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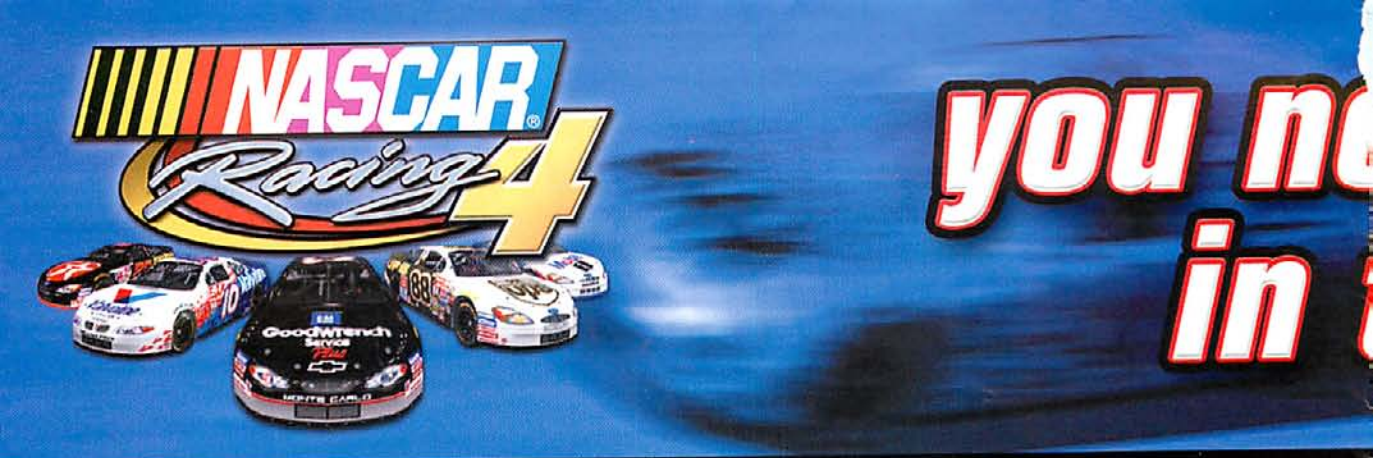
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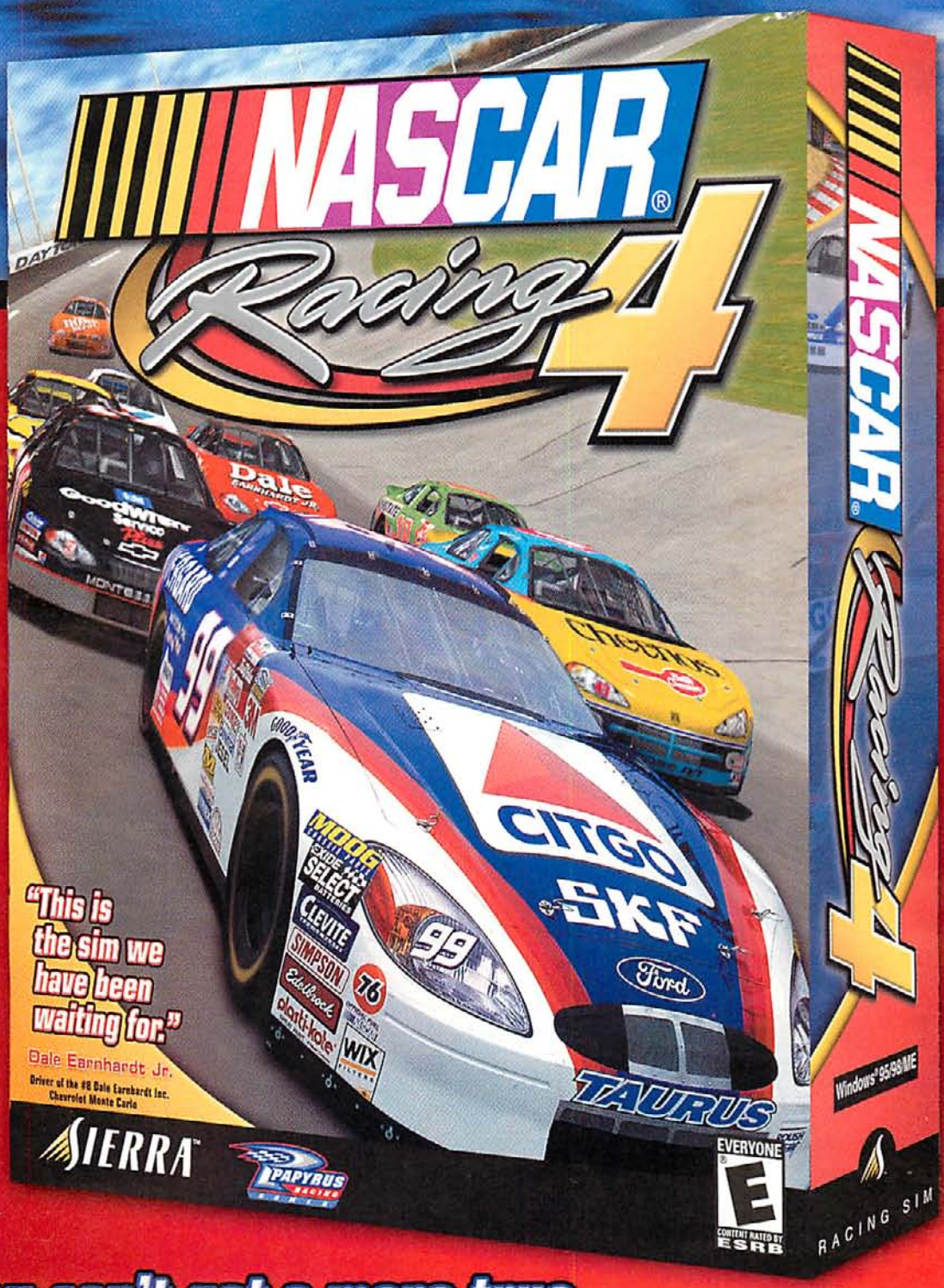

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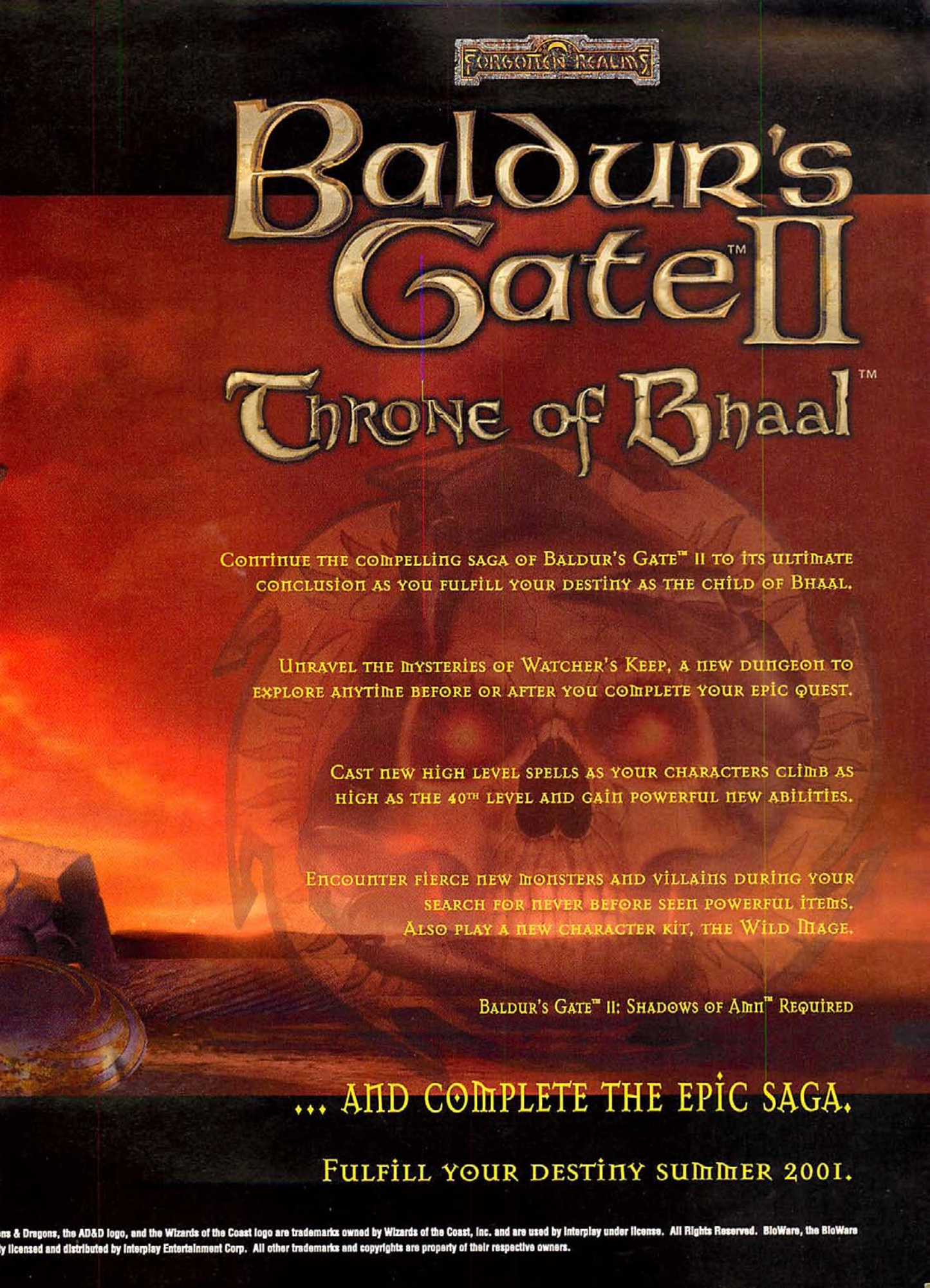

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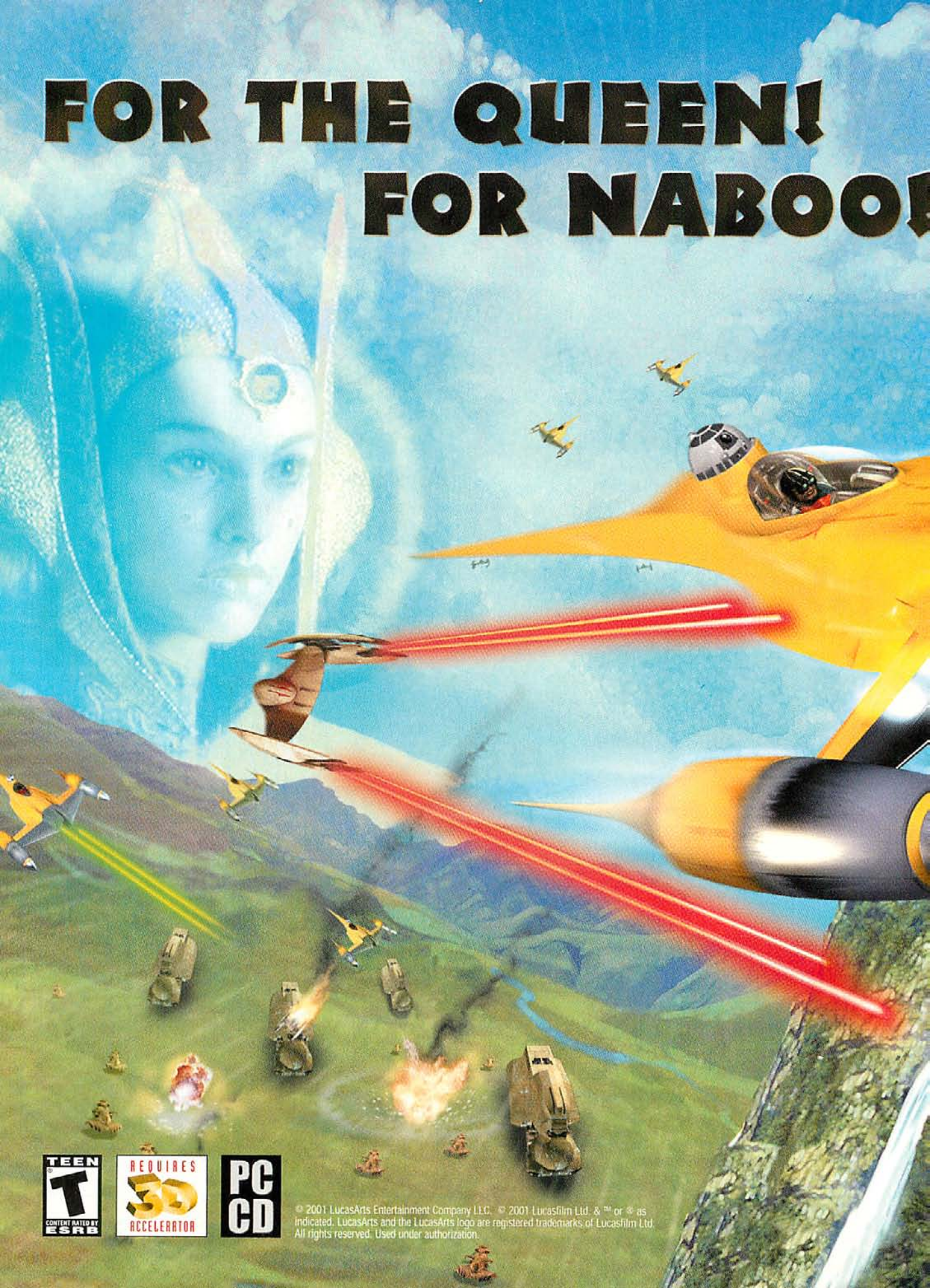
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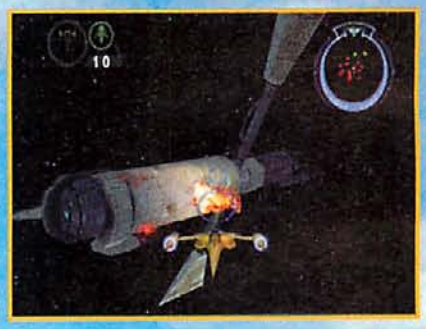

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

April 2001 • Issue 201

features

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Space Invaders

Space is the place, or at least the setting, for some of the most ambitious games in the development wormhole. Blast off for a closer look at EARTH AND BEYOND, STAR WARS: GALAXIES, STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER, INDEPENDENCE WAR 2, FREELANCER, and more.

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The Resurrection of Derek Smart

Whether you've seen his name on a Usenet flame war, played his notorious space sim BATTLECRUISER 3000AD, or have no idea who he is, you won't soon forget Derek Smart. We sent intrepid columnist Jeff Green on a search for a man that many gamers hate, but few understand.

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Game of the Year Awards

Every year at this time, we look back on the year's best, get sorta moist, and give thanks we don't work at *Ranger Rick*. This year we recognize 13 Winners, 5 Losers, and 12 Special Awards from the games that shaped another wonderful, whimsical year.

Daikatana... just kidding

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Jeff's got a bad case of the EQ's.

GEORGE JONES

Random Access Memory

Well, lookee, lookee. I got a fancy new home, one which puts me several pages closer to my plans of world domination through gaming editorials. Wait—don't turn the page yet! I have something to say. Actually, a few things...among them:

All-New Gamer's Edge Not that I ever need any help with games or anything (I'm sure you don't either), but I'm happy to direct you to stop reading my editorial and jump right to page 113, where you'll find our brand new Gamer's Edge section. Every month, we'll bring you 16 pages of strategies, tips, walkthroughs, and easter eggs—every month. And keep in mind as you read through the section that we're counting on you—gamers and designers alike—to contribute.

Gaming Avoidance I vacillate between feeling defensive and not caring (a defense mechanism in and of itself) about things like this, but why do non-gamers appear incapable of accepting our obsession as a viable form of entertainment? Gaming is not child's play anymore—it's a sophisticated medium. Check out Editor Ken Brown's Read.Me opener, where he explores the convoluted issue of college game design degrees. With the gaming industry currently pulling in more money than Hollywood, it seems like a no-brainer to me. Do you think that the people who pass such critical judgment on games are still carrying their 1980's concept of what computer and video games are?

George's Mix

SIMCOASTER

HIGH HEAT 2001 beta

Understanding Media

FALLOUT TACTICS beta

Fixing my broken Nomad Jukebox. (Damn it.)

Derek Smart? The net-savvy among you should probably just go ahead and read Jeff Green's profile (page 66) of a man so many gamers love to hate. Our big question regarding Smart was Why? Why does he incite such rage in gamers? And why does he fight back? Jeff flew to Florida to puzzle it out, and the result is a surprisingly intimate look at a game designer who consistently finds himself in the thick of it. It's a fantastically unique read, and I'm curious as to what you'll think of it.

Send George email at george_jones@ziffdavis.com.

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LETTERS

Letter of the Month

Please REMOVE immediately my name from your mailing list. DO NOT give, transfer, or even suggest my name to any like publication. I do not want your nor their materials. I have never subscribed, nor will I, to such kind of materials.

Apparently you have no conscience for anything that is decent. Your products are a contribution to the delinquency and perversions in this blessed land of America. May God in His great mercy reprove you to the place of repentance and conversion to His Son, Jesus Christ, for your own salvation and consequent change of occupation in the publications of right and noble thought and action.

Sincerely,
E. Leon and Sandra Holderby

Thanks for your concern. For writing this month's Letter of the Month, we're sending you a deluxe gaming gift pack of KINGPIN, SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, and MESSIAH. Congratulations and happy gaming, E. and Sandra!

Driver Hell

At what point does the consumer/gamer come into play on hardware? I was at a local store and noticed that the shelf still had 3dfx game cards and a Montegoll Quad A3D on the shelf. No notice that 3dfx had stopped producing cards and that specific driver support "down the road" might be "iffy." No notice that A3D was gone and the 3D sound feature might not work because no new DirectX drivers have been announced. (Yes, I know Creative bought up A3D, but to augment and develop or to bury a competitor? Hmmmm.)

The employees just replied that until corporate told them to do something, it would be "business as usual." Driver support should be part of the purchase price of the product, particularly a retail version (OEM/White box is another issue). You pay for a product with all the features, not something which is knowingly a potential problem. *Caveat emptor* is one thing, but in this new millennium/massive buy-outs/big mergers age, somebody has to look out for the gamer/customer. This attitude should be pulled kicking and screaming from the dank dungeon and into the light. If we don't, and soon, there won't be much PC gaming, because the Xbox and PS2 don't have these problems.

Michael Gray

Cgwletters@ziffdavis.com

Relax Dude, It's Just a Game

Don't game developers get professional advice when they make a game? Please look at the photo in "Inside Action," page 129, in the February 2001 issue. How many times must we see supposedly professional shooters holding an automatic weapon by the magazine? Any real professional shooter can tell you that you must NEVER hold a weapon by the magazine (unless you are loading or unloading)! In that picture, the only thing the guy holding that submachinegun is going to get is a jam. That wouldn't matter, of course, because in a real firefight he'd just be plain dead. So you might tell me, "Relax dude, it's just a game and it looks cool." My answer to that is, "No, it doesn't look cool. It looks stupid."

Michael Howatt

You have a point, but it's not likely anyone will confuse that game, NO ONE LIVES FOREVER, with a combat simulation. Also, any professional explosives expert will tell you that that you NEVER release robotic poodle bombs the way they do in that game.

Not Just for Kids

Who's listening to us? We are the over-40 gamers with lots of disposable income, who read your magazine and can buy any game we want, any time we want. Your magazine becomes the "what to buy" bible for us. Why? Because our money is available, but our time is not. We cannot afford to spend 100 hours on a role-playing game, or even 50 hours on a shooter or real-time strategy game just to learn we don't like it. Tell the game companies about us.

We are not kids; we work full-time and have families. What does that mean? Our gaming time is severely limited. We have to play until the wee hours of the morning, then get up and go to work. I can tell you that at any price, a crappy game won't last long on my hard drive.

Tell the PC game companies to go back to the days of the Apogee shareware program. Let me have the first few levels to try, and if I like it, I will buy it at any price. I am

Canadian Corner

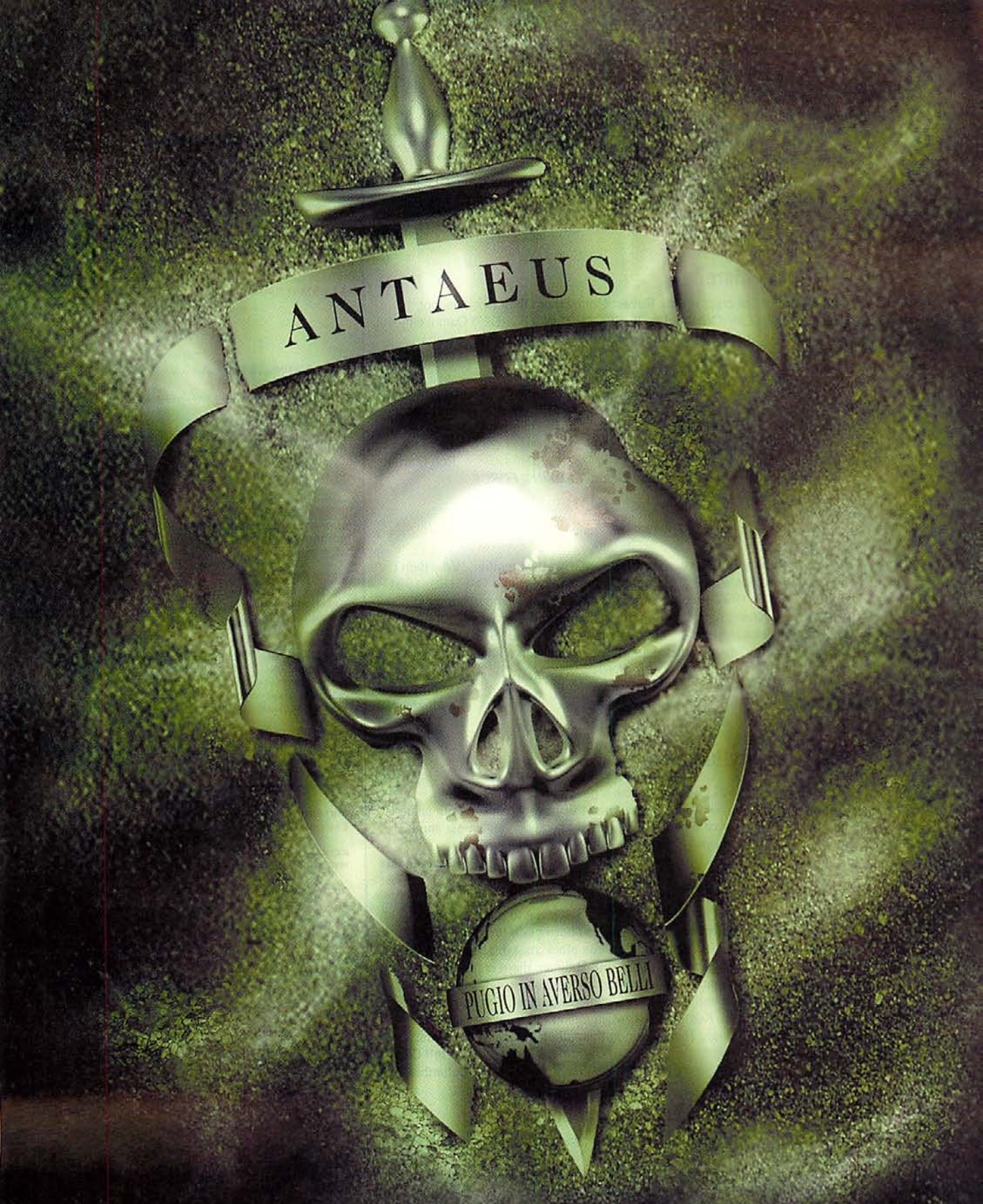
I am astonished at the arrogance at *CGW*. You guys, although I'm a new subscriber, already tick me off royally. I can't believe the response I just read in your 199th issue. I think you are totally out of line, acting like a-holes towards Canadians [Letters, November 2000–March 2001]. Piss off.

