speech, he proclaimed: "The 21st century is not the American century—it is really the Asian century."

Welcome to the international version of Trading Spaces, where intertwining economies, tumbling foreign labor costs, and aggressive game studios are transforming the race to produce triple-A games. In view of skyrocketing domestic production expenses, studios are moving aspects of their business offshore, focusing on quality through quantity, soliciting increasingly skilled Chinese workers in bulk to build the games of the future as quickly and cheaply as possible.

#### REBALANCING ACT

Outsourcing, just as it sounds, means obtaining goods or services from an outside source, simply supply and demand writ large upon a global stage. In terms of game development, this includes any component in the process,

from assets to code to bodies, and it's been occurring progressively in U.S. and European game studios for at least the last five years. In mid-July 2006, Niko Partners, a market research and consulting firm for the Chinese videogame industry, reported "cost savings and a need to augment development staff" as the force impelling publishers and developers to outsource portions of their projects. Surveying 20 outsourced game development studios in Shanghai and Beijing, Niko identified the cost savings to be in the range of 40 to 60 percent over development costs in the U.S. or Europe. The study's results also indicated that the market for outsourced game development is growing swiftly as publishers and developers turn increasingly to China for help with mostly artwork-related projects, leading demand for outsourcing studios to outstrip supply.

Today's games are yesterday's pipe dreams, complex amalgams of code, sound, and art, often requiring extensive collaborative efforts

from different creative subsidiaries as studios attempt to meet increasingly steep production goals. In the U.S., senior programmer salaries alone range from \$75,000 to more than \$100,000, and that's before benefits. Compare to Chinese programmer costs, which eschew benefits altogether and typically range from \$18,000 to \$30,000—cheaper still for asset creation (the value of art outsourcing alone is predicted to reach \$1 billion by 2010). Is it any surprise that companies are gazing eastward with increasing frequency?

In a March 2006 report for London-based business intelligence provider Screen Digest, researcher Rick Gibson says outsourcing "tends to follow a standard path as companies introduce it to an industry, first prioritizing cost over quality, then establishing partnerships with suppliers, and finally moving into joint value creation." According to Gibson, the transition to the next generation of games will be more disruptive and costly than in previous generations. >

Unchecked, production cost averages will rise by 50 percent or more (primarily driven by a fourfold increase in art requirements). Sixty percent of game studios outsource today, a number that Gibson says will increase to more than 90 percent by 2008; the proportion of total production budgets allocated to resourcing will jump from 14.8 to 20 percent—and will reach as high as 40 percent in 2010. Globally, the outsourcing marketplace is expected to reach \$1.1 billion this year, \$1.9 billion by 2008, and \$2.5 billion by 2010. If Gibson's numbers are accurate, today's studios ignore tomorrow's outsourcing provisos at their peril.

**OFFSHORE EXODUS**

Take a labor pool as large as China's, and it's easy to see why the lure for foreign investors is gauged in workforce aggregates. At between one-half to one-fifth the cost of a comparable U.S. game-studio employee, publishers and development houses can achieve literally two to five times the output per dollar spent on projects like obtaining cut code or creating assets for the latest MMO expansion. And it's not just up-front costs. Time, as they say, is also money, and U.S. studios can get Chinese artists for \$100 a week who deliver fast, high-quality work. "Most next-gen games for PC or console cost between \$8 and \$12 million, depending on the franchise and genre, over a 24- to 30-month period," says Atari creative director Paul Steed, referring to cost estimates others predict are spiraling toward \$20 million and higher. "If communication is clear and the target quality or style level met, Chinese outsourcing can save anywhere from six to 12 months." (A cost savings of between \$2.4 and \$4.8 million using the 30-month model.) Steed adds that, in the past, game developers have tended to cannibalize schedule savings by throwing in the kitchen sink. "The difference with outsourcing," he says, "is that it actually achieves an impossible amount of work in a very short amount of time." Like using a sledgehammer to pound a nail (for the cost of a hammer), Chinese outsourcing takes the financial sting out of delivering cutting-edge content as consumer expectations skyrocket.

Consumerism cuts both ways, of course, and when you're talking about a country with a population of more than 1.3 billion (roughly one-fifth of the world's people), publishers in or out of China have a vested interest in courting both domestic and international markets. The economic ramifications of this "niche effect" are potentially enormous. "China is a very high interest point for publishers, not just because of the components that they can outsource, but for her domestic market," says Dustin Clingman, a professor of game design at Full Sail, a technical college. "As it's always been in history, external countries are eager to peddle their wares to the billion customers whose earnings are growing. Investing into China today isn't just for cheap labor but for a long-term strategy of participating in the growing consumer base."

Of course, you can't overlook competing markets like Eastern Europe or India, but when it comes to growth potential, Viikarian CEO Xin Chung says China is unique. "Eastern Europe has a strong computer graphics and gaming culture, in addition to lots of great talent dumped out of the military/aerospace complex, but they have a much smaller population, so large-scale operations will always be an issue," says Chung, regarded by some as the "grandfather" of China art outsourcing for major game titles—his company, Viikarian, is one of the up-and-coming outsourcing leaders. "India has its strengths in a large English-speaking population and the longest, most developed IT outsourcing industry," he says. "But since they don't have access to the latest triple-A games, the question is, would you rather have a game artist that speaks English, or one that speaks videogames?"

**MIDDLESOURCING**

Like any other high-volume service, outsourcing has its middle-layer consultants, companies usually located at outsourcing enclaves, focused on assembling local talent and mediating the often complex language and culture barriers between outsource service-seekers and providers. What's more, China's government is helping. "With such a huge audience for outsourcing, the Chinese government has implemented a number of incubator programs to assist businesses in obtaining domestic and foreign development," says Clingman.

Just as it sounds, an "incubator" is essentially a third party designed to target specific market sectors—such as biotechnology, microelectronics, telecommunications, or software—offering strategic advice on issues ranging from management to financing. For example, Shanghai Wihub Hi-tech Business Incubator lists itself as a nonprofit service organization jointly founded in May 1999 by the Science and Technology Commission of Shanghai, the Xuhui District Government, and Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Among its functions it lists the following: "Science and technology innovation" and "Cultivation of hi-tech enterprises as well as entrepreneurs."

Located within the Wihub Jiao Tong University Science Park is Virtuos—a "middle-sourcing" firm operating from Shanghai since 2004 and employing roughly 110 people—which provides art and game-conversion services to major publishers like Electronic Arts, Microsoft, THQ, and Ubisoft. According to developer resource site Gamesutra.com, Virtuos is at the high end of the Chinese outsourcing boom in terms of quality and pricing, but still provides up to 50 percent in savings over Western development costs. Interestingly, part of Virtuos' job involves knowing when to outsource, but also when not to.

"Not everything can be outsourced to an offshore country successfully," says Virtuos CEO Gilles Langoureaux, a former member of Ubisoft

Shanghai. "The more uncertainty and iterations you have in a task, the less suitable it becomes for offshore outsourcing. So art production, programming, and quality assurance are easier to outsource to China than game design." Langoureaux stresses that, contrary to conventional wisdom, it's not solely about cost savings. "Most of our clients are looking for extra capacity and flexibility so that they can produce more with the resources they have." Those resource savings can lead to the creation of higher-skilled jobs in the U.S., though as game-design luminary Warren Spector puts it, "There's a danger in equating 'highly skilled personnel' with 'the ability to make cool games.'" In Spector's view, game designers are creating art (or, he says, if you're less generous, "entertainment"). "There's a world of difference between building a spreadsheet program and making a game," he argues. "You can learn the skills associated with the former, but you can't learn the talent necessary to do the latter. The thing to worry about—if there's cause to worry at all—is that there are so many people in China, odds are damn good there are dozens of folks as talented as the West's best game developers. If those folks learn the skills needed to exploit their talents, watch out."

Part of honing a talent involves hands-on immersion within its medium—in this case, endless hours spent playing games. According to China-based research firm Pacific Epoch, more



**'THERE'S A DANGER IN EQUATING 'HIGHLY SKILLED PERSONNEL' WITH 'THE ABILITY TO MAKE COOL GAMES.'**

—WARREN SPECTOR, FOUNDER  
JUNCTION POINT STUDIOS



than 80 million Chinese will be playing online games by 2010, and Chung says that China will soon have the largest overall videogame population in the world. Since many Chinese artists play games like *World of Warcraft*, he reasons, they're instilled with a keen sense of what global-quality games look and "feel" like. The result? Higher-quality returns from practically bred gamers at market-competitive labor prices. "China definitely has the culture," adds Virtuos's Langouneux. "There are more gamers in China than in any other country in the world, more qualified students in the arts or computer science that are also avid gamers than in any other country. So they get it; they want to work in this industry and put China high on the world gaming map."

#### GEOGRAPHIC DEMOGRAPHIC

At a recent Game Developers Conference summit, *OutsourceReport* president Jonathan Hales delivered a presentation entitled "Geography of Outsourcing." *OutsourceReport* owns and operates the Gaming Industry 411, a database of outsource providers, as well as *OutsourceReport* magazine—a free outsourcing resource for game developers. In his presentation, Hales made the point that labor costs are only one factor in determining a possible outsource development partner. The more salient considerations, he argued, would include development experience, the portfolio of the outsource provider, internal management, the communicative abilities of the outsource provider, and labor shortage, which he says is "a factor of management experience and capability."

"Labor shortage" should be redefined [as] "the shortage of experienced labor," says Hales, adding that while experienced-labor shortage is a growing concern in developing third-world

countries, it's specifically true in China. "It's not that they're not churning out game development graduates by the thousands—they are. And it's not like eventually they won't have more cumulative game development experience than any nation on earth—they will." The problem, he says, is really threefold: 1) A shortage of experienced developers and, more importantly, managers in China. 2) experienced managers and developers being wooed and pulled from company to company, and 3) the dramatic increase in development outsourcing interests in China increasing the volatility of the foregoing two factors.

One notable consequence of the rush to plumb foreign labor markets is a phenomenon called "outsourcing through the back door," a response on the part of local outsourcing companies to remain competitive in the global outsourcing market. Hales says local outsourcing companies are finding their own development partners overseas and utilizing the offshore labor market to remain competitive and gain scalability. "In essence, an outsource outsources," he says. "In doing so, they minimize the risk, exposure, and complex due diligence otherwise required of management dealing directly with the overseas providers."

Other challenges for outsourcers include security and legal protection. "Security has always been an issue when dealing with any external relationship and thus is not unique to China," says Hales. "On the other hand, many very large and conspicuous projects have been completed in China without any known security breach." Hales attributes this to increased management education and security personnel as well as extremely strict working procedures, which have included practices such as ripping all USB ports out of

working systems as well as stringent regulations on what was allowed into working environments.

Legal protection is tougher, and any company is at risk to a certain degree when they turn to outside development. "If a foreign company folds, the developers are going to be left holding the bag," he explains. "When dealing with the Orient, developers have always been cautious regarding their [intellectual property]. And who wouldn't be? China still has a very far way to go to come into alignment with international IP laws. If you want to be protected in China, get a good lawyer, one who is fluent in English and Chinese as well as Chinese law." Since Chinese law is changing daily, especially in hot areas like IP, Hales says it would be wise if your lawyer was associated with (or had connections to) a Chinese law firm. "You should also ensure that your Chinese contract and your English contract are the same verbatim. If litigation occurs, "an English contract is worthless," says Hales, as cases will be litigated in China by Chinese attorneys under China law—and very expensively. To certify full delivery of assets before payment, you should make sure good talent is working on your project and set up a good milestone payment system. "Finally," says Hales, "always, always have a contingency plan."

Whatever the risks, the global market is omnivorous and impressive. Yesterday's domestic market assurances are today's binders. For better or worse, game studios are outsourcing in droves. And while that hot new game you just picked up may not bear the familiar "Made in China" stamp, the chances are better than ever that its snow-capped mountains and lush fantasy forests were shaped by foreign hands, some 6,500 miles away. **f**



ONCE YOU KNOW, YOU NEWEGG.



No Payments for 6 months with your NEWEGG.COM PREFERRED ACCOUNT

Enjoy no payments for 6 Months and FREE retail packaging with the Newegg.com Preferred account! It's the easiest account to maintain for shipping at Newegg.com. Never have to enter an account number again during checkout! With zero head liability, members only benefits and low interest financing, it's the smart move.

See Newegg.com for more info. Restrictions apply. ©2005

2005 BizRate Circle of Excellence Gold Honoree.



AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 3600+  
Windows 2.0GHz  
2 x 512KB L2 Cache  
Socket AM2 Dual Core Processor

\$299.00



AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4600+  
Windows 2.4GHz  
2 x 512KB L2 Cache  
Socket AM2 Dual Core Processor

\$547.00



SAVING THE GAMERS OF THE WORLD



\$29.99

Arctic Cooling Freezer 7  
Pro CPU Cooler 108mm Fan  
Aluminum & Copper Heatsink



\$179.99

MSI 975X Platinum  
Socket T (LGA 775) Intel 975X  
ATX Intel Motherboard



\$97.99

ECS P665T-A (V1.0)  
Socket T (LGA 775) Intel P665  
Express ATX Intel Motherboard



\$149.99

Antec Nine Hundred ATX Case  
Black Computer Case With Side  
Panel Window 2 x USB 2.0



\$69.99

Rosewill RT550-135-BK  
550W 135mm Fan SLI Ready -  
ATX V2 2.0/EP12V Power Supply



\$99.99

Western Digital WD3200KS  
320GB 7200 RPM 18MB Cache  
SATA 3.0Gb/s Hard Drive - OEM



\$117.99

Diamond X1600PCIEX5658  
Radeon X1600PRO 256MB  
128-bit GDDR2 PCI Express x16



\$125.99

GeCube GC-RX1600PGA2-E3  
Radeon X1600PRO 512MB  
128-bit GDDR2 AGP 4X/16X

©2005 Newegg, Inc. All rights reserved. Price, and Availability: most good from 08/18/05 to 12/31/05 or while supplies last. Price, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Buyer and shipping charges, if applicable, are not shown. Newegg is not responsible for pricing of the products, services or offers. Items listed during this sale may not be available in all areas. ©2005 Newegg, Inc. All rights reserved. All prices are in U.S. dollars.

**BEST PLACE TO BUY**

ONLINE

SOFTWARE

PERIPHERALS

CORE COMPONENTS



... Enter Promo Code **CGW21106** at checkout for a **FREE T-SHIRT** with these items ...



**AMD Athlon™ 64 X2 4200+**  
Windsor 2.2GHz  
2 x 512KB L2 Cache  
Socket AM2 Dual Core Processor

**\$369.00**

**AMD Opteron™ 175**  
Denmark 2.2GHz  
2 x 1MB L2 Cache  
Socket 940 Dual Core Processor

**\$549.00**

**AMD Opteron™ 275 Italy**  
2.2GHz 2 x 1MB  
L2 Cache  
Socket 940 Processor

Dual core technology is like having two processors, and two working together is better and faster than one working alone. Do more in less time.

**\$599.00**

**FROM BOREDOM, 2 CORES AT A TIME.**

**\$449.00**  
*Free Shipping*

**Corsair TWIN2X2048-8400C4**  
2GB (2 x 1GB) 240-Pin DDR2  
SDRAM DDR2 800 (PC2 6400)

**\$399.00**

**Crucial 8L2KIT12864AA1805**  
Ballistix 2GB (2 x 1GB) 240-Pin  
DDR2 SDRAM DDR2 1060

**\$219.00**

**Hanns-G HW-1940FS**  
Gloss Black 19" Slim Widescreen  
LCD Monitor Built in Speakers

**\$269.00**

**ViewSonic VX322 19" LCD**  
2ms LCD Monitor 270 cd/m2  
650:1 0.294mm Pixel Pitch

**\$178.00**

**Creative Sound Blaster X-Fi**  
Platinum 7.1 Channels 24-bit  
96kHz PCI Interface Sound Card

**\$385.00**

**Creative Sound Blaster X-Fi**  
Elite 7.1 Channels 24-bit 96kHz  
PCI Interface Sound Card

**\$259.00**

**Western Digital My Book**  
Pro WDG1T5000N 500GB 7200  
RPM 16MB Cache External HD

**\$409.00**

**Seagate ST3750640AS**  
750GB 7200 RPM 16MB Cache  
SATA 3.0Gb/s Hard Drive - OEM

• 98% of orders ship within 1 business day • "A" rating on ANY merchant ranking site  
• 500,000 product reviews from customers • 50,000 customer testimonials

# BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

Fighting words

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft DEVELOPER: Gearbox GORE: First-Person Shooter RELEASE DATE: 2007

## PREVIEW

### HELL'S HIGHWAY PRODUCER AND

Gearbox president Randy Pitchford is sick of seeing historical shooters glibly teen-ratify violence and half-assed language. "War isn't for kids," he says. "What happened was as horrible as it was amazing... a monumental thing, and so many games trivialize the memory, turn it into a sensationalistic shooting gallery." Other period-piece FPSes, he argues, are fun—"Half-Life trussed up in WWII textures"—but ultimately hollow. "In fact," he holds, "for those of us who have dug into the history and understand what was at stake, they're sort of shameful." Fighting words for sure.

His company's commitment with *Brothers in Arms*: "To treat veterans and their families with

deference. To re-create real history and to portray places, events, and participants as faithfully as possible. As with movies such as *Saving Private Ryan* or [television miniseries] *Band of Brothers*, we're obligated to entertain," he says, "but we can do so with authenticity and respect." Some things even his games haven't gotten right. "Even so, we still can't completely capture the tension and trauma of being shot or having the buddy who's helped you through hell die in your hands," he says. "Here, no one is literally hurt, and as long as we're safely in our living rooms, we won't truly know what it was like."

Nonetheless, Pitchford wants us to imagine it as we might. "We hate the implausibility of magic cartons that patch you up," he says. "We hate recharging health meters. We want it the way it happened. In life, several senses work

together to tell you that you're at risk, in *Hell's Highway*, we create audiovisual cues, and you can tell the difference between a bullet breaking the sound barrier beside you versus one that's several yards away. You read it and react." He isn't, however, insisting that *Hell's Highway* is obligatorily difficult (where anything less is a disservice to vets' lived experiences). "We're interested in understanding and participating in these paratroopers' experiences, not punishing ourselves... even though it's essentially still 'get down or get dead.'"

### SCREAMING EAGLES

Set in Operation Market Garden, an Allied effort to secure a series of bridges over the Rhine and Waal rivers in German-occupied Holland, and based, in part, on veteran historian George ▶





#### WAR ENGINES ▶

This August, EA announced that its delayed *Medal of Honor Airborne* would employ Epic Games' Unreal Engine 3, the same graphics power plant driving *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway*. Gearbox president Randy Pitchford is sympathetic (sort of), if unsurprised: "My guess is that the executives there know that their franchise is at risk, and that *Hell's Highway* scares them. I showed some EA guys the game at [the Electronic Entertainment Expo], and I could see it on their faces. They know they have to nail it. It's not fair for the development studio [that] had to deal with EA's decision to click with RenderWare, [which it owns]. They're eating the cost, throwing out their last 60 or so man-years of work, and playing catch-up, whereas Gearbox is one of the earliest licensees of UE3 and is very close with Epic. It's tough—management sets the targets, and then the talent there has to deal with those decisions. We're an independent developer, so we can shield ourselves from such difficulties."

Koskimaki's (see "Engaging History," below) book of the same name, *Hell's Highway* chronicles the 101st Airborne's campaign actions. At one point—a scant Pitchford finds especially moving—Germans begin bombing the Dutch city of Eindhoven. "So many civilians are caught up in the mess, and Sgt. Hartsock, who has a wife back home with a daughter he's never met, is seriously affected by the implications. He decides to disobey orders and goes through the town, house-to-house, hoping to help its women and children."

Wehrmacht soldiers arrive, however, and attempt to retake the town and seize Highway 69, the Allies' route for reinforcing their paratroopers. "So," says Pitchford, "as Sgt. Baker, you're in a bind. Hartsock is acting outside the immediate problem, and it comes down to deciding between the success of the mission and the lives of fellow soldiers, between winning the battle and preserving the people you're fighting for." *Hell's Highway's* concern with civilians caught in combat is a first among historical FPSes, although we wonder how naturally it will integrate narrative with interaction.

The game's ever-evolving, "Four F"-grounded gameplay (a support squad finds and fixes the enemy with fire, while an assault element flanks and finishes him) isn't as worrying. Effected in

Road to Hell 3D and perfected in sequel *Earned in Blood*, it rewrites FPS rules with Patton's "grab 'em by the nose and kick 'em in the ass" maneuver, and now tweaks them in *Hell's Highway* with new mortar, bazooka, and machine-gun crews.

"Stone walls block bullets, so they're an excellent place for the enemy to set up a base of fire," says Pitchford. "Suppress them all you want, but you won't pierce the stone. This is where an up-and-over-and-onto-their-heads mortar crew comes in handy."

According to Pitchford, "Tanks are virtually impervious to bullets, and even mortars aren't always able to take them out. You need to pierce the tank's armor and explode something inside of it, and that's what bazookas are for. They're great against armor, big artillery pieces, clearing out rooms by shooting through windows—all kinds of applications. But a bazooka team is vulnerable. It has to expose itself in order to fire and afterward everyone knows where it's at."

"And a machine-gun team, of course, carries the Browning .30. The thing's a suppression blower—set it up to make sure that no one approaches from a specific angle."

It's also a way to chip, crumble, and cut whatever soft cover an enemy happens to be hiding behind. Not, in other words, a "rated T for Teen" tool. *Shawn Elliott*



➤ "AS LONG AS WE'RE SAFELY IN OUR LIVING ROOMS, WE WON'T TRULY KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE." —RANDY PITCHFORD, PRESIDENT, GEARBOX



**ENGAGING HISTORY**

How does George Koskimaki—*Hell's Highway's* consultant and WWII veteran who served in the 101st Airborne Division, U.S. Army, during the D-Day operation, Operation Market Garden, and the Battle of the Bulge—respond to *Brothers in Arms*? Specifically, is he concerned that the game might trivialize or glorify lived experience, perhaps even more so than a movie might? "The story of WWII, and why we had to fight, is important to retell," he responds. "The idea that these guys got people excited about experiencing this in their games makes me realize what a powerful new communication medium games can be—provided they're done well. From what I have seen, *Hell's Highway* is a tribute to why we served and why we fought."

Koskimaki, we should also note, isn't worried that videogames are the one place where people engage WWII history; rather, he sees the medium as simply one of several ways in which smart folks supplement reading and other research.



**MULTIPLAYER MATTERS**

Pitchford says he's "super excited" to show off *Hell's Highway's* off- and online multiplayer modes—only not today. "We've shown off the single-player stuff a bit, so that talk isn't cheap. But because we haven't demonstrated multiplayer yet, I'd rather not reveal details until the evidence backs it up. I will say that you need to forget everything we've ever done with *Brothers in Arms* multiplayer or not until the past. We're moving in an entirely different direction, and it's more exciting than anything we've done to date."

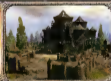


FORGOTTEN REALMS™

# NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2



EVERYTHING YOU DO HAS A MEANING



Available Fall 2006  
[www.nwn2.com](http://www.nwn2.com)



OBSIDIAN



© 2006 Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Atari and the Atari logo are trademarks owned by Atari Interactive, Inc. Neverwinter Nights, Forgotten Realms and the Forgotten Realms logo, Dungeons and Dragons, D&D and the Dungeons and Dragons logo, and Wizards of the Coast and it's logo are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, Inc. in the U.S.A. and/or other jurisdictions, and are used with permission. HASBRO and its logo are trademarks of Hasbro, Inc. and are used with permission. The ESRB rating icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



GREEN, JEFF

COVER

# GLADSTONED

Confessions of a mail thief

## TRUE STORY

I LOVE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD. Always have. These aren't the ramblings of some dude drunk on a Jonestown-sized helping of corporate Kool-Aid. Since the tender age of 12, when I picked up my first issue, I became a fanboy—and a hopeless nerd. Thanks for that, CGW!

Over the years, I scratched my head over the random Nietzsche and Kierkegaard references (how many 12-year-olds do you know who ponder staring into the abyss?), I relied on Scoop's walkthrough to help me beat *The Magic Circle*...and even though I'm half-Conuck, I laughed at the now-infamous "Canadian Corner" column in the Letters section. And now, in that fine tradition, I have a story to share that I was saving for a special occasion. Since this is the last issue of CGW (before we change to the sexy *Games for Windows: The Official Magazine* moniker), it's now or never. Confession time.

I stole then-associate editor Jeff Green's mail. This probably requires a little more explanation.

Years back, I landed a sweet job at the same company that published CGW; I worked just one

floor below the editors. Every day, I'd show up at the office and contemplate hitting the wrong button in the elevator. I'm a grown man; I've profiled high-tech CEOs and interviewed A-list celebrities. Yet I felt intimidated by a bunch of teen-children in funky T-shirts who played games for a living. I was just a like-minded nerd who happened to be a fan of Jeff's Greenspeak column.

So what does a neurotic, self-effacing dork from New York do when he wants to approach someone whose work he admires? He swings by the 14th floor, goes to the mailroom, and swipes an innocuous package destined for Jeff's desk.

Later that day, my delivery run began... and the 14th floor sounded like a war zone. First-time CGW tech editor Dave Salviator was getting his eye handed to him in a *Half-Life* deathmatch; I could hear him screaming curses about some damned camper on the map, hammering his keyboard with both hands and shouting as if someone had just shoved his grandma down a well. Up ahead—Jeff's cube. Jeff was that camper.

The match ended...and I saw my chance. What would I say? It had to be clever. Should I make fun of Jeff for taking cheap shots at Salviator? I

hemmed and hawed for a second and settled on, "Lumm...got your mail this morning by mistake and just wanted to make sure that you got it."

"Thanks, man. Really appreciate that," he said, nicely enough. "No problem," I answered. "See you around." And then I took the elevator back to my floor. Why couldn't I come up with anything better? In that moment, I realized I was still in awe of what CGW does for a living—and that I wanted a job there.

Years later, and here I am, working with the people I respect most in the game industry—but all the mystery and wonder is gone. I've stepped behind the Wizard of Oz's curtain and found out that Old Man Green is kind of like me (God help him); he doesn't drink as much, but he's a goofball and a gamer—and that's gotta count for something.

Yeah, it sucks that the name of the magazine has to change. But the way I see it, I'm here for the end of the first chapter of CGW and the beginning of the second. I'm OK with that, I've made my peace. But if I've learned one thing that I can pass along to you readers, it's this: If you want a job in the gaming industry, steal somebody's mail. Just not mine. /Darren Gladstone

## THE LAST-MINUTE CONFESSION OF AN OLD-SCHOOL PC GAMING DORK AND LONGTIME CGW FANBOY.



**Darren Gladstone**  
How much of an old-school nerd is CGW senior editor Darren Gladstone? He remembers his first stroll down Condo-Dutra Avenue. Do you?

## THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY NOVEMBER 2006



**THE GOOD**  
**PSYCHONAUTS LIVES:** Despite massively positive critical reception, genius designer Tim Schafer's most recent game, *Psychonauts*, sold about as well as *Eloha* in a box. Fortunately for the few intelligent gamers out there who actually value quality over name recognition, *Psychonauts* is Steam-bound. Those who missed this masterpiece the first time around will have a second chance to enjoy it in all its glory. This means you!



**THE BAD**  
**DESIGNERS FLEE DUKE**  
Key graphical designers left Duke Nukem Forever developer 3D Realms, causing many to wonder what this means for the infamous near-reporeware. 3D Realms president George Broussard says it's just business as usual, and that Duke's progress is unaffected: "Physics and animation systems are virtually finished and shippable. It's simply maintenance and polish from here on out." We'll believe it when we see it.



**THE UGLY**  
**MMO ADS**  
Shiny founder Owen Perry has a crazy idea for in-game advertising. His upcoming AOLtime-published MMO *2Moons* gives players the ability to generate more experience if they keep an ad banner open at the bottom of the game's interface. What's more, Perry says the *2Moons* is set up so that advertisers can pay for your in-game items. "Foul beast! Taste the wrath of my +5 Sword of Vanquishing...SPONSORED BY DORITOS!"

**GAMER ULTRA SLI ELITE**

**\$ 899**



- NVIDIA® nForce™ 770 SLI Chipset MB with Dual 16X PCI Express
- GENUINE Windows™ XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- Corsair 128MB DDR2 800 Dual Channel Memory
- OCZ 700MB/s SATA-II 3.0Gb/s RMB Cache Hard Drive
- CD NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7800 GT 256MB DDR3, Over 60% Performance Gain Over a Single Video Card Solution
- LG 16X DVD±RW Drive & 16X DVD-ROM
- NVIDIA® nForce™ S 71 3-D Sound Card

- BEHRM Subwoofer System
- Logitech® G15 Keyboard
- Logitech® Optical Wheel Mouse
- Tarte X-Cable Case, \$29.95 with Set Through Windows
- CoolerMaster Aquagate Mini Liquid Cooling System
- 3 Cool Gaming Colors to Choose From
- Free 802.11G Wireless PCI Network Adapter
- 3 Year Limited Warranty
- Lifetime Toll Free 24/7 Techsupport
- Add 12" Widescreen LCD \$299.95 (Screen Only)

AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 5000+ Processor	\$ 1099
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 4600+ Processor	\$ 1045
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 4200+ Processor	\$ 989
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 3800+ Processor	\$ 939
AMD Athlon™ D4 3600+ Processor	\$ 915
AMD Athlon™ D4 3500+ Processor	\$ 899

**GAMER ULTRA SLI PRO**

**\$ 1615**



- NVIDIA® nForce™ 770 SLI Chipset MB with Dual 16X PCI Express
- GENUINE Windows™ XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- Corsair 256MB DDR2 800 Dual Channel Memory
- OCZ 700MB/s SATA-II 3.0Gb/s RMB Cache Hard Drive
- CD NVIDIA® GeForce™ 7800 GT 256MB DDR3, 32% Performance Gain Over a Single Video Card Solution
- LG 16X DVD±RW Drive & 16X DVD-ROM
- NVIDIA® nForce™ S 71 3-D Sound Card

- Creative Centurion Inspire F7800 7.1 Surround Sound System
- Logitech® Office K34 Keyboard
- Microsoft® Optical Intelli Explorer Mouse
- Acas Vario 3393 Maxra Cooling Case with 500Watt Power Supply
- CoolerMaster Aquagate Mini Liquid Cooling System
- Free 802.11G Wireless PCI Network Adapter
- 3 Year Limited Warranty
- Lifetime Toll Free 24/7 Techsupport
- Add 12" Widescreen LCD \$299.95 (Screen Only)

AMD Athlon™ D4 FX-60 Processor	\$ 2349
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 5000+ Processor	\$ 1765
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 4600+ Processor	\$ 1699
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 4200+ Processor	\$ 1645
AMD Athlon™ D4 X2 3600+ Processor	\$ 1615

**GAMER XPLOER-64 9550**

**\$ 1025**



- AMD Turion™ D4 X2 Mobile Technology
- AMD PowerPlay Technology
- System Protection Technology
- Enhanced Virus Protection Technology
- GENUINE Windows™ XP Media Center Edition 2005 with SP 2
- 256MB DDR2 800MHz Memory
- 160GB Ultra ATA100 Hard Drive
- Mobile ATI™ X1600 Pro 256MB Video Card
- 15.5" WQXGA Wide-Screen TFT Display
- 1560x800 Pixels

- RK DVD±RW Drive
- 15/100 Network Card & 56K V.92 Modem
- Wireless 802.11G (802.11) Networking
- 3-in-1 Built-in Media Reader
- 1 PCMCIA Type II Slot
- 1 FireWire (IEEE 1394) & 4 USB 2.0 Ports
- 3 Custom Colors to Choose From
- Weight Only 5.35 lbs., Free Carrying Case
- 3 Year Limited Warranty
- Lifetime Toll Free 24/7 Techsupport

AMD Turion™ D4 X2 Mobile Technology TL-64	\$ 1529
AMD Turion™ D4 X2 Mobile Technology TL-55	\$ 1435
AMD Turion™ D4 X2 Mobile Technology TL-55	\$ 1385
AMD Turion™ D4 X2 Mobile Technology TL-52	\$ 1355
AMD Turion™ D4 X2 Mobile Technology TL-5D	\$ 1325

- Run all your gadgets quickly, seamlessly and simultaneously.
- Discover the true potential of your PC. Break the speed limit.
- Smart dual-core performance, made for mobility.
- Cool 'n' Quiet technology means whisper quiet operation and significantly reduced power consumption.

**AMD** Smarter Choice



**TOLL FREE 800. 707. 0393 or WWW.CYBERPOWERPC.COM**

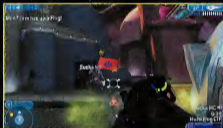
© 2005 CyberPower PC, Inc. AMD, Athlon™ and Turion™ are trademarks of AMD. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. CyberPower is not responsible for any typographical or graphical errors. Copyright © 2005 CyberPower. All rights reserved.

# HALO 2 VISTA

Still synonymous with console shooting



▲ According to producer Jo Clowes, "Cheating is a big concern for us, especially in online play. We will be using the Live Anywhere services to help us bring the technologies available on Xbox Live to the PC. The Live Anywhere team has also been hard at work to bring extra PC-specific security measures to the service. That said, there will always be those that try to work around these measures, and...it will likely never be possible to 100-percent eliminate any and all forms of cheating."



▲ "Halo 2 Vista is a DirectX 6 title, but it will run on DX10 systems as our users start to adopt them," Clowes says. "On a suitable PC, [it] offers significantly enhanced visuals compared to the Xbox version." Namely, higher resolution [1920x1200].

►PUBLISHER: Microsoft Game Studios DEVELOPER: Bungie Studios GENRE: First-Person Shooter PLATFORMS: Xbox 360

## PREVIEW

► HALO 27 MOON JUMPING AND LEADED movement. Alien structures made to funnel Spartan firefights—walkways and walls, never more plausibly inhabited than mazes. Call it Earth or a circular space station for narrative purpose and color it purple, green, gunmetal. Uh huh. Is it that we don't dare admit an FPS on any other platform matches those on our muscle machines, or is it more matter-of-fact: Xbox's big fish is itty-bitty in PC's bigger pond?

Bungie Studios community lead Brian Jarrard thinks big is big, no ifs, ands, or buts. *Team Fortress 2*, *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*, *Crysis*, *UT 2007*? "All good and unique in their own right," he says, "although Halo 2 has practically taken over tournament play—certainly as far as consoles are concerned. What we hope is that the Vista version can attract more of those high-ossiber tournament players who've thus far avoided the console version. Also, the ability to craft custom maps makes everything that much sweeter."

What will grab us, if it grabs us, is a map-for-map port rejiggered for mouse input without veering much from the original version's joyed roots. "The Xbox 360 controller versus keyboard-and-mouse are well balanced at the moment, but we're working to get the right

"tool" for existing Xbox users," says producer Jo Clowes. "Support for the Xbox 360 pad allows our Xbox players to easily transition between Xbox and PC without needing to learn a new controller layout."

Another enticement, according to Jarrard, is Live Anywhere, Microsoft's online network initiative to connect Xbox, PC, and mobile gamers' digital identities in an always-on world. "With it," he says, "we can create a seamless community between the [PC and Xbox] worlds, giving gamers a shared fence: [st] [between] both

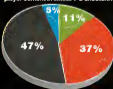
platforms and the ability to send and receive messages on either 360 or a Vista machine." But Clowes clarifies, "We are not, however, offering cross-platform play." So, while we can confirm that poster children *BestBuilder* and *VelocityGirl* are indeed playing *Project Gotham*, we can't, you know, challenge them to a game. However, popular Xbox Live Achievements—virtual merit certificates awarded for completing missions, meeting various performance criteria in multi-player matches, and so on—are available for public viewing. /Shawn Elliott

## CGW POLL: CANNON-MEASURING CONTEST

Q: How does Halo 2 for Xbox's single-player campaign compare to those of similar PC shooters?



Q: How does Halo 2 for Xbox's multi-player component compare to multi-player content in similar PC shooters?



Source: PGW poll on Oct/Nov 2006. Based on 10,000+ responses.



HEROES PLAY ON  
**IBUYPOWER**



Order Toll Free 888. 462. 3899

**WWW.IBUYPOWER.COM/HERO**



**HERO**

# MEDIEVAL II

The alchemy of chaos



PUBLISHED BY DEVELOPER: The Creative Assembly GENRE: Strategy RELEASE DATE: November 2006

## PREVIEW

WE PAINT PC STRATEGY GAMES IN two broad strokes: Do you take it turn-based, or do you like yours real-time? But mixing TB with RT can be a dangerous alchemy. A Civilization echoes to a different set of gaming laws than *Rise of Nations*; combine the two, and the potential for frazzled brains (or exorcavagantly long campaigns) increases exponentially.

"We've been very aware right from the start about the need to avoid too much micromanagement," says Bob Smith, project director of The Creative Assembly's method-mixing *Medieval II: Total War*. "That's been true for all the games in the *Total War* series. The design for the new agents is an example of this awareness. They've been designed to be useful without you having to constantly take care of them—the merchant, for example, is simply used to locate a resource, and once it's discovered, he can remain feeding income back to the player's cities without any additional micromanagement. The numbers of agent characters you can train are limited so that moving them around is never a chore."

For those unfamiliar with *Total War*'s modus operandi, it goes something like this: Administer towns, build armies, and engage in diplomatic toaks in a turn-based map not too far-flung from Civilization. Run an army into an opposing force (or click them onto an enemy city or castle), and

you have the option to settle things in a real-time battle of dozens of units, each comprised of dozens of individual soldiers. The scale's the thing, and the devil is in *Medieval II*'s details: Individual arrows fly through the air from battalions of archers (a touch you only notice when you zoom in for a scotist-eye view); individual characters have their own details—clothes, hair, faces—to prevent combat from looking like a clerk-age Clone Wars; and battlefields wind up littered with hundreds of bodies. *Total War*'s aspiration is total chaos, and when battalions clash and their soldiers mingle, the illusion works—even though you can spot soldiers sweating at invisible demons instead of the mounted chargers in front of them when you zoom in close enough.

As for tactics, siege weapons are key—ladders for infantry to scale keep walls, battering rams to knock down citadel doors. Knowing your renks' strengths and weaknesses is vital (no lessing your whole army and just clicking on the enemy hoping your numbers beat theirs), and so is understanding the weather. "Rain reduces the power of missile troops," says Smith, "hot sun makes [soldiers] tired, and of course fog makes it hard to see the enemy." Choke points—both when entering the city and once inside its maze of streets and alleys—become a sort of third force to fight against, and it's here that pathfinding A.I. becomes paramount—and it's here where *Medieval II* could potentially falter. Nothing brings a Crusade to a halt

faster than having your holy warriors head to the stables when they were supposed to run for the church; in the build we played, units in town- and castle-based skirmishes would often take inexplicable routes or simply stand motionless when we administered orders. The Creative Assembly warns that the battlefield A.I. is a work in progress; we warn that it's the most important work they've left to finish. And if they don't? Just click the autosolve button to skip the whole thing. "Many *Total War* fans actually play the entire campaign mzp autosolving battles along the way," says Smith. "That's their choice of method of play, and that's great." /Sean Malloy

## TOTAL DIPLOMACY

In most turn-based strategy games, diplomacy is usually synonymous with balancing a list of tradeable items until Gandhi stops insulting your mother. *Medieval II* adds a more human touch. "We wanted to offer the player a great deal more feedback," says Smith. "Although it sounds a small thing, being able to hear the tone and intonation of another faction's response to your offers makes a lot of difference—it gives the A.I. a more human face, adds flavor, and provides more information...A.I. factions have a far better memory of what's gone before, so bully it or make insulting offers, and it'll be far harder to make a deal in future negotiations."

# TOTAL WAR

## THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Here are just a few of the many pieces that make up Medieval II's turn-based puzzle.

**AUTOMANAGEMENT ICON:** When there isn't an officer stationed in a town or castle, you can't manage its projects manually.

**PRIEST:** Religion breeds order and appeases the pope, a priest in town converts the populace.

**ARMY:** Collection of units that can confront other armies and lay siege to towns and castles.

**TOWNS:** Serve as the social and economic base of your kingdom; harder to defend than castles.

**REBELS:** Capture, sack, or raze rebel outposts to increase your coffers or kingdom size.

**CASTLE:** Contains war-related units and structures; more easily defensible than towns.

**RESOURCES:** Building your resources helps increase your trade revenue. Building roads and ports helps increase your trade, too.

**PRINCESS:** Woo other leaders' officers into your fold, but be careful your princess doesn't defect instead.



One thing project director Bob Smith never wants to see again: "A cheesy story. Strategy games should be about making your own story."

Every Civ-style campaign needs carrots—new Wonders to strive for or a Space Age to race toward. Medieval II's in the mad scramble to claim the New World, a costly endeavor that could have huge payoffs if all goes according to plan.

# THE HOT SHEET

TEN THINGS THAT ROCK CGW'S WORLD

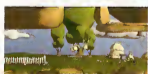
**1 WTF GAME OF THE MONTH**  
While you'd think that this award would go to the aptly named PSP Warzone clone *Work Time Fun* (not it?), the award goes to Cupcom's brawler *God Hand*. In it, you button-mash to spank women and fight toy fellas dressed as Native Americans.

**2 WONDER SHOWZEN** ◀  
It has puppets, children, and life lessons—but *Wonder Showzen* is no kids' show. The show even warns up front: "If you allow a child to view this, you are a bad parent."

**3 VAMPIRES SUCK** ◀  
Arne Riis screwed it up for everyone. She turned scary vampires into whiny Eurotrash. Well, game-industry hack William Mirra is trying to reinvent the vampire with the comic series *Impaler*. After 300 years, Vlad travels to NYC—and he isn't happy.

**4 HOLY HAND GRENADE** ◀  
Killer rabbits running amok? Quick, consult the *Book of Armaments* (or fetch ye a Web browser and visit [thinkgeek.com](http://thinkgeek.com)) before thou lobbest the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch toward thy foe!

**5 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA**  
If you haven't seen the Sci-Fi Channel's new take on the classic space opera, we're officially revoking your need card. Seriously, hand it over right now. Or just go out and grab the newest box set.



**6 CLONING CLYDE** ◀  
The whole idea of shareware isn't lost on us PC gamers. Hell, we invented it. So will someone please explain how this awesome (and damn funny) platforming game is only available over Xbox Live Arcade?



**7 I, SPY** ◀  
Wild Planet sent us this crazy "stealth" surveillance toy—a remote-control car with a black-and-white camera on top. It's just a little hard to be inconspicuous when this big plastic thing roars up to your feet and only has a 15-foot transmission radius.

**8 MMMM, BRAAAAAAINS**  
Fact or fiction? *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War* by Max Brooks is a series of short pieces, interviews, and personal accounts "as told to the author" chronicling the lives of survivors of the zombie apocalypse.