Your insolence is quite readily noted, and I am seriously reconsidering my subscription to your magazine. I am very annoyed with the way you editors have replied and I expect an apology for Nicky R., myself, and ALL the Canadians whom you've made fun of. If not, you can be sure that it won't only be me writing angry emails about your insolent comments. Pick up your mess, and pay your respects, because your readers sure as hell shouldn't have to be attacked as such.

Darius N.
Canada

Hey now, Darius! We love Canada. Some of our best friends are Canadian. Please don't cancel your subscription. If you don't understand our feelings, let us quote our favorite Canadian, Bryan Adams:

There's no love – like your love
And no other – could give more love
There's nowhere – unless you're there
All the time – all the way.



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LETTERS

willing to pay up to half price for a chance to try the game before I buy the full version. WHY? I DON'T HAVE TIME! I bought and paid for WOLF 3D, DOOM, and others after trying the shareware versions; don't make me download a 75MB demo.

If you don't think me and my over-40 buddies are buying games, I can tell you that more than 70 percent of my peer group are gamers of some sort or another.

Ken K44

Who Sucks More?

Sweet mother of crap! It took Robert Coffey more than twice as long to finish GUNMAN CHRONICLES as it did OPPOSING FORCE?! Damn, either he really sucks at first-person shooters, or I'm just really good (which I doubt). I absolutely despise GUNMAN CHRONICLES, and while I can accept that Mr. Coffey may have a differing opinion, saying the game is "easily twice as long" as OPPOSING FORCE is just a lie. It took me all of 6 hours (if that) to complete GUNMAN, but at least 12 (well, I suppose that'd be obvious) for OPPOSING FORCE. Although, I suppose I might just suck at OPPOSING FORCE.

Rob Martens

Robert Coffey replies: You just suck at OPPOSING FORCE.

Castle Waiting

In your February 2001 preview of STRONGHOLD, you state: "Why didn't anyone think of this earlier?" Somebody did. Interplay had CASTLES (1991) and CASTLES II (1997)—a couple of enjoyable games. I know that most gamers enjoy having orcs and dragons run around their castles, but I enjoy historical-based games, and am very excited about STRONGHOLD. I hope Firefly Studios provides gamers like myself with a solid and enjoyable product!

Timothy Gatti
Albany, NY

We Love Everything!

Wow! It isn't just Jeff Green who has a new attitude [Greenspeak, February 2001]! You all do! Check out page 95! Every game in your issue is rated five stars! Oh, wait a second! It's just that you use an almost impossible-to-see color! Or maybe it's just my eyes! I'm old! Nevermind!

David Maste

Pow! Bang!

Normally, I don't care about the ratings *CGW* gives to games. I know what I like and I go with it. This time, however, you have gone too far. In your February issue, you have, representing three stars...as average...Adam West. What is your problem? Adam West is THE Batman, there is no other, and for you to rank not only Keaton but a cartoon above the original Caped Crusader shows the depths *CGW* has sunk to. Shame...Shame on you. Adam West could kick Keaton's butt while eating Bat cookies he made in the Easy Bake Bat Oven. There are no others, there is only Adam West.

Jeff Clineff
Columbia, MD

SQUAD LEADER—The Touchier, Feelier Wargame

I just read your Inside Wargaming column, "Squad's Labors Lost," in the February issue.

Letters from home? Emphasizing the soldiers' "personalities"? Who in the hell thought up this warm-and-fuzzy, touch-feely, girly crap?

"Damn, I rolled a one; Sergeant Rock goes to the rear for counseling!"

SQUAD LEADER is about squad tactics, not getting in touch with one's feminine side, et cetera. Out of all the SQUAD LEADER and ADVANCED SQUAD LEADER modules, I don't recall any that had anything to do with "Letters from Home."

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Morons.

Wargame developers must be wargamers first, "game developers" second, psychology majors not at all.

Mike Marunchak
Dublin, CA

Your Correct

Imagine my surprise when, flipping through your December 2000 issue, I turned to page 64 and discovered that something of mine was in Verant/Sony's world now. The advertisement for EVERQUEST: SCARS OF VELIOUS didn't say what of mine was there, only that "Your in our world now." I looked around to see what was missing that could be in their world now, when it occurred to me that what they probably meant was ME. But then I thought, no, they would have said "You're," not "Your," so I knew that was wrong. I still haven't discovered what it is of mine that is in their world, but if I should discover what it is, I'll be sure to ask that it be returned.

Michael J. Guth

We Forgot the Vectrex

Just finished with your March 2001 issue, enjoyed the Johnny Wilson article on the history of games, but I can't BELIEVE there was no mention of the Vectrex, either in the article or the sidebars.

The Vectrex was an awesome machine for its time, with gameplay mechanics that equaled the arcade games when other home systems were clunky like the Atari 2600. Everyone I knew wanted a Vectrex once they saw it.

After the Crash (of 1984), I was able to pick up a complete system on closeout for next to nothing, with all the cartridges, the 3D imager, light pen, etc., and it's still happy in my basement. Enough die-hard Vectrex maniacs are out there that the 3D imager alone now sells for several hundred dollars.

You left out the BEST home console of the entire first wave!

Craig Clarke

Role-Playing Reality

This is in regards to the article on the "suicide" in the EVERQUEST community [Read.me, February 2001].

Let me make sure I have this right...a bunch of RPG gamers are shocked and amazed that someone was online pretending to be someone else. WTF??? This isn't a rant against RPG gamers, for I am one. I've been around the block (heck, I'm probably as old as Jeff Green), started playing RPGs in the '70s with pencil-and-paper *D&D*, and have been online since the days of the 386SX and 2400 bps modem. Maybe I'm jaded, but I just don't see how the news that everyone you meet online isn't honorable and forthright should be shocking. There are good people and not-so-good people everywhere. Why should EVERQUEST players be any different?

Rob Puckett

By the Way, Which One's Pink?

I want to tell you something. Your staff is awesome—the coverage you do. In your February 2001 issue in your review of SACRIFICE, the heading was "Shiny's Crazy Diamond." And there was a Pink Floyd song called "Shine On You Crazy Diamond" and as I read it, I immediately began to laugh. Me being a PF fan, everyone looked at me like I was psychotic. I just wanted to tell you that you guys have a gift. You have a creative sense of humor. Keep up the good work. You have a great mag.

Chance

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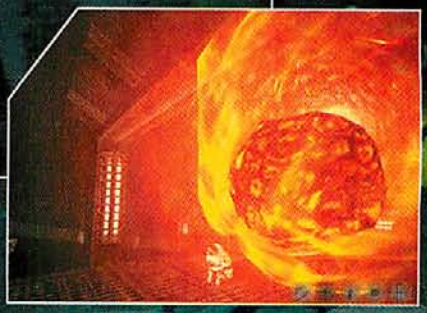

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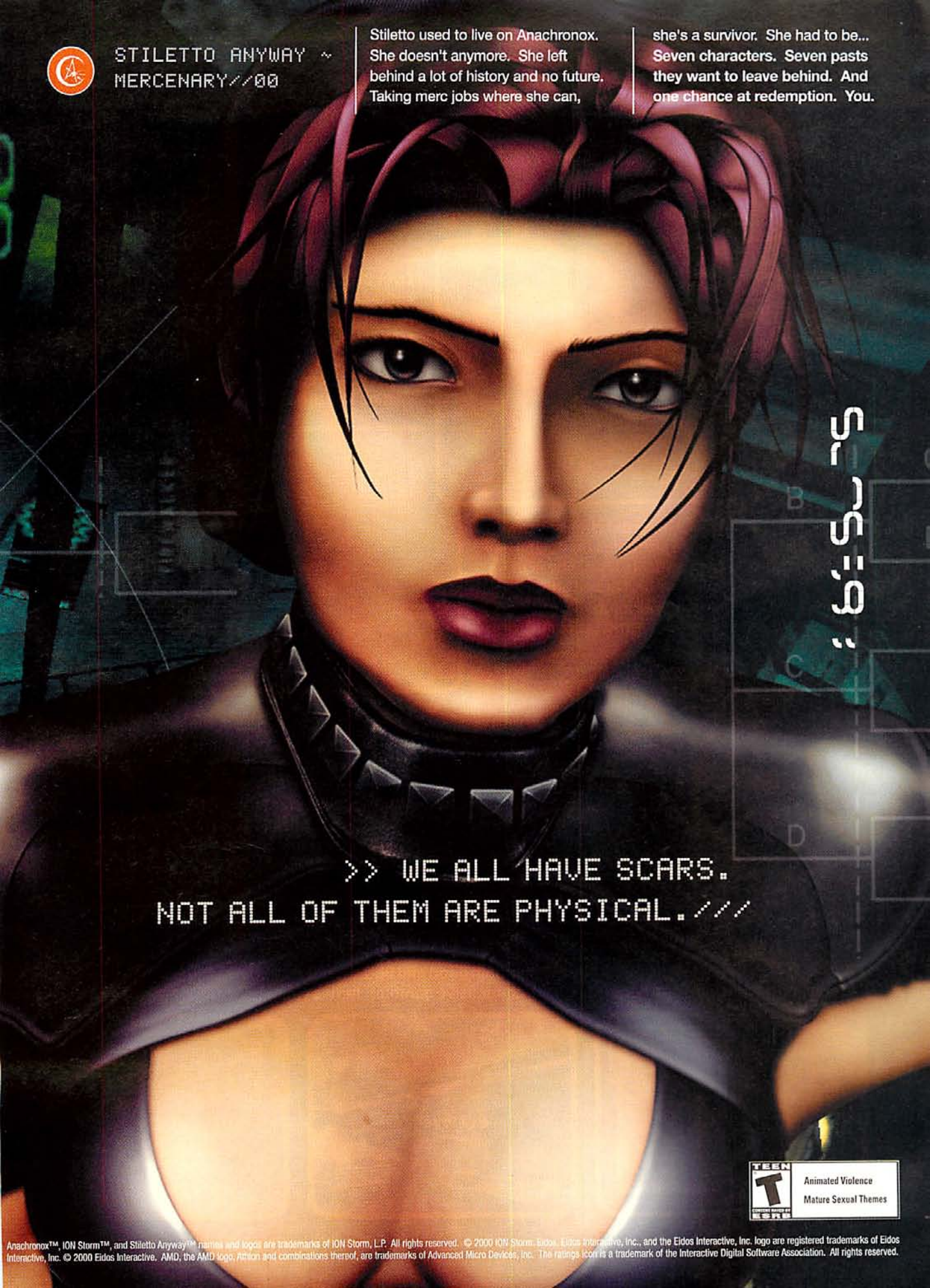

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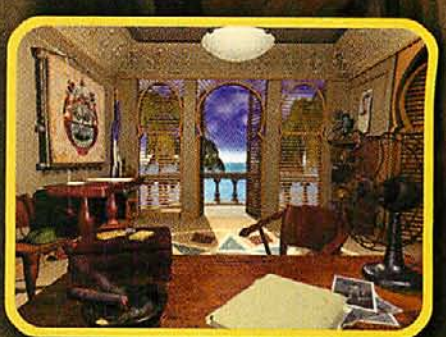

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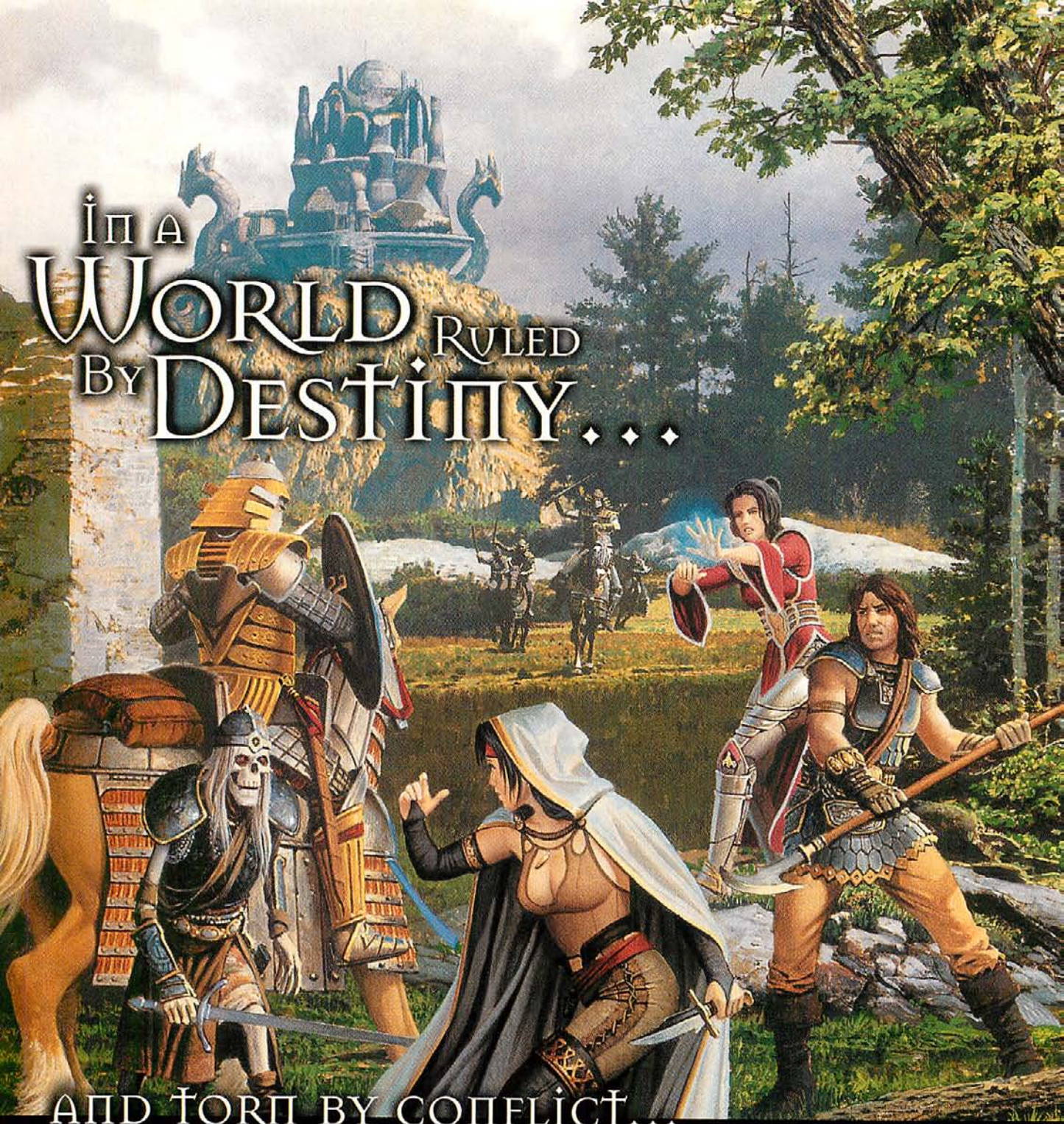

Saviors can be Destroyers.

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HOT SHOTS

Unreal II

■■■ You are looking at some of the first images of a game that is high on our list of must-plays. In development for over a year, the technology behind it is capable of enormous outdoor environments and incredibly detailed interiors. The new engine can render 150–200 times as many polygons as the first game, thanks to new hardware brushes and improved mesh rendering.

When we first saw this game last year, we were stunned by the ruthless AI that was tearing up the guy running the demo; enemies fetched reinforcements and deployed intelligently. It seemed to be an even better version of the stellar team AI from UNREAL TOURNAMENT.

Few details have been released, but we do know that the game will have a strong single-player storyline with an emphasis on scripted events (like the lights-out Skaarj ambush in the original game). Developer Legend Entertainment (under the supervision of original creators Epic Games) is being closed-mouthed about the plot.

The sketches here are of your ship, the Atlantis, and Aida, your intelligence officer. With Aida at your side, maybe you won't be fighting alone in UNREAL II...

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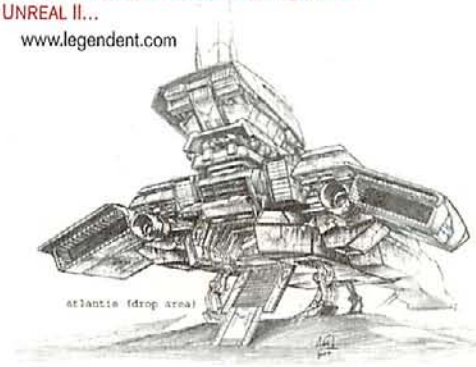
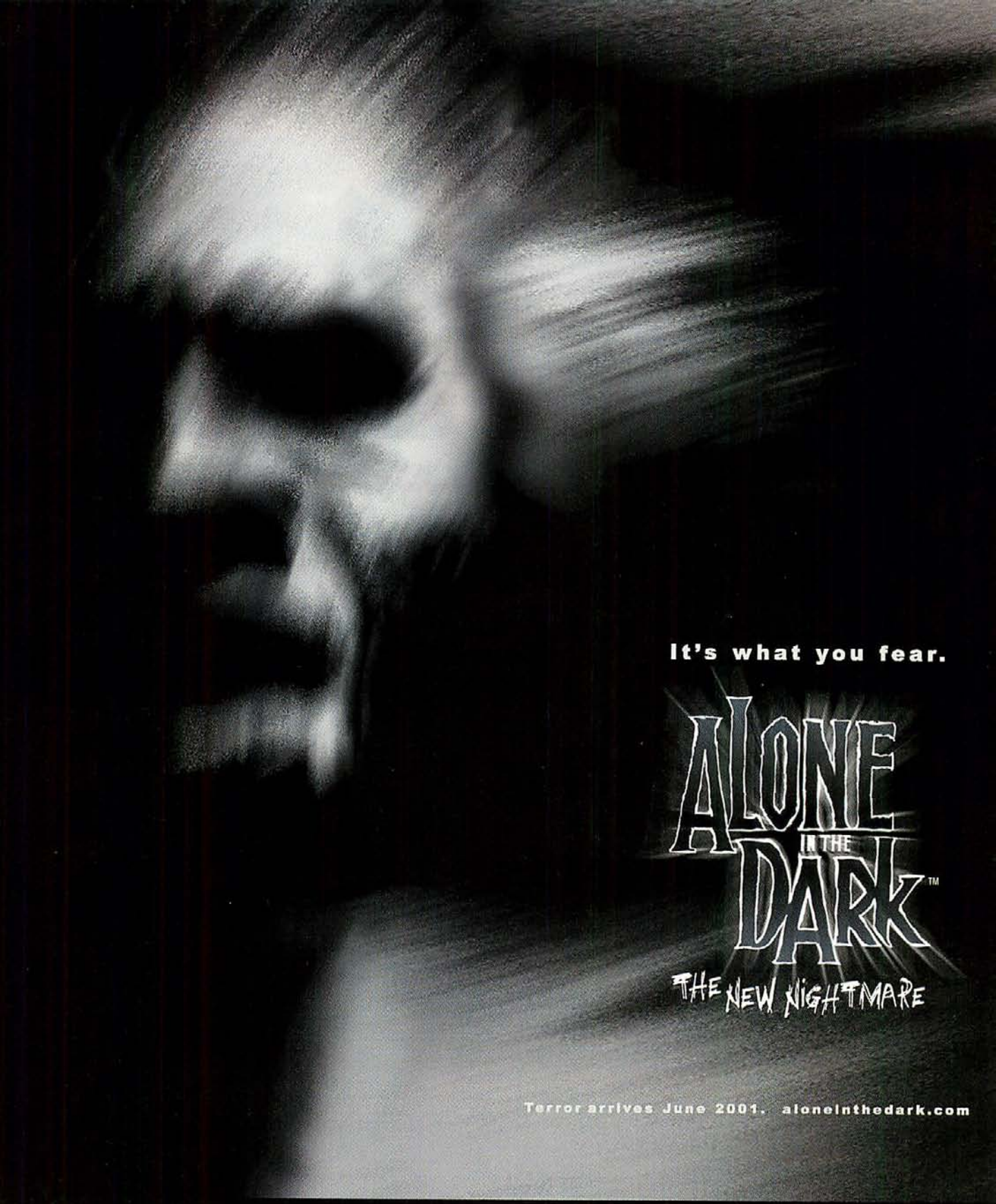


Myst III: Exile

■■■ Love it, hate it, or dismiss it as the best-selling screensaver ever, there's no denying that MYST is one of the seminal titles in gaming. And one of the prettiest – just check out these shots, if you don't believe us. Fortunately, it looks like the latest installment will move away from the maddening, alienating, and downright cruel puzzles of the last game, RIVEN, and back to puzzles that are more a part of the environments and story. Again, love it or hate it; it signals a return to the gameplay that made MYST such a hit. What *is* new is real 360-degree visuals, instead of the lockstep slideshow that defined the previous two titles. EXILE uses a new technology to draw the pre-rendered graphics in realtime via a node-based movement system. Yeah, that confuses us too, but we think it means we'll finally be able to look around and ogle the incredible textures while we hunt for a crucial gear or hydraulic thingamajig.