**9 WEAR'S THE CODE?** ◀  
It's not just a sweat clothing line—edoc laundry is a series of wearable puzzles that tie together a fictitious band called Poor Richard, a website, and a murder mystery. The best part: The gear is so chic that nobody will even realize how much of a nerd you truly are.



**10 CENSORED SUNGLASSES** ◀  
When you're popular, you need to hide your identity from those crowds of adoring fans. Before they have a chance to record some embarrassing home videos, buy these stupidly idiotic \$10 black bar shades from [stupididiot.com](http://stupididiot.com).

## PIPELINE

Save some money for these upcoming games!

OCTOBER 2008	PUBLISHER
Age of Empires II: The WarChiefs	Microsoft
ArmaLand	Goodware
Batling 2102	Electronic Arts
Dark Messiah of Might & Magic	Ubisoft
Desperate Housewives	Buena Vista Games
F.E.A.R. Extraction Point	Vivendi Games
FIFA 07 Soccer	Electronic Arts
Genesis Rising: The Universal Gracids	Quartz/October
Guid Wars Nightfall	NCsoft
Microsoft Flight Simulator X	Microsoft
Evolution: The Last Ritual	DreamCatcher
Neverwinter Nights 2	Atari
Pearce Command: Operation Winter Storm	To Syntax
Phantasy Star Universe	Sega
Renegade Dogs	Eden Interactive
Red Meats Redmeat	2K Games
The Sims 2: Pets	Electronic Arts
Star Wars Empire at War: Forces of Corruption	LucasArts
Storm of War: Battle of Britain	Ubisoft
Stronghold Legends	2K Games
Survivor: The World Is Yours	Vivendi Games
Splinter Cell Double Agent	Ubisoft
Test Drive Unlimited	Atari
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	Electronic Arts
UFO: Extraterrestrials	To Syntax
Waltzwater #0.000	THQ
Deus of War—Dark Crusade	
Zoo Tycoon 2: Marine Mania	Microsoft
<b>NOVEMBER 2008</b>	
Agatha Christie: Murder on the Orient Express	Green/October
Observer's Web	Sega
Oregon	Vivendi Games
EverQuest II: Saviors of Pyrower	SOE
Left Behind: Eternal Forces	Left Behind Games
The Lord of the Rings: The Battle for Middle-earth II—The Rise of the Witch-King	Electronic Arts
Medieval II: Total War	Sega
War Front: Turning Point	CDV Software
<b>WINTER 2008-2009</b>	
Darps 2	Apple/Apple
Wagner's Song of Heroes	SOE
World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade	Blizzard



# Hitchcock. Spielberg. Tarantino. Guy with an Xbox.®



Explore the evolution of animation and filmmaking.

2006 *Machinima Festival*

Animated filmmaking, videogame style.

## The 2006 Machinima Festival

Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2006

### Museum of the Moving Image

35 Ave at 35 Street • Astoria, New York, USA

Hours: 11am-6:30pm Admission: \$10/day, \$15 for both days

For Machinima and festival information, visit: [festival.machinima.org](http://festival.machinima.org)

For Museum information, visit: [www.movingimage.us](http://www.movingimage.us)



C:\cgw>25years.exe\_

# 25 YEARS

OF COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

A lot can happen in 268 issues

## END RUN

WELL, KIDS, IT WAS A GOOD RUN. IT WAS A LONG ONE, TOO. WITH THIS ISSUE, WE celebrate the 25-year anniversary of Computer Gaming World magazine—and we also get ready for The Big Switch. Next month marks our new beginning as Games for Windows: The Official Magazine. And while we're excited about the change, we wanted to pause here in this final issue of CGW to take one last look back at the evolution of the mezeine—and of the PC-gaming industry itself—over the past two and a half decades.

Joining us in this look back are all four editors-in-chief who ran the magazine over the past 25 years—Russell Sipe (founder of CGW and editor-in-chief from 1981–1992), Johnny Wilson (1992–1999), George Jones (1999–2002), and Jeff Green (2002–present)—each offering his own perspective on the era he covered. We've also picked out a few notable covers from our 268-issue run to punctuate computer gaming's long and storied history. So join us as we take a look back one last time. And no sniffing there, soldier! We'll be back next month. Just a bit...different looking. >

by the (past and present)  
editors of Computer Gaming World

IN THE BEGINNING...

ISSUE 3.1, Jan-Feb 1982 *EDGE* Zork review, *Ultima* review

When the first issue of *CGW* hit stands, Ronald Reagan was a year into his presidency, the Cold War would soon start cooling off, and PC games were still abstraction—numbers, letters, and graphics that required players to be, um, especially imaginative. And those computers were still solely the domain of college professors and best-programmers (gamebooks, players mostly involved the sorts of challenges one associates with the Intellectual elite: strategy war games, simulations, text adventures (Zork), and ASCII dungeon crawls (Rogue), *Lunar Pac-Man* in the breaks and the “action” to the ColorVision side.



Mailbox  
the leaflet  
HOME TO ZORK!

a game of adventure  
turning in the great  
mortal. No  
one!

ELECTRONIC GOTHIC

ISSUE 3.2, October 1983 *EDGE* Archer review, *Delta Squadron* review

Game graphics of the 1980s did not good cover images make—and so the *CGW* of the era oft decorated its front with bizarre American Gothic parades. Hiding behind this voluptuous space monster and her now human rural husband-clone: an interview with fledgling game maker Trip Hawkins in which we see his company (Electronic Arts) “is attempting to jump into the forefront of the microcomputer software field as an immediate success, much as the goddess Minerva left [sic] fruit grown from the brain of her father Zeus.” Truer words have never been spoken.



GOLDEN YEARS

ISSUE 4.3, June 1984 *EDGE* Quester, *MIG Alley* Ave. column on “telegaming”

Ask any ancient computer gamer to name their favorite games from the 1980s, and chances are that a great majority will answer *Steven Coste of Gold*, an awesome cross-genre strategy/adventure/RPG by legendary game designer Don (Peter Dink) Bunten, that put you in the role of a 16th-century Spanish explorer setting sail for the New World. Why was it so great? Its sheer addictive nature: It was an easily, perfectly executed example of open-ended gameplay—no set goals, no scripted sequences, an entirely different experience every time you played. Two decades later, many designers still have trouble achieving that.



# 1981-1990

THE MOTHER OF INVENTION by Russell Sipe



Find a need and fill it. Read any book on starting a business, and you'll find words to that effect as a basic guideline to building a successful business. It's the principle that led to and sustained Computer Gaming World's success over the past 25 years. What follows draws heavily from what I wrote back in August 1988 on the occasion of our 50th issue.

In the spring of 1981, I was driving down the Orange Freeway near Anaheim Stadium in Orange County thinking about some problems I had encountered while playing SSI's *Computer Air Combat* game. Specifically, I was bothered by the way the game handled certain aspects of the ME-109 range and related factors. It was a very game-nerdy moment.

I will never forget what happened next—it's as clear in my mind now as it was then. While passing Anaheim Stadium on the left, I thought to myself, "I sure would like to read up on this game." However, it occurred to me that no one was writing about computer games in any detailed fashion, "Someone should start a maga-

zine on computer games," I thought to myself.

Then a little voice spoke to me: "Why don't you do it?" Rather than bothering myself with the implications of having a voice speak to me out of the blue, I instead answered the voice. "I have no experience in publishing," I said. "So what? You can learn!" replied the voice. I considered debating the voice in my head, but before I could get another word in, I recalled that I had read somewhere that the secret of a successful business is to find a need and fill it. If I personally felt the need for a computer game magazine, surely there were others that felt it as well. By the time I reached home, I was getting excited. Explaining the little voice in my head to family and friends, I raised \$6,000 and put together the first issue of *CGW*, which was slated for a November 1981 release.

By August, we found out that we would have some competition. *Electronic Games* (later renamed *Computer Entertainment*) from Reese Publishing out of New York and *Solitaire* (later renamed *St. Game*) out of North Hollywood were also scheduled

for winter 1981 debuts. "Great!" I thought to myself, "I haven't even printed an issue yet, and I already have big-time competition!"

All three magazines debuted within days of each other, and the computer-game-magazine industry was born.

By 1983, the arcade game fad was in high swing, and *CGW* had something on the order of 18 competing titles on the newsstand. The years 1983 and 1984 were trying times for us. We had to compete with higher-circulation magazines for advertising dollars and newsstand space. Nevertheless, our conservative business approach helped us weather the storm. Then came the videogame-game crash of 1984. It took down the majority of the computer-game magazines with it. By the winter of 1984, only a few such magazines remained—and by summer 1985, *CGW* was the only four-color computer game magazine left.

The manufacturers who survived the crash and prospered during that time were those companies that, for the most part, targeted an older age group (especially those consumers who were interested in strategy and adventure games



4 The 1990s were marked by the rise of Ronald Reagan and the fall of the Berlin Wall. PC games by heavy war simulations.

#### RISE OF THE BERNIN GAMING

ISSUE 29, March 1989. **NOOD** How common on the Amiga.com. Along for it in the weeks Star Trek The Next Generation. Computer gaming was still largely the domain of the Apple II, Atari, and Commodore 64—though games for the IBM PC were now popping up as well. The mid-1990s also saw the beginning of the designer-as-superstar phenomenon, with Richard "Lord British" Garriott as the arch, um, Brad Pitt, if you will. This issue told him at "the ripe old age of 24," as he put it, working on Ultima-IV, still largely programming it all himself, but amazed to see his staff at Origin Systems now up to 20 whole employees.

#### COMPUTER WARGAMING WOULD

ISSUE 37, May 1987. **NOOD** Quotas. Ardi. sequel EA's success, wargaming's future: the Amiga or the Atari ST?

Sometimes it feels like half the games out right now here in 2008 are set in World War II. Funny enough, it felt that way 10 years ago, too. Thus an issue (all 56 pages of it) almost entirely devoted to the topic. Back then, it wasn't first-person shooters or real-time strategy games—it was hexagonal turn-based strategy games, the direct descendants of the board games we used to play before these new-fangled computer games around. The game is not as popular today, but we still love it, and even have a column by Bruce Dargatzis devoted to

#### POINT-INTERACTIVE CLICKTIVITY

ISSUE 41, July 1990. **NOOD** Links of the Week. Saw "Is VGA Worth It?" In the late 1980s, "clickmats" had a much more limited definition than it does today—a couple of screens, a few lines of dialogue printed across your screen, and you qualified. Highest among the classic/retro kinds of your graphic adventures like the King's Quest series and Monkey Island. LucasArts ushered in the Golden Age with Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade and set the stage for adventure-game dominance in the early 1990s—the era of Monkey Island, Sam & Max, Myst, and more. Game designers mark 1990's Grim Fandango as the graphic adventure's time of death—but hey, at least it went out in style.

as opposed to arcade action games). Fortunately for CGW, our readership has always been dominated by the adult strategy/adventure gamer, an audience that was not only interested in the games themselves, but also in the personalities that designed the games and the companies that manufactured them. CGW catered to this readership.

CGW began life as a bimonthly magazine. Reader demand caused us to go to a nine-issue-per-year schedule with the January/February 1986 issue. In 1988, CGW went monthly. As with all growing industries, there is change. The early 1990s were a time when large magazine publishers were eyeing the growing computer game field and the publications serving it. The inevitable market forces led to CGW's acquisition by Ziff Davis Publishing. While a lot of our past

readers have graciously let us know that they preferred the CGW of old, the move to sell CGW to Ziff Davis was the right decision for more reasons than can be discussed in the scope of this story.

So now here we are, some 25 years later. My "baby" hasn't been under my stewardship for more than a dozen years now. But even though she was bound to another, she has always been "my baby." And even though my byline as founder has shrunk to 0.5-point type, I still proudly point her out to friends on the newstand.

But now my baby is moving on and transforming into something else. Computer Gaming World, my child, you will always have a place in my heart and in the hearts of thousands. May your new masters heed the voices of those that have toiled in the past and will do so in

the future to be what you have always been: America's first, oldest, and best computer-game magazine.

Oh! Speaking of finding a need and filling it? For the last couple of years, I have been active in the virtual world called Second Life ([www.secondlife.com](http://www.secondlife.com)) in the guise of Mark Twain White. Not very long ago, working with an in-world partner, I created Second Life's first golf course. The project turned a profit in the first month, and now two more courses are under development. It looks like we've hit a nerve. So if the secret of success is to find a need and meet it, here we go again. CGW readers are welcome to sign up for Second Life, come to the Holly Kai Golf Club in the Hollywood "sim," and look me up. Let's play a round together.

**"THE MANUFACTURERS WHO SURVIVED THE CRASH WERE THOSE THAT TARGETED AN OLDER AGE GROUP."**

—RUSSELL SIPE



Russell Sipe founded CGW in 1981 and remained editor-in-chief until 1992 and publisher until 1995. Visit his virtual golf course, then see what he's up to at [www.sipe.com](http://www.sipe.com).

**COMPUTER GAMING WORLD**

**IMPENDING DOOM**

cover 113, December 7 1993. The Elder Scrolls Arena, Master of Orion III broke sales and PC gaming changed forever when id Software released the original Doom for MS-DOS in December 1993—well, shareware, no less, meant to be distributed (as it was) to the furthest reaches of the computer gaming world. You can trace the roots of the modern LAN party back to Doom's brown-gray design-witch-styled corridors, modern modeling owes a hefty debt to Doom's portable WADs and simple level-rolling tools. Doom's other claim to fame? Frontline duty, idiosyncratic Mortal Kombat and full-motion-video copypasta Night Trap, in the first battle of the War Against Videogame Violence.

**THE YEAR OF THE CD-ROM**

cover 115, June 1994. *Microcosm, Alone in the Dark 2* Up through the mid-1990s, even as PC gaming phased into the first-person shooter era, you could still bank on at least two or three aeroplume-themed flight-sim CGW covers per annum. Within the pages of this issue, we boldly heralded 1994 as "The Year of the CD-ROM" and sounded the death knell for the floppy diskette. Early CD-era pioneers (circa 1990) saw the quantum leap in storage capacity as an opportunity to create/lure full-motion video of Dana Plato and tiger puppets. "Don't watch the game, play the movie!" enthused the ed for Wing Commander III. This was game take some getting used to.

**WINDOWS TAKES OVER**

cover 134, September 1995. *The Dig, Multimedia Celebrity Poker* (with Joe Piscopo) Ten years, other games for the IBM PC joined CGW's rotation, the revolution was complete, and, so usual, the winner was Microsoft. In 1995 CGW was devoted all but exclusively to DOS- and Windows-based games. This was about to change, too, as the release of Windows 95 would spell doom for DOS; gamers need never touch an autoexec.bat file again. CGW didn't necessarily recommend dumping DOS right away, and in a 50-page [E] feature devoted to the topic, told PC gamers how to survive the impending cataclysm.



1991-1999

**THE NOTORIOUS NINETIES**

by Dr. Johnny L. Wilson



"Looking at the current state of the computer game industry is a lot like watching a videotape when the VCR is on 'Pause.' That's what I said in my editorial for November of 1991 (CGW #88). From today's perspective, that reads pretty silly. With today's DVDs, the reference to the VCR is anachronistic, but when I think back on all that happened in the 1990s, I have to question my sanity.

It was the decade when the long-promised switch from floppy disk to CD-ROM took place. That switch alone disabled the "Pause" button. Art assets increased from VGA to SVGA to the era of accelerated and enhanced graphics cards. CGW was there, covering Sierra's first VGA game in the June 1990 issue (#72). Music assets were expanded, largely due to the proliferation of soundcards, combined with the efforts of people like George Altschiringer ("The Fat Man") and Hollywood film composers to create game soundtracks while John Miles and others worked for a

soundcard standard. CGW was there, with the digitized version of Sean Lake represented in the LOOM cover (April 1980, #78) and our glowing words about Bob Swebenberg's *rock* rock game Supertramp fame's music written for Space Quest III (August 1989, #82).

But all was not good. The CD-ROM revolution enabled an unholy alliance between Hollywood and the game industry. Instead of the "New Hollywood" envisioned by EA, 3DO, and Digital Chocolate founder Trip Hawkins where "the tal (interactive entertainment) would wag the dog (traditional linear entertainment), we entered the lame era of FMV (Full Motion Video), where companies crammed bad video segments onto those CDs in order to sell them up. As a result, the strength of the games—interaction—was sacrificed on what we called the altar of "Bollywood" (Silicon Valley meeting Hollywood). To be sure, there were some worthy products that used FMV. Access Software scored big with *Under a Killing Moon*, Origin (newly merged with EA) invested heavily in *Wing Commander IV*, and Sierra bet the bank on *Phantasmagoria* and *Gabriel Knight*

in *The Beast Within*. CGW was there, as demonstrated by the werewolf cover for February 1990 (#139). In fact, CGW was there when its founder, Russell Spee, appeared with a cameo in Amstrad's *Guardians of Eden from Access* (September 1992 cover story).

It was also the age when the processor industry began carving off chunks of Moore's Law. Originally, according to this accepted wisdom, processing power was supposed to double every two years. In the '90s, that accelerated with the Intel 386 becoming the 486 and giving way to generations of Pentium processors. This allowed the wave of 3D games to proliferate. Once the refuge of pure polygons, great-looking texture-mapped games like *Acad of the Pacific* (CGW was there in March 1992, #92) and the *Wing Commander* series (rated No. 1 by our readers throughout 1991) appeared. And once Wolfenstein 3D took off, could Doom (previews in July 1993), *Betrayer* at *Keenland* (CGW was there on the cover of February 1993, #103), *Alone in the Dark* (previews in #103), *Duke Nuke'em*, *Ultima Underworld*, and *Quake* (CGW



### QUAKEN WITH CHANGE

ISSUE: #113, June 1998 **COVER:** Civilization II preview; Gabriel Knight 3: The Secret Willam named Game of the Year  
By 1998, PC gaming was in a golden age, with awe-inspiring titles such as another Crusader for Remorse, Full Throttle, Command & Conquer: Warcraft II, Panther General, TIE Fighter. The amazing bounty was reflected in CGW's sales, jousting with a 300-page issue in 1993, but this cover story on the now-forgotten Dark Error, and our declaration that "3-D is Here!" tells another story: CGW was having trouble keeping up with the times, as newfangled shooters like Quake had to fight for respect amidst the mag's traditional fare of simulations and war games.

### GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN...

Take an intensive stroll through 25 years of CGW history—we've revisited the covers (and 199 entries!) from our 25th-issue run at [CGW.FunFreak.com](http://CGW.FunFreak.com).

### THE COLUMBIAN FALLOUT

ISSUE: #116, June 1999 **COVER:** Ultima IX: Ascension preview; Heroes of Might and Magic IV review  
The tragic, horrific shooting at Columbine High School in April 1999 will go down in history as the most notorious act of violence for which videogaming became—at least in part—a scapegoat. Firing a hailstorm of mainstream media scrutiny and criticism, the game industry blinked and ducked for cover. CGW itself faced a barrage of criticism for its June cover, which featured Max Payne, in a leather jacket, firing his guns in a corridor—which to our horror was mistaken by some as a guy in a trench coat, firing in a school.

↑ The 1990s: We praised to the music of Nirvana and incorporated them from Reservoir Dogs, The Simpsons, and Susan Park.

### THE PROPHECY

ISSUE: #104, November 1999 **COVER:** Star Wars: The Force Unleashed review  
It would take a couple years before we'd understand just how early prophetic our November 1999 cover words for Halo did indeed become gaming forever—just not the way we'd hoped. While consoles such as the NES and Sega Genesis had always managed to live harmoniously with PCs, it wasn't until the PS2 and Xbox that audiences started to converge—and games like Halo that were once considered pure PC were migrating to cheaper and increasingly capable consoles, causing outsiders to declare again and again, "PC gaming is dead." If we come across as a little defensive now and then, behold the reason why.

'THE CD-ROM REVOLUTION ENABLED AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE BETWEEN HOLLYWOOD AND THE GAME INDUSTRY.'

—JOHNNY WILSON

was there with the cover of July 1995, #114) be far better?

We were there when the era of the "memory managers" gave way to Win-G and Direct X. One of our most controversial covers was September 1995 (#134) with its "Are DOS Games Dead?" headline. We had seen the future, and, considering the new title of this magazine, quite prophetically realized that future was Windows.

Some Personal Intolerance: When I'm asked what I most remember about CGW, I have to answer with both positive and negative feelings. On the negative side, I remember the death threats after our Seal Team cover (#106) and the online attacks by those who accused me of being "in bed" with MicroProse and Origin (at the same time that I was losing friendships at both places because they thought I was biased against them).

On the positive side, I was able to bask in the reflected glory of a whole generation of visionaries who birthed a new entertainment medium. I feel great about that. I didn't deserve the recognition, but I was the lucky guy who was a visible symbol of what the public would think and how

the press would handle something. I might have been the Walter Cronkite of the industry—the elder observer interpreting the fast-paced events for a wide range of readers, a psychographic rather than a demographic, as I always tried to share it with my bosses.

Journalistically, I feel positive about the way we called 'em as we saw 'em. Origin hated me for breaking the EA/Origin Systems merger on the Prodigy network before even Bloomberg could get the news. The executives at Ziff Davis were furious at me for the "Wing Commander IV: Is It Worth \$12 Million?" story, but I still thought it was a valid question. Some EA executives still accuse me of reading the budget upside-down off of Lord British's desk. They tried to say we were lying. I did read that budget upside-down as someone slowly turned the pages in a binder, but that person wasn't Lord British. It was exasperated when I revealed the problems with a planned 3D version of Ultima (Ultima: Ascension) and we proclaimed Ultima Online to be the Coaster of the Year. I proudly became the wilson slime in UO, my only regret the fact that they deemed I "dubbed" the

blades of my attackers.