Tropico

■■■ As they near their release date, the TROPICO team is nailing down the last few game features. One of the newer features: sunbathing tourists. Running the gamut from blond *Baywatch* refugees to pasty white land masses, the denizens of your resort beaches will be determined by the quality of your hotels. The political side of the game is also getting a lot of attention – only the most capable dictators will avoid the all-too-common sight of their well-armed guards repelling crowds of rock-throwing, unhappy citizens. If the gameplay is anywhere near as lovingly detailed as the graphics, TROPICO should be addicting legions of strategy gamers when it ships this Spring.



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Too Cool for School

Why Can't Johnny Get a Degree in Game Design?

After being weaned on technology, media, and video games for 16 years, little Johnny's got a great idea: He wants to be a game designer. He grew up in San Francisco, a short drive from Silicon Valley, the home of the new media pioneers, so he's sure that local universities teach interactive design. After he graduates, he'll work for the world's biggest entertainment software company, Electronic Arts, located 20 minutes away. Johnny's got his whole future mapped out, and it sounds pretty awesome.

But after scanning the local colleges on the Internet, Johnny's hit a snag. Stanford doesn't have a program in interactive media. Neither does San Jose State University. The San Francisco Art Institute doesn't teach how to make video game graphics. Johnny turns to the University of California at Berkeley, the biggest school in northern California, a place so loaded with progressive interdisciplinary studies that he's sure to find coursework in game design. He winds up in Film Studies, and he stabs the power button on his monitor. Game over. Johnny grows up to be a web designer.

San Francisco, as you can imagine, is not exactly behind the times—it's the same story at colleges and universities across the country. But it appears they're finally waking up to that fact.

Last December, Robert Nideffer, an assistant professor of studio art at the University of California at Irvine, proposed that the school offer a minor in computer games. His proposal, and the university's reaction to it, seems to be reflective of the debate going on nationwide behind ivy walls.

Nideffer's proposal to UCI read, "Computer games and gaming have been largely ignored by the academic community. A more comprehensive and theoretically informed approach to the artistic and technical production...of games and gaming needs to be taken if we wish to effectively engage the cultural institutions that inform our individual and collective identities, and engender new processes of communication and creativity."

But UCI shot down the proposal. Wired.com quoted Nideffer's reaction: "There's still quite a bit of stigma associated with games and gaming. It gets into the whole 'high culture, low culture' debate. There is resistance."

UCI's resistance to embracing an emerging form of pop culture follows in a long tradition of conservatism in higher education. The same debates occurred over film studies, modern art, fiction, and jazz. It'll probably take longer for universities to welcome gaming since none of them want to be known for teaching people how to make twitch games or "murder simulators." But the fact remains: Games are a major part of our culture.

So are they high culture or low culture? They're both, just like film, television, and fiction—all of which, incidentally, are now major courses of study at many universities.

Gaming is a 30-year-old entertainment form in its evolutionary infancy. Although we've never progressed very far from the early concepts of seek and destroy, it won't be low art forever. The sooner universities embrace interactive entertainment as they have film studies, the sooner we can begin to see the potential that games have yet to discover. —*Ken Brown*

"Mr. Sneaky wouldn't be surprised if HALF-LIFE 2 winds up at a different publisher" page 32

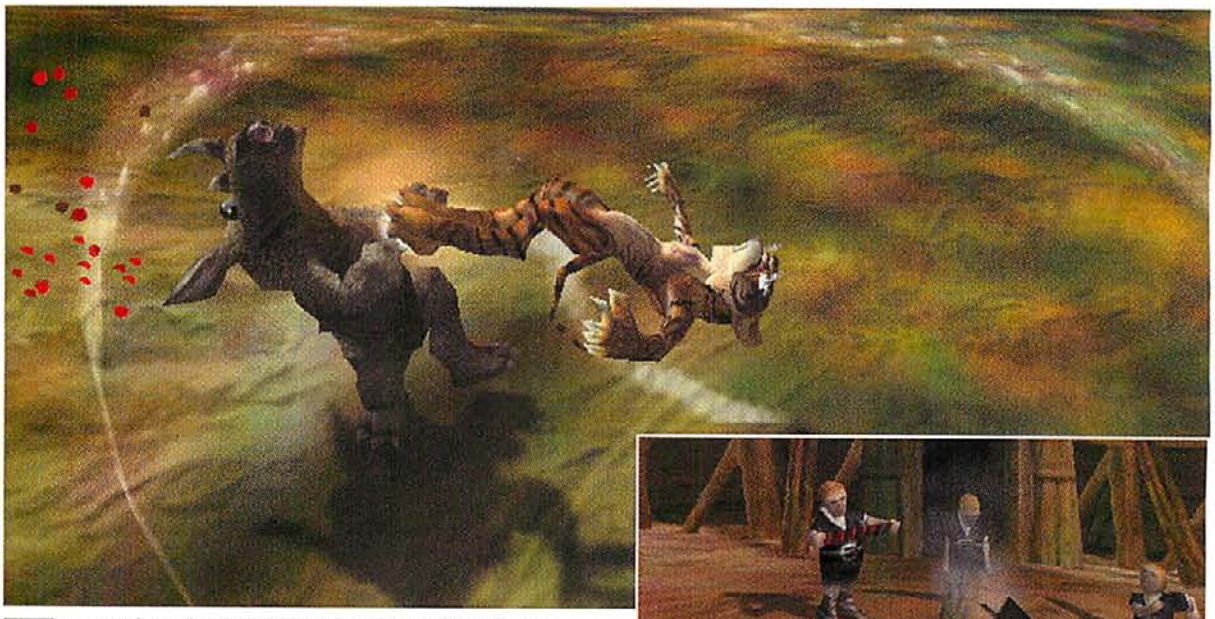
Black and White
page 28

The real Cate Archer
page 30

Fallout Tactics
page 31

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Rhino

BLACK AND WHITE prepares to consume the gaming industry



Expectation—in the gaming industry at least—is a hunger that must be carefully managed. Left to linger too long, it becomes ravenous, swallowing games whole and then ungraciously dumping them. Unrealistic expectation can jump on a modest game design flaw and transform it into a gaping failure. It can take the best intentions of a game designer, and when they fall short, make them seem manipulative and evil.

So it will be interesting to gauge the reaction of the gaming public to BLACK AND WHITE upon its imminent release. By now, both gamers and non-gamers alike know all about Lionhead Studios and Peter Molyneaux's ambitious title.

Or, at least, we think we do. One of the interesting aspects of BLACK AND WHITE is the aura of mystery that still surrounds it. Much like with THE SIMS last year, by the time BLACK AND WHITE is released, very few people will have played it. But recently, Electronic Arts invited the gaming press to their Redwood City, California, headquarters to have a go at the game everyone's been dying to play. What we found was startling, for three different reasons.

1. BLACK AND WHITE is a game.

This seems kind of obvious, but for so long, BLACK AND WHITE, the Concept, is all we've been exposed to. So during our playtest, we were shocked to discover that the game sports genre-busting mechanics. At times, you'll play it like a real-time strategy game. To harvest wood, for example, you can pick up trees and place them into bins, or you can turn individual villagers into foresters. To build your people's population, you can designate certain villagers to become "breeders" for life. (Ouch.)

Other times, BLACK AND WHITE is a role-playing game with open-ended quests, challenges, and incentives. Contrary to current game design theory, as soon as you start the game, you're presented with these play elements. Right off the bat, you need to accomplish three deeds that will help you get your Creature. The game's challenges are a critical part of learning how to play, advancing the storyline, and developing your character.

Given the open-ended nature of the game, you can accomplish any given task in a multitude of ways. At the heart of the game lies the central component of BLACK AND WHITE: convincing non-believers to have

faith in you. Various actions on your part generate impression points within a village. While the equation is simple—generate enough points and you convert the village—accomplishing this task is anything but.

2. The decision-making really works.

Also central to BLACK AND WHITE, or any other game for that matter, is decision-making. Our initial concern (damn expectation) was that the game would create conditions under which it wasn't clear what decision *should* be made. Why should you be bad, we reasoned, if playing the game in a morally good way was an easier path?

Molyneaux and Lionhead solved the problem through extensive balancing. One of the game's early moral decisions involves a group of men building a ship in order to sail away. They beg for your help, asking you to provide wood and other supplies. When we saw this challenge back in June, we wondered, *Why wouldn't you help these guys?* particularly since we assumed a reward was attached to the deed. Our last visit showed us why: The shipbuilders grow increasingly more demanding as time goes on. And since you're juggling their finicky demands while trying to grow your tribe of worshippers, these guys can become incredibly irritating and quite frustrating. Fortunately, thanks to the nature of the game, you can fling them into the water if you'd like.

The other aspect of BLACK AND WHITE is that your decisions have long-lasting effects on your character, your people, and most importantly, your Creature. Can you really stomach making someone (and his or her descendants) a breeder for life? We'll find out.

Believe It or Not

Three of the four features below are actually in BLACK AND WHITE. Which one isn't? (Answers below.)

a) Villagers in the game will have their names drawn from your Outlook directory. If you receive an email from someone in this directory, the appropriately named villager will wave at you. Click on them, and you'll be able to read the email.

b) BLACK AND WHITE will go online, get your local weather reports, and apply it to your game.

c) You can import your Creature into Windows, where it will serve as your desktop assistant, automatically notifying you of Internet stories you'd be interested in, as well as e-commerce bargains.

d) BLACK AND WHITE features a full-out 3D fighting game for the creatures.

ANSWER: c

3. The Creature is alive.

Original plans for BLACK AND WHITE didn't place you in immediate contact with your Creature. This has changed. Perhaps realizing that the Creature is a huge part of the game's appeal, you now are immediately faced with challenges that will reward you with your very own Tiger, Cow, or Ape.

Largely due to the lack of information surrounding the Creature, it's easy to overestimate its appeal, while at the same time, underestimate its value to the core game mechanics in BLACK AND WHITE. Part alter-ego, part avatar, part tamagotchi and part Streetfighter, the Creature is more intelligent than we thought possible. Consequently, its gameplay potential is more or less infinite.

For the second year in a row, Electronic Arts could be in the position of releasing a breakthrough game and a bona fide hit. In a day and age in which most games are based on previous games, that's refreshing. —*George Jones*

The GOOD...

ANOTHER AGE

AGE OF EMPIRES fans will be happy to hear that series creator, Ensemble Studios, is working on a new strategy game. Although they didn't divulge much about their project, code-named RTS III, Ensemble indicated that the game will be 3D, will allow you to manipulate "massive armies," and will appeal to both history and fantasy fanatics. Woo-hoo!

the BAD...

DREAMCAST DEAD

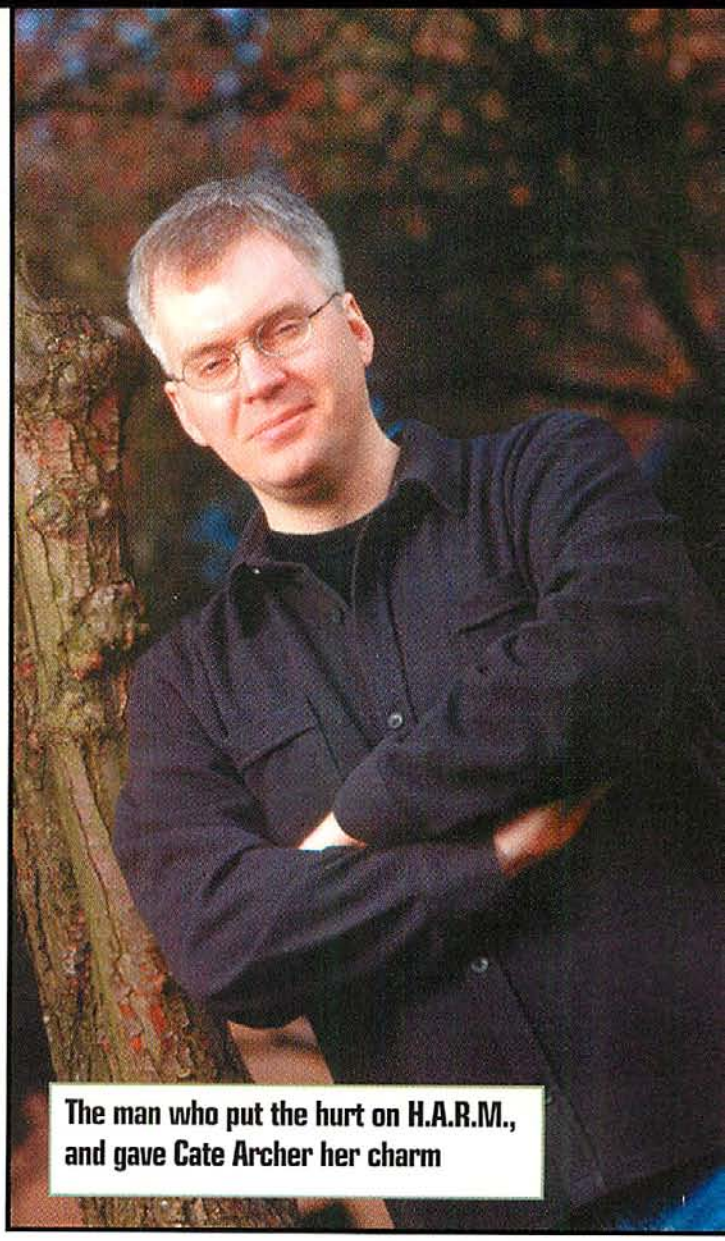
Sadly, just as the platform was beginning to see some amazing games (SKIES OF ARCADIA, GRANDIA II), Sega decided to end Dreamcast production. Instead, they'll be putting out a set-top box next year that will download games directly over a cable line. The upside is that Sega can focus on developing their killer titles for other platforms, and a new Dreamcast is now only $99.

and the UGLY

DINOSAURS EXTINCT

SID MEIER'S DINOSAURS has gone the way of the...well, you know. On January 24, the game went from being endangered to plain dead. Or long-delayed: Sid says that a new game idea has captivated him so much that he's decided to focus on it, as well as CIV III, and save DINOSAURS for a later time.

Craig Hubbard



The man who put the hurt on H.A.R.M., and gave Cate Archer her charm

Never heard of him? Neither had we until we awarded his game, NO ONE LIVES FOREVER, *CGW*'s Action Game of the Year. Because of Hubbard's relative obscurity—and due to his huge role in creating the best shooter since HALF-LIFE—we even gave him a special award this year: Best Unknown Game God of 2000.

If you share any of our fascination with the best female spy since Pussy Galore, here's a closer look at the man who helped put her on top.

Who the heck are you, and what do you do?

My official title is lead game designer. I've been at Monolith for the past four and a half years. I started as a level designer on BLOOD, then joined the SHOGO team as lead game designer. NO ONE LIVES FOREVER is the first project I've been on from the outset.

What was your role in NOLF? You wore several hats, no?

We all did. My chief responsibilities were to design game systems, plan scenarios, develop the story, write the script, direct the voice sessions, implement the in-game cinematics, create game environments, place enemies, balance the game, and so on *ad nauseum*. I also got to do some sound design and play a role in the development of the musical score and its utilization in the game.

Who wrote the dialogue for the game? The incidental dialogue between H.A.R.M. henchmen was hilarious!

I wrote most of it, although there were numerous people here and at Fox Interactive reading, critiquing, and making suggestions. There are roughly 3,400 lines of dialogue, although the script would have been somewhat shorter if I'd had more time. Funny how that works.

Who is Cate Archer?

Model Mitzi Martin lent her body for Cate's killer look.

Kit Harris gave Cate Archer her voice, as well as Inge Wagner and the elite guards. Nope, she's not British.

NOLF recreates the camp of the 60s-era spy thrillers so well. What were the major sources of inspiration for the game?

For the look of the game, we gravitated toward lower budget movies, as they really tend to show their age. I'd say *Our Man Flint*, *Danger: Diabolik*, and *Modesty Blaise* were the big influences. We also used a lot of reference materials, such as books on the era's graphic design, architecture, interior decoration, and fashion.

The characters and story are based on an amalgam of the '60s spy craze rather than specific sources. The biological explosives thing was triggered by *Casino Royale*, but it was also in the general spirit of the Derek Flint and Pink Panther films, with a dash of *The Avengers*, Matt Helm, and James Bond for good measure.

Cate Archer: Where did she come from? Will we see her again?

When we decided to switch to a female protagonist, all we really knew was that she would be resourceful, intelligent, and driven. She went through numerous concept sketches, costume designs, hairstyles, names, and even nationalities. The hard part was to come up with a look that suggested the right age, era, and personality, but also worked as a 3D model. After an international talent

Struggling for survival in FALLOUT TACTICS by Robert Coffey

Future Shock

After just a few hours of playing FALLOUT TACTICS, I lost count of how many times I'd been torn apart by submachine gun fire, cut in half by shotguns, or simply butchered with a machete. And I loved every second of it.

Slated for an April release, FALLOUT TACTICS is shaping up to be every bit the standout title we thought it could be when we put it on our cover last October. The maps are huge and packed with tactical challenge; blind bumrushes of the enemy will prove little more than suicide charges here. The vast post-apocalyptic maps are teeming with danger and demand that players approach the shifting tactical situations logically. On the third mission, I had to draw a patrol into an ambush, surround an enemy squad for a gun battle, pick off guards with a sniper, then stealthily coordinate the movements of three separate units in order to take out the last bunkered defender—all before I even breached the outpost. Interplay's goal of forcing players to plan their assaults is obviously coming to fruition, as I found myself relying heavily on scouting and decoys to beat the AI.

The new continuous turn-based game mode skates the thin line between maintaining tension and becoming too frenetic—and it is much better than a traditional turn-based system when it comes to coordinating squad maneuvers.

Supporting resolutions up to 1024x768 with 32-bit color, FALLOUT TACTICS is shaping up to be a wonderfully gritty gameworld. Lighting effects bring a great sense of tension to the night missions, and the character animations are fluid and realistic.

Following our upcoming review, be sure to *watch Gamer's Edge* for tips and strategies; this is going to be one tough mother to beat.

search, Fox Interactive decided to use the likeness of actress/model Mitzi Martin.

Are there any plans for an add-on or sequel?
I guess the appropriate answer would be, I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you.

What are you working on next?
Finishing SHENMUE and unlocking Ayane's last costume in DEAD OR ALIVE 2: HARDCORE on the PS2.

5, 10, 15 Years Ago in CGW

15

April 1986

The big news in April of '86 was a trippy game called FOOBLITZKY from Infocom. Requiring two to four players (at the same computer), FOOBLITZKY included four folding slates and erasable markers, and featured gameplay that was a "cross between Mastermind and Clue." Sounds like a lot of work to us.

10

April 1991

And we thought these days were license-crazy. *CGW*, Issue 8, featured reviews of Interplay's first LORD OF THE RINGS ("bright, enjoyable, and perfectly harmless") and JAMES BOND: THE STEALTH AFFAIR. But what really got our— and gamers'—attention was the full-page ad for Accolade's ELVIRA game. "They don't get much bigger than this," the review copy declared. Amen.

5

April 1996

The reincarnation of Sierra's RED BARON was the big news in 1996, and our cover story illustrates just how far gaming has come in the last five years. At the top of the game's drool-inducing list of features: planes that, when hit, would start "streaming semi-transparent smoke," and wings that would— get this!—bend or even be blown off.

The CGW Mix

Our latest fascinations

Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn

I've finally got the end of this epic game in sight. It's been an incredible ride, so rewarding that the idea of spending another four months playing as a different character is unbelievably tempting. Has any other game so deftly balanced a sprawling scope and story? *–Coffey*

Airfix Dogfighter

It's every kid's dream: To fly miniature WWII aircraft–with functional guns and rockets–through the house, and jump the Germans in the living room. Simple concept and easy gameplay, but I was hooked. *–Handy*

Dreamcast Games

Yes, the system's been canned, but dammit, who can ignore games like JET GRIND RADIO, SKIES OF ARCADIA, and NFL 2K1? Not me. I even bought the over-hyped SHENMUE, which wasn't bad once I started imagining I was in a Jean-Claude Van Damme flick. *–Scooter*

Counter-Strike

We haven't been game-locked like this on a HALF-LIFE mod since TFC, but COUNTER-STRIKE's fast-paced tactical sim gameplay and real-world weapons keep us coming back for more. The bomb has indeed been planted. *–Price*

Understanding Media

Wow. Marshall McLuhan's late 60's treatise remains the definitive study of all things media. It's still relevant and surprisingly insightful with our favorite new forms of media: the Internet and games. *–Jones*

STEALTH MODE

by Rodney Allen Sneaky

■ Let's start off with the Xbox. Anything with a mysterious "X" on it grabs my eye. Microsoft is making the Xbox so that it can optionally work with a mouse, keyboard, and your PC monitor, so guess what? It's essentially a home PC. Take that, Gateway and Dell. Microsoft has unleashed the boys in the lab coats, though, and they're pushing Xbox technology even further. It should have some radical input options, like voice recognition that really works. We'd even guess that it will work with mental telepathy, but the Amazing Kreskin hasn't been recruited by Redmond. Yet.

■ They're not stopping there, though. As *Red Herring* learned, Microsoft is seriously considering jumping into the handheld games market. That's just the fastest-growing segment of the games market, after all. The rumor is that while the handheld, dubbed Xboy, has been discussed, it will have to wait until after the Xbox launches this fall, meaning that the handheld would be a 2002 market entry at the earliest. While this would put it far behind Nintendo's Game Boy Advance, it would be able to surpass the GBA's technology.

■ 3DO is readying several titles. Expect to see a **HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC 4** this fall. They're far along in development already. For this iteration, they've focused not on adding more, but on refining the core gameplay. They'll also publish a **MIGHT AND MAGIC IX**, though they're thinking of renaming it. Finally, they've asked a development studio that is well-known for making hardcore RTS games to make a hardcore RTS game to go with their Army Men franchise.

■ Sierra's having some tough times, and Havas has put them under the microscope, with absolutely no sense of humor about things. They've already done some layoffs and canceled one internal game that was never announced, **ODYSSEY**. Mr. Sneaky wouldn't be surprised if **HALF-LIFE 2** winds up at a different publisher. Sierra sold its soul to get the original and didn't acquire guaranteed rights to the sequel. I have no word yet on whether Sierra's officially inked a deal with Valve, but the fact that the game is still unannounced makes me wonder.

■ Chainsaw David Grenewetzki, Sierra's president, may be counting his last days. His VP of marketing was fired without notice, and replaced by the French guys, and Grenewetzki is commuting from L.A. two days a week. Nicholas Longano, formerly of Mattel and the Hot Wheels brand, and Calvin Klein and Revlon before that, is the new senior VP of games marketing. So if games are like Hot Wheels or bottles of Obsession, Sierra may be okay. Longano is head of strategic marketing for Havas, and he is moving to Bellevue to take charge. Everything will report to him. Sierra Home is also being taken over by another guy from Paris. *C'est la vie* at Sierra these days.

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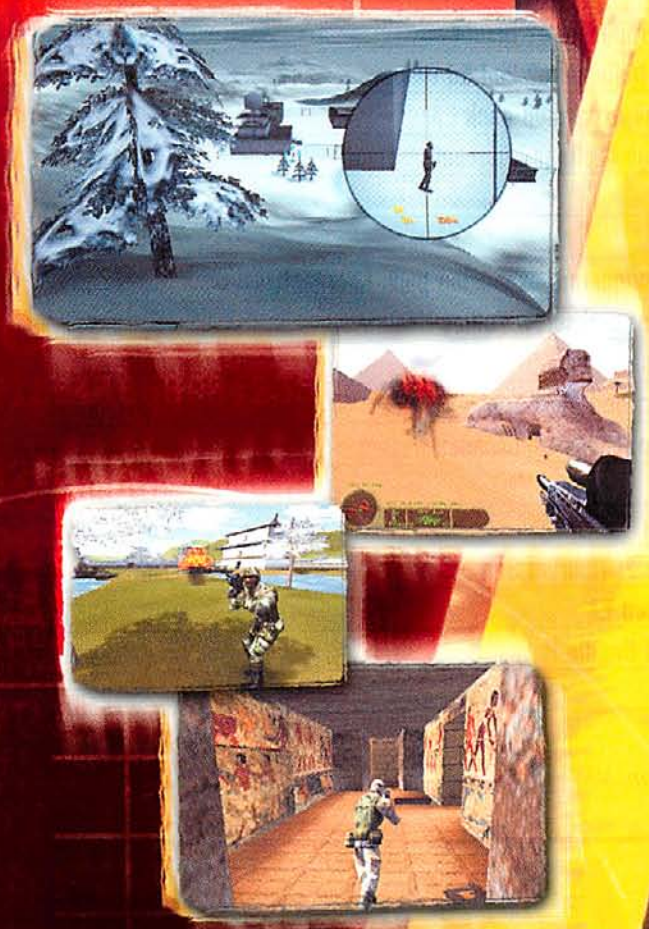

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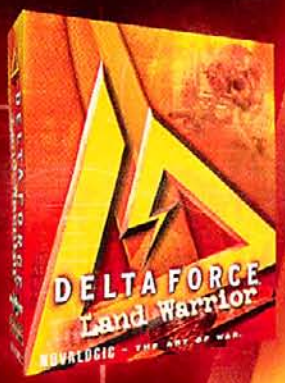

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Handy Stats

by Alex Handy

$90 million
Gross U.S. sales last year from THE SIMS and THE SIMS add-on, LIVIN' LARGE.

1
Number of times Maxis canceled THE SIMS because the review board didn't like it.

3
Number of years Will Wright secretly directed THE SIMS before EA bought Maxis and supported the game.

2.75 million
Worldwide unit sales in 2000 of DIABLO II, Blizzard's fastest-selling game ever.

29
Supposed age of Jeff Green.

39
Actual age of Jeff Green.

14
Number of levels in ONI.

4
Number of levels that don't suck.

79
Number of emails I received that complained about my ASHERON'S CALL review.

1
Number of emails Robert Coffey received that complained about his DAIKATANA review.

13.2
Percent of gamers who pronounce "Gibs" as "Jibs."

0100001101000 11101010111
"*CGW*" in binary.

1
Number of issues "Handy Stats" will last.

Top 20 of 2000

Rank	Game	Publisher	Total Units
1	The Sims	EA	1,775,788
2	Roller Coaster Tycoon	Hasbro	1,251,770
3	Diablo 2	Havas	970,131
4	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	Disney	942,978
5	Who Wants To Be A Millionaire? 2nd Ed	Disney	752,868
6	The Sims: Livin' Large expansion pack	EA	595,410
7	Age Of Empires II: Age of Kings	Microsoft	595,016
8	Sim Theme Park	EA	563,299
9	SimCity 3000	EA	385,001
10	Age Of Empires II: Conquerors expansion pack	Microsoft	373,440
11	Roller Coaster Tycoon: Corkscrew Follies	Hasbro	370,121
12	Unreal Tournament	Infogrames	352,866
13	Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2	EA	334,400
14	Roller Coaster Tycoon: Loopy Landscapes	Hasbro	325,210
15	Sim Mania Pack	EA	294,214
16	Half-Life	Havas	286,593
17	Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun	EA	283,544
18	SimCity 3000 Unlimited	EA	278,496
19	StarCraft/Battlechest Bundle	Havas	275,286
20	Diablo	Havas	260,020

Source: PC Data, Inc., Reston, VA

The Buzz

"Don't underestimate toys – it was games that got the personal computer revolution going." *–Matthew Mason, computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University, quoted by AP*

"There's no lack of creativity in this business, there's just a lack of consumer demand for anything outside of the core settings. Unfortunately." *–Brian Fargo, founder of Interplay*

"I guess someone figured out that there really isn't a huge economic benefit to publishing every piece of mass email that comes out of whatever PR firm Microsoft uses." *–Bruce Geryk (Strategic Therapy on Gamepen.com), on the collapse of online gaming alliances*

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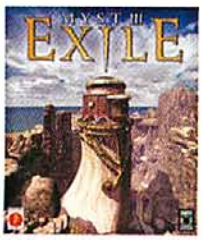
THIS MONTH'S TOP 5
PREORDERS

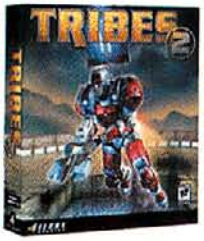
Arcanum: Of Steamworks & Magick Obscura *(Sierra Studios)* Welcome to the land of Arcanum, where magic and sorcery hold equal sway with technology and science. An adventurer among dwarves, humans, orcs, and elves might just as easily wield a flintlock pistol as a flaming sword.

Baldur's Gate II Expansion Pack: Throne of Bhaal *(Interplay)* Continue the epic saga of Baldur's Gate™ II to its ultimate conclusion as you fulfill your destiny as the child of Bhaal. Unravel the mysteries of Watcher's Keep, cast new high level spells and gain powerful new abilities.



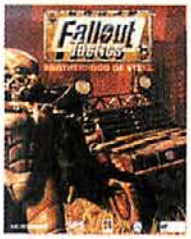
Myst III: Exile *(Broderbund)* Building on the surreal style of Myst and Riven, Myst III: Exile features new fantastic environments that made its' predecessors immersive, mysterious and beautiful. Exile features five entirely new ages for players to explore and hours of new mysteries to uncover.

Black & White *(Electronic Arts)* A role-playing game unlike any other you've played before. You play the role of a deity in a land where the surroundings are yours to shape and its people are yours to lord over. Your actions decide whether you create a heaven or hell for your worshippers.



Tribes 2 *(Sierra Studios)* The ultimate team-based experience, set in breathtaking worlds where brainpower and teamwork are the only true keys to survival. Unprecedented innovations in teamplay and tactical warfare will summon your intellect and gaming prowess in unimaginable ways.

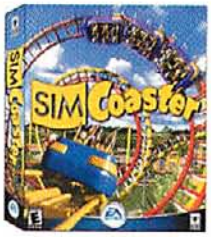
THIS MONTH'S TOP 5
RELEASES



Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood of Steel *(Interplay)* A squad-based tactical combat game set in the Fallout universe and serves as a side story to the series' ongoing continuity. Features many systems native to the series, which will no doubt please those hungering for another postapocalyptic romp.

Evil Dead: Hail to the King *(THQ)* Ash must once again attempt to save the world from an appalling and horrific end. Survival horror genre is taken to new heights by combining the successful formula of suspense, action, and puzzle-solving with over-the-top bloodlust and signature humor.

Star Trek: Away Team *(Activision)* You are in charge of an elite group of officers brought together to take care of the Federation's dirty laundry. Your unit will consist of 22 characters, each with a unique expertise. It's your to choose the 3 to 6 officers needed to complete each of the 18 missions.



SimCoaster *(Electronic Arts)* Experience the most gut-wrenching, pulse-pounding roller coaster of all time. You research, create, staff, and manage the theme park of your dreams. An easy-to-use interface and stunning 3-D graphics make it fun to create and enjoy. There's a new thrill around every corner!

Clive Barker's Undying *(Electronic Arts)* A first-person action game based on the *Unreal Tournament* engine. Clive Barker immerses players in 1920s Ireland.The richly rendered environments and detailed characters capture the dark, ominous spirit of the horror master's 's other narrative creations.

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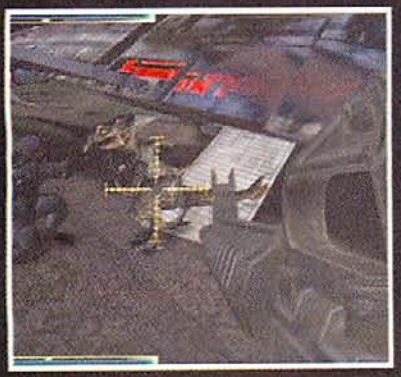
pipeline

Software development is an inexact science, so pinning down release dates is like predicting the next gaming website to go under. These dates represent the best available info we had at press time. If you're a publisher, send us your updates: cgwpipeline@ziffdavis.com.

Updates

DREAMLAND CHRONICLES: FREEDOM RIDGE: The game has been pushed back all the way to the end of the year. Why? Mythos is working on a custom engine for the PS2 version. Curse those consoles for delaying our PC games!



CIVILIZATION III: An online interview at twingalaxies.com revealed that Firaxis is working on customizable units *a la* ALPHA CENTAURI, more ways to achieve victory, and customizable music.

DIABLO II: THE LORD OF DESTRUCTION: The expansion has a name now, and it's – unofficially – in pre-alpha. They're not even close to tweaking or balancing the new skills yet; it'll be many moons before you can bloody your sword again.

Just Announced

MASTER OF ORION III: The game is still very "pre-alpha." The team has reached the point where one can research technology and have industries build things, but that's about it.

AGE OF WONDERS II: THE WIZARD'S THRONE

EARTH & BEYOND

HOSTILE WATERS: ANTAEUS RISING

MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE

HALF-LIFE 2: Nothing "official," but NYU computer science professor Ken Perlin says he's been working with Valve on a way to let players "fall in love with in-game characters." Love 'em and leave 'em bleeding, that's our motto.

NEW Age Of Wonders II: The Wizard's Throne G.O.D.	Spring 2002
Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare Infogrames	Spring 2001
Anachronox Eidos	Spring 2001
UPDATE Arcanum Sierra	May 2001
Battlecruiser Millennium 3000AD Inc.	Spring 2001
Battle Realms Crave	Summer 2001
Black & White EA	Spring 2001
Command & Conquer: Renegade Westwood	Spring 2001
UPDATE Commandos 2 Eidos	May 2001
Destroyer Command Mattel	Spring 2001
UPDATE Deus Ex 2 Eidos	Summer 2002
UPDATE Diablo II: Lord Of Destruction Blizzard	Summer 2001
UPDATE Dreamland Chron: Freedom Ridge Bethesda	Christmas 2001
Duke Nukem Forever 3D Realms	Fall 2001
Dune DreamCatcher	Summer 2001
Dungeon Siege Microsoft	August 2001
NEW Earth & Beyond Westwood	Winter 2001
Elder Scrolls: Morrowind Bethesda	Winter 2001
UPDATE Empire Earth Sierra	Summer 2001
Emperor: Battle For Dune Westwood	Summer 2001
Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood Of Steel Interplay	Spring 2001
Flash Point: Status Quo 1985 Bohemia	Summer 2001
Freedom Force Crave	Winter 2001
Freelancer Microsoft	Fall 2001
Halo Bungie	Fall 2001
Harpoon 4 SSI	Spring 2001
NEW Hostile Waters: Antaeus Rising Interplay	Summer 2001
Icewind Dale: Heart Of Winter Interplay	Spring 2001
IL-2 Sturmovik Blue Byte	Spring 2001
Legends Of Might & Magic 3DO	Spring 2001
Magic & Mayhem 2: The Art Of Magic Bethesda	Spring 2001
Majestic EA	Spring 2001
NEW Master Of Orion III Hasbro	Spring 2002
Max Payne G.O.D.	Summer 2001
MechCommander 2 Microsoft	Summer 2001
Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault EA	Fall 2001
Myst III Mattel	Spring 2001
NEW Myth III: The Wolf Age G.O.D.	Christmas 2001
Neverwinter Nights Interplay	Summer 2001
NEW Planetside Verant	Fall 2001
Pool Of Radiance II SSI	Spring 2001
Red Faction THQ	Fall 2001
Return To Wolfenstein Activision	Spring 2001
Serious Sam G.O.D.	Spring 2001
Sid Meier's Civilization III Hasbro	August 2001
Sigma Microsoft	Fall 2001
Silent Hunter II Mattel	Summer 2001
NEW The Sims: House Party EA	May 2001
NEW Sims Live EA	April 2001
NEW Sims Online EA	December 2001
Simsville EA	Spring 2001
Sovereign Sony Online	Summer 2001
UPDATE Star Trek: Bridge Commander Activision	Fall 2001
UPDATE Star Wars Galaxies Verant/LucasArts	Late 2002
Stronghold G.O.D.	Summer 2001
Summoner THQ	Spring 2001
Team Fortress 2 Sierra	Fall 2001
The World Is Not Enough EA	Spring 2001
UPDATE Thief III Eidos	Spring 2002
Ultima Online: Third Dawn Origin	Spring 2001
NEW Ultima Worlds Online: Origin EA	Spring 2002
WarCraft III Blizzard	Summer 2001
Warlords IV Mattel	Spring 2001
X-COM: Alliance Hasbro	Spring 2001

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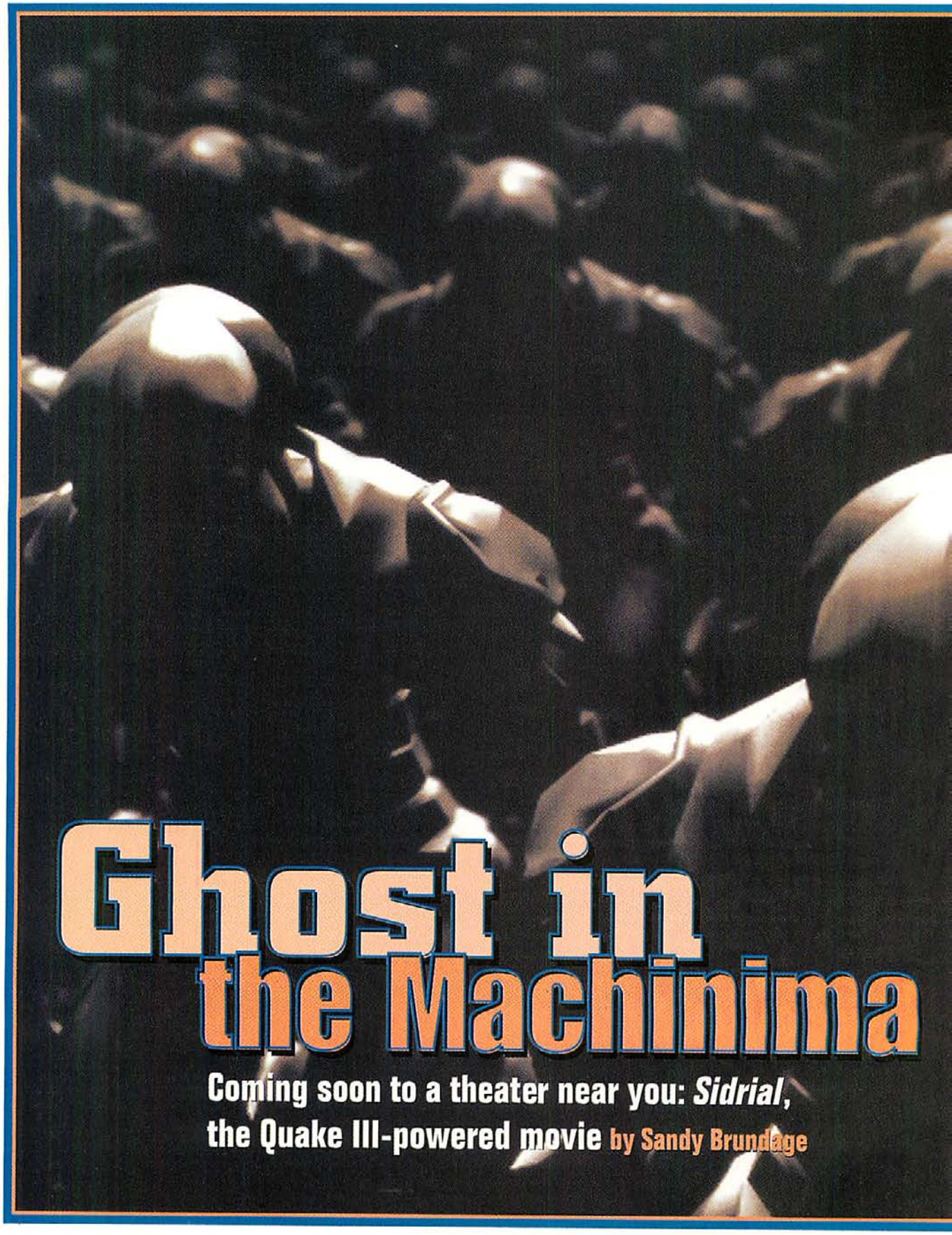


Ghost in the Machinima

Coming soon to a theater near you: *Sidrial*, the Quake III-powered movie by Sandy Brundage

Most people use game engines to make games. Anna Kang makes movies. At Fountainhead Entertainment, the former id employee is creating *Sidrial*, the first commercial animated title using the QUAKE III engine.

Inspired by Vernor Vinge's science-fiction novel, "Deepness in the Sky" and the television series *Babylon 5*, *Sidrial* has a familiar "rebels fight alien invaders" storyline underlying the action. Kang recently revealed the story exclusively to *CGW*:

"In *Sidrial*, a race of people have been torn and beaten by a hostile, mysterious species that seem unable to be defeated. The invaders are ancient, and their history spans millions of years. The Sidrilians, who have fallen victim to these invaders, are a race with merely a hundred thousand years of history," she said.

"Two planets unite to vanquish a dark force which threatens to destroy every living thing in its path. The story follows the rebel leaders and their fight against extinction. Their journey leads them to uncertainty and a discovery that will change everything. Earth will find itself in the middle of the greatest war the Universe has ever seen."

Making movies with a game engine is called "machinima." It was born with the release of QUAKE in 1996 by id Software. Check out the four-hour epic *Seal of Nehahra* from The Nehahra Project to see what an antique engine can do. Slapstick cartoons "Apartment Huntin'" and "Hardly Workin'" from ILL Clan show off the lighter side of QUAKE.

Using the game engine to create scenes rather than using the traditional way of pre-rendering an animated film allows for faster and cheaper movie-making that will be adaptable as new, more elegant engines like Monolith's LithTech arrive. The LithTech engine is even being expanded into a suite of film production tools called "LithTech Film Producer."

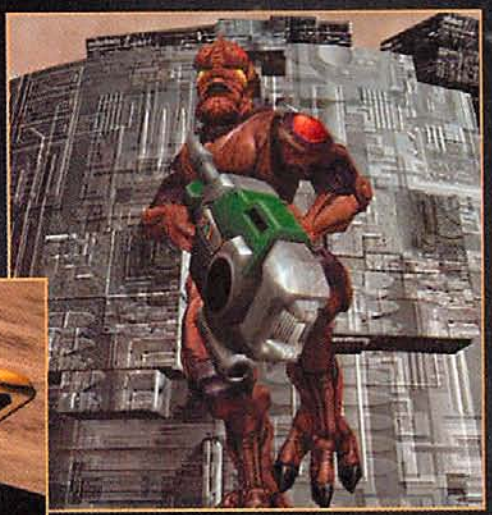
A successful machinima needs a compelling script, like any movie, but it also needs solid code, a director, and an animator. *Sidrial* draws upon two artists, two level designers, a programmer, a sound engineer, and Kang.

Why does *Sidrial* use the QUAKE III engine? The obvious reason is because Kang's husband is none other than John Carmack, the genius who programmed QUAKE III. But Kang also says that QUAKE III's graphical capabilities can do tricks you've never seen. In games, designers often struggle with considerations of frame-rate, processor speed, and lag. But when an engine powers a movie, it blows past those limits, particularly with the help of a few film-editing tools.

"The main tool we use is proprietary, written in-house," Kang said, "but we also use tools ranging from traditional film/television hardware and software to traditional game development tools. If we can't find it, we create it."

Fountainhead Entertainment is creating a world that will haunt you even as it shoves machinima into the mainstream. Kang believes that anything from a persistent online universe to a comic book series is possible. "*Sidrial*'s story is so expansive, that if things go well, I see myself as engulfed with *Sidrial* as George Lucas has been with *Star Wars*." And thanks to QUAKE III, it will be made at a fraction of the cost.