Finally, I have a confession to make. When I left CGW to prepare for my role as group publisher of magazines at Wizards of the Coast, Jeff Green wrote a column about my departure (CGW #184). I cried when I read it, and I still open it up every so often. I still cry when I read it. I guess it's a good thing that ZD is changing the name of Computer Gaming World. You cannot return to an institution and expect it to be the same as when you left it. You can't go home again. Now, when I see the magazine on the newsstand, I won't have to pretend that it doesn't sadden me that I am no longer part of it.



Johnny Wilson is currently the executive vice president for content and community for [www.mun5togames.com](http://www.mun5togames.com), a source for community, game information, and mainstream computer games. If it's not in retail, it's probably available at [www.mun5togames.com](http://www.mun5togames.com). #1 and more reminiscence from Johnny at [CGW.FunFreak.com](http://CGW.FunFreak.com).

## A NEW HOPE

Issue 190, May 2000 **News**: Online flight sim roundup; *Avatar/Dino* preview  
The first great game of the 21st century was more than just a great game. It was a genuine phenomenon, a milestone that would go on to become the biggest-selling game of all time. Will Wright and his Maxis team had already proven themselves as great designers with the *Sims* City series, but with *The Sims* they propelled themselves, and PC gaming, into another dimension. What everyone thought would be nothing more than an oddball title *Sims* City spin-off became one of the rare videogames to appeal to people of all ages, genders, nationalities, whatever. Six years later, *The Sims*' innovation and impact has yet to be matched.

## REGULAR

## WORTH THE WAIT

Issue 201, November 2001 **Preview**: *Anarchy Online* review; *Ghost Recon* preview  
Massively multiplayer online roleplaying: *Meridian 59* pioneered it; *Ultima Online* popularized it; *Eve Online* redefined it; and *World of Warcraft* refined it, achieving 7 million subscribers and generating nearly \$1 billion a year in revenue ("one of the most lucrative entertainment media properties of any kind," according to the *New York Times*). Of course, back in 2001 when we first peeked at what *Sims* had in store (and when *Tyranosaurus, Omega*, and *humans* were all getting along amazingly, we had no idea how huge the World would get for me. *Mega* here! Here one hell of a great ride!

## THE FALSE PROMISE

Issue 219, October 2002 **Preview**: *Battlefield 1942* preview; *Magic: The Gathering Online* review

One year after the first *World of Warcraft* cover, but still two years before that game would be released, CGW and the rest of the gaming media were still waiting for that first big MMO smash hit and pontificating about what it might be. It seemed quite reasonable to assume that *The Sims Online* would be worthy. But even in our enthusiastic cover story, we had questions: "Will games like up for an online genre in which killing dragons and aliens is not the main goal?" we asked. The answer turned out to be a resounding no.

## SUPER UNLEADED

## HOW IT WAS FOR ME by George Jones

25

No matter what competitive magazine I've worked for or will work for, I'll always have a soft spot in my heart for CGW. I read the magazine as a kid and was lucky enough that my first job as a gaming journalist was at *Computer Gaming World*, back in 1994.

What a time of change and excitement my first two and a half years at CGW were. DOS-based gaming went out, Windows-based gaming came in. Flight sims started to vanish, action games leapt to the screen thanks to Windows 95. Bye-bye 2D gaming, hello 3D cards and first-person shooters. You know, given how dominant a role Microsoft Windows has played in shaping the sphere of PC gaming, maybe it's appropriate that *Computer Gaming World* become the official gaming magazine for Windows. Although that sure is a mouthful.

I still count the day when Lee Unacka, the then-publisher of *Computer Gaming World*, approached me to gauge my interest in leaving the dot-com goldmine at CNET.com and come back to the magazine as editor-in-chief as one

of the greatest moments in my life.

But wow, talk about rugged transitions. CGW was in the middle of making a hard double-shift: into a world where the Internet was absolutely dominant in terms of game previews and reviews, thereby reducing the importance and relevance of print magazines. Into a world where flight sims and war games—two key CGW staples—were dying, dying, dead. It was a weird time to be running a magazine, that's for sure. I'll never forget the angry letters I got from readers blaming me for making the magazine shrink from 200-plus (and sometimes 300-plus) pages to a more "normal" size.

But the good times were plentiful. In my entire career, I don't think I've ever laughed as loudly on a daily basis. How funny was it? The phrase "fiscal domat" was effectively used numerous times as a joke. I know what you're thinking: "That's not funny" and I'm here to tell you that you're wrong.

The rest, as you know, is history. I look back on those days and wonder exactly how CGW won all those Pulitzer

Prizes and "Most Influential Magazine" awards and appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine and got invited to the White House and Red Square in the same month. And then I chuckle to myself, because I know exactly how. And now I'm going to share it with you: For the first time ever, I present CGW's "secret recipe" for success:

1. Never be afraid to treat computer games on the same level as movies or music.
2. Never be ashamed to admit to loving computer games publicly. Even if the admission of such a desire will get your ass kicked.
3. No game is above or beneath you.
4. Never assume that one form of gaming will last forever.
5. The words "fiscal" and "domat" should probably never be used in the same context. Even if it is funny.

George Jones is currently the editorial director of *300 Entertainment*, overseeing the development of *GamePro* magazine, *GamePro.com*, and *GameNxt*.



The 2000s As war and technology seem to pull the industry world apart, our gaming editors find ways we never imagined possible.

### NEWELL'S POLLY

ISSUE 227, June 2003 **NOVA: OTA: War City preview; Fall Thriller Mail on Wheels review**

You can only hear that a platform is doomed a couple hundred times before it starts to wear you down—and *HALO: 2* came exactly when we needed it. And at a time when shelf space for PC games was shrinking, Steam proved that games can be sold without the help of a fancy box or a point-of-purchase display. Today, Steam is a small fortress filled with independent projects that would otherwise have perished were it not for the boxless scheme. If console fans like Jerry Bruckheimer productions, consider this the art-house scene.

### WORLD WIDE WARFARE

ISSUE 240, July 2004 **NOVA: Pathfinder review; Tom vs. Bruce vs. World of Warcraft**

By 2004 and the announcement of EA's *Battlefield 2*, the proliferation of broadband and the sheer horsepower of modern gaming PCs meant that online games could be more intricately timed, and realistic, than ever before. It also meant that a game's "multiplayer component" was no longer just a secondary consideration or an afterthought. It was, in more and more cases, the primary component, and it was getting more sophisticated than ever. We were all online now, and we wanted to play our games that way, too.

### THE END IS THE BEGINNING

ISSUE 252, June 2005 **NOVA: Medieval II: Total War preview; The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion viewpoint**

The curtain's closing on Computer Gaming World, but it's not closing on computer gaming. Great things are coming, we guarantee it. Look to further than Space, Will Wright's upcoming omniverse of strategy, simulation, community, omnivision, and xenoevolution. And we suppose evolution is not a way an try to end our trek through CGW history, since we're not really going away—we're just adapting. Come back around next month when we're reborn as *Games for Windows: The Official Magazine*. Change is good. We'd love for all of you to be a part of it.



### THE DARK TOWER VII



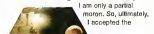
# 2006

## A NEW BEGINNING by Jeff Green



True confession time: I never wanted to be editor-in-chief of this here magazine. By 2001, I had been at *Computer Gaming World* for five years, and I was really happy with my job. Happier than I'd ever been at any job, in fact. I had been hired by Johnny in 1996, served under both him and George, and, after watching those guys, felt that I'd gone as high up the ladder as I needed to go.

Yeah, sure, I could see the perks of being the boss. The riches. The power. The babes. But I also saw all the grief those guys went through—the political BS, the late nights, the headaches—and my first reaction, when offered the promotion in 2001, was "thanks but no thanks." I was happy playing my games, writing my Greenpeak articles, and going home with my sanity intact. Of course, only a complete moron turns down the opportunity to run a national magazine, and fortunately



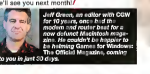
promotion, and, five years later, I'm sure glad I did.

Not that it's been a piece of cake. If George Jones thought it was rough during his tenure, I'd humbly ask him to walk in my orthopedic shoes for awhile. Because, if anything, it's only gotten tougher as the decade has gone on, as print magazines have continued to struggle for relevance in the Internet Age and as the PC-gaming market has continued to lose mindshare and shelf space to the console world. I've had to watch as the magazine has shrunk down literally hundreds of pages in size, and as former PC-only game developers have migrated over to the consoles.

On the other hand, I have also presided during the rise of homogenous franchises like *The Sims*, the *Battlefield* games, *Half-Life*, and, of course, *World of Warcraft*, arguably the biggest and most important game—on any platform—of the new century so far. So it will simply not do to whine. It has been and continues to be an amazing time to be a PC gamer. And if you don't see it, then I submit that you need to open your eyes.

As for my five years running this place, I see things I'm both proud of and regret. I'm proud of the changes we tried, the chances we took, whether they worked out or not. I'm proud of the ambition and hard work of my staff, who, rather than rest on CGW's longstanding reputation for integrity and commitment—earned the hard way by all the CGW editors and artists before us—never took the easy way out, never compromised, and, most importantly, never stopped asking the hard questions, either of ourselves or of the gaming industry in general.

So it's onward to the future. CGW is outta here. But if you listen closely, I promise, you'll hear the beating heart of *Computer Gaming World*—still alive and kicking—in every page, every sentence and word of the new magazine. We'll see you next month!



Jeff Green, as editor with CGW for 10 years, says: And the mission and roster best for a new digital *Microtech* magazine. He couldn't be happier to be joining the industry for *Windows: The Official Magazine*, coming to you in just 50 days.

5  
YEARS OF  
GAMING  
P. 74

5:23 AM

CGW's notes on

\$4.99

# Alan Wake

12:23 PM

7:23 PM

## A QUICK STUDY GUIDE TO ALAN WAKE

- Alan Wake is a free-roaming "psychological action thriller" set across a large swath of the United States' Pacific Northwest.
- Remedy Entertainment, an independent developer best known for the Max Payne series, is developing Alan Wake at its studio in Helsinki, Finland. Published by Microsoft, the game has no firm release date. Sometime in 2007 is probably a good guess.
- Wake is the main character in an ensemble cast, many of whom will be playable in story missions.
- Modeled after a single season of a television show, the game's story will unfold over several smaller story arcs, which will be organized into missions.
- Light plays a crucial role in both puzzles and combat. Wake and cast use various light sources to weaken supernatural enemies and conventional weapons to finish them off.
- Wake is an insomniac. His world becomes more surreal and twisted as the game progresses.





### CHAPTER 1: WELCOME TO BRIGHT FALLS

I've checked into a sleep clinic somewhere in the boonies of Washington state with a two-pronged plan of attack: 1) Get some nice, wholesome, dreaming-about-angels-and-puppy-dogs sleep. 2) Coast for a while on my publisher's generous advance. So far, only number two is working out.

The Pacific Northwest is a beautiful place to lose your mind. Cold diamond rivers carve their way through valleys embossed with evergreens and jagged mountain peaks. In the morning, the sun rises over the Pacific Ocean, a consolation prize for another sleepless night. There's a little picture-postcard town near the coast called Bright Falls. Maybe it's just my inner city sickler for the chronic hallucinations of an insomniac, but the locals seem to act a bit strange around me. I spend my days enjoying the fresh air and wilderness. My nights... My nights are something else. I know this sounds like the fetched premise of a new A. Wake best seller, but at night, when the sun sets over the Cascade mountain range, I find myself in situations ripped from the pages of my own writing.

### CHAPTER 2: THE HITCHHIKER

It's a leisurely drive around the corkscrew interstate that leads to my place, the quaint hillside cabin I temporarily call home. I'm here to learn how to sleep, so I've got nothing better to do than enjoy the peace and quiet of my drive. I should be clearing my mind and taking in the scenery. Instead, I pick up a hitchhiker along a lonely stretch of highway, trees flicker past like the frames of an old movie. He appears around the bend, a bad edit on scratchy film. I know I shouldn't stop, but I can't resist.

"First taker I've had all night," he says, unzipping his raincoat to settle into the passenger seat, knapsack between his knees. "I guess I look a little rough." He does. But then again, so do I.

Now, I'm not a self-promoter, and I don't talk shop—definitely not with some random stranger picked up on the side of the highway—but here and now, with this guy, I feel compelled to do so.

"Funny thing... I'm a writer, and I'm working on a story about—of all things—a writer." I give the guy a friendly once-over, really just searching for some signal that I haven't picked up a psychopath. "After a tragic loss, the writer goes to live in a secluded cabin someplace out in the Pacific Northwest. He writes a horror story there, a story about shadowy specters that disguise themselves as men. Unimaginable things." Now the guy thinks I'm the psychopath. "When he leaves the cabin, he discovers that his world has turned into the nightmare he's just written." My passenger keeps quiet, staring out into the distance. "The story began with the writer picking up a hitchhiker on the way to his cabin..."

"Let me guess." A wry smile cracks across the stranger's face. "The hitchhiker's the killer."

"Actually, the hitchhiker's the one who gets killed."

From around the bend, I see it: An explosion of glass and steel, the dead chassis of an overturned car, fresh blood on the road. There's been an accident. Somebody's hurt. I leave the car—and the hitchhiker—on the highway and rush over to the debris. A smashed jeep, almost identical to mine, lies silent on its doors, its bloodied driver ejected onto the pavement. I don't have a problem with the gory details of my own imagination, but the

AT NIGHT, I FIND MYSELF IN SITUATIONS RIPPED FROM THE PAGES OF MY OWN WRITING.



real thing is overwhelming, I'm woozy as I approach the man, the body. I enter his orbit in slow motion, afraid, somehow, for my own life. Hovering over his torn face, I look into his glassy, terror eyes. The dead man on the street is me.

Here comes the twist. I know—I wrote it: The massive rumble of a semi approaches at rocket speed, horn howling. I turn my attention back across the street to see what I know is about to happen: The semi slams into my jeep with the force of a junkyard compactator, crushing everything in it, Hitchhiker included.

### CHAPTER 3: OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD

How did I finally sleep? How long was I out? In my half-crazed condition, I'm used to hallucinatory happenings. This, however, is too much. Where's the dead man? Where's the highway? Where are the mountains and the rivers, the town of Bright Falls? As a storyteller, I worship at the altar of believability, but I'm afraid, dear reader, that I'm about to murder your suspension of disbelief. Like Dorothy, magically transported to the land of Oz, I've been snatched from the rural Northwest and dropped into Finland—and not a twister in sight.

I walk down the cobblestone streets of Helsinki, taking in the city's vast supply of pretty blondes in sensible shoes. Through old cafes and ultramodern furniture galleries, I wander with a mysterious purpose, pulled like a moth toward an unfamiliar flame. Across lakes and over bridges, down streets alternating between the bland cube tenements of the city's past and the high-tech, abstract office parks of its present, I arrive, finally, at my destination. The sign on the front of the building says Remedy Entertainment, but to me it's the Emerald City, and I've come to see the Wizard.

I press the buzzer. A man who introduces himself as "Sam Lake, head writer" greets me, flanked by small army of quiet followers. This place and these people are strangely familiar. "Welcome, Alan." Sam escorts me into the complex and raises his arms theatrically. "This is where we created you, created your game! The idea that my life exists entirely on the shiny surface of a DVD seems as believable as anything. My insomnia-induced hallucinations are usually out to kill me. This I can handle. Besides, how often do you get the chance to sit down and have a chat with God?>>

"LET ME GUESS." A WRY SMILE CRACKS ACROSS THE STRANGER'S FACE. "THE HITCHHIKER IS THE KILLER."



part of  
1 dram of  
1 " "  
2 " "  
Sufficient

C. H. R., Binghamton, N. Y.:—Cut glass should be washed in

fection  
at has





"After Alan met his girlfriend, Alice, he began to have strange dreams," Sam speaks as though my life were the plot of a daytime drama. "With those dreams as material, his first book—a psychological thriller—practically wrote itself, almost as if Wake was not in control of the process. The book was a best seller. Then Alice vanished without a trace. The events surrounding her disappearance were chillingly mirrored by Wake's book. Wake was devastated. He could no longer write and began suffering from a severe case of insomnia." It's nice to have the painful details of your life reduced to bullets in a PowerPoint presentation. This isn't how I wanted to introduce you to Alice, but there she is, lurking just under the surface of everything. I just can't seem to dig her up.

"Wake travels to a private sleep clinic to get help," he continues. "There, he begins to see glimpses of Alice. The line between dreams and reality blurs as Wake spins deeper and deeper into this nightmare. Dark secrets lurk under the surface of the idyllic small town of Bright Falls."

#### CHAPTER 5: THE MANIACS BEHIND THE CURTAIN

If you had a chance to sit down and talk to the authors of your life, what would you ask them? I'm in that situation. Seated around a mundane conference table, the 30 or so individuals that constitute Remedy Entertainment look like typical, quiet Finns. On closer inspection, however, they all seem a little off. I start with the basics:

"What, exactly, am I?" I pose the question to no one in particular. "Alan Wake is a psychological action thriller," Sam speaks, joined by a cult of call-and-response agreement from the team: "Psychological thriller! A thriller, yes, a psychological action thriller..." One of those chanting, a bearded 3D artist on my right, appears to be frantically drawing pentagrams on his Wacom tablet.

"So, I'm in a horror story—a game like one of my books?" The Remedy hive mind emits a collective hiss. A few especially zealous team members spit on the floor.

"To many people, horror means gore and endless scares for their own sake," Sam's musical Finnish vowels sing over the gasps of his team ("No horror! Thriller! Psychological thriller!"). "We are definitely not doing that."

"But it's supposed to be scary, right? I mean, it scares the s\*\*\* out of me all the..." A wiry programmer comes uncoiled. He leaps onto the table, scurrying on his hands and knees toward me with ascending speed, swiping at my face with a can of Battery energy drink to the fore, scurrying on his hands and knees toward me with ascending speed, swiping at my face with a can of Battery energy drink to his seat. Remedy favorite, apparently, Sam removes a whistle from his pocket and furiously blows. The programmer sinks back to his seat.

"Yes, we are building a very strong atmosphere. We're going to be scaring the players—a lot, but the idea is to have a good story behind it all—a mystery to be solved." A man who, up until this point, has been seated quietly next to me scribbling in his notebook slides a business card across the table (Remedy Entertainment: Petri Järvelä, creative director). I flip the card over to read his note: "Duck, stupid!"

An assassin among the five stands, shotgun in the crook of his shoulder. "I preferred army-jacket Alan Wake, not this pretentious, bohemian, Bond look-alike!" I slide down my chair and under the conference table, narrowly avoiding the blast. >>

"We want to use the player's imagination to our advantage by not necessarily showing everything closely," says Sam, directing my attention back to the hive. "A scary monster, once you've seen it 10 times, isn't scary anymore. That's the idea—to keep some of it hidden and keep up the mystery."

"How do you manage to create fear when I can go anywhere and do anything I want? Bright Falls isn't a haunted house. I can easily wander off the tracks...." Petri Järvihto, the business card guy, turns in his chair.

"Yes, it's a free-roaming game and, with the exception of time-sensitive missions, the player is free to go anywhere he wants," says Petri. "But we're still in control."

## CHAPTER 6: LAND OF THE FREE, HOME OF THE AFRAID

The lights in the conference room fade once again and the enormous screen opens its eye on my Pacific Northwest world. My doppelgänger is at a gas station, staring directly into the camera, completely motionless. Petri stands up from his chair and strolls behind me, placing his hands on my shoulders.

"In your world, the weather and time of day are completely dynamic, but we keep control." He leans into my view, puffs out his cheeks out like a blowfish, and blows a gust of hot, wet breath into my face.

"For example," he kicks his heels together and spins around to the screen, "as you head to the top of a mountain, the sky becomes overcast. Clouds roll in. When you finally reach the peak, you're in a full-blown storm. We can use the world to create suspense and drama." Onscreen, doppelgänger Alan is in trouble. The weather turns from bad to worse as a tornado appears, sucking up anything not nailed to the ground. Alan runs toward the camera. Behind him, the twister picks up a rusted-out truck and flings it into the air. It crashes and explodes on the asphalt. Flaming tires bounce back to the earth. The storm vanishes as quickly as it came.

"You say the game is an open world," I break the silence. "But it doesn't seem like you want me, or the player, to feel free." With precise comic timing, the conference table begins to rumble. Something grabs my leg. I pull away and glimpse the Creature crawling out.

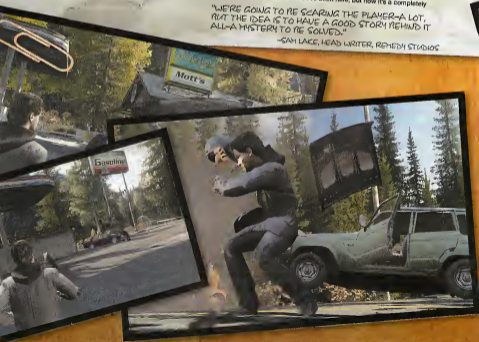
"Games Journalist Games Journalist?" The Remedy hive mind shrieks and flails about. Some team members attempt to run but make it only as far as the power cords on their laptops will allow. The Creature stands at the head of the table. He's morbidly obese in an ill-fitting Pac-Man T-shirt and a red military beret, a small piece of paper hanging from the headband that reads "PRESS." Having finished chewing the frayed remains of a pencil, he speaks.

"It seems that you are using the open world to create a different effect than your contemporaries." A small fills the room: Rico's nachos cheese, mixed with the aroma of some old, dusty couch. "It seems that, instead of using open-world design to convey a sense of freedom—as in, say, *Grand Theft Auto*—Alan Wake uses it to create a feeling of safety and familiarity. You will use this familiarity against the player, pulling the rug out from underneath them by turning the places they've come to know as safe into surreal nightmares."