Watch for *Sidrial*'s release in cinemas or on cable television later this year. CGW



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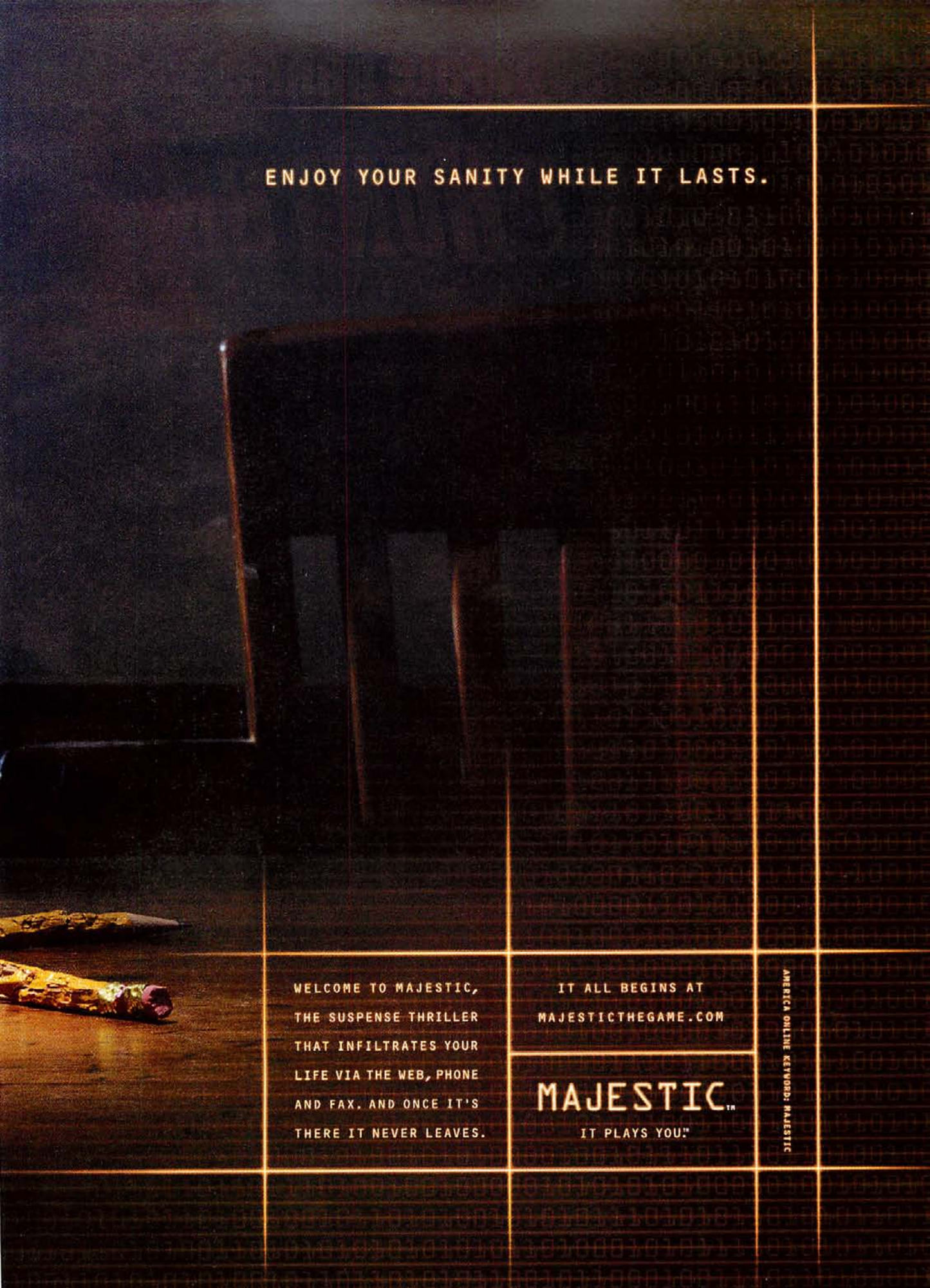
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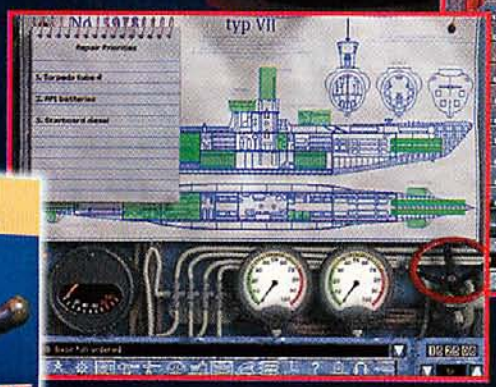

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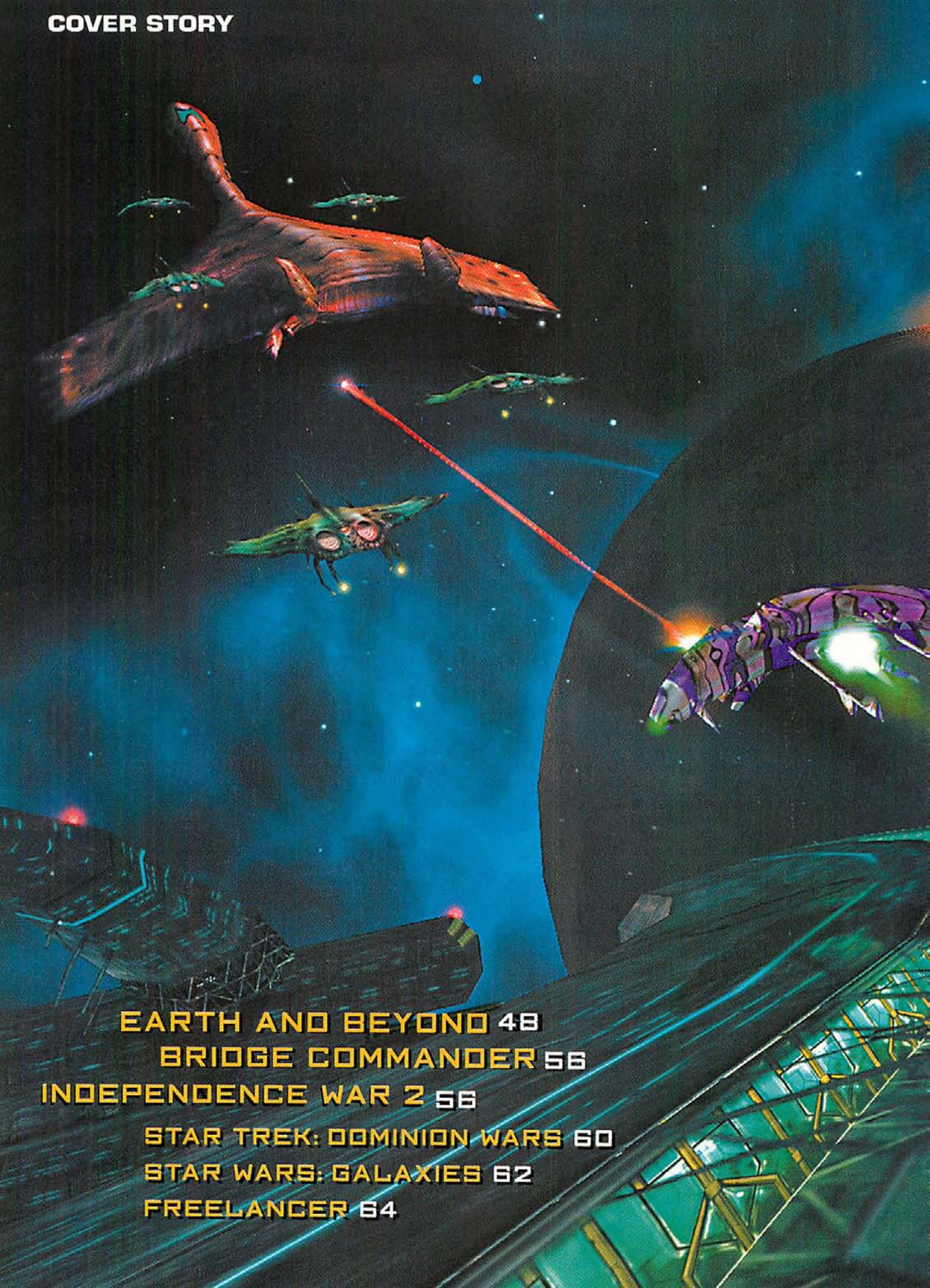

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FREELANCER 64

We're living in the future.

Thirty-one years ago, Stanley Kubrick thought we'd be floating in space stations by now, yet here we are, earthbound, looking at the stars and dreaming of hurtling through infinite space.

You're not alone.

Game developers are building visions of a spaced-out future that will make WING COMMANDER and TIE FIGHTER look like World War I. While NASA talks about terraforming planets, we're talking about putting you in command of starships.

Forget reality. Get ready for the ride of your life.

TRADE BAIT A Terran trader ship fires at a Black Vendari Leviathan in Jupiter's orbit. This nasty alien can crush a player's ship in its powerful jaws.

EARTH AND BEYOND

Taking gamers to deep space—a few thousand at a time

Right now, as you read this, odds are that some genius is pitching a massively-multiplayer online version of *Hogan's Heroes*. Unlikely?

No more so than that show's "madcap situation comedy in a Nazi concentration camp" premise. The fact is, the virtual playground of online gaming is about to get a whole lot more crowded in 2001 as a slew of developers unveil their efforts to jump Verant and EVERQUEST's claim on the online goldmine. Designers are working overtime trying to come up with unique hooks and niches to set themselves apart from the ever-expanding pack. Yet, in the end, most of these games will be met with resounding indifference. Considering the enormous time commitment these games demand in order to be entertaining, how many variations on the same theme can gamers be expected to make time for?

BY ROBERT COFFEY

We're thinking that there are just enough hours in the day for gamers to squeeze in one more. And we're thinking that game might very well be Westwood Studio's inaugural effort in the persistent online world milieu, EARTH AND BEYOND.

Genre
Massively-Multiplayer Online RPG

Publisher
Electronic Arts

Developer
Westwood Studios

Release Date
Q4 01

www.westwood.com

Space Cowboys

So why are we betting on EARTH AND BEYOND? Because it's the only game that actually gives players the opportunity to carve out virtual lives for themselves in the finest *Buck Rogers* tradition, building their own spaceships, fighting for or against good, amassing enviable fortunes, and exploring the most distant reaches of a far-flung universe.

The game takes place well in the 23rd century. Humanity is living in a state of cold war, still recovering from a nearly catastrophic conflict that took place some 100 years previous. Three factions now dominate the solar system: the voraciously capitalist Terran Alliance holding Earth; the science- and discovery-minded Jenquai living on one of Jupiter's moons; and the Progen Republic, the warlike colonists who are genetically engineering warriors on Mars.

These three factions form the foundation for the character you will create; while E&B may look like a space sim joystick jockey's dream, the game is

WHAT PLANET ARE YOU FROM? Many of the stations you'll visit will be planetside, bringing the game and some of its quests down to an alien terra firma.

actually a very solid RPG. Each of three possible trades (fighter, warrior, or merchant trader) is available to any citizen of any planet, and the skill bonuses each planet confers consequently create a pool of nine potential roles. So while you'll get the best pure traders from the Terran Alliance, the more combative Progen trader can enjoy just as much success in the game...he just may need to do it more as a pirate hijacking convoys and trading in black market goods.

What I Learned at Space Camp

Similar to ASHERON'S CALL, gamers will start with just two or three basic skills, and gain more (probably up to 15 or 20) as they accumulate experience. Unlike EVERQUEST's, E&B's skill system will not be use-based, so gaining experience will be crucial. The list of skills hasn't been finalized yet, but Westwood is planning on having literally 100 or more, including diplomacy, critical hit, and various weapon skills. Leveling up will allow you to add new skills or train to improve existing ones—though to improve skills to the fourth or fifth level, you will probably be tasked with completing some epic quest. Additionally, home planet limits will help determine how high skills can go, so don't count on maxing out your critical hit rating if you're playing as a Jenquai merchant.

One of EARTH AND BEYOND's most interesting features is how your spaceship becomes a physical exprssion of your character's class and level. Sure, you'll design a handsome 3D avatar to wander around space stations and get quests (more on that later) but 99 percent of your presence in the game will be as captain of your own personalized ship. As you gain levels, you'll move up the game's tech tree and win the opportunity to upgrade specific portions of your ship at predetermined increments. Will you upgrade your sensors or opt for more firepower? Should you increase your shielding at the expense of faster engines for eluding attackers? Every race has a specific ship style, and every trade a specific baseline ship, so the inky blackness of space should be filled with a huge variety of craft—especially since players also will be able to pick their own ship color and decals (some of which may be rewards that become available at certain levels). You should also be able to assess another ship's level, class, and abilities at a glance.

Galaxy Quests

So how will you obtain the experience that is necessary for adding skills or upgrading your ship? Well, you could follow the basic online RPG model and just kill lots of stuff. But the designers really want you to go on quests; to that end, they're bending over backward to make their questing system the standout that the current king of the hill, EVERQUEST, isn't. The hope is that quests will add more substance and narrative flow to the game than constant, random fighting would.

Twinks in Space

"Twinking," the practice of artificially buffing up your character, is going to be nigh onto impossible in EARTH AND BEYOND. Most twinking is done by having a high-level character load up a newbie with superpowered items that he could never hope to get through legitimate means. E&B's tech tree thwarts twinking by having your ship incrementally gain new tech levels. So if your vessel's engines are at tech level two, it is impossible to slap a ninth-level engine on it—it simply won't go on.

This anti-twinking policy can't come as good news to Westwood cofounder, Brett Sperry, who is, according to several sources at Westwood, an EVERQUEST twinker supreme. Sperry has his high-level characters practically neuter and nail big monsters to the ground before letting his fresh characters deliver the killing blow and garner all the experience. He reportedly runs four PCs at home to make this tactic work. While you may or may not agree with Sperry's alleged character augmentation, you've got to hand it to the guy for his ingenuity and enthusiasm. If EARTH AND BEYOND can only inspire a handful of players to the level of Sperry's industrious fanaticism, it can't help but be a hit.

5 Ways E&B Isn't a Traditional Space Game

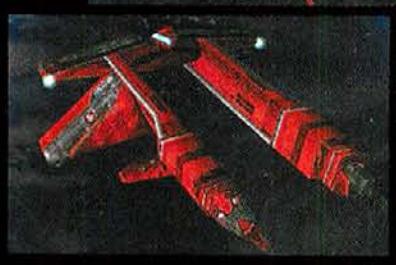
1. **No Joysticks** Combat is real-time but mouse-driven with invisible die rolls, based on such attributes as skills and weapons, determining the outcome.
2. **Scale** Even the biggest player ship is tiny compared to a space station, capital ship, or many of the creatures.
3. **Web Integration** You'll be able to buy and sell items online but out of the game-world.
4. **Journalism** Westwood is hoping to integrate fan fiction into the game in the form of players participating as reporters on game events, which could become an actual role to play.
5. **Death** Since it's a persistent online world, death is not permanent. You'll get one free death a day; after that you'll respawn at your starbase at 70 percent health with the option to pay for a full repair.

There are basically two types of quests: crafted and personalized. The personalized quests are obtained through quest generators you find on space stations. These generators take a look at your character, fill in details in a quest template, and then send you off on an escort mission, a salvage run, a retrieval errand, or any of hundreds of possibilities.

The crafted missions should be more compelling, advancing the storyline and often requiring you to get help to complete them. These quests could be as straightforward as asking you to assassinate an NPC to tasking you with creating a squadron of fighters in order to take out an enormous capital ship sometime later that week. They will not all be conflict-oriented, however. Explorers can expect to go on quests to discover new planets, star gates, space creatures, and more.

The one thing all the quests have in common is that they're saved server-side with your character, so only you will get credit for completing the quest. For example, if you have to assassinate a pirate leader, some spoilsport who kills him before you may get combat experience but not the big quest payoff (you'll get that after your target respawns and you take him out). And players won't be able to hog all the good crafted quests either, since no character can carry more than four active quests at a time.

BODY WORK Leveling up your character nets you new technology, which, over time, will dramatically alter the appearance of the modest spaceship with which you start out.



Lost in Space?

The one concern we have about this visually dazzling, enormously appealing game is a potentially big one: communication. Even though clans and corporations will be able to maintain radio contact on personal, CB-style channels, most player-to-player communication will be limited to starbases. Players nearby each other will be able to chat, but in the vastness of space it seems likely that players will be incredibly spread out and forced to cluster around key navigation buoys to find any companionship. It's obviously too early to make a real call now, but if E&B does not provide adequate player socialization it runs the danger of not developiing a community of committed players—the very thing that makes these online games thrive.

In the meantime, we're looking forward to participating in the beta test (see sidebar if you'd like to participate). The test should clear up any questions lingering in our minds...and if our EVERQUEST addiction is any indication, the game should suck up hours and hours and hours of our woeful lives. CGW

BIG BADDIES

HOW BIG IS BIG? Expect to see drastic differences in scale throughout the game. Many of the monsters will be comparable in size to the space station dwarfing the Jenquai ship here.

PRETTY ON THE INSIDE The inside of this planetside docking station really shows off EARTH AND BEYOND's stellar graphics.

Do you want to participate in the EARTH AND BEYOND beta test? Go to http://westwood.ea.com/specials/betasignup/index.html and enlist. A few caveats are in order. First off, be prepared to mix your play with work. Westwood will need testers to commit to between 12 to 30 hours a week of play time—time that might be spent testing specific areas of the game universe on specific days and times. Be you a newbie or the world's most experienced gamer, you'll be expected to document and concisely explain any bugs or problems in regular reports.

I Wanna Be a Spaceship Ranger

You'll also need a fairly hefty system (at least in the early portion of the testing). Testers will need a minimum Pentium III 500 with 128MB of RAM, 1GB of hard drive space, a GeForce 128, and at least an ISDN Internet connection.

ALIENS FROM OUTER SPACE The monsters swimming through the deep space of EARTH AND BEYOND are a diverse lot. In order, these are a Shotokan Manacle, a malicious alien able to generate its own wormhole; the neutral Sin-U Voidrunner, which feeds off player ships' energy fields; and a Shadow Reaver, a viciously territorial alien.

PORT OF CALL Ships will be constantly flying in and out of neutral space stations, which are the primary places for players to get quests, trade goods, and form parties.

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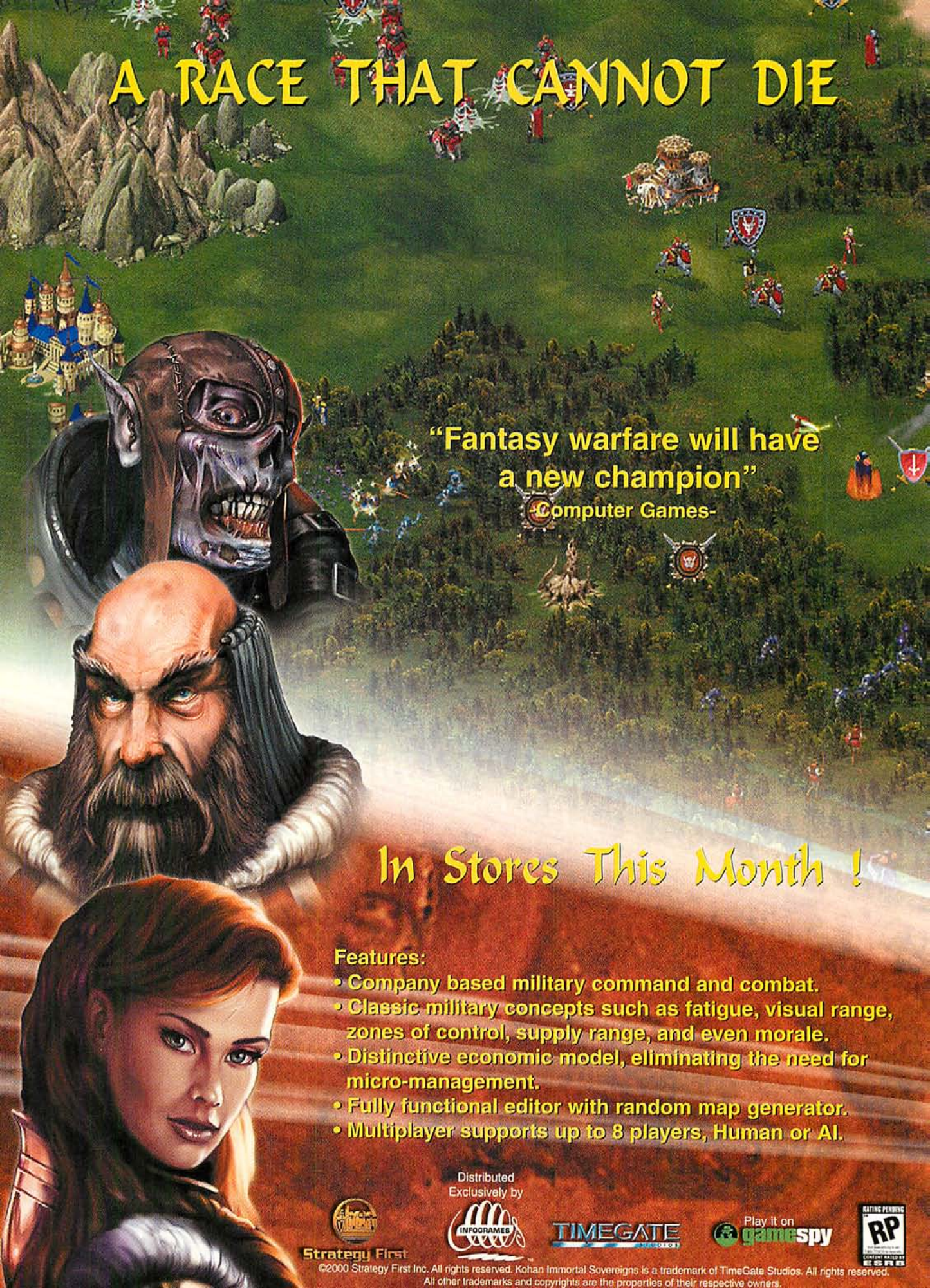

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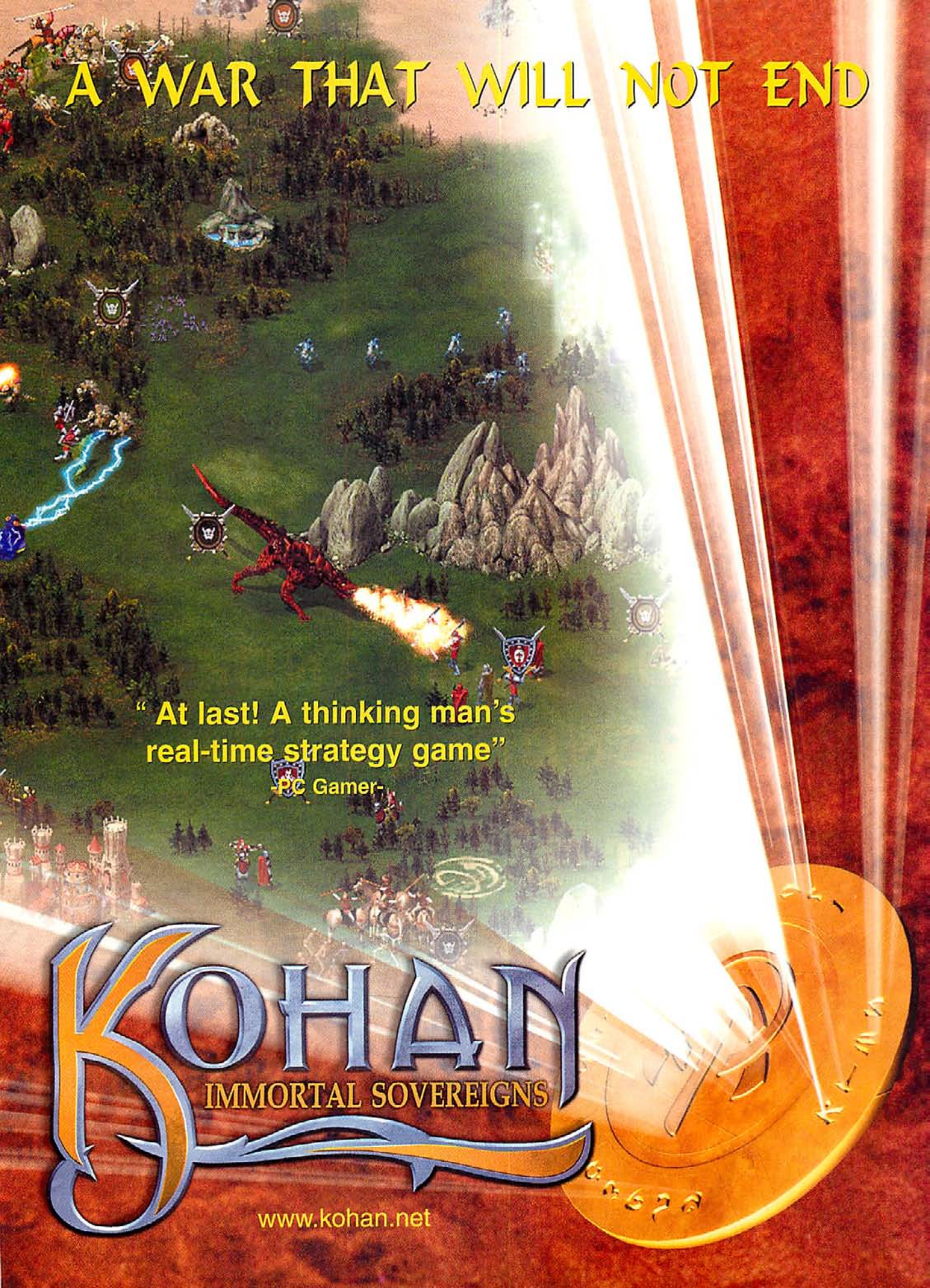
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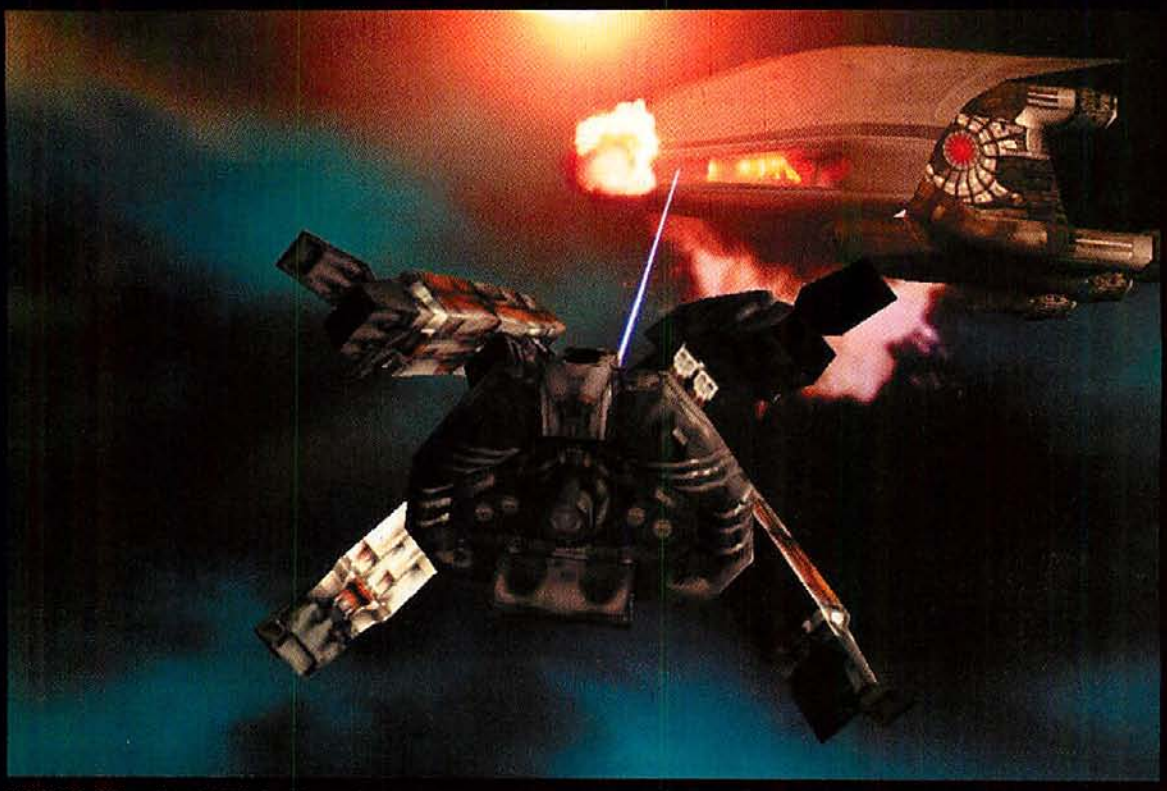

TUG ALONG Different ships within I-WAR 2 will be used for different purposes. Remember to use a bigger ship than this tug if you plan on fighting anyone.

STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER AND INDEPENDENCE WAR 2: THE EDGE OF CHAOS

Take command of the biggest and the baddest in these two awe-inspiring space simulations

BY THIERRY NGUYEN

This seminal year in history has added a new directive to the space sim genre: Games now obey your will.

You're no longer just a cog in a massive war machine. You don't just flitter around, squeeze the trigger, and spew colored lighting at another space speck. You don't listen to your commander yell out an order and begrudgingly follow it.

Now you *are* the commander.

This is the space sim experience for 2001. You utter a phrase, and your men follow it. You say, "Destroy," and they ask, "How fast?" Sure, you may have to talk with some advisors before deciding on a course of action, and you do still have to report to a boss, but the bottom-line is: Your word is law.

Larry Holland's STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER (BRIDGE COMMANDER) and Particle System's INDEPENDENCE WAR 2: THE EDGE OF CHAOS (I-WAR 2) present two different takes on the aspect of command. One game is American and the other is British. One replicates the experience of a beloved franchise. The other is simultaneously expanding and refining a new creation. One follows a tight, precise formula, while the other presents you with an open playfield and drops in narrative when you feel like tackling it.

First Question: *How* Does One Command?

It would be nice to simply bark orders to "divert engine power and raise shields!" but since not everyone has voice recognition software, these two titles use the tried-and-true menu-driven command systems.

(For those who do wish to bark orders that are actually recognized, we highly recommend a program called GAME COMMANDER 2, $30 from www.gamecommander.net.)

The original I-WAR had a dazzling array of commands but featured a clumsy interface for issuing them. Both BRIDGE COMMANDER and

I-WAR 2 endeavor to make exercising your will easier. I-WAR 2 still uses hotkeys for immediate access and execution, but there's also a HUD-menu. Use your joystick hat to pop up a straightforward menu with four options; click your hat around in different directions to see your commands, whether to prioritize the order of repairs, select a system to cruise toward, or detach your turret fighters and let them fight on their own. Much, much easier than before.

In BRIDGE COMMANDER, giving orders requires merely turning toward an officer and clicking. Aim your mouse at your First Officer, and you can solicit sound advice or instruct her to put the ship into red alert. Click on your Tactical Officer to tell him what maneuver to pull, where to aim, and what to fire. Larry Holland and his team's desire to make command accessible to everyone, even those who've never flown anything of the sort before, seems to be quite effective.

Why Are You in Command in the First Place?

Each game has an interesting story and a different method of telling it. BRIDGE COMMANDER depicts command by succession. The original captain of your starship dies in the line of duty, and you, plucky First Officer, are immediately promoted and given the task of taking over the ship and continuing your mission of investigating a weird space maelstrom. Soon, you will tumble down a path that leads to the involvement of *Star Trek* luminaries Picard and Data (with authentic voices to boot) and concepts such as Cardassian superweapons. The game is divided into 35 missions distributed between 8 episodes. Veterans to Holland's *Star Wars* space combat games will notice that there is much more flexibility when it comes to playing missions this time. Rather than a linear string of objectives, you can now prioritize in what order you'll tackle the various missions within a given episode. However you approach them, the emphasis—as in last year's STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE—is to replicate the theoretical experience of an episode of *Star Trek*.

I-WAR 2 depicts command via progression. You start out with a lowly command module but soon move onto ships such as tugs, a storm petrel, a light corvette, and a heavy corvette. Also, while BRIDGE COMMANDER will have a fixed, Sovereign-class starship at your ready, I-WAR 2 will allow you to customize and/or upgrade various aspects of your ships. The storyline here is also mission-based and includes several traditional elements, such as ragtag bands fighting imperial and/or corporate oppression, yet, the bulk of the game is made up of freeform space travel, à la PRIVATEER or ELITE. You roam about space, looking for either trading opportunities or even poor freighter ships who can be...coerced into giving you their goods. Or you could check your email at your home base and accept missions ranging from escorting merchants to destroying pirate squads.

The plot itself is divided into acts and will simply drop in story-specific missions at certain times. These will be more in the vein of the unique missions offered in the previous game, such as using a cutting beam to sear graffiti onto a New Alliance flagship. So while there is an interesting story to serve as a framework, British design sensibilities are putting more emphasis on a massive universe and open-ended gameplay.

Outer Dark

Are you a distant commander or are you one who gets his hands dirty?

Both games may sound a little hands-off, but space combat is still quite the opposite. The biggest ship that a player can

BRIDGE DECORATOR That far middle seat is yours, and the empty one to the right is reserved for various dignitaries/ambassadors who pop up during missions.

SHIELD MY EYES This is a straight shot of the big, bad ship that you inherit after your commander gets offed. It has multiple shields, so you'll want to make sure your most-protected section is always facing the enemy.

FREE SCREENING You can either watch the battle unfold in this tactical screen, or take manual control of the ship yourself.

obtain in I-WAR 2 is corvette-sized, so while it's significantly bigger than a traditional dogfighter, it still possesses more speed, maneuverability, and involvement than a massive capital ship. Similarly, BRIDGE COMMANDER features options for both hands-on and hands-off combat.

WHAT'S YOURS IS MINE I-WAR 2 will be more free-form, allowing you to attack and snatch space stuff from goody-goody merchants.

I-WAR 2 features the same Newtonian physics as its predecessor, so combat is a refinement of the delicate, ballet-style naval engagements handled so well in the original. As mentioned before, the interface has been cleaned up. Rather than jumping around to different stations as you did in the previous game, you simply click through the various menus without ever leaving the main view. Additional tactical considerations over the original game include a wider arsenal of ship gadgets, ranging from weapons to shield types to engines, and the ability to customize your load-out before heading out on a mission or for a random flight.

OUTLOOK 3000 From your central base, you can accept missions via email, decide what goods to trade, outfit your ship, and even manufacture new items for your ship.

Combat in BRIDGE COMMANDER can be handled entirely through orders—you can tell the Tactical Officer what to do, or you can hop into tactical mode and use the keyboard to directly maneuver your ship. Multiple weapon and shield systems are modeled, so considerations such as facing, firing rate, and collateral damage are all present. Because you're

HOW'S HOLLAND?

Not everyday does one get the chance to exchange words with space sim legend Larry Holland, so we now give you the results of our lexical intercourse with the vision behind some of the best space sim games ever.

CGW: You've always been more involved in the fighter-pilot aspect of simming, starting with SWOTL and continuing through the *Star Wars* games. What made you decide to focus your next project on a capital ship scale, and how was the process of adjusting from the single-fighter mentality to the entire-cap-ship mentality?

LH: [Well] before that, two of the earliest games I worked on when I joined the industry were actually large naval ship and fleet-based games, P.H.M. PEGASUS and STRIKE FLEET, both published by EA in the 1980s. So you could almost say I'm coming back full circle, as *Star Trek* is more a naval sim in space whereas *Star Wars* is much closer to a WWII fighter sim.

We did not even try to prototype BRIDGE COMMANDER on our existing ALLIANCE engine as we really wanted to start from scratch and create a new genre—a command sim—that allows you to interact with your crew and take direct control of the action, but otherwise not require micromanagement. From the start we saw the pitfalls in just slowing down a fighter game. We have really tried to take a unique approach to controlling your ship in 3D space and combat while remaining authentic to the license and creating only a short learning curve.

CGW: Looking at the lackluster sales of recent space sim titles, even Space Sim of the Year winners like FREESPACE 2 and INDEPENDENCE WAR, a) what do you think seems to be the main factor in these sales, and b) what do developers in this genre need to do to fix this?

LH: Well, I'll give you some insight into what most publishers are saying about the trend—science fiction or space-oriented games are on the wane, that even the major licenses are having a tough time doing the same numbers as their previous titles, that to do a non-licensed space combat game for the PC or console is near suicide, that consumers are tired of joystick games, and that joystick owners are now even a niche among the hardcore segment. One thing is for sure: It's a tough climate to launch a space combat game.

While I enjoyed FREESPACE, INDEPENDENCE WAR, and ALLEGIANCE, my feeling is that no game in recent memory has broken the mold and taken the genre to the next level or in a new direction—either they only look prettier, have more options, or are more difficult to fly.

What the space combat genre needs is some truly innovative approaches to gameplay. We're trying to accomplish this with BRIDGE COMMANDER.

CGW: How does it feel to switch from one established license to another? Any specific differences regarding working within the limitations of either license that you can discuss? Do you plan on embarking on a more creative, personal, license-free project down the line?

LH: Well, it is definitely a shift and we have even felt some disappointment from some of our long-time fans. Working on *Star Wars* for the last eight years was great, but keeping a team motivated for another round just wasn't possible. The whole company pretty much loves science fiction from *Star Trek* to *2001: A Space Odyssey* to *Dune* to *Babylon 5*. We really felt like we were up to the challenge to make a game that could live up to the greatness of the license—*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*. Yes, we've got some original projects in the works, the one I can mention is an original action-oriented Xbox title in development that has quite a bit of flight involved and is based upon a unique fantasy universe created in-house.

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manipulating a Sovereign- or Galaxy-class starship, keep in mind that combat will be slower-paced than it is in I-WAR 2.

From Here to Eternity

What good is command when you're the only person around?

BRIDGE COMMANDER, so far, is committed to a multiplayer skirmish model, in which up to eight players can individually command their own vessels. While there won't be all-new interface art for each race, you and your buddies can now see who best knows how to use Romulan Warbirds, or whether a Marauder can really take out a Keldon. The team is also looking to develop cooperative scenarios, such as that in *Star Trek: First Contact*. But they are making no guarantees.

I-WAR 2 will have a host of multiplayer options. Besides traditional deathmatch, there will be Capture the Pod (the space version of the ubiquitous CTF), and a "bomb tag" scenario. Think of it as a cosmic version of Hot Potato, where players fling the bomb from one to the other, hoping not to be the fool who has the bomb attached when it finally detonates.

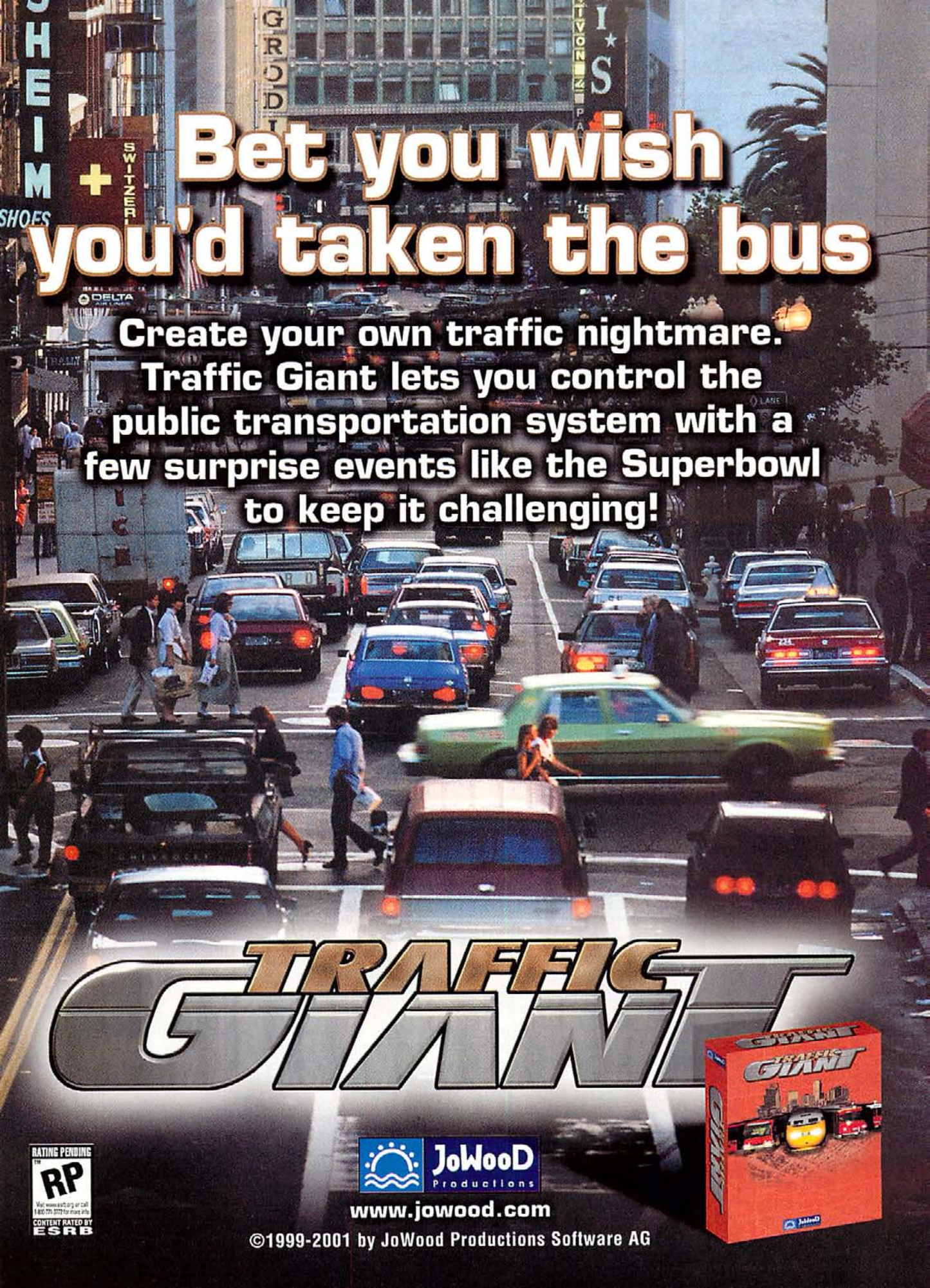
These titles definitively indicate that the space combat genre, long confined to dogfighting in space, is actually (and finally) evolving. Not only do you fight for yourself, you can use mind-control techniques to make others do your bidding. Will the innovation and sense of power offered by these titles bolster the recently sagging space sim genre? We'll find out, first with I-WAR 2 shipping around the time you read this, and BRIDGE COMMANDER rounding out the year come Labor Day. CGW

PRIDE OF THE FLEET Here's your final ship, complete with detachable turrets, slick shields, and the ability to dish out serious damage.

STAR TREK DEEP SPACE NINE: DOMINION WARS

If Simon and Schuster hadn't surprised us with one good *Star Trek* game (DS9: THE FALLEN), we'd be more skeptical about this game. This real-time title focuses on capital ship combat, eschewing RTS staples like base building and resource gathering. The problem we foresee is that developer Gizmo Games is simplifying the game so much that there just won't be much to do beyond designate a target and watch the slow-moving combat develop.

Call us crazy, but we don't see how a stripped-down version of STARFLEET COMMAND, a classic niche product, is going to hold any appeal to wannabe Starfleet officers. We'll know if Simon & Schuster can pull another rabbit out of their hat come May. CGW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STAR WARS: GALAXIES

Verant casts its elven magic on a galaxy far, far away

On paper, it's the ultimate alliance: The kings of online role-playing (Verant, the creators of EVERQUEST) joining forces with the creators of *Star Wars* for a massively-multiplayer RPG that lets *you* play the Wookie. Or the Jedi Knight. Or the pilot in the AT-AT—whatever your sweet Tatooine-tatooed heart desires.

If Verant pulls it off, you'll be able to slice Stormtroopers with your lightsaber, toss back some brewskis at the cantina, and go rancor hunting with your buddies on the Internet. The goal, clearly, is to be far more than "EVERQUEST with lightsabers."

CGW has learned that the game will be set sometime after the first movie (the destruction of the first Death Star, not *Phantom Menace*). Verant's goal is to immerse players in the *Star Wars* universe by letting them choose their role, from zipping around as gallant Jedis to running their own cantina.

Unlike EVERQUEST, there will be no classes in SWG. You'll pick a species, such as Wookie, and simply define yourself through your use of skills. In fact, not only is the game entirely skill based, combat isn't even necessary. You could play the game as a politician or shopkeeper or community-service person and never lift a finger against someone else. Conversely, you could also pick up a blaster and start firing away. The galaxy *is* in a civil war, after all. If you thought EVERQUEST had nifty items, prepare yourself for gadgets, ranged weapons, and vehicles.

How will they handle player-killing? Simple, players won't be able to "die."

From Verant's plans, the game looks to meld the best aspects of both EVERQUEST and ULTIMA ONLINE, with a twist of the classic *Star Wars* mythos. Elegant combat, skills, and factionalization, combined with the freedom to do activities other than hitting things, all within a solid, space-opera universe. Can Verant pull it off, or will the universe prove too enormous to be playable? Come 2002 (more likely 2003), we'll find out if we get an *Empire Strikes Back* or a *Phantom Menace*. —*Thierry Nguyen*

BIOWARE'S STAR WARS RPG

The other big RPG in the *Star Wars* universe is, of course, coming from BioWare, creators of the award-winning BALDUR'S GATE series. This game will primarily be a single-player RPG set about 4,000 years before *Star Wars: Episode I*.

Although neither Bioware nor Lucas have released many details, we do know that the game's story will focus on the ancient struggles between the Jedi and Sith. In this period, the Jedi Knights formed an enormous protectorate for many planets in a vast republic, as well as in a few outlying systems. The Empire hadn't yet emerged, but the Sith, the predecessors of Darth Vadar and the Dark Jedi, have already begun spreading their dark influence.

Comic book fans may be the most familiar with this period, due to the *Dark Horse Sith* series. However, the developers say this game will have an entirely new story that doesn't involve any existing comic book characters.