Petri, the only live member in the room willing to look the creature in the eye, answers: "Yes. The player thinks, 'I've spent three hours playing the game in this location, but now it's dark, it's raining, and my vision is limited. I've been here, but now it's a completely different scenario.'"

"WE'RE GOING TO BE SCARING THE PLAYER—A LOT, BUT THE IDEA IS TO HAVE A GOOD STORY BEHIND IT ALL—A MYSTERY TO BE SOLVED."

—SAM LAKE, HEAD WRITER, REMEDY STUDIOS





## CHAPTER 3: Q&A WITH THE CREATURE

As the Creature moves across the conference room, five members part like the Red Sea. He takes a newly vacated seat, slumping into the chair as if completely exhausted, belly hanging over the elastic of his seat of pants. "So, Petri and Sam... do you guys have time for a little Q&A?"

**Petri:** Well, I'm quite busy now. Can we do this later, on the phone, perhaps?

**The Creature:** I'll make it quick. With Alan Wake, are you going for a movie feel or a book feel?

**Sam:** The story of the game is modeled after one season of a TV series with multiple episodes, with a larger ending, and an ensemble cast of characters around Wake himself. Each episode is divided into missions for the player to complete.

**The Creature:** What is it about the TV series format that attracts you?

**Sam:** We were thinking of models that might better fit a game. A season of a TV series feels very much like a perfect match. It's shorter, episodic, nature keeps the player hooked.

**The Creature:** Who are the other playable characters?

**Petri:** We're not going to talk about the supporting cast.

**The Creature:** But you can play as other characters, and the game is called Alan Wake. Are you trying to trick me?

**Petri:** One of the things with using the TV series format is that it indirectly means the ensemble cast is something we're heavily on. You have Buffy in Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and then you have the large supporting cast, but it's still all about the lead character. It's a similar setup with *Laird*.

**Sam:** Our goal is to make as much of the story playable as possible. You won't be watching long cut-scenes.

**The Creature:** Will daytime be a reprieve from the scary stuff of night?

**Sam:** Fear and suspense in a game work much better if they are properly paced. If we are trying to keep the player afraid all of the time, they become numb. We have these daytime periods where everything feels quite nice and safe, and then there are these nighttime periods that are really hectic and scary.

**The Creature:** So what's so scary? Where's the action? Didn't you guys make *Max Payne*?




## CHAPTER 8: ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The pavement feels cold on my face. I'm surrounded by debris from the crash, glass everywhere. Somehow, I'm completely unhurt. It's dark. In the right pocket of my jacket is a flashlight, in the left a revolver. I switch on the light and palm the gun. On top of a hill, just a few hundred yards from the road, I can see my cabin, a lantern swinging on the porch. I huff it up the path, my breath steaming as I race, it feels like a matter of life or death. As I reach a streetlight—a small comfort—it explodes, snuffed out. I pick up the pace, contriving on, I make my way around the bending path toward the next light, hearing nothing but the crunch of shoes on gravel. The next light explodes, as does the next, just as I reach them. The trees at the top of the path open onto a field. As the cabin and the lantern, warmth and safety, get larger and larger in my view, relief creeps in. Of course, that light goes out, too. I hear him behind me, out in the field. I can make out, in the pale light of the moon, the outline of his form. The hitchhiker stands before me, his body in a state of perpetual undulation, flesh and fabric melded into one indistinguishable ether. He is a walking shadow, now only yards away.

I aim the revolver and pull the trigger. The sound is big and brutal, but the shadowy hitchhiker presses on. I squeeze again—a body shot I'm certain, but the result is the same. I still can't quite see. I swing the beam of my flashlight toward him. Trapped in its light, the shadow freezes. I have him pinned. Letting loose a quick succession of bullets, I dissipate the black cloud.

Was it even here? Was it even here? In Finland or Washington state, driving down an infante, twisting highway? At the end of the road there is a bed, a bed covered in white sheets and pillows, and in that bed is Alice—warm Alice. That's where I lie down to sleep. /



-  **Cheats**
- Walkthroughs**
- Videos**
- Screenshots**
- News**
- Reviews**
- Previews**
- Forums**
- Blogs**

## Welcome to **GAZERK**:

the Web's only search engine dedicated to finding videogame content!

When you search, **GAZERK** automatically arranges the results into the categories you most need, such as screens, videos, news, reviews and previews.

With **GAZERK**, you find what you want—fast!



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

Just what you were looking for.



ISSUE 268

# VIEWPOINT

BEYOND  
REVIEWS

READ THIS FIRST! THE CGW REVIEWS SECTION IS NO MORE. HERE'S HOW VIEWPOINT IS DIFFERENT:



## NO MORE REVIEWS

Mindful of the lateness of magazine reviews, we don't print our reviews in the magazine anymore. Instead, we publish our reviews online the day the games come out—you can find them online at <http://CGW.1UP.com>.



## MULTIPLE SCORES

Yes, we still have scores! We give every game a score when we first review it online (Just look for the 1UP Network score—that's us!). For additional perspective and points of comparison, we also list the scores that other websites and outlets gave each game.



## BROADER ANALYSIS

These articles are meant to give you the bigger picture: a summary of our original online review, community and media reaction to the game, and a look at patches and updates since a game's original release. In short: It's everything you need to know.



## THIS IS NOT A REVIEWS SECTION

The astute among you have probably noticed a bit of tinkering going on with the Viewpoint section over the past several issues—namely, the addition of a "Reality Check" box on each featured game noting review scores given to the product in question by major gaming opinion sites.

For those of you who want scores, that's what the 1UP Network number exists for: 1UP's PC reviews—all scribbled by the very same snappy writers whose witticisms you're about to read—form the baseline for what you see in this section each month. We include those other guys' scores as a frame of reference for readers curious about some of the other points of view we occasionally refer to—a shocking inclusion for a section called Viewpoint, we know.

OK, so the headline on this page isn't completely true—but we don't want you to look at Viewpoint as the typical reviews section that you see in every other magazine (hence the name change). Yes, you can find opinions on games now available in stores. Yes, we attempt to provide relatively timely coverage of games you might be interested in playing. Beyond that, we go a cut above the norm in our content thanks to all the elements spelled out in the handy FAQ below. Embrace the change—we definitely have.



### EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD

CGW's reviews don't concern themselves with scored evaluations; you can find those at 1UP.com well before the magazine arrives. Our Editors' Choice emblem signifies the best in PC gaming.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT VIEWPOINT

**So do you still review games?**  
YES! The CGW team posts its reviews online as the games hit store shelves. Read them at [CGW.1UP.com](http://CGW.1UP.com).

### What's 1UP.com?

Computer Gaming World is just one part of the larger 1UP Network ([www.1UP.com](http://www.1UP.com)). Visit us there at [CGW.1UP.com](http://CGW.1UP.com).

### How do I know if I should buy the game?

Read the Viewpoint article and check the score in the box to see what we originally scored the game and how others rated it.

If you still can't decide, read our in-depth review online at [CGW.1UP.com](http://CGW.1UP.com).

The game's critical reception is based on the scores of all the major gaming sites that we've reviewed. The scores are based on a scale of 1-100, with 100 being the highest score. The scores are based on the following criteria:

Game	Verdict
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	95
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	90
Call of Duty: Black Ops	90
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare	85
Call of Duty: World at War	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Campaign Remastered	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered (Xbox 360)	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered (PS3)	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered (Wii)	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered (Xbox One)	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered (PS4)	85
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2: Multiplayer Remastered (Switch)	85

## INSIDE



### American McGee Presents Bad Day L.A.

More like American McGee Presents My Backed-Up Toilet.



### Wings of Power II: WWII Fighters

One of the best flight simulators...ever!



### Tom vs. Bruce: Dominions 3: The Awakening

Hopefully less confusing than Dominions II.

### WANT TO READ OUR ORIGINAL REVIEWS?

Hit [CGW.1UP.com](http://CGW.1UP.com) to read PC game reviews penned by all of CGW's talented writers.



[HTTP://CGW.1UP.COM](http://CGW.1UP.COM)





# Games for Windows<sup>®</sup>

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

Dear CGW Subscriber,

Hello! This is Jeff Green, the editor-in-chief of *Computer Gaming World* magazine, with an important message for you.

Thanks to the phenomenal success of games like *World of Warcraft* and *The Sims 2*, and the ever-increasing access to broadband Internet, PC gaming is in the middle of its biggest renaissance in years. In recognition of this, Microsoft recently made an extraordinary new commitment to PC gaming, rebranding the platform as "Games for Windows" as a way to give PC gaming the kind of first-class exposure and treatment that consoles like the Xbox and PlayStation 2 receive.

When we learned of Microsoft's new commitment, we decided that it was time for CGW to step up its game, too. We believed that the time was right for PC gaming to get its own official magazine. And that, with our unparalleled 25-year history, we were the right magazine for the job. We presented this idea to Microsoft—and it agreed. And so with Microsoft's relaunch of the PC gaming platform as "Games for Windows" comes CGW's relaunch as *Games for Windows: The Official Magazine*. The gaming platform that you know and love is getting its own official magazine. The one you already subscribe to.

But let me reassure you about a few things. Because if you like CGW, I promise that you have nothing to worry about. We are, at root, the same magazine, with the same editors and artists, writing the same articles about PC gaming that we always have. All of your favorite columns and sections like "Tom vs. Bruce" and "Line of Attack" are still going to be around. We are still a hard-core PC gaming magazine for hardcore PC gamers like you. And despite that new "official" tag, we are not owned by Microsoft. Microsoft will never see what we write before we write it, nor will it have influence over the articles we publish. We have complete editorial independence. Everything in the magazine, including the game reviews, will be entirely our own. Microsoft chose CGW for this partnership most of all because it respected our editorial honesty. And I assure you that won't change.

So with this issue we say goodbye to *Computer Gaming World* after a glorious 25 year run. In four weeks, you will have a brand new magazine coming your way: *Games for Windows: The Official Magazine*. But I think you're going to recognize everything inside it. And like it just as much, if not more.

Sincerely,

Jeff Green  
Editor-in-Chief, Computer Gaming World







# AMERICAN MCGEE PRESENTS BAD DAY L.A.

OK, who forgot to flush?

**PUBLISHER:** Amby **DEVELOPER:** Eighty Software **GENRE:** Action **AVAILABILITY:** Retail Box CD/DVD **PLATFORMS:** PC (REQUIRED: 1.4GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 2GB free drive space) **CONVICTED:** 20% CPU, 308 MB RAM **MULTIPLAYER:** None

LET'S SEE...THINGS I'D RATHER DO than play *Bad Day L.A.*... Hmm... Take a honey bath next to a fire ant nest? Make anagrams of the game title to get names for D&D Arabian Adventures characters (Al Yaddab, Aty Abdal)? While the game's easter eggs come while pounding my head with a rubber mallet? Chug a gallon of pinto beans marinated in Crazy Mother Pucker's Liquid Love and chase with Ex-Lax?

Like a skinny dip in hydrochloric acid, *Bad Day L.A.* strips you of your patience and gentility. It's the sort of game obviously targeted at an audience that could only exist in Loopyland, where *Dineratics* wins the Pulitzer and *Uwe Boll* sweeps Cannes. As shipwrecks go, this could've been a *Titanic*. Bereft of hope, I suppose we should be grateful it's more like watching a fishing dory sink off the coast of Madagascar: Yo-yo dialogue out of an Ed Wood film, collision detection tantamount to rubbing magnets, and pointless cel shading that covers

everything like the skin off a two-day-old cappuccino. In its own scathing review, online site *Amped IGO* describes *Bad Day* as "a desperate stabbing pain in our sides." Well, yes, if you simply must be polite about it.

## FEAR IN A HANDFUL OF JOKES

The idea for *Bad Day* apparently came to former *Id* Software designer American McGee as he took a spin down Los Angeles' Sunset Boulevard. Spying a Homeland Security billboard on the virtues of biochemical terror readiness with the words "Are you prepared?" McGee's imagination lit up: How about a game that poked fun at America's propensity for scaring itself to death? Oh, what could have been—had someone with any real sense for comedic timing worked over the script and game mechanics.

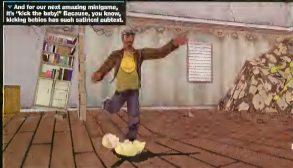
Exacerbating the problem, *Bad Day* thinks it's genuinely funny, and I suppose it is, if "genuinely funny" is an SNL sketch with Horatio Sanz running around for 10 minutes yelling, "Hey, guys—

I farted!" Rambling about modern L.A. in third-person, you're Anthony Williams, a former Hollywood agent who's cynically traded his money gig for a shopping cart and champion breakfast of "mud-butt" buns. Dropping your drawers one morning to crap on a "backed-up" freeway (are you laughing yet?), you're interrupted by an airplane crashing into the nearby overpass. Out of the plane, barrels...and out of the barrels, what else? Mutant zombie gas! Grab a fire extinguisher, bandages, and the iron—then your game choices consist of spraying "infected" zombie-people with the extinguisher to "cure" them; optionally (and therapeutically) beating them to death with the iron; healing the wounded (if you can get them to stop scrambling like headless chickens); and resisting the temptation to commit suicide for kicks by running headlong into the arbitrary "keep-you-on-rails" walls of green funes. Oh, and some signposts that happen to look exactly like squirrels give you "tips" on how not to make too much of an ass out of yourself.

From there, you're basically playing *Ghetto Raider* without the hot chick or anything like a good time. Terrorists pop in randomly behind barricades or chase you creeping through the streets in the back of a truck (boy, an arcade gun sequence), snipers perch on rooftops and

LIKE A SKINNY DIP IN HYDROCHLORIC ACID, *BAD DAY L.A.* STRIPS YOU OF YOUR PATIENCE AND GENTILITY.

And for our next amazing minigame, it's "kick the baby!" Because, you know, kicking babies has such satirical subtext.



Aside from looking like someone suited sandpaper over everything, at least cars blowing up is sorta nice to watch...in a "party like it's 1995" way.



Honestly, people—can you imagine a better sickkick than this?

sting you with insouciant bullets like a merciless pack of invisible bees, and flammable citizens flail about begging for a dousing before running back into burning buildings for fiery seconds. Further on, you experience additional catastrophes like an earthquake, a meteor shower, and a run-in with a missile-packing street gang, but they're all bark and no bite—just ugly, scripted disaster sequences that allow the game's bad writers time they don't deserve to crack the sort of "jokes" you find scrawled in high school bathrooms.

#### CRAPTASTIC PLAY, NOORAY!

In another sad attempt at witlessness, *Bad Day* includes a "threat advisory" meter, which mimics the Homeland Security five-color system. Harm citizens (which makes "ironies" appear) and you're headed for yellow, orange, or red territory—at which point even the nonzombies owners you like, well, zombies. Do a few good deeds (oop go the medals) and you cruise back to green. Pretty much after the first level, you'll start paying as much attention to this as you do the real thing, because you move along fast enough that it simply doesn't matter.

We're supposed to care that NPCs use cover or exhibit changing emotional states based on what's going on around them, as if this were

somehow new or special. I guess that means we also shouldn't notice when the so-called "friend" technology ("white one looks, the others look, where one runs, the others run") devolves into a tangle of jittery, jerking bodies with the directional sensibilities of the bugs in *Control*. Along the way, you snag a few companions from the rabble, including a gardener, some blonde, a one-armed guy, and a puking kid. Yeah, they're about that memorable, too. They follow you whether you lose them or not (hello, magic teleporter!); they're along for the comedy attack, which—as we've established—is funny like passing a kidney stone.

*Bad Day's* idea of social commentary would elude even the *Family* brothers. // Matt Peckham

#### REALITY CHECK

NUP NETWORK	1/10
GAMESPOT	3/10
GAMESPY	1.5/5
IGN	—



## VERDICT

A sloppy mess of a satire...and a sorely missed opportunity.



ATTENTION: Better to have someone up in here. That's not to shoot things without being high.

→ You play as Anthony, self-respecting anything-pkt-crack-addict.



or first help people or they are going to kick your ass. Remember, you're a girl!

→ *Bad Day's* heavy on cut-scenes...most of which flow about as well as peanut butter through a cheese grater.

# MADDEN NFL 07

Mad about Madden



• The always effective "Chad Brown and Lucy" play.



• What touchdown is complete without a rollicking end-zone celebration?

PUBLISHED BY EA SPORTS DEVELOPER EA GAMES OFFICE Sports 2007 Irving, Georgia REQUIRES 600MHz CPU, 256MB RAM, 4GB hard drive space  
RECOMMENDED 512MB RAM, 1GB RAM recommended, supported MULTIPASS 3 players

▶ WHEN A GAME FRANCHISE BECOMES as big, as powerful, as monopolistic as Madden, it's inevitable—hardcore fans scrutinize it to death. And why not? EA Sports adheres to a thuglike philosophy: It cripples competing products by securing exclusive licensing deals, then releases a slightly tweaked annual update with just enough to pique the interest of veterans but not enough to be considered a wholesale revision...Leaving the door wide open for the next high-revenue installment.

But such cynicism glosses over one very important fact: EA Sports generally delivers great products. Granted, occasional gameplay issues simply don't go away fast enough; however, the most vociferous complaints typically come from obsessive players who find and exploit subtle AI weaknesses year after year. Moreover, what one person perceives as a problem, another person may not

## THE WANTON DESIRES OF A FOOTBALL VIRGIN

The newbie sees things from an entirely different perspective. I know I did, coming to the PC football giant for the first time after a decade of chafing NHL picks and FIFA soccer balls. With Madden, I didn't care so much about comparisons with the 2006 model—I merely wanted EA to utterly convince me I'd been embedded inside the world's top level of football. I wanted stadiums to mimic every nuance of their real-world counterparts and players to look

TV-perfect even while stretching for overthrown passes...or when viewed from three feet away. I wanted sensibly programmed AI, total customizability, and a bevy of authentic plays and controls with which to dazzle my opposition. And for the most part, Madden complied.

However, it also delivered dull, buncated commentary that belied the game's budget-blowing 17-year pedigree. And its players seemed to glide across the turf as if running on an air-hockey table, and then perform quickie time-warps at the last millisecond to get where the coding dictated. Such transgressions didn't seriously impact the gameplay experience, but I expected more sophistication from a flagship title.

Did it matter to me that some early reviews—while awarding the highest Madden scores in years—still knocked EA Sports for its complacency? Or that the PC version didn't make use of the console version's new kicking meter? Or that certain stats are apparently stiff out of whack? Not really. I was too busy enjoying what's right

## CRUSHING BLOCKS AND NIMBLER JOCKS

Moreover, the development team really did change things up this time around. It enhanced the running game, allowing players to deftly sweep control between a back and his punishing lead blocker. It gave bell carriers a new arsenal of manually triggered evasive maneuvers. It offered a new defensive weapon

through which an entire squad can receive instructions, at the line, to break from their assigned play and fully commit to either a run or pass—a brilliant tactic if used in the right spot, but a potentially backbreaking error if not. And EA rejiggered the game's Superstar mode so you really do feel like you're guiding one player through his career. Indeed, it's hard to imagine the game without these features.

But what really strikes this Madden rookie: how incredibly busy I get in these precious few seconds before the ball is even snapped. Particularly, when gearing up for a deception-riddled multiplayer contest, I spent days poring over the manual, coordinating button presses and putting it all into practice. Playing Madden at its full capacity and mastering the split-second madness is most definitely an art.

First-timers will greedily devour it, and—judging by early online discussions—it should appeal most franchise returnees. Madden NFL 07 is EA Sports at the top of its game.

/ Gord Goble

OVERALL  
GAMING  
VERDICT

VERDICT

Murderously challenging and finely brandishing a solid roster of upgrades, Madden NFL 07 is a worthy proposition for newcomer and veteran alike.

## REALITY CHECK

IUP NETWORK	8.5/10
GAMESPOT	7.8/10
GAMESPY	4/5
IGN	8.3/10

▶▶ THE NEWBIE SEES THINGS FROM AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE.



**CASUAL CENTRAL**  
 Looking for a place  
 casual game to play? We  
 recommend heading over  
 to RealArcade at  
[www.realarcade.com](http://www.realarcade.com).

GAMING

# FALLING PIECES

OUR FAVORITE  
 WAYS TO WASTE  
 SPARE TIME

## LIGHTNING REFLEXES

WHILE MAY YOU WANT CASHBACK, *Recharged* website presents heli-hobby cluttered mission. *Recharged* ([recharged.com](http://recharged.com)) is one.

The browser and most navigable, making it a snap to find just the right way to waste your time. Lately, I've wasted a ton of time on one of Reflexive's in-house games: *Recochet Lost Worlds Recharged*. The original *Recochet* reinvented the brick-busting Breakout-style formula; *Recharged* does it one better, as Reflexive solicited the input of designers from around the world. The result: over 350 original and challenging levels, with most featuring some clever gimmick or bizarre theme (one level celebrates Herbie the Love Bug; another presents a playable entomaking PSA). Inventive new power-ups and an emphasis on tricky moving targets make *Recharged* a black hole for free time.

## SUPER TROOPERS

My other big time-burner: *Devastation Zone Trooper*, developed by OGS Software and also

available at Reflexive Arcades. I don't expect much more than disappointment from any 200 game claiming to deliver solid 3D-shooter action, but *DZT* lives up to its market hype. It's remarkable how much quality gameplay this third-person shooter packs into a SWAG download.

After you select a mission, you pilot your ship through space, dodging obstacles and shooting mines along the way. It's a nice prelude to the main terrestrial part of the game: running and gunning against a slew of enemies in a game world of destructible 3D terrain. Once you meet the mission objectives, the game shoots you back to the menu, where you can spend credits to upgrade your arsenal. It won't make you forget *Prey*...but it costs a good \$30 less and runs on just about anything but Android. —Robert Coffey



OGW alum Robert Coffey blames his inability to get anything done on "column research." He's really just playing word games online.



*Devastation Zone Trooper* is liberal with the power-ups...because it's just as liberal with the enemies.



This screen tells left of the wall of a *Recochet* level; the higher the score, the better.

## ECLIPSE II. CONTROL THE FUTURE

ILLUMINATED BACKLIT KEYS IN BLUE, RED & PURPLE

MEDIA KEYS CONTROL AUDIO / Play / Stop / Volume

VARIABLE LIGHTING CONTROL DIMMER

3 POSITION KEYBOARD ANGLES FROM ZERO SLOPE

SOFT LIGHTING HELPS REDUCE COMPUTER EYE STRAIN



What if you could change everything? The way you work. The way you play. The way you move. With the all-new Eclipse II you can. With more power and features than its predecessor, it's all here. Illuminated backlit keys that glow red or blue at the touch of a button and dim with the turn of a dial. An adjustable wrist rest and 3 keyboard angle positions that adapt to your needs for your comfort. Side and lighting to help reduce eyestrain and media transport keys that control your music effortlessly. It is more of a revolution than an evolution and it can be all yours now.

Saitek™

# WINGS OF POWER II: WWII FIGHTERS

The world's best noncombat aircraft sim

## IN THE KNOW

Developer Shockwave emulated detailed ground interaction with real towers and pilots of every included aircraft to get inside interaction and details you can't pick up in books.



OK, let's see what this button does...



Buzzing NYC in a P-51.

**PUBLISHER:** Tri Synergy **DEVELOPER:** Shockwave Productions **GENRE:** Flight Simulation **AVAILABILITY:** Retail Box \$29.99 (PC/PS2) **Everyone** **REQUIRED:** 800MHz CPU, 128MB RAM, 500MB hard drive space, Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004 **RECOMMENDED:** 1GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 1GBMS videocard, Right stick (XBOX/PS2) **None**



**HARDCORE FLIGHT-SIM FANATICS** (those who view any simulation with the wrong shade of flat black paint on the rudder trim knob as worth flying) who put massive pressure on developers to invest all their resources in pure fidelity at the cost of gameplay stand accused of driving the genre's demise. But this soaring focus on reality has an upside: It encourages products that provide an experience that the average person could never enjoy in real life. Shockwave's *Wings of Power II: WWII Fighters* (an add-on to Microsoft Flight Simulator 2004) is the perfect example of this.

Most of us who look into the cramped cockpit of a Messerschmitt Bf 109 at a flight museum and try to imagine the feeling of flying the bird know it won't ever happen. Enter Shockwave: The developer's detailed attention to reality results in planes that fly precisely—in every condition—like their real-world counterparts. You can use the actual flight manuals for these fighters and get the predicted results in your virtual aircraft. If you've ever wanted to know what it's like to take a P-51D Mustang,

Spitfire Mk IIB, P-47D-20 Thunderbolt, Bf 109-E4, or A6M5 Zero up for a spin...hop in, buckle up, and prepare for takeoff.

## WHAT WOULD YEAGER DO?

Everyone claims their virtual rendition of a WWII fighter is "real," but what sets *WWII Fighters* apart is Shockwave's passionate attention to the minutiae of details—as seen in extracts from this e-mail sent by real-life P-51 pilot Dudley Henriques and posted on the game's official forums: According to Henriques, the P-51 in *Wings of Power II* exhibits "almost perfect rudder response while taxiing, taking off, and landing. It's very much like the real thing, with almost the exact amount of lead and lag required [versus] airpilotrum affect on the rudder. This is especially noticeable on the rollout as the airspeed dissipates.... The fairing door [opening] is a nice touch. I can't tell you how many times I've told P-51 owners not to forget to pull that damn thing when parking on a hot ramp.... The stall characteristics are damn near perfect."

Such attention to detail (the fairing door?) is meant to aid the perfection-seeking sim fan. Aficionados argue online over the thousands of add-ons for Flight Simulator 2004, consistently citing the original *Wings of Power* as one of the best. A poster on SimHQ.com's forums raves, "Shockwave's Bf 109 and Spitfire cockpits are the best of any aircraft [in] any flight simulation around—worth every cent." Indeed, the virtual cockpits amaze: Almost every gauge and button is fully operational and completely readable, and each plane feels unique on the runway and in the air, both in ways you would expect (such as the tighter turn radius of the Zero over that of the Bf 109) and in a multitude of more subtle, detailed responses during flight.

*Wings of Power II* doesn't include combat (Flight Simulator 2004 is a civilian flight sim, after all), but if you really want to get a feeling for what it was like to climb in the cockpit and soar into the skies with one of these WWII legends, this is as good as it gets. /Jeff Labrecque

GAMEPLAY

VERDICT

Amazing attention to detail makes this package a hardcore flight sim fan's nirvana.

## REALITY CHECK

IUP NETWORK	9.5/10
GAMESPOT	—
GAMESPY	—
IGN	—

» THE FAIRING DOOR (OPENING) IS A NICE TOUCH. I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MANY TIMES I'VE TOLD P-51 OWNERS NOT TO FORGET TO PULL THAT DAMN THING WHEN PARKING ON A HOT RAMP.

—DUDLEY HENRIQUES, P-51 PILOT

# LINE OF ATTACK

YOUR MONTHLY  
GUIDE TO  
HARDCORE WAR-  
GAMING

## SCUTTLED

IF FLIGHT SIMULATIONS ARE A DYING genre, then naval simulations are dead and buried, with the tomb location lost entirely. We really haven't gotten any naval sims to speak of since SSi's *Fighting Steel* back in 1999; HPS Simulations' *Naval Campaigns* series (*Atlant*, *Tsushima*, and *Guadalcanal*) does a good job of modeling the action, but the presentation is so dry that the fundamental weakness of such games becomes glaringly obvious.

The problem with naval simulations as games is that players don't really have enough to do on their own, as naval sims present smaller numbers of decisions than similar-scale land-combat games. You arrange your battle line (a factor often defined by the scenario), your ships choose their targets...and that's pretty much it. In a table-top naval sim, the charm lies in moving the little model ships manually and admiring how nice they look. With a computer moving the pieces for you—and the models reduced to featureless ovals—the PC sims manage, in one fell swoop, to eliminate everything that's appealing about them.

This makes Storm Eagle Studios' new *Distant Guns* worth a look on its own. Designers Norm

Koger (the man behind *The Operational Art of War*) and Jim Rose (former head of TalonSoft Games) apparently know what these kinds of games are all about, as they chose the Battle of Tsushima and modeled it with 3D cinemathroughs. You don't necessarily get more stuff to do than in the aforementioned HPS games, but this is one case where presentation makes all the difference. *Distant Guns* is really a love letter to naval miniatures, with the kind of lens-flare sensibility that shows how, in the end, what we really want to do is play with toy boats. — **Bruce Geryk**



Longtime CGW contributor Bruce Geryk can probably kick your ass at any board game... any day of the week.

WE REALLY  
HAVEN'T GOT-  
TEN ANY NAVAL SIMS  
TO SPEAK OF SINCE  
*FIGHTING STEEL* IN 1999.

## GET THE DEMO!

Check out a 30-day "free trial" demo of *Distant Guns* at [stormeaglestudios.com](http://stormeaglestudios.com).



Would you rather play this...



...over this?

## ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY. TOTAL CONTROL



[ X52 ]

- Non-contact technology on X & Y axes, a 7° rudder bent.
- Adjustable ergonomic grip system.
- 200+ Advanced programmable buttons.
- Illuminated buttons and MFD.



[ PRO FLIGHT RUDDER PEDALS ]

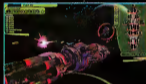
- Precision rudder axis control.
- Adjustable pedals with integrated toe brakes.
- Adjustable response, force, and feel.
- Durable, stable base.

Advanced mechanics in every detail. Unrivaled abilities in every feature. This is what you can expect from our new **Pro Flight Rudder Pedals** and **X52 Flight Control System**. Both truly magnificent works of modern technology that give you superior performance at the highest level. And while you may appreciate their fine looks and distinguished design, it is their phenomenal handling and higher intelligence that will have you smiling at the speed of sound.

Saitek™

# SWORD OF THE STARS

Star-crossed



It's not the size of the ship that matters... it's how many weapons you can fit on it.



The SOTS universe holds many mysteries beyond the interface. Random events like this often ensue, for example.



The lightning gun is good for...umm...how can I get back to the tech screen?

## THE OLD GUARD

Longtime readers may remember Electronic Arts' *Sword of the Stars* and designer Martin Dingle as the author of *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*. —*Edmund*

PLAY-DATE: Lightwave exclusive DEVELOPER: Rebellion Productions (XBOX) Strategy First (PC) Retail box cost: \$59.99. Screens: 16:9 REQUIRED: 1GB CPU: 1.5GHz RAM: 1GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard RECOMMENDED: 1.5GHz CPU, 2GB RAM MULTIPAYER: 8 players

**MOST ONLINE REVIEWS OF SPACE SIM** *Sword of the Stars* are mildly positive, noncommittal softballs. It's a difficult game to decipher and manage—and no reviewer wants to leave himself open to the charge that he didn't understand a game well enough to not like it. It's better to be vaguely positive.

That said, I'm baffled by statements like this: "It's great to see a 3D playfield, at least on the star map, that's actually both workable and contributes depth to the gameplay." This comes from Yahoo! Games' Mike Smith, regarding SOTS' unplayable strategic map. He's right that it contributes depth, but only in the literal sense in that it adds a z-axis...much to the chagrin of anyone interested in seeing what's happening without having to refocus his eyes as if staring into one of those posters with fuzzy dots that somehow resolve into a unicorn if you look at them in a certain way.

"The galactic map is presented in a nifty 3D form that can be rotated and zoomed in and out at will. It's a slick piece of work, and one that's reminiscent of 1995's *Ascendancy*," says GameSpot critic Jason Ocampo, perhaps unintentionally drawing a comparison to another really awful space strategy game before awarding SOTS 7.4 points worth of "good."

Many reviews praise the streamlined ship-building, but they fell to note the lack of information about components on the shipbuilding screen. What's the difference between gun X and torpedo Y? Where's the line between "streamlined" and "indecipherable"?

## DAMN THOSE DISTRACTING OVERLAYS

The tactical battles—which are the sloppy, sclerotic heart of the game—also receive numerous compliments. During a battle, you're supposed to draw conclusions about damage and weapon interaction by visual cues. "Remarkably thorough visual damage modeling," IGN's Steve Butts calls it in his 7.7 review. The developers seem proud of the fact that you don't get a health bar for your ships; the manual calls a health bar "another distracting overlay." A recent patch added color-coded icons that give a broad indication of a ship's health, maybe with a few more of these "distracting overlays" patched in SOTS might become more manageable. You're supposed to manually target weapons as if you were playing *Star Fleet Battles*. "The way this all works so naturally is truly remarkable," writes IGN's Butts of the game's expectation that

you're going to zoom in and click on individual parts of enemy ships.

Frankly, I think SOTS is awful—almost train-wreck awful for how badly and boldly it spays out in front of you, as uncommunicative and unrepentant as a surly teenager. I'm sure the developers have no problem rotating the 3D map, remembering what weapons do, and managing their wayward-inclined ships during tactical battles. After all, they made the damn thing...but what about the rest of us?

"*Sword of the Stars* is the best candidate in years to make 'you go, I go' interstellar empire-building accessible to hurry-up junkies like you and rest of the twitchy masses," says Game Radar's (and CGW's) Matt Pockhem, addressing his readers as if they were convulsing from a lack of superficial games. They're in for a rude surprise when they all down to try to figure out *Sword of the Stars*. —*Tom Chick*

IGN.COM  
GAMING  
VERDICT

IGN.COM  
GAMING  
VERDICT

A mess of bad interface and design.

## REALITY CHECK

IGN NETWORK	4/10
GAMESTOP	7.4/10
GAMESPY	3/5
IGN	7.7/10

FRANKLY, I THINK SOTS IS AWFUL—ALMOST TRAIN-WRECK AWFUL.

# CRISIS ON INFINITE SERVERS

CGW'S MONTHLY TRAVELOGUE OF THE ENDLESS MMORPG LANDSCAPE

## TWICE SMITTEN

BEING A NEWBIE IN AN MMO ALWAYS makes for the best of gaming experiences. It's a rare time when everything feels fresh and new, but recently it also hit me with an uncanny sense of déjà vu—after all, lightning doesn't strike in the same place twice, does it? Well, for me it just did.

My first experience with newbie-dom, as well as with death (the two always manage to go together somehow), took place in the now-aged classic *Ultima Online*. You see, back then player killers (or PKs) ruled the game, and you only needed two spells to PK someone—Paralyze and Lightning Bolt. First you'd cast Paralyze; if that spell succeeded, then congratulations—you won! After that, you simply cast Lightning Bolt on your incapacitated (and oftentimes profanity-spewing) victim until he finally perished.

The first time this happened to me, I'd just looted a meager fortune in gold from an abandoned ore camp when I ran into a menacing-looking fellow wearing a gray robe and a bone helm. I hesitated—should I flee, or was he really harmless? The magical words "An Ex Port" appeared over the grim reaper's head, and I found myself frozen, unable to move. The lightning followed a moment later; my heart, and even time itself (or maybe just my dial-up connect or)

seemed to stand still until the screen finally faded to black, followed by the awful UD death-moan and the words "You are dead." I lost everything I owned—including my newfound fortune in gold.

## SPACE RACE

Fast-forward nine years from fantasy past to sci-fi future, where I recently found myself living the newbie experience all over again in the vast spaces of *Eve Online*. I had just invested all my money in a load of planetary vehicles I could sell in a nearby star system for a healthy profit...but as I approached the local jump gate, a hulking battle cruiser came to a halt right in front of me. I hesitated, thinking to myself, "Come on, what are the odds he could actually be a PK?" As if I'd jinxed it, he activated a warp scrambler on me, disabling my engines and effectively paralyzing me, preventing any means of escape. Seconds later, a staccato of laser fire tore my poor ship to shreds, and the pirate made off with the full contents of my cargo bay.

I immediately felt...well, shocked at how I'd died the exact same way I had so long ago in *UO*. But, after thinking about it, I realized that getting PK'd didn't even make me feel bad—it made *Eve* feel just like home. It also made me realize how much I missed this type of gameplay.

Other MMOs embrace quite the opposite mentality as a key to success, codifying their

player base as a parent would an infant. For me, this risk-free approach waters down the feeling of living in a virtual world. Life is only as sweet as death is painful; sure, I lost everything, but the more you stand to lose, the more you care about what you have. That makes any MMO infinitely more gripping, and I'm glad at least one developer still appreciates this effect instead of catering to the lowest common denominator. Only 125,000 people (give or take) play *Eve* so far as a result, but that's only one side of the statistic. The way I see it *Eve* boasts 125,000 loyal fans and continues to grow even after three years in a very heated market.

Lightning can indeed strike twice. I'm taking its scorch mark as the hallmark of something truly great. **Matthew Chase**



Matthew Chase remembers when 30-year-old Apple II sites like Bob Bishop's Bamber constituted the hottest gaming action around.



▲ An *Ultima Online* PK encounter from the days of old. Pay the toll or heads will roll.



▲ As the less-respecting PK should underestimate the importance of looking menacing. Or at least ship. Look, I am your father!



▲ This guy's epithet: "Killed because of name."

AFTER THINKING ABOUT IT, I REALIZED THAT GETTING PK'D DIDN'T EVEN MAKE ME FEEL BAD—IT MADE *EVE* FEEL JUST LIKE HOME



▲ That ship disappearing to the blazing fireball used to be me.

# DARKSTAR ONE

More fun than meets the eye



## STRATEGY FIRST?

Ascoron, DarkStar One's German design house, is better known for strategy titles like Star Wars and Port Royale 2.

Star systems are populated with planets, space stations, and various ships just going about their business.

In a throwback to the Desert days, some sequences require you to fly into (and desperately grope your way out of) asteroids.

**PUBLISHER:** ODV Software **DEVELOPER:** Ascoron Entertainment **GENRE:** Space Sci-Fi **AVAILABILITY:** Retail Box (PC/MAC) **TECH REQUIREMENTS:** 1.5GB RAM, 512MB RAM, 5.6GB hard drive space, 288MB videocard **RECOMMENDED:** 3-GB RAM, 1GB RAM, 700 hard drive space, 256MB videocard **RIGHT CLICK MULTIPLE:** None

AS MAJOR DEVELOPERS CONCENTRATE on the four basic food groups of PC gaming (MMO, RTS, FPS, and sports), it falls on the shoulders of smaller companies to sample the less-popular menu items. One such item: the space sim—the genre of choice for designers in the early-to-mid 1990s who sought to showcase their technological bells and whistles (and B-list FMV acting skills). Having reached its pinnacle with the fantastic *FreeSpace 2*, the genre abruptly petered out, taking with it the sun-kissed bones of Mark Hires's onscreen career.

So, German design house Ascoron takes a bit of a risk with its latest offering, *DarkStar One*. With this highly competent—but nevertheless totally conventional—space sim, Ascoron gambles that former *Wing Commander* addicts are jonesing for a bit of nostalgia. With the mild success of other recent European-made space sims, like the *Space Rangers* and *X* series of games, it isn't a bad bet. But the game hasn't proved particularly popular (never even cracking the top 250 of Amazon.com's Computer & Video Games sales charts).

## STRIKING BACK

If some of Ascoron's designers get canned over *DarkStar One*, it's a shame—those sales

figures add up to nothing less than a bum rap. Sure, the game is highly derivative of *Freelancer*, and sure, the graphics won't give *Crysis* a...err...crisis of confidence. But the free-wheeling, guns-blazing gameplay, quirky, lost-in-translation dialogue and clever little touches hearken back to a classic era.

The pitch is simple: Your dad died mysteriously, but not before bequeathing you his greatest invention: the flux capacitor, with which you can travel back in time to astonish bewildered bobby-saxers with the sounds of Chuck Berry. No, actually it's a spaceship called *DarkStar One*, fully modular and capable of simultaneously taking on dozens of ornery star pirates or uppity space cops (depending on what kind of character you choose to play). At the helm, you'll travel to far-flung star systems, solve the mystery of your father's death...and, yeah, save the galaxy, too.

Now, all this sounds pretty lame on paper (which may account for the distinct lack of online buzz about *DarkStar One*), yet the game itself is surprisingly entertaining. This core gameplay consists of space combat and ship/food-out management, both of which get handled elegantly. Winning battles gamers you more money for upgrades (purchased via a long and

intricate menu), which, in turn, lets you take on tougher and more interesting missions. Further, you have free rein to tackle the kinds of missions you like for whomever you like. The only real gripe: Enemy A.I. isn't as sharp as it could be. Fortunately, *DarkStar One* generally picks up the slack in quality by upping the quantity.

## A NEW HOPE?

The space sim's gradual fall from grace in recent years is indicative of a shift in gaming tastes, but that doesn't mean the genre's run out of steam...or mysterious alien artifacts. While *DarkStar One* certainly won't single-handedly resurrect a bygone era, it will please gamers who fondly recall those days...and may even bring in the odd newbie or two. Perhaps, if a big-budget studio were willing to take a risk on a game like this—throwing some serious graphics and an original story line into the mix—gamers might just have reason to dust off those flight sticks. /Eric Neighar

POWERED BY  
**GAMING**

**VERDICT**

No points for originality...but score one for fun.

## REALITY CHECK

TUP NETWORK	7/10
GAMESPOT	8.1/10
GAMESPY	2.5/5
IGN	8/10

YOU'LL TRAVEL TO FAR-FLUNG STAR SYSTEMS, SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF YOUR FATHER'S DEATH, AND, YEAH, SAVE THE GALAXY, TOO.

Check it out:  
[www.espn.com/videogames](http://www.espn.com/videogames)



# Welcome to Sports Gamer Paradise

News

Reviews

Cheats

## Pigskin Dreams

With the typical college games are early look at fall line force when you can see college and pro football in the same area. **Score**

• [2009 NFL Schedule](#)

Specialized

NFL.com

It's time to take the...  
comp. We've got...

Simulations

Video Podcasts

**ESPN**  
VIDEO GAMES

Brought to you by ESPN.com,  
The Worldwide Leader in Sports  
in conjunction with 1UP Network



# TOM vs. BRUCE

## DOMINIONS 3: THE AWAKENING

Tom vs. The Guy Who Wrote the Game's Manual



PLAYED BY: **Shane** (Game Developer, *Shogun: Total War*); **DAVID** (Game Designer, *Age of Empires*); **DAVID** (Game Designer, *Age of Empires*); **DAVID** (Game Designer, *Age of Empires*) **CONTR.**: Tom: *Band Strategy*; Bruce: *Warfare*; **REQUIREMENTS**: 660MHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 10GB hard drive space **RECOMMENDED**: 1GHz CPU, 1GB RAM **MAXIMUM**: 2GB RAM

**TOM:** I JUST WANT TO START WITH a disclaimer about *Dominions 3*. Guess who wrote the manual? If you guessed me, you're wrong. If you guessed Bruce Geryk, you're right. I just want you to keep this Tom vs. Bruce in mind next time you feel bad for how much Bruce sucks at, say, a real-time strategy game or *The Sims*.