BioWare is creating a new engine for the game's 3D graphics. Sources within the company say that although the game is planned mostly for single-player, they're not ruling out the possibility of adding multiplayer later on in development. LucasArts will publish and distribute the game sometime in 2002. CGW

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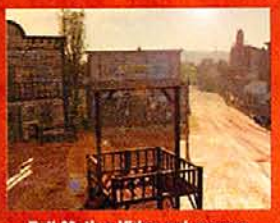

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FREELANCER

Taking gamers to deep space—a few thousand at a time

Despite the departure of Chris Roberts and acquisition by Microsoft, Digital Anvil's epic space sim is still under intense development. And scrutiny. At press time, both companies were examining the project to determine two things: how much more development time would be needed, and what would be the scope and feature set of the project. Encouragingly, Microsoft officials vowed to give FREELANCER "as much time as they needed."

What this means is that the game's original concept probably won't change much. FREELANCER will still be a combination of WING COMMANDER and PRIVATEER. Set in the not-too-distant future, you inherit a basic space ship, some fundamental alliances, and total freedom. As you trade goods and successfully complete various missions, you'll gain cash. Money leads to ship upgrades, which, given the game's mouse-driven interface, is key.

Ship upgrades—a novel RPG slant on the space sim genre—allow your vessel to more efficiently perform certain tasks, like weapon targeting or evasive maneuvers.

As you get further into the game, a central storyline pops up that pits various political factions against each other, forcing you to make decisions about your alliances...and your future.

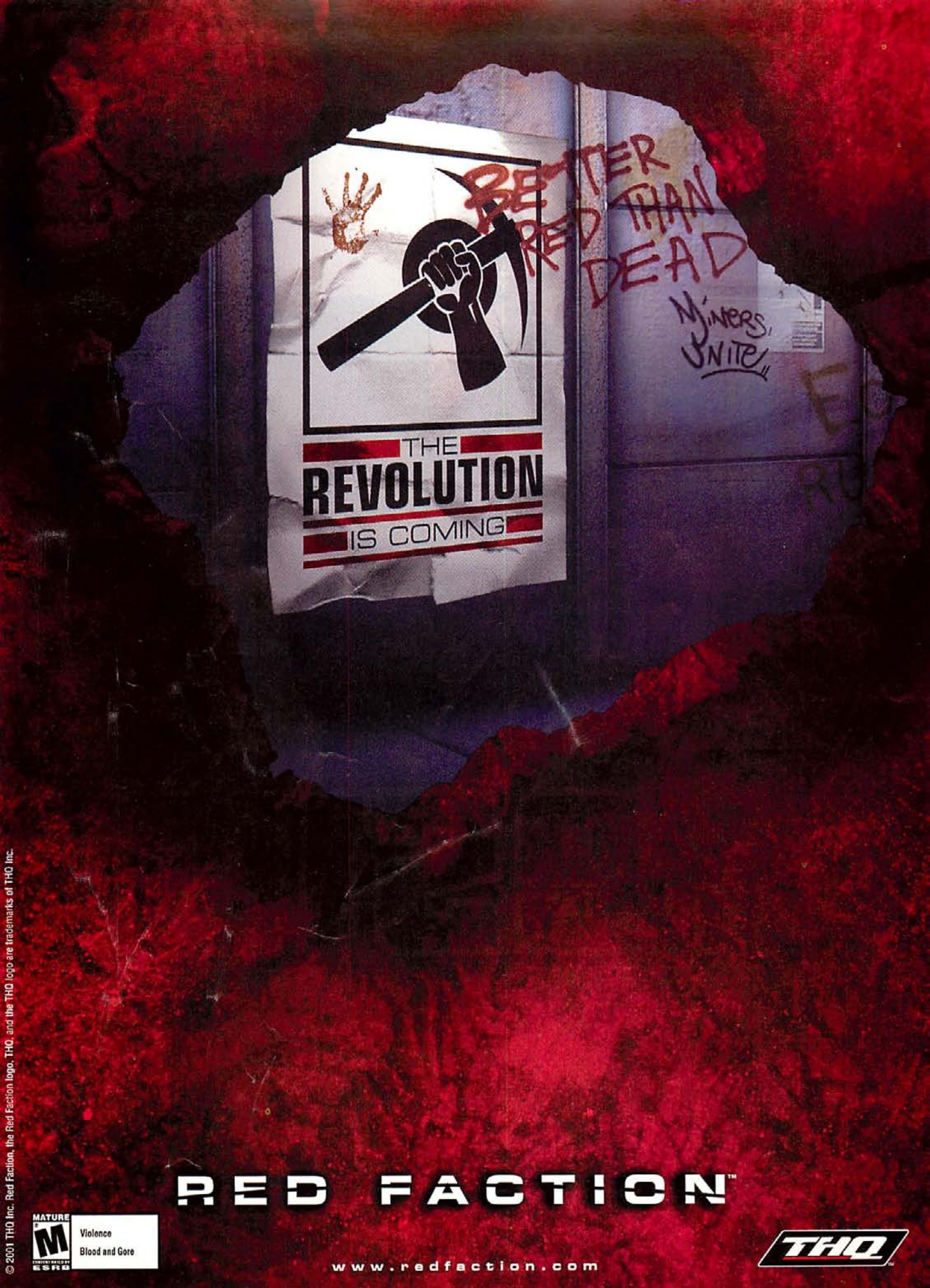
Count on FREELANCER to be released sometime between November 2001 and April 2002.

BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM

The mother of all space simulations has to be BATTLECRUISER 3000AD V2.0. Derek Smart's mind-bogglingly ambitious game of galactic exploration and combat combined strategy, simulation, and even first-person shooter-style gameplay in a huge, freewheeling space saga. But what it didn't do was offer multiplayer support.

The sequel, BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM, is an equally massive update to the original that will add multiplayer support, as well as improved 3D graphics, native Windows support, better AI and special effects, and a ton of other improvements.

The online-only version, GALACTIC COMMAND ONLINE, will use the same engine, but it is designed for massively-multiplayer support. Up to 1,000 players per server can fly around in space, drive on a planet's surface in an assault vehicle, get into first-person firefights, or hurl through space as a fighter pilot. Once again, Smart is building one of the most ambitious games currently in development, but will it work? We'll find out later this year.



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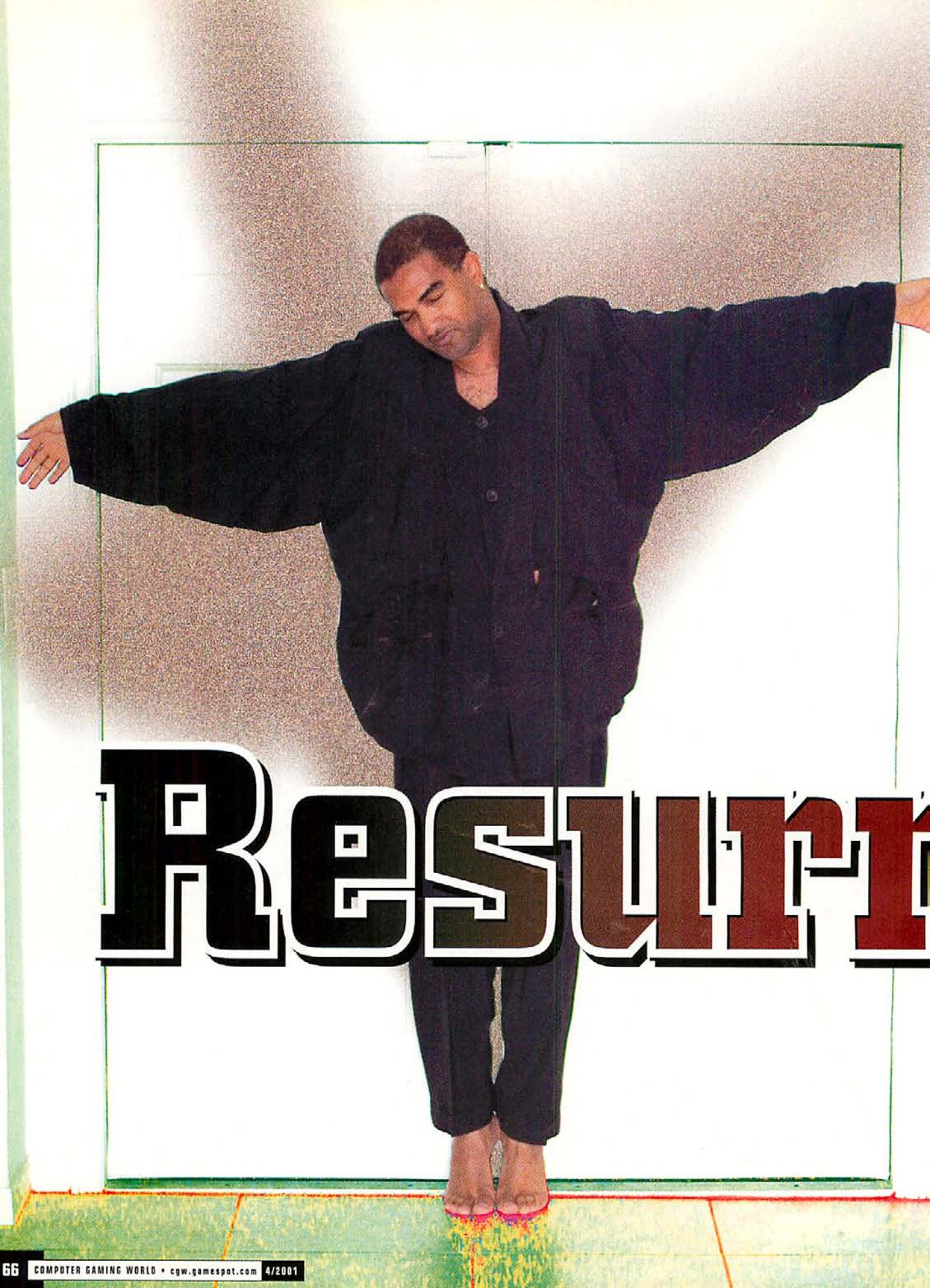

Resurr

"Do you know how hard it is to turn the other cheek?"

Derek Smart is looking straight at me. He's getting fired up.

"If you're not on the receiving end, you don't know what it's like. I can make one simple post, about a screenshot or something, and these idiots will start a flame war for weeks. I don't f***ing get it."

I didn't f***ing get it either, frankly. Which is why I now find myself sitting in a bagel shop in Sunrise, Florida, face to face with one of gaming's most legendary and bizarre figures. Like someone gawking at a car accident, I had needed to meet this guy.

And sitting in this restaurant, listening to his story, I realize that I am getting a lot more than I bargained for.

Long before John Romero and DAIKATANA came along, Derek Smart was *the* gaming biz whipping boy. To this day, his name is one that inspires derision, mockery, and sometimes outright hatred in his detractors, and his game—an ambitious, independent space sim called BATTLECRUISER 3000AD—remains one of the most notorious projects in the history of computer gaming.

It would take a Stephen King–sized novel to do justice to the fiasco surrounding Derek Smart and his game, so here's the CliffsNotes version: BATTLECRUISER 3000AD was in development for about seven years (starting in 1989), went through three publishers, accrued major hype (including a *CGW* cover in 1994), only to be shipped, inexcusably, by Take Two in 1996 in an unplayable, buggy beta form, without a manual.

But if all we had was a lousy game on our hands, there would be no story here, or at least, not one we haven't heard a million times before. The real story is the man himself—Derek Smart, whose notoriety, like Dennis Rodman (to whom some people liken him) or Howard Stern (to whom he likens himself), comes not from *what* he does but from who he is and what he says.

Smart boasted of BATTLECRUISER's greatness for years and thus (like Romero) set himself up for excoriation and ridicule following the game's disastrous release. But where most developers might have vanished from the scene—or taken their lumps in silence—Smart did what public figures rarely do: He fought back. Viciously. Proud, stubborn, and fiercely driven, Smart refused to be the fall guy, and he publicly battled anyone and everyone—Take Two, the press, and gamers themselves—who tried to lay the blame on him. And that's when his real trouble started.

What started out as the dream of a lone, unknown programmer mushroomed into the longest, most savage, and most ridiculous flame war this industry has ever seen, with Smart as much at fault as anyone else. Even now, *five years* after BATTLECRUISER's release, the game is not completely dead. Type Derek Smart's name into an

ection

The second coming of Derek Smart is near.

The most notorious man in gaming sits down to discuss his life, his game, and his mission. By Jeff Green

Internet search engine, and you'll see strands of it all over. There are websites dedicated to ridiculing him, and guys who follow him around mercilessly, pouncing on every post he makes. Any thread that Derek Smart appears in, regardless of the original topic, devolves into a Derek Smart flame war.

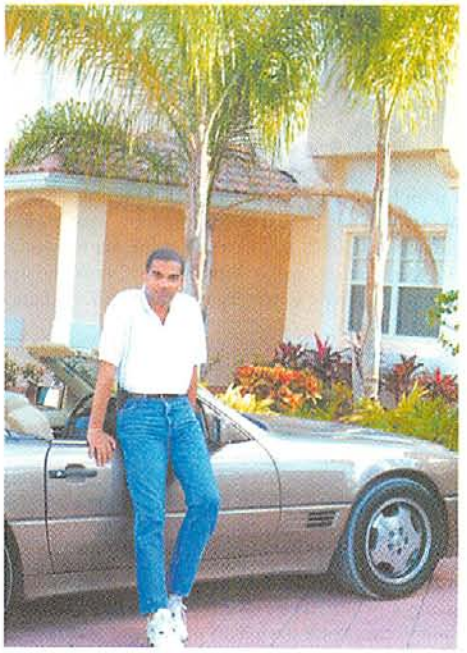
And through it all, there's Smart himself. Still combative, still pissing people off. Why does he bother? And isn't he ever going to learn to just *shut up*?

Lox, Bagels, and a Side of Rage

Derek Smart can't stop talking. His bagel and lox will sit on his plate, uneaten, while I fill two 60-minute tapes with his words.

"Nowadays you go online and it's not people talking about the game [BATTLECRUISER] or how to make it better. You go online and it's all 'Derek Smart's an a**hole.' It's just *so disturbing*. I mean, sometimes I go on there and read something and I just get *depressed*. I mean, who are these people? There's all these guys who actually punch my name into a search engine to find out where Dsmart is posting, and go on there and totally rip me. You can walk down the street, and if someone is harassing you, you can call the cops. Online it's a totally different story."

The exasperation shows on his face. He's not speaking loudly, but he is speaking forcefully.



EAT IT Derek Smart drives a Mercedes 500SL convertible, whether you like him or not.

"My concern is for the newbies who go online and just ask a question about my game, and they get ripped. Okay, fine, attack *me*. That's cool. I can deal with it. I've been beat up, tossed around for so many years. I'm immune to it now. Yeah, I get pissed every now and then and go over the top, but I can take it. I'm used to it."

Smart pauses to eat. I gently question whether he *can* take it. I suggest that this attitude might be what has kept his persecutors gleefully in pursuit of him all these years: They know they can get to him.

"Someone calls me an a**hole, and then when I respond, they say 'Oh, look! He called me an a**hole back!' Well, gee, duh, what do you expect? I'm not a 'take it' kind of guy. But I know my limits. I know how far I can go."

A Simple Plan

London, 1988. A 25-year-old computer consultant and self-taught programmer is getting obsessed with computer games. He's playing games like ELITE, ECHELON, and the STARFLIGHT series, and he starts thinking maybe he can create a game himself. He doesn't know his limits yet. He doesn't know how far he can go.

He puts together some ideas for what he calls "THE GAME"—the ultimate combination of simulation, role-playing, strategic combat, and more. Never mind that he has no game design or industry experience, he believes he can do this. He works on his ideas in his spare time, learning from books, and puts together a demo to show to members of the gaming community. The result: In May 1992, BATTLECRUISER 3000AD lands on the cover of *Computer Games Strategy Plus* magazine.

"It all went downhill from there," Smart says now. "All of a sudden I had to live up to the hype. I got a god complex that took over. Suddenly I was 'Derek Smart, the game developer.' But I was nothing, nothing, nothing close to a game developer at that time."

Smart keeps plugging away and in late 1993, he lands the first of a series of ill-fated publishing deals with 360 Pacific. The arrangement falls apart when the development drags and Smart becomes increasingly resistant to compromise. "People were saying to me, why don't you strip it down and make it more of an action game? Why don't you make it more like WING COMMANDER? But I was not in a hurry to release *a game*. This was my game. It was my world, and I was building it."

It *was* his world—until September 1996, when Smart signs a

"I got a god complex that took over"

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE, PART 1 One of the more notorious ads for BATTLECRUISER 3000AD, circa 1995.

"I'm the guy who just won't die"

deal that will change his life forever. The previous year, Take Two Interactive agreed to publish the game. Now they have had it. They force his hand. In April, Smart, who had always worked independently from his home in Florida, is forced to drive up to Take Two's office in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, and work with a team of guys he doesn't know so the game can ship by Christmas. Come August, they're not even close. ("Jeff, it wasn't even beta yet," he sighs.)

But Take Two is fed up. They believe Smart will never finish the game. They tell him the game is shipping in October, finished or not, for a Christmas release. He's horrified and furious, and his frustration boils over. A huge argument ensues. Online legend has Derek attacking a Coke machine at this point, which he denies to this day (and an email from a former Take Two employee backs him up on this point).

Smart wants out. He will not be a party to the early release of his game. So on September 27, he makes the most painful decision of his life: He signs a mutual release giving Take Two the rights to the game, and then he gets in his car and drives back to Florida, defeated. And Take Two ends the nightmare by releasing BATTLECRUISER 3000AD in all of its pathetic, unfinished, undocumented glory.

For the next four years, Derek Smart—boastful, outspoken braggart, would-be designer of "THE GAME"—is roasted alive on the Internet and in the gaming press. But he doesn't do the one thing that everyone expects—he doesn't go away. Facing an avalanche of derision, he stands by his project. Without Take Two's consent, he starts patching the game. He settles with Take Two to get back the rights to BATTLECRUISER 3000AD, gives the whole game away for free over the Internet, and in 1998 rereleases the 2.0 version as a budget title through Interplay and two other publishers. And slowly, incredibly, he salvages the game's name. But his own name stays mired in mud.

Paradise Found

We leave the bagel shop, and Smart takes me on a mini-tour of his adopted home, Sunrise, Florida. It is a quiet, peaceful, open area comprised mostly of high-tech business parks and gated communities, built on former swampland on the outskirts of Fort Lauderdale.

Derek Smart, now 38 years old, lives in a new home in one of these gated communities with his fiancé and his baby daughter. The house is not huge, but it's picture-perfect on the outside, and immaculate and tastefully decorated on the inside.

His home office, an open area right off his kitchen, resembles something out of one of his beloved space sims with its massive deck of electronic gear from which he operates every aspect of his business, 3000AD, Inc. Smart sits down at his computer and shows me the infrastructure he's set up with servers, FTP sites, Web cams, and ICQ to keep in daily contact with the team working on his new game, BATTLECRUISER MILLENNIUM. (Yeah, that's right. There's a *new* game. And a massive-multiplayer one after that. See page 64 for details.)

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE, PART 2
Even that venerable old rag *CGW* fell prey to the hype, putting BATTLECRUISER on the cover in May 1994.

In the first two minutes that we are seated, he fields a phone call from his support programmer, Peter Rushworth, in England, and then chats over ICQ with his tools programmer, Andrei Proskurine, in Moscow. Everyone on the team is employed on a work-for-hire basis. They live all over the world. They've never been in the same room together. And none of them has ever worked in the gaming industry.

"I love it," Smart says, "because I'm in control. I have a group of people I trust with my game. It's all about trust. Nothing else. I could go out and get an office space, hire from the tech businesses and universities around me, but I want to remain in a situation that I'm in control of. These are all guys who like me, who know what it is to want to do something because you want to do it, because you love doing it—not because you want to make money. They're not doing it for fame and fortune. They've all got regular jobs."

At this very moment, Derek Smart is happy. He's in his element. He is insulated. He is in his home, his office, working with friends he trusts. The nightmare of BATTLECRUISER 3000AD and those who won't let him forget it are far away.

Or are they?

"I have a confession to make," he says. "Sometimes when I get online, and it's quiet, and I see something that attracts my attention, I'll post just to piss these guys off. That's why I do it." He laughs. "Because I'm in a good mood that day, I go in there and I start trouble."

But why Derek, why? Why bait the guys who have tormented you so relentlessly?

"Because at the end of the day, they can attack me all they want, but I know who I am. I'm focused on my family and my game. And I'm doing the game that *I want to do*. I'll never falter. That's just not ever gonna happen. Beat me up, that's cool—but as long as I have breath, I'm gonna try to get to the finish line. I'm the guy who just won't die."

Survivor

I'm on the airplane heading back to California, and I'm thinking about everything I've heard. I take out a sheet of paper and start making a list of adjectives. Smart. Witty. Stubborn. Angry. Tenacious. Loyal. Thoughtful. Obsessive. Proud.

So go ahead—flame the guy. Try to piss him off. You'll probably succeed. But he's still here. He's got his family, his friends, his games, his fanbase, and above all, a frighteningly strong fighting spirit.

I'm the guy who just won't die.

You wanna take on Derek Smart? Go ahead. Make his day. He's waiting for you. CGW

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GAMES

MDK2's Shwing-Shwang

A YEAR OF TRANSITION

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Technology took a beating last year, but the personal computer seemed to bear the brunt of the mob's rage. Stocks sunk, PC sales slowed, and game developers groped for next-gen consoles like frat boys at a wet T-shirt contest. The cries of "death of the PC" rose to a roar, while publishers canceled projects, slashed staffs, and shut down studios like Jane's legendary Baltimore group. Looking Glass Studios, one of the most beloved developers in PC gaming, went belly up. Gamers grieved.

Yet, lost in the cacophony were a few overlooked facts. PC game sales *increased* $100 million from 1999 to 2000, according to market research firm NPD Group. THE SIMS broke down barriers and introduced computer gaming to millions of non-gamers. Hardcore gamers enjoyed the deepest, richest, most entertaining games ever produced (as you can see in the following pages).

It was a tumultuous year, but it wasn't all bad. Here are a few of what we saw as the best and worst trends of 2000.

Best Trends

Humor. We love dark, gloomy, scary games as much as anyone, but it's always refreshing when a game comes along that makes us laugh and reminds us that these things are supposed to be *fun*. GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO, MDK2, and best of all, NO ONE LIVES FOREVER surprised us with hilarious screenplays, combined with equally excellent voice work, that made each game a total delight to play. When you can make the sad, bitter men of *CGW* laugh, you know you've done something right.