**BRUCE:** I'm playing the Yomi, a Japanese-themed nation with demons in it. I saw *Spirited Away* and *Princess Mononoke*, so I know that having demons in a Japanese fantasy world is very realistic. The demon I plan to use is the Dai-Oni, which is a priest-mage-general kind of guy who just happens to be huge and cause fear. I'm going to make him something called a "supercombatant," which is the term for turning *Dominions* into a role-playing game by choosing one guy and equipping him with phat loot. In order to get magic gear in *Dominions*, you have to make it, which means doing research. That's fine—I'm good at that.

**TOM:** One of the new races in *Dominions 3*: monkeys. Monkeys! How can you pass that up? Naturally, I'll assume the role of the monkeys in this game. I will defeat Bruce with a monkey rush. I can imagine him talking about it at the watercooler at work the next day. "Yeah, Tom just came at me with a bunch of monkeys—hundreds of the little guys! Nothing I could do about it." It's

the most humiliating defeat you can inflict on a person, short of, like, a kitten rush.

**BRUCE:** My pretender is a Lord of Plenty with *Astral-4*, *Nature-4*, and *Earth-1*. I took the *Nature* skill because my Dai-Oni is sacred, and having a *Nature-4* pretender gives my Dai-Oni *Regeneration +5* when they're blessed. I also take *Order-3* to crank up my income. Most importantly, though, I take *Dominion-8*—*Ess* means my dominion has an 80 percent chance of spreading, and my high maximum dominion makes it really hard to make a dent in my religious dominance, once established. On a small map, it's easy to get out-dominated... something I hope happens to Tom and not me.

**TOM:** I make a pretender by selecting the most fearsome unit available—a dragon, naturally. To get extra points, I let my dragon sleep in. He's like me in that he can't be bothered to get out of bed before noon (or Year Two, in the dragon's case). I spend points jacking up as many of the scales as I can, then I spend points on dominion, which will help me spread the monkey religion. I take the rest on a gift certificate.

**BRUCE:** We're playing on a large-sized random map, which gives us about 40 provinces. We've set the victory conditions at four victory points out of the five available on the map. Two such provinces lie near our respective capitals, with another kind of out in the wilderness.

**TOM:** My strategy: build as many cheap little monkeys as I can every turn, and then sail forth under the leadership of my damn dirty ape commanders with their stinking paws. Eventually, I'll back up my monkey blitzkrieg with ape warriors and holy guys called Yavanas. I have no idea what the Yavanas have to do with monkeys. They're apparently some sort of Hindu dudes, which makes me imagine a horde of invading monkeys with Hare Krishnas bringing up the rear. What a way to beat Bruce Geryk! The only thing better would be the kittens with a bunch of Santa Clauses following behind.

**BRUCE:** A big sea divides the two halves of the map. The only nonwater connection is along the southern map edge, where a couple of single provinces form a sort of bridge.

**TOM:** My favorite thing about this map—other than the fact that it's random, which is a really sweet addition to the *Dominions* games—is that I start with a bunch of farmlands nearby. Farmlands are great for gold income. Imagine, if you will, thousands of well-fed, fat little monkeys conquering Bruce Geryk. That's me in the game Bruce, on the other hand, is smack-dab in the middle of a bunch of nonriver forests.

**BRUCE:** My target is Kepna, in the center of the map. Thanks to the sea and a mountain range, Kepna is a bottleneck, controlling access to the central victory point. If I can take Kepna

LAST MONTH...  
Tom's earth golem led Bruce's army in the decisive battles and game PaNem.



TWO GAMERS  
ENTER, ONE  
GAMER WINS

## ▶ Tom Chick

In addition to being one of the videogame industry's most prolific freelance journalists, Tom also runs the popular website [QuarterToThree.com](http://QuarterToThree.com).



## ▶ Bruce Garyk

Longtime CGW contributor Bruce Garyk has written about videogames for over 20 years; he loves war games like most people love oxygen.



▶ Curious George has the power to vomit fire.

and build a fortress there, Tom's basically sealed into one third of the map, leaving the other two thirds under my control.

**TOM:** My prophet, the Monkey Whisperer, runs into a bit of trouble. Monkeys are fine against light infantry and militias...but they're having trouble taking a Horse Tribe territory. The tribe's cavalry turns back two waves of monkey attacks, and I don't seize the territory until a third attack. I'm getting bogged down fighting an upstart computer-controlled Genghis Khan wannabe when I should be moving forward to head off Bruce.

**BRUCE:** Ichtyidat! One of the land-bridge provinces, Vocan, is defended by Ichtyids, which are these amphibious fish. This is good, because if a province is defended by a certain type of unit, you can usually recruit that same unit once you capture the province. Priority 1A just became getting to Vocan first and recruiting a bunch of these guys, then gobbling up ocean provinces. I hope Tom's dragon can't swim. Can any dragons swim?

**TOM:** Unfortunately, my monkeys are again beaten back by Horse Tribes. My commander, Clint Eastwood, can't make any headway with his light monkey infantry, so I start building up a complement of heavy apes. Meanwhile, another commander, Clyde, dies while fighting the Jaguar Tribe in nearby swamps. Since my monkey rush went the poorly against the independent territories, I'm worried about how it's gonna fare against Bruce's samurai warriors. I'll find out soon enough: One of my scouts, Bad Dates, found Bruce's army marching up toward Kepna. Unless he slows down, he's going to get there well before me.

**BRUCE:** I got to Kepna ahead of Tom and start building a fortress. It takes three turns. This is gonna be a nail-biter.

**TOM:** In early spring of Year Two, a dragon wakes up in my capital city of Kailias. Get your ass out of bed, Mr. Pretender! No snooze button for you! Curious George is put to work flying around and single-handedly capturing neutral territories around my side of the map.

**BRUCE:** Uh-oh. One turn left until my fort is finished, and what shows up next door but about 1 billion monkeys. No, seriously—the monkey loots in that province take up about six lines. Show-off! If he attacks me and wins, I'll lose all

The monkey rush doesn't work so great against Horse Tribes. ▶



## I SPEND POINTS ON DOMINION, WHICH WILL HELP ME SPREAD THE MONKEY RELIGION.

the money I spent building the fort, the temple, and the laboratory.

**TOM:** In the summer of Year Two, Bruce and I fight our first big battle. It doesn't go well, and I'm not entirely sure why. I think it's mainly because Bruce wrote the manual for this game and I didn't.

**BRUCE:** Tom makes the right (and obvious) choice and comes after me in Kepna. Hundreds of Tom's monkeys charge straight at my province defense. I've built 40 defense, which gives me something like 40 bandits, 40 Ko-Onis, and 20 Ao-Oeas. That's 100 extra guys. But that's just the cannon fodder—my big advantage is the Bakemona archers in my regular army, which I place in back and order to rain volley upon volley of arrows on Tom's monkeys (each with an average protection of 4...if that). That's a real technical way of saying that his unarmed monkeys had to cross a huge field while my archers used them for target practice. The ones that made it were engaged by my foot soldiers. They never had a chance.

**TOM:** The two things I learned from this battle: 1) I should build a whole bunch of archers, and 2) monkeys are quick to flee, even with their prophet, the Monkey Whisperer, preaching the Sermon of Courage spell to the little guys. Maybe this whole monkey-rush strategy is ill-advised. I

outnumbered Bruce...and according to Dom-iana's magical under-the-hood calculations, I ended up losing half my army while he lost nine guys. This game is blatantly antimonkey.

**BRUCE:** I actually didn't lose nine guys total. I just lost nine guys that weren't part of my province defense. The game doesn't account for province defense in the battle reports because the province defense all comes back, anyway. So next turn, I'll have those 100 extra guys again. That was Tom's best chance to win a battle in that province; the longer he waits, the more reinforcements I bring up.

**TOM:** Great...Bruce managed to build a fortress in Kepna right after the battle. Out of sheer frustration, I throw another wave of monkeys at him. Hopefully, I can whittle away some of his defenders. No such luck—this time, I lose half my army, including some commanders. I only kill 14 of his dudes.

**BRUCE:** My plan was to research to Alteration-6 so I could have my prophet see Soul Vortex, a spell that fatigues all the units around him and makes them a lot easier to hit. The problem: I'm up against a bazillion monkeys. I would probably be better off researching some summoning spells, like the one that gets me flying sacred units. Why should Tom's dragon be the only one who flies? ▶

We have now taken control of the province Kepbur. Our forces met no resistance. An enemy Temple was found and it was swiftly razed.

Exit

▶ Tom needs to build some province defenses.

**TOM:** The good news is my awesome income—I might be losing, but I'm rich...which makes it all the more stupid that I haven't built defenses in my rear territories. Bruce has stealth units or some such nonsense running around, grabbing my undefended land. So I dispatch commanders Bongo and Bush-or-Chimp back from the front to deal with Bruce's impromptu Resistance fighters.

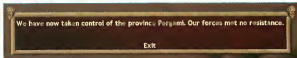
**BRUCE:** Here's the situation: I have three VP provinces locked up, either behind my fort in Kepria or way off in my half of the map, which Tom isn't likely to reach for a while. A single VP province lies on the north coast. Now that I've captured a sea province, I can build up a big army of Tritons (fish-men who unfortunately can't leave the water) and conquer the coast. That will let me move my amphibious Ichtyids through the sea and invade that fourth VP province—kind of like the Normandy invasion, except I won't have to nuke the Russians for Berlin, since that fourth province will win me the game.

**TOM:** Since Curious George, my dragon pretender/god, has done so well mopping up independents, I fly him over the mountains closing off Kepria. By leaping the mountains and a territory on their far side, I can grab a victory point location right behind the Kepria bottleneck. Then I can pump some of my vast wealth into a powerful defense force.

At least that's the idea. But I've used Curious George recklessly and he's accumulated quite a few wounds at this point. He's Weakened, has a Limp, a Chest Wound, and a Never-Healing Wound. Dominions remembers that kind of stuff! In the ensuing battle against the independents, Curious George is fatigued to the point of retreat...but when he tries to flee, he has nowhere to go, since I flew him in. As a result, my pretender gets killed. "Where is your god now?" is a perfectly valid question for someone to ask me.

**BRUCE:** Even better luck—one of the sea provinces I conquered lets me recruit Mermen, which are amphibious. So now I can build up in Vocab and this undersea province, secure in the knowledge that Tom can't get to me.

**TOM:** I am so over monkeys. I've been putting my expensive Hindu magicians (whom I can readily afford, what with all the rich farmlands on my side of the map) to work researching conjuring magic. Now I've summoned a bazillion lions, along with a couple of cave drakes and some celestial dancing beings called Apsaras (I guess they're good for morale or something). From my controlled territories, I've also marshaled heavy



Tom still hasn't built any province defenses.



Tom—build province defenses!

## NOW I'M DOWN TO PLAN D, WHICH INVOLVES HOPING BRUCE'S PC CRASHES AND THE TURN PASSES WITHOUT HIM TAKING HIS MOVE.

infantry, barbarians, a few Amazons, and some of those pesky Horse Tribe units that gave me such a hard time earlier in the game—time to try a counterattack.

**BRUCE:** Tom is making the classic Dominions mistake of just collecting a bunch of units without coordinating a magic strategy. This can work...except not so much against the guy who wrote the manual. I have some evil sorceresses called Hennyas, who teach Tom with fire spells. You know, the kind you use in D&D—fireballs and such. Tom's also clumped his lions together in one big squad, which reduces the number of lions fighting at any given time, thanks to the laws of geometry. Eventually, arrows and fireballs cause one morale check too many and Tom's lions slink off.

**TOM:** So that happened.

**BRUCE:** And that, as they say, is that. My Mermen and Ichtyids stormed out of the ocean and took the fourth VP province without much trouble. Wait a minute—why didn't I win? I have four VP provinces! Tom's hexed the game!

**TOM:** Hal Bruce forgot to capture the victory-point location closest to his starting territory. I was actually going to summon a bunch of werewolves, long-distance, to take it from him. Unfortunately, none of my Hindu magicians are good enough

at Nature magic to summon long-distance werewolves. Plan B involves hoping Bruce doesn't notice that last victory-point location.

**BRUCE:** Err, yeah, I guess I forgot about that one right next to my capital. So I quickly recruit an army of archers and send them out with some Hennyas to capture it.

**TOM:** OK, I'm down to Plan C, which involves a counterattack on Bruce's beachhead. The counterattack consists almost entirely of monkeys, since my better troops are at the front, down by Kepria.

**BRUCE:** I spend all my money on province defense in that coastal VP province. It would be really embarrassing to have Tom take it and deny me the victory just because I forgot how to count.

**TOM:** OK, so I could have guessed that the plan with the monkeys wasn't going to work very well. Now I'm down to Plan D, which involves hoping Bruce's PC crashes and the turn passes without him taking his move.

**BRUCE:** That's better. I wipe out the Deer Tribe defending the VP province and win the game in the late fall of Year Three after 37 turns. That's about half the time our Dominions II game took. Using the victory point is a good way to limit the length of the game. Or, in Tom's case, the duration of the pan /



The sad demise of Curious George...who was Weakened, Limping, and afflicted with Never-Healing and Chest Wounds.



Tom mounts a final counterattack against the Guy Who Wrote the Game's Manual (aka Bruce).

# REALITY CHECK

YOUR HANDY GUIDE TO WHAT WE SAY—AND WHAT THEY SAY—ABOUT THE LATEST IN PC GAMING



## COMPANY OF HEROES

**We say:** "You're going to hear folks talk about this being a banner year for RTS games. That's true, depending on whether you thought *Rise of Legends* or *The Battle for Middle-earth II* were great, good, or merely average. *Company of Heroes* brooks no such debate." —Matt Peckham, 1UP.com (10/10)

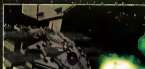
**They say:** "It's a brilliant combination of incredibly deep real-time strategy, beautiful presentation, and innovative features that make it one of the best gaming experiences of 2006 to date." —GameSpy (5/5)



## IRON WARRIORS: T-72 TANK COMMAND

**We say:** "Tank sims are few and far between, but luckily, they're generally worth playing. *Iron Warriors* doesn't break that trend, and although it lacks the *JoJo de sire* of the classic *Steel Beasts*, it's still pretty solid." —Bruce Geryk, 1UP.com (6/10)

**They say:** "Insufficient documentation, an unreliable engine, and some obvious gaffes in terms of realism make *Iron Warriors* a hard sell for the sim fans out there." —IGN (6/10)



## LEGO STAR WARS II: THE ORIGINAL TRILOGY

**We say:** "Like any good sequel, *Lego Star Wars II* improves on the original in almost every way. But most importantly, it's about the good episodes now. For that reason alone, [it's] one of [this fall's] most enjoyable games." —Sam Kennedy, 1UP.com (6/10)

**They say:** "The concept itself isn't quite as potent as it was the first time around... Still, anyone with even a sliver of nostalgia for *Star Wars* will find this to be a fun, good-natured romp." —GameSpot (7.7/10)



## PERIMETER: EMPEROR'S TESTAMENT

**We say:** "Apart from die-hard fans of the original *Perimeter*, gamers will be better served sticking to more mainstream RTS games than putting in the heavy lifting needed to pick up *Emperor's Testament*." —Eric Neigher, 1UP.com (5.5/10)

**They say:** "The concepts of energy management, unit morphing, and land leveling definitely set *Emperor's Testament* apart from the rest of the RTS titles on the market." —IGN (7.6/10)



## THE SHIP

**We say:** "[The] unique art, along with the appropriate period music for atmosphere, help turn the offset, dark pleasure of being in a confined space trying to kill off your shipmates one at a time (even as they hunt you) into a creepy re/ro-emp." —Patrick Joynt, 1UP.com (6.6/10)

**They say:** "*The Ship* is one of the best and most innovative multiplayer games available right now, particularly at its cut-rate price of \$20." —GameSpot (8.3/10)



## WORLD WAR II COMBAT: IWO JIMA

**We say:** "Two *Jima* looks and plays like a tech demonstration from a couple of gifted grade schoolers, with deplorable graphics, clunky controls, and completely unimaginative level design." —Di Luo, 1UP.com (3/10)

**They say:** "If you're looking for a cheap shooter, go to the store and grab any game off the shelf, and you're practically guaranteed to have a better game than this one." —GameSpot (2/10)

# SCORECARD

Available now

GAME	RELEASE	1UP NETWORK	IGN	GAMESTOP	GAMESPY	IGN
Age of Pirates: Caribbean Tales	Sept 2006	4/10	—	—	—	—
Civilization IV: Warlords	July 2006	8/10	5.6/10	3.5/5	—	8.4/10
Company of Heroes	Sept 2006	10/10	9/10	5/5	—	9.4/10
Dungeon Siege II: Broken World	Aug 2006	6/10	6.3/10	3/5	—	8.3/10
Glory of the Roman Empire	July 2006	6/10	5.8/10	3/5	—	7.5/10
Iron Warriors: T-72 Tank Command	Sept 2006	6/10	—	—	—	6/10
Lego Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy	Sept 2006	8/10	7.7/10	—	—	8/10
Perimeter: Emperor's Testament	Sept 2006	5.5/10	7.3/10	—	—	7.6/10
The Ship	July 2006	6.5/10	6.3/10	—	—	7.4/10
World War II Combat: Iwo Jima	July 2006	3/10	2/10	—	—	3/10

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE 1UP NETWORK

For more thorough reviews on the latest PC games, point your web browser to [CQW.1UP.com](http://CQW.1UP.com) today!

1UP NETWORK

**EXTREME TECH**

Check out some more  
customize-to-order  
cases with lots of color  
mod PC case modding at  
[ExtremeTech.com](http://ExtremeTech.com)

**PIMP YOUR RIG**

**COFFEE-TABLE COMPUTERS** Plexiglas PCs. Creepy life-sized anime dolls stuffed with motherboards. A quick Google search and you'd think you'd seen just about every possible PC case mod under the sun. But we weren't satisfied. And so our partners at ExtremeTech.com sent out a call online for the few, the proud, the geeky—our readers—to find out what a good case mod really is.

The challenge: Test your imagination and engineering knowledge by building your own PC and doing something with it besides shoving components into the same boring beige box. The designer of the sweetest rig would walk away with the King Nerd crown, the respect of our resident tech dorks, and enough PC components to assemble his own killer gaming rig, including a Cooler Master Mystique 631 PC case, a Cooler Master extreme 600W power supply, and a Core 2 Duo processor. Read on to see some of our favorite cases. Then turn the page to find out who we named the big winner.



▲ This 1969 Boss 302 Mustang mod will race you for pink slips, punch you in the face, and steal your girlfriend. You got a problem with that, punk?

# THE RIGHT STUFF

The search for the ultimate case mod



Someone is going to be upgrading his computer soon. Is it you? ExtremeTech's Loyd Case tells all.



▲ Check out that fan under the hood. Simple, but it still says this is one badass case box.

## THE MOD: 1969 BOSS 302 MUSTANG

The Modder: Craig Tate

**THE STORY:** "The 1969 Boss 302 (see photo, pg. 108) is, without a doubt, one of the best street rods in existence. Unfortunately, my issue is that I am 6-foot-8, and I don't fit into the car very well, so I had to settle on making a case mod instead. My PC takes lots of influence from the design of that beautiful car—fastback shape on the back of the scope; all forward-facing front bezel lights made white to look like a dashboard display; engine compartment-styled internals and cabling, et cetera.

It starts with custom authentic 1968 Boss-style side striping, but I replaced the '302' engine displacement with a more appropriate FX-57 designation. I arranged the interior of the chassis to look like an engine compartment with an emphasis on swooping pipes—CPU heat sink and Gigabyte GeForce 6800 GT videocard heat sinks—and an air manifold mod to the top of the heat-sink fan. I crafted a hood scoop from aluminum, spray foam, fiberglass, Bondo, and a whole lotta elbow grease. I even switched out the LED lights in the CoolDrive 3, Real Power voltage VU meter, mouse, and Satek keyboard with matching white LED lights and paint. After all the work, this is now my daily-use machine for LAN parties and general gaming. It's becoming my web dev platform as well."

**WE SAY:** Grease monkeys that spend weekends tuning up muscle cars have a whole lot in common with PC tweekers—and this rig proves it. With its sweet styling, this PC scoop anything but nerdy. Make the hood scoop a little bigger, and we'd karjack it from you at your next LAN party.

## UNDER THE HOOD

**CASE:** Cooler Master Geminari 031  
**PROCESSOR:** AMD Athlon 64 FX-57  
**MOTHERBOARD:** ECS KH1 SLI Extreme  
**RAM:** 1GB (2x512MB) Crucial Ballistix Toccara  
**GRAPHICS CARD:** Two Gigabyte GeForce 6800 GT  
**OPERATING SYSTEM:** Windows XP  
**STORAGE:** Seagate Barracuda X-81  
**CD/DVD:** Pioneer SATA DVD-RW  
**HARD DRIVE:** 300GB hard drive  
**POWER SUPPLY:** Cooler Master Real Power 550W  
**(modified to an SLI)**  
**KEYBOARD:** Cooler Master Hyper 48  
**MOUSE:** Logitech mouse

## THE MOD: UAL 737

The Modder: Brian Carter (aka Boddaker)

**THE STORY:** "My dad is a retired United Airlines mechanic, with 39 years of service. I wanted to pay tribute by building him a Boeing 737 case.

In order to keep the size relatively small and still fit all the components inside, I went with a pudgy, cartoonish look. I also chose to build into the right half so the PC could be set up against a wall or hung up using a monitor wall-mount system. Since I had to be reasonably lightweight, it's made of acrylic instead of wood or aluminum.

The center section holds the motherboard, the front nose houses the two hard drives, and the tail section is where the power supply is mounted. The DVD/OD drive is hidden in the wing, and discs are loaded through a slot in the leading edge. The keyboard and mouse receiver are integrated into the wing, and the Cooler Master Jet 7 CPU cooler is attached underneath and functions as an intake fan.

Since the motherboard was deep inside the midsection, I needed to provide an easy way to plug everything in. A standard front-mount I/O panel built under the tail did the trick. In addition to the audio, USB, FireWire, and game ports, I added a network port, custom United-logo power switch, reset button, and the AC adapter plug for the mouse docking station. After six months, it was time for the finishing touch: a commemorative plaque dedicating the case to my dad.

**WE SAY:** Brian's tale of making a machine for his retired pop touched our cold, shriveled hearts. And being able to crack outdated, lame jokes about getting motherf---ing spyware off his motherf---ing plane is a nice bonus as well. Overall, this solid-looking and unique piece works pretty in any flight-simulation game. **Fly, B. Fly, B.**



▲ Brian's dad flew 100+ first-class. Well, at least in Flight Simulator X, he will.

## UNDER THE HOOD

**PROCESSOR:** AMD Athlon 64 FX-60  
**MOTHERBOARD:** Asus ADR-SLI  
**RAM:** 1GB GSkill DDR PC3200  
**GRAPHICS CARD:** XFX GeForce 7800 GT  
**DVD DRIVE:** Pioneer Slimline slot-loading DVD/CD  
**HARD DRIVE:** Two 80GB Western Digital hard drives  
**(RAID 0)**  
**POWER SUPPLY:** Thermaltake Pure Power 600W  
**KEYBOARD:** Zalman CMPS7705 CPU cooler  
**MOUSE:** Logitech LX 700 cordless keyboard  
**MOUSE:** Logitech MX 1000 cordless laser mouse

THE  
WINNER

## THE MOD: BATMAN BEGINS

The Modder: Alex Wiley

**THE STORY:** "Why Batman Begins? I was excited for the new movie—yes, this case mod started that long ago. The project dragged on for over a year and five months, but it was worth it. This is easily the most intense project I've done to date.

The PC is made out of aluminum and weighs in at around 50 pounds with all the components inside. And, while I haven't measured it, the steel stand the PC sits on probably adds another 50 pounds—so trust me, a strong wind won't knock this thing over. I painted the case black using PPG basecoat/clearcoat for the interior and exterior. I added cold cathode lights underneath the center piece—the power supply—and clusters of LEDs light up the two hard drive cages. I have one logo for the old *Batman* movie and one for the new movie. A slot-loading 16x DVD-RW drive sits just underneath the motherboard, as does a lot of wiring. With a case that is 55 inches wide, you have to find extra long cables for everything.

With such an odd shape, most people wonder where the cables plug in. I had to reroute most of the motherboard plugs—VGA, DVI, audio, LAN, USB, S-Video,

and so on—to the back of the case. From there, you can plug into any of the ports and send the cables down the stand. The square tubing sends cables down the stand and out of the bottom to eliminate any ugly mass of cables. With the 40-inch LCD in front, I doubt it'll really matter."

**WE SAY:** Did Alex break into the Batcave and steal the Dark Knight's rig? This PC is damn solid and, quite honestly, a little intimidating. Which, we suppose, is the point—you want to strike fear into the hearts of gamers when you light this thing up. For outstanding design—and the ability to cater to the comic geeks on staff—we have ourselves a winner!

## UNDER THE HOOD

PROCESSOR: AMD Athlon 64 3000+  
RAM: 512M Membliss DDR2500 RAM  
GPU: NVIDIA GEFORCE 6200M ATI x1900 XL video card  
DRIVE: 54x DVD-RW drive  
HARD DRIVE: 300GB Maxtor hard drive



→ Holy cool computer, Batman!



## THE MOD: THE COFFEE TABLE

The Modder: William Urbina

**THE STORY:** "The Coffee Table is my second case mod. Following the success of my first mod, The Desk, I decided to continue bringing further functionality to my computers than what the internal components could provide. The idea for this coffee table mod came to me as I was sitting on my couch playing a competitive game of *Halo* with my roommate. In one intense moment, I accidentally knocked over a glass of Coke. I had set carelessly on the rug. I decided it was time to get a coffee table. It came to me then that this piece of furniture could also fit my living room into my computer network—this coffee table could act as a file server, media control for my living room TV, and light entertainment for guests.

For this project, I wanted to keep the cost as low as possible, seeing as it did not have to be a high-performance computer. Almost all the parts for the PC, except for the screws and power supply, are extra that I had lying around. The case is primarily made up of steel tubing and sheet metal. The rear panel is removable and, as a final touch, I tore apart an old 5-inch 4GB drive and gave it a Plexiglas window to display through the case."

**WE SAY:** Who needs IKEA when this modder's on the case? A great idea with simple execution—and we could technically get our MAME fix on this machine. But why not build a whole living room? Someone needs to hook up William with some top gear so that he can build a kick-ass gaming rig out of, oh, a chaise longue or something.

## UNDER THE HOOD

PROCESSOR: 800MHz Pentium 3  
GRAPHICS: Radeon V8 with TV out  
SOUND: Creative Sound Blaster Audigy 2  
HARDWARE: 450GB Seagate hard drive,  
4GB memory hard drive  
I/O PORTS: FireWire and USB 2.0 cards  
NETWORKING: 54Mbps Belkin wireless router,  
Optical LAN card

# got game?

Compete in DigitalLife's

## \$100,000

PRO/AM GAMING TOURNAMENT  
and find out.

Play the latest, unreleased games at the PC & console arcades and get your hands on the hottest gear before it hits the streets.

Meet your favorite celebrities.

Win tons of cool prizes.

Don't miss the largest gaming tournament on the East Coast!

october 12-15, 2006

javits convention center • new york city

Get Tickets NOW

50% off with promotional code:  
at [www.digitallife.com](http://www.digitallife.com)

CGW

each adult ticket is only \$6.00!

learn it hear it try it play it rock it live it



# digitallife®

the ultimate consumer technology,  
gaming and entertainment event

presenting tournament sponsors:

ALIENWARE



sponsors:



TOSHIBA



namco



official launch event of

**PINAL FANTASY XIII**



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

# JUST IN CASE

Four choice chassis

UNLIKE THE FOLKS IN OUR CASE-MOD COMPETITION (SEE PG. 106), not everyone wants to make a piece of modern art when putting together a PC—but it's still possible to have a killer home-made rig without taking out a home loan to pay for the pleasure. It all starts with a good case. Or, we suppose, four good cases, depending on what you want to build. A portable LAN party-ready box? A full server case? If you're dabbling in home theater PCs, maybe you're all about smart design and high style. Even Dell (yes, that Dell) is getting into the case market; the build-to-order business now offers individual components right down to the case level. Want to get your hands on the sleek XPS 700 case with just a CPU, motherboard, and RAM? Done. You can order as little—or as much—as you want.

## SHUTTLE XPC SN27P2

### GAMING TO GO

Shuttle has built some great small-form-factor rigs over the years. Hell, the company popularized the cube-shaped, high-performance portable PC. So what's new? How about a truly game-worthy LAN box case?

Shuttle's new SN27P2 uses the latest nForce 570 core logic chipset. It also supports AMD's Socket AM2 and DDR2 memory. Shuttle's obviously done its homework, building a system that's more expandable than past designs while managing to reduce the overall noise level.

Shuttle's latest P-series system houses the motherboard, which has one PCI Express x16 graphics card slot and one 32-bit PCI slot. Inside is a 400W power supply and PCIe six-pin power connector for graphics cards so that you

don't have to go fishing for odd cables at Radio-Shack. The front sports two USB ports and one unpowered four-pin IEEE 1394A connector. The rear side wastes no space on legacy PS/2, parallel, or serial ports. Instead you'll find audio jacks and a full six more USB 2.0 ports.

The SN27P2 hits a sweet spot between performance, heat, and sound. Even when running 3DMark06, which can stress both a dual-core CPU and a graphics card, the Shuttle ran on par with a high-end nForce 590 SLI system while keeping quiet and relatively cool.

The only obvious downer is that a case with such cramped quarters means little room for expansion compared to a normal ATX case.



Want a double-wide videocard? Fine. You just won't have room for much else. The other problem: The SN27P2 will run you about \$400—and that's just for a case, motherboard, and power supply. Still, Shuttle's new nForce 570-based system is about as good as it gets. /

PRODUCT Shuttle XPC SN27P2  
COMPANY Shuttle Computer  
PRICE: T4D (\$400 estimated)  
WEBSITE: www.shuttle.com

## THERMALTAKE EUREKA

### YOU GOT SERVED

Ah, those wide, open spaces. Adding extra-long capacity (and stacks of hard drives) to your PC requires lots of elbow room, airflow, and a sturdy frame capable of holding everything together. Heat and vibration kill hard drives, so selecting the proper container is more than just a matter of finding the happy delta between price and aesthetics. That's where Thermaltake's Eureka comes in.

Thermaltake's subwoofer-styled home server chassis looks like it was designed to blend into a home theater environment. It even comes in your choice of two innocuous home-theater-friendly colors: black or silver. Despite its featherweight 20-pound frame, the all-aluminum Eureka is solid as a rock.

There isn't anything radical about the Eureka's interior layout—it's essentially a standard configuration with a couple of home server-specific enhancements. The

removable motherboard tray is easy to guide and slide into position. The lower right edge of the tray supports extended-length PCI cards, the kind usually found in servers such as RAID controllers.

Swapping a hard drive is quick and painless. Just remove the side cover, slide it out of the cage, and unbolt it from its tray—handy for when you want to hotswap a failed disk while keeping everything else up and running. It's also easy to see which drive corresponds to which SATA port on your motherboard or controller card with the backs of the drives pointed out of the cage.

Aside from a minor beef with the designers' decision to mix Torx-head screws with garden-variety Phillips-heads, the Eureka provides great bang for your buck. /

PRODUCT Eureka  
COMPANY Thermaltake  
PRICE: \$159  
WEBSITE: www.thermaltake.com







# GAME VIDEOS

watch now, play later

**See the games in action  
before they hit the stores.**

**Log on to [GameVideos.com](http://GameVideos.com) to watch the  
best videos about the hottest games, PLUS:**

**Exclusive videogame shows**

From weekly news updates to in-depth roundtables, interviews and features on the hottest titles, [GameVideos.com](http://GameVideos.com) will be the home of the very best videogame programming.

**Trailers of upcoming games**

You'll find gameplay videos and trailers for all the latest and upcoming games at [GameVideos.com](http://GameVideos.com) to stream or download in hi-res.

**Video cheats and walkthroughs**

Never be stuck again. Video cheats and walkthroughs show you exactly how to play the games to win.

**...and other stuff!**

Including retro game ads, the funniest game-related videos on the Web, user-submitted movies, 'extreme' gameplay movies and more.

## ANTEC FUSION

### HOT FUSION

What the—someone actually listened to us? Antec has somehow figured out how to achieve exactly what we've always wanted in a microATX home theater PC chassis. Let's start with design: The brushed aluminum bezel is simple and belongs in your home theater. A Media Center Edition-compatible vacuum fluorescent display (VFD) scrolls useful text information. Using Antec's software, you can customize the VFD to show system information (CPU utilization, memory usage, and so on), media information, e-mail alerts, news, weather, or a graphic equalizer.

Beneath the display, the cover flap for the optical drive blends cleanly without causing any additional installation headaches. The FireWire, USB, and audio jacks integrate seamlessly into the lower half of the bezel. A large knob for volume control sits above the reset and backlit power buttons.

Inside, the Fusion features a triple-chamber design that divides the chassis into separate compartments for motherboard, power supply, and hard drives. The walls battle no-poll, isolate heat, and keep things organized. (Cable management is an oft-overlooked aspect of case cooling. In addition to improving your system's internal appearance, it also lowers temperatures by improving airflow through the chassis.) The ventilated floor beneath the hard drive (you can fit two disks) and two massive 120mm fans merge airflow. Each fan has a three-speed switch for manually dialing in fan RPM, and they're practically silent at the lowest setting when running alongside an Athlon 64 X2 4600+ in stock cooler. Set them on high, and the movement of air feels sufficient to

bring back anything you could stuff into the case. Customers at Antec deserve a pat on the back.

With its subtle layout, attractive industrial design, and useful features that enhance performance and aesthetics, the Antec Fusion is a great package that performs well and looks good—and at around \$165 online, it's a fantastic bargain for a gorgeous case with a 430W power supply and programmable VFD. /

**PRODUCT** Fusion  
**COMPANY** Antec  
**PRICE** \$165  
**WEBSITE** [www.antec.com](http://www.antec.com)



## XPS 700 CASE

### A DELL DIVIDED

Right now, some half-baked pitchman is practicing his new lines: "Dude, you're getting a Dell case." Yes, the build-to-order PC manufacturer is dipping its foot a little deeper into the hardcore gamer pool. That much is obvious the second you gaze upon the sleek, gamified industrial design of the new XPS 700. Quite honestly, past Dell designs never lit a fire under our collective asses. Now, though, we would pay for the case alone.

Unfortunately, you can't. Buying the XPS 700 case means also buying into a basic configuration that consists of an Intel-based, Nvidia SLI-friendly BTX motherboard with a tower six-copper heat sink and 750W power supply. (The Formula Red Chassis, which we tested, comes with a 1,000W PSU.) This base-level machine also includes 512MB of DDR2-533 memory and Pentium D 930 processor that you can upgrade. Ordering from a soup-to-nuts manufacturer means you get a little

more from the get-go. All the wires come expertly routed through the case for easy access.

Besides external eye candy and front-mounted USB/FireWire/headphone jacks, one standout feature is the hard drive cage. Once you get past the flimsy plastic tray that snaps onto your hard drives, it locks into the metal frame and you're ready to boot. The screwless design for expansion cards allows you to install a graphics card faster than you can say "DirectX 9.0." In all fairness, we said it slowly.

A few problems: The plastic front grill looks cool, but feels chintzy. Hit the power button at the wrong angle and it feels like it'll snap. Installing an optical drive is a pain, and good luck squeezing a control box into the drive bay.

Finally, make sure you have enough room to stow this monster machine. It measures 22.5 by 8.6 by 24.25 inches. Second, make an appointment to see your chiropractor before lifting the 48-plus-pound case out of the box. /

**PRODUCT** XPS 700 Case (with CPU, motherboard, and RAM)  
**COMPANY** Dell  
**PRICE** \$1,320 (basic configuration)  
**WEBSITE** [www.dell.com](http://www.dell.com)



➤ You can now buy a Dell computer case without getting a whole Dell computer.





EXTREME TECH

# TECH MEDICIS

Plague-riddled PC? ExtremeTech's Loyd Case has the cure

**Q:** IF YOU HAVE A MOTHERBOARD THAT supports ATI CrossFire technology for dual video cards, can you instead use two Nvidia GeForce 7900 GTs in SLI mode? Can you use ATI cards on an SLI motherboard? In other words, are SLI and CrossFire basically the same thing?

I know you can run a single Nvidia card on a CrossFire motherboard because the PCIe slots are exactly the same, but I'm not exactly sure how SLI or CrossFire work. It seems to me that they would be cross-compatible because PCIe 16x slots are all the same size.

Daniel Lazarus

**A:** The short answer: no, sorry.

The long answer: You can run ATI's CrossFire setup on systems running an ATI CrossFire chipset or an Intel 975X chipset. You can run Nvidia's SLI technology only on systems with Nvidia chipsets. It's really unfortunate, but that looks to be the situation for the foreseeable future.

**Q:** I can't run Call of Duty 2 using DirectX 9. Can you guys help me out?

I have a GeForce FX 5500, 768MB of RAM, and a 1.75GHz AMD Sempron 2500+. When I try to run COD2 with its DX9 effects enabled, the game gets all laggy.

I'm a big fan of the game, so I want to know if my processor or my videocard is the problem—they're both pretty low-end. If you could tell me which one I would need to upgrade to fix my problem, that would be great.

Joe Benson

**A:** We feel your pain—really, we do. The problem is that your rig is just too low-end for what you want to play. I hate to deliver the bad news, but it's time to get that bank loan so you can go out and get a new PC. In your case, both the processor and the graphics card are too low-end to run Call of Duty 2 with all the eye candy turned up. If you can't afford a new PC, you can get an Athlon XP 3000+ CPU, which should fit in your motherboard, for about \$130 to \$150. Better AGP video cards such as those using Nvidia's 7800 GS or ATI's X800 XL will also help.

**Q:** I'm having some problems with my GeForce 6800 GT videocard. It's idling at about 82 degrees Celsius and, under load, it can go up to over 100 degrees! The system ambient temperature isn't much better (idle at 53 degrees Celsius). I've had the system for over a year. I've never over-clocked it and I try to clean out the dust regularly. The wires are arranged so they don't interfere with the cooling. I have two system case fans that, as far as I know, function very well. I do keep my computer in a room where the temperatures are often feely warm (80 degrees Fahrenheit—I live in Georgia) would that have any effect on my system temperature? Do I need new fans? A water-cooler attachment for the videocard? A garden hose? What?


Daniel Singleton

**A:** Actually, short of parking your PC inside an iceberg, you probably need to move your system to a cooler room in the house.

That might help a little, but it does sound like you still have some serious heat issues. It could be that you need to pull the cooling fan off the GeForce 6800 GT and possibly replace it with something more robust, like Arctic Cooling's NV Silencer. Replacing your current CPU cooling fan might help, too. Also, make sure that you aren't stacking the high-heat cards all on top of each other. If you have room in the case, give 'em room to breathe.

Speaking of which, you should also consider getting a new PC case. Older PC cases often don't allow adequate airflow, while newer case designs facilitate cooling more efficiently. In fact, you might want to try a new case before disassembling your graphics card./

Got questions? Send them to  
[Tech\\_Medics@usdavis.com](mailto:Tech_Medics@usdavis.com)

 CAN YOU USE  
ATI CARDS IN  
A CROSSFIRE SETUP  
ON AN SLI MOTHER-  
BOARD? THE SHORT  
ANSWER: NO.

It's the first time in my life  
that I've felt like I actually fit in.  
Or at least in happy now that I don't.  
Truly **OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE**  
dedicated video **MANIAC**

who has found true fulfillment  
& that means

a career in **GAME DEVELOPMENT**  
State of the Art—hardware and software  
**AT MY DISPOSAL**

Game Design & Programming Game Art  
Implementation of current programming APFS  
Writing code, what about you?

「The LAN  
tournament  
ROCKED」

My demo reel turned them  
into web monkeys  
I want to learn how to create long hair  
part effects and stuff!



## WE SPEAK G33K

Greeks transform into Alpha-Geeks  
by becoming fluent in:

GAME DESIGN	COMPUTER FORENSICS
DIGITAL ANIMATION	NETWORK SECURITY
ARTIFICIAL LIFE	SOFTWARE ENGINEERING
DIGITAL VIDEO	TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT
WEB DESIGN	GAME PROGRAMMING



REBOOTED



Reborn.

Computer Gaming World becomes  
**Games For Windows: The Official Magazine**

On stands November 14



ISSUE 368

# GREENSPEAK

BECAUSE  
WE HAVE  
THE EXTRA  
PAGE

## Computer Gaming World

A fatal exception has occurred at 02b8 in computergamingworld.exe. The current magazine will be terminated.

- \* Press any key to terminate the current magazine.
- \* Press CTRL-ALT-DEL again to restart your magazine as Games for Windows: The Official Magazine. Your 2b8 previous issues will be saved in memory.

Kick any editor to continue



Jeff will be back next month as Microsoft Jeff for Windows. Send your favorite autorec.bat and config.sys file jokes to [jeff\\_green@gzftavis.com](mailto:jeff_green@gzftavis.com).

A TOM CLANCY™

**GHOST  
RECON**  
ADVANCED™ OPERATIONS  
Now Bundled with PhysX™

Believe



PhysX™ P1

Reality gaming is a matter of PhysX. Calculating how energy and matter interact at the particle level more than 500,000 times per second, the ASUS PhysX card provides you with a gaming environment that doesn't just look real – it acts real. Explosions, collisions, fire, smoke, and movement are all suddenly believable. Making the gaming experience suddenly – unbelievable.

**ASUS**  
usa.asus.com/ad/cgw

**MICRO CENTER**  
The Official PC Superstore

**mwave.com**

**FRYE**

**NEWEGG**

**ZipZ.comfy**

**TigerDirect.com**

© 2008 ASUS Computer International. All Rights Reserved. ASUS is a registered trademark of ASUS Computer Inc. PhysX is a trademark of NVIDIA Inc. Ghost Recon: Ghost Recon Advanced Operations, the Delta icon, Ubisoft, and some of the other technology and trademarks are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the US and/or other countries. Developed by GIGI. Publishing agent: Sublime Systems.



WHEN NIGHT FALLS  
ON ELONA...

# HEROES SHINE.

JOIN MILLIONS OF PLAYERS WORLDWIDE IN THIS THIRD CAMPAIGN IN THE AWARD-WINNING

GUILD WARS® UNIVERSE. CREATE YOUR OWN BAND OF HEROES AND LEAD THEM AGAINST

HAD RULER AS SHE ATTEMPTS TO FREE HER OUTCAST GOD AND BRING DARKNESS TO ELONA.

WHEN NIGHT FALLS YOU MUST FIGHT — BUT YOU WON'T FIGHT ALONE!

# GUILD WARS® NIGHTFALL



FREE ONLINE PLAY!

[WWW.GUILDWARS.COM](http://WWW.GUILDWARS.COM)

[WWW.PLAYNC.COM](http://WWW.PLAYNC.COM)

©2009 NCSoft Inc. All rights reserved. NCSoft, the Guild Wars logo, and the PlayNC logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of NCSoft Corporation. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. \*Free Online Play requires internet connection and access to Internet. PlayNC is responsible for all applicable internet fees.