Originality. Nothing has hurt PC gaming more than the sheer lack of originality. The pattern usually works like this: Company comes up with original game concept. Makes millions. A thousand other game companies release copycat games. They all suck. Genre is killed. So thank goodness a number of PC game developers broke away from the cookie-cutter mold and let their fevered imaginations run wild. Games like THE SIMS, SACRIFICE, and MAJESTY were all risk-taking, original ventures the likes of which we've never seen. And with mind-benders like SIGMA, BLACK AND WHITE, and ANACHRONOX on the way, we're hoping that 2001 will take us even further.

Internet Gaming. We've talked about it for years, and it's been building momentum, but the hype and promise was always bigger than the reality. Not anymore. Now Internet gaming is a huge, integral part of our everyday gaming experience, accessible to everyone. EVERQUEST, COUNTER-STRIKE, QUAKE III, UNREAL TOURNAMENT, and many other games kept servers running 24/7 all year, all over the globe. If you haven't taken the plunge yet, it's time to join the party, baby. The future is now.

Worst Trends

Lack of In-Game Saves. How many times have you just gotten into a game when you suddenly notice: no in-mission save. At first, you tell yourself it will all be okay, this game is so much fun that you won't mind playing these levels two or three times. Then, before you know it, you've replayed a level six or seven times, the rage starts building in your throat, and you smash down the mouse and scream, "What kind of maniacs don't let you save?" Well, the kind of maniacs who programmed GROUND CONTROL, HITMAN, and ONI, just to name a few.

The Great Console Shift. "Our next title is going to be on the Xbox. *Maybe* we'll do a PC port" and "We're concentrating on PS2 development." Comments like these spewed from the mouths of game producers and PR flacks like shrimp tempura out of George Bush (the elder). All we have to say is: You'll come back. Crawling on your hands and knees, you'll come back to the PC, begging for forgiveness, promising never to forsake the superior PC again. At least until the PlayStation3 is announced.

of the YEAR

ACTION

No One Lives Forever

We've come a long way from "Find the red key," baby.

This year's best action games saw designers finally expanding their horizons beyond the way-overdone goal of making a cool technology demo, instead giving the genre the kind of rich content for which gamers have been starving. The one common link among all our nominees is their creativity—their willingness to take chances and to give us something new.

Interplay scored big in action this year. MDK2 and GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO were both incredibly funny, inventive, and beautifully designed games. Microsoft's CRIMSON SKIES delivered an entertaining blend of barnstorming and aerial combat, wrapped up in a cool alternate-universe storyline.

But our overwhelming pick for Action Game of the Year—Monolith's NO ONE LIVES FOREVER—occupied a category of greatness all its own. Easily the best shooter since HALF-LIFE, this 60's spy movie spoof was also the game that came closest to threatening THE SIMS' hold on Game of the Year. Like HALF-LIFE, NOLF is filled with moments that you can't wait to talk about with other gamers. Every level brings different challenges, goals, and styles of play. Every scene brings new rewards—and makes you laugh out loud in the process. This game keeps you enthralled from start to finish. Monolith blew us away with NOLF, and we couldn't wait to give it the Action Game of the Year award.

FINALISTS

1. Giants
2. Deep Space 9: The Fallen
3. MDK2
4. Crimson Skies

MULTIPLAYER

EverQuest

To think that in a year full of great opportunities to play games with others, we crawl back to one that dates back to 1999. Somehow, EVERQUEST still holds us in its throes, despite the presence of other quality games. We can't resist the basic premise of running around, thwacking things, and acquiring loot and experience points just so we can thwack bigger things faster. Alongside a bajillion other people who are more or less doing the same thing. Despite some problems, Verant has managed to maintain the high level of community and a simple, yet elegant game design. The game's momentum has kept up with Verant's release of two expansion packs, RUINS OF KUNARK and SCARS OF VELIOUS. Doubters of the massively-multiplayer-RPG concept have been converted. They now can be found gabbing about things such as leveling up, or participating in a big raid on Crushbone.

EVERQUEST's win does not reflect poorly on the other candidates, however. The HALF-LIFE add-on COUNTER-STRIKE is an incredible phenomenon that has taken the worldwide first-person-shooter community by storm. There are few games anywhere that command the kind of loyalty and devotion that you're apt to see in a COUNTER-STRIKE group. Microsoft's ALLEGIANCE is also noteworthy for its unique blend of simulation and real-time strategy, but the game failed to attract a wide audience.

Note a particular trend among our top five chioces: The first three are multiplayer-only. As recently as a year ago, the concept of a multiplayer-only game raised doubt and uncertainty. Yet, this year's trend shows that multiplayer-only games do have an audience, and can, indeed, succeed on their own.

FINALISTS

1. Counter-Strike
2. Allegiance
3. Red Alert 2
4. Diablo II

ADVENTURE

The Longest Journey

We get just as tired as you do with all this "adventure game is dead" jazz. But the fact that we could, once again, only come up with two worthy nominees for this award speaks volumes. Yes, there were more than two adventure games released this year, but these were the only two that really warranted an award in our minds.

We were as psyched as anyone about ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND, and why not? MONKEY ISLAND is one of gaming's best franchises, featuring LucasArts' finest efforts at brain-bending puzzles and humor. ESCAPE is a lot of fun and is strongly recommended to fans, but it's a few jokes and puzzles short of being a classic like the other games in the series.

Which leaves this year's award to the game we knew would win anyway: Funcom's THE LONGEST JOURNEY. This Danish import comes without fancy bells and whistles; it's your standard point-and-click graphic adventure. What it does offer is a mature, literate, and compelling story featuring a strong female heroine who, for once, is not exploited for her looks. The gameplay is nothing overly original, but the puzzle design is tough and fun and brainy. It's as if Funcom never heard all the naysaying about the genre and just went ahead and made the game they wanted to make. We applaud them for that.

FINALISTS

1. Escape From Monkey Island

ROLE-PLAYING

Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn

The epic sense of adventure and virtuous fortitude is back in the RPG genre. Years ago, we would've been content with games that focused on less ambitious goals—regaining your memory (PLANESCAPE: TORMENT), retrieving a Water Chip (FALLOUT), or simply living (DAGGERFALL). Not this year. Either we're interceding in Elvish warfare, fighting a rogue planar demon-general, killing the devil, or exposing the secret ties between the UN and the Illuminati.

Quality has also improved, although not across the board. DEUS EX was crafted by noted designer Warren Spector, but its actual execution was hampered by performance, AI, and stability issues. DIABLO II, while great fun, petered out in the long run due to a wonky save system and a lack of compelling rewards to play at Nightmare or beyond. ICEWIND DALE hearkened back to the old days, where you threw together six yahoos, a dungeon, and a ton of nasty meat ready for the dicin'. It was dangerously close to being the most purely fun RPG that we've played in a long time.

FINALISTS

1. Icewind Dale
2. Diablo II
3. Deus Ex

But Bioware's epic vision for BALDUR'S GATE II won out in the end. Like the heftiest of mage tomes, it sits on your desk, daring you to attempt it. It has a spell list that overwhelms lesser RPGs. It uses monsters around which legends are crafted. It has NPCs with actual character, rather than jumbles of statistics. It has combat that rivals X-COM. We're constantly discovering new scenes, new situations, and new stories. Bioware should feel proud in crafting what is, essentially, *The Lord of the Rings* for computer RPGs.

SIMULATION

FINALISTS

1. Steel Beasts
2. Jane's F/A-18 Simulator
3. Combat Flight Simulator 2
4. B-17 Flying Fortress II: The Mighty Eighth

Enemy Engaged: Comanche vs. Hokum

While 2000 didn't bring the apocalypse many predicted, it did seem apocalyptic for flight sim fans. One of the most respected design teams of all time, Electronic Arts' Jane's Baltimore team (responsible for award-winning sims such as JANE'S F-15 III and JANE'S F/A-18) were given their walking papers. Even the teams behind *CGW*'s 1999 Flight Sim of the Year (MIG ALLEY), and what surely will be a leading candidate for the 2001 award (BATTLE OF BRITAIN), are no longer working on flight sim projects.

STEEL BEASTS and Microsoft's COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2 were beacons in the gloom. But one sim emerged that would have been a standout in any year: Rowan/Empire's ENEMY ENGAGED: COMANCHE VS. HOKUM. It boasts superb flight physics, intelligent AI, and outstanding eye and ear candy. But what raises this sim to Hall of Fame candidacy is its dynamic campaign. Browse the battlefield, and you will observe hundreds of units fighting for their lives, all tempting you to enter the conflict. Every foray into battle is unpredictable and sweat-inducing.

In a beleaguered genre, it's good to see a developer invest the time and effort to produce a standout. We recognize ENEMY ENGAGED for having done just that.

SCI-FI SIM

MechWarrior 4: Vengeance

The starfighters that hurl through the heavens spewing laser bolts and missiles seem to be lost in space. In 2000, sci-fi sims focused on capital ships, big robots, and massive wars. They veered off from the WWII dogfights of years past, but we're happy to see some back in the hanger, under construction. (See this month's cover story.)

Microsoft's ALLEGIANCE, while ambitious in its attempt to create a new style of space-sim/RTS, failed on a couple of levels. For an online-only game, it didn't really foster the necessary sense of community. Also, the paying for extras plan backfired, since the content wasn't as compelling and the learning curve was steep. KLINGON ACADEMY took a positive first step in fixing the glaring problems of its predecessor, but it lacked the polish and sense of presentation required in a sci-fi sim.

Why MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE, then? Because it's actually fun. Although it changed the way things work in BattleTech, it accomplished what CRIMSON SKIES set out to do: Open up the sci-fi genre to non–BattleTech-heads. Although its rules may be different, MECHWARRIOR hearkens back to the spirit of the game—massive metal goliaths pounding on each other. We applaud the Evil Empire for putting out a game that returns BattleTech to its roots—and is simply a blast to play. The game also earns high marks for its multiplayer design, something that historically has troubled this genre.

FINALISTS

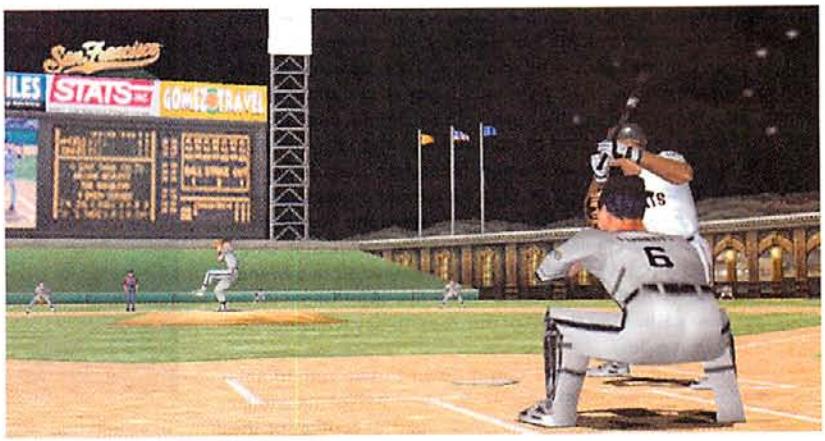
1. Allegiance
2. Klingon Academy

SPORTS

Sammy Sosa's High Heat Baseball 2001

FINALISTS

1. Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
2. FIFA 2001
3. Madden 2001
4. PGA Championship Golf



You would think that the lack of competition in certain PC sports game genres would result in a narrow field of mediocre games. Thankfully, the sports games that did come out last year were solid. EA Sports delivered the best iterations ever in its vaunted MADDEN, NHL, and FIFA lines (although NBA LIVE is still missing in action), but EA did seem too focused on the next-gen consoles, at the PC's expense. The king of extreme sports, Tony Hawk, made an impressive debut on the PC with Activision's port of TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2. We played so much THPS2 that a bad case of Nintendo-thumb flared up.

But the clear winner for Sports Game of the Year is 3DO's sublime installment of what is becoming the most consistently excellent franchise in computer gaming, the HIGH HEAT BASEBALL series. SAMMY SOSA'S HIGH HEAT BASEBALL 2001 did everything to top its predecessor, the winner of last year's award. But far from being just an upgrade to that game, HH2001 is simply the best simulation of any sport to grace the PC. And from the early looks of the next installment, the HIGH HEAT development team could easily pull a hat trick and win next year, too. There's no sports game we're looking forward to playing more.

RACING

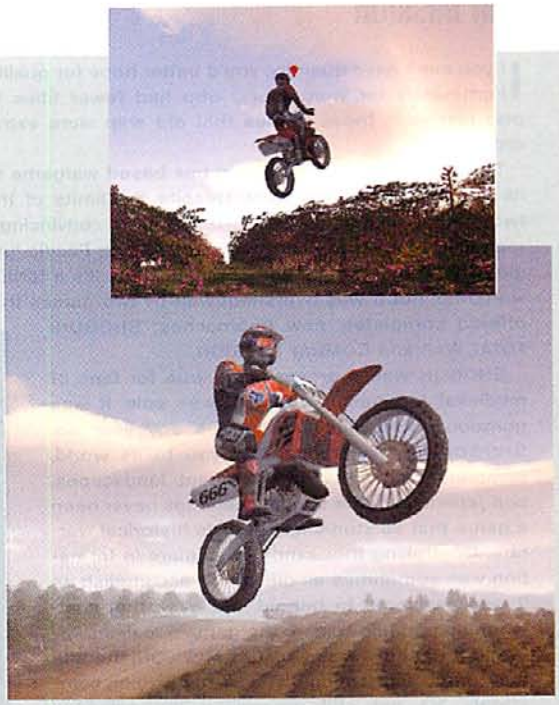
Motocross Madness 2

Surprisingly, every year we have a much tougher time than expected, hashing out the Racing Game of the Year award—partially because we're constantly debating the merits of sim-oriented driving games versus more arcade-oriented titles. Every year we are faced with outstanding games in both categories. On the sim side this year, we had the precisely tuned GRAND PRIX 3, the innovative and beautiful NASCAR HEAT, and the flawless SUPERBIKE 2001, all worthy titles. And on the arcade side, the latest NEED FOR SPEED game, PORSCHE UNLEASHED, continued that series' excellent tradition of cutting-edge graphics and fantastic gameplay.

But when it came to picking a winner, we had to go with our hearts (not to mention our crotches) and give the accolade to Microsoft's MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2, which was far and away the most viscerally pleasing and outright fun racing game we've played in a long time. Sure, the single-player mode could have done a better job of rewarding the player for progressing through the game, and real licensed bikes would have been cool, but the variety of gameplay and the amazing racing environments made Rainbow Studio's MXM2 the funnest thing on two wheels since you learned how to ride a bicycle.

FINALISTS

1. Superbike 2001
2. Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed
3. NASCAR Heat
4. Grand Prix 3



STRATEGY

Sacrifice

This year's most diverse category was also the most hotly contested. In what was easily the longest debate at our annual awards hoedown, *CGW*'s band of misfits grappled with one of gaming's biggest conundrums: Is innovation a more noble quality than simple, easy fun?

In fact, this year's list of nominees is a study in conflict. On one hand, you have the very old-school, turn-based 4X game SPACE EMPIRES IV, with its almost obsessive level of micromanagement. But you also have the very hands-off yet deeply challenging gameplay of MAJESTY. Does new beat out old? Hard to tell—we nominated two brand-new titles, a pair of sequels, and a five-star follow-up to last year's Strategy Game of the Year. To say we were torn is to put it mildly.

In the end, the debate came down to two remarkably disparate games: RED ALERT 2, by virtue of its stellar multiplayer mode along with rock-solid execution of the simple joys of traditional real-time strategy (RTS); and SACRIFICE, a slightly daunting, undeniably gorgeous game that reworked RTS gaming with a new resource model and no small amount of user-initiated action. It was the closest vote of the year, but in the end we felt that, as desperately hooked as many of us were on RED ALERT 2, SACRIFICE was equally rewarding once we managed to leap that second mission hurdle and wrap our brains around the twisted inspiration and tactically rich gameplay beating at its heart. We're not willing to say that SACRIFICE is a harbinger of the future of RTS gaming—but we're willing to say that we hope it is.

FINALISTS

1. Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2
2. Majesty
3. Homeworld: Cataclysm
4. Space Empires IV

WAR

Combat Mission

FINALISTS

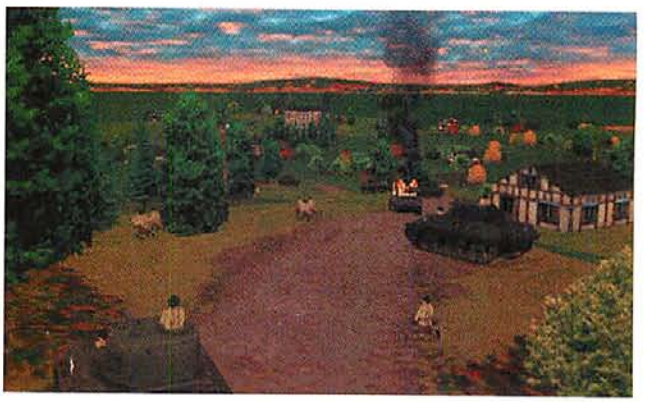
1. Shogun: Total War
2. Rising Sun

If you can't have quantity, you'd better hope for quality. Fortunately for wargamers, who had fewer titles to play last year, those games that did ship were extraordinary.

TalonSoft took the traditional hex-based wargame to its zenith with RISING SUN. Despite the limits of the two-dimensional battlefield, RISING SUN convincingly recreated an overlooked theater (the South Pacific jungle of WWII) with style and sophistication. It's a terrific wargame, but it was overshadowed by two games that offered completely new approaches: SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR and COMBAT MISSION.

SHOGUN was a dream come true for fans of medieval Japanese warfare. It was epic. It was gorgeous. And, like few games any year do, SHOGUN literally transported you to its world, complete with wind, rain, verdant landscapes, and Japanese battle songs. There has never been a game that so stunningly depicts historical warfare. Controlling thousands of soldiers in formation was sometimes as difficult to accomplish as it was awesome to behold, but even that challenge helped underscore the game's realism.

And then there was COMBAT MISSION, the title that turned wargaming on its head by going completely 3D, yet still preserving the accuracy wargamers demand. The graphics didn't match those of SHOGUN, but the experience was every bit as immersive and nerve-wracking. In the end, the competition boiled down to the big budget blockbuster, SHOGUN, versus the equivalent of an indie film from a no-name studio. We chose COMBAT MISSION because it essentially altered the basic idea of what a wargame can be. We believe it has changed the genre the way DOOM changed first-person shooters. That's enough to make COMBAT MISSION Wargame of the Year in our book.



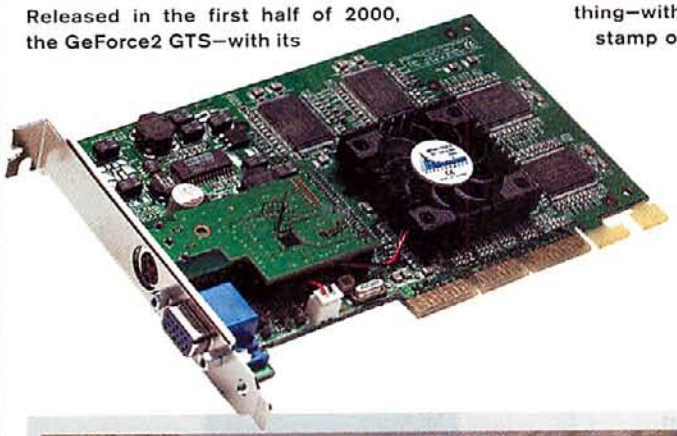
GAMING TECHNOLOGY

nVidia GeForce2 family

In late 1999, nVidia released their GeForce256 chipset, a laudable bit of graphics technology that was the fastest 3D chip available. Their ascension to the throne of graphics dominance had us all wondering what graphics chip titan 3dfx would do. A year and half later we had our answer—fold.

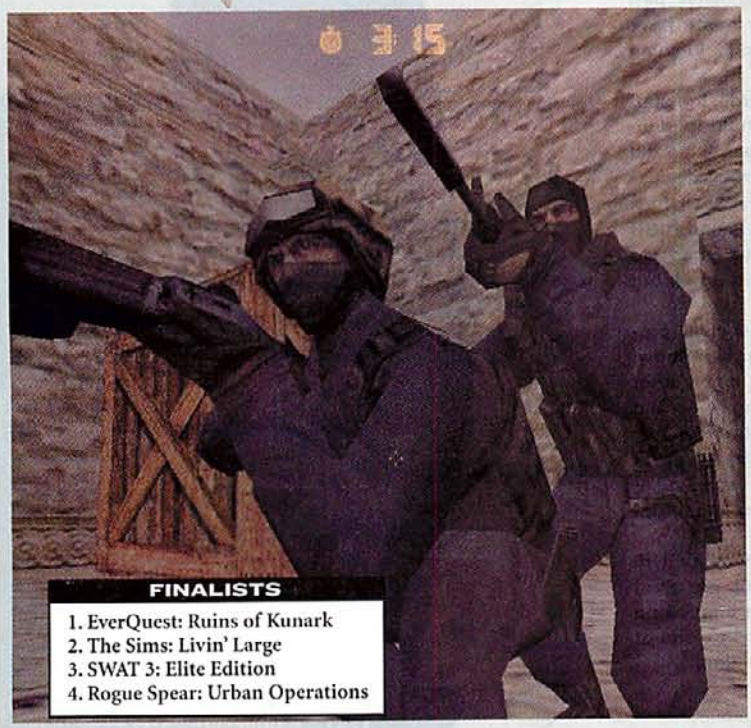
Come 2000, nVidia was at it again. This time, with the GeForce2 GTS chipset, nVidia had set the stage for what was soon to become a 3D graphics dynasty. Released in the first half of 2000, the GeForce2 GTS—with its second-generation hardware transform and lighting engine—was nearly 80Mhz faster than its predecessor and boasted GigaTexal rendering capability (one billion filtered textured pixels per second).

What does this all mean? It means that nVidia has won the graphics chip battle, knocking out 3dfx in the process. And it means gamers aren't faced with the confusing array of options as they were in the past. Need a new graphics card? Get something—nay anything—with an nVidia GeForce2 stamp on it.



THE BILL BUCKNER AWARD FOR TECHNOLOGY

With technology that was in many ways—and for a long time—unrivaled, all that 3dfx had to do was keep innovating. Too bad they stopped. We expected big things from 3dfx, but in the end, we suppose it took more than a good idea, a huge fan base, and retail dominance to stay afloat.



FINALISTS

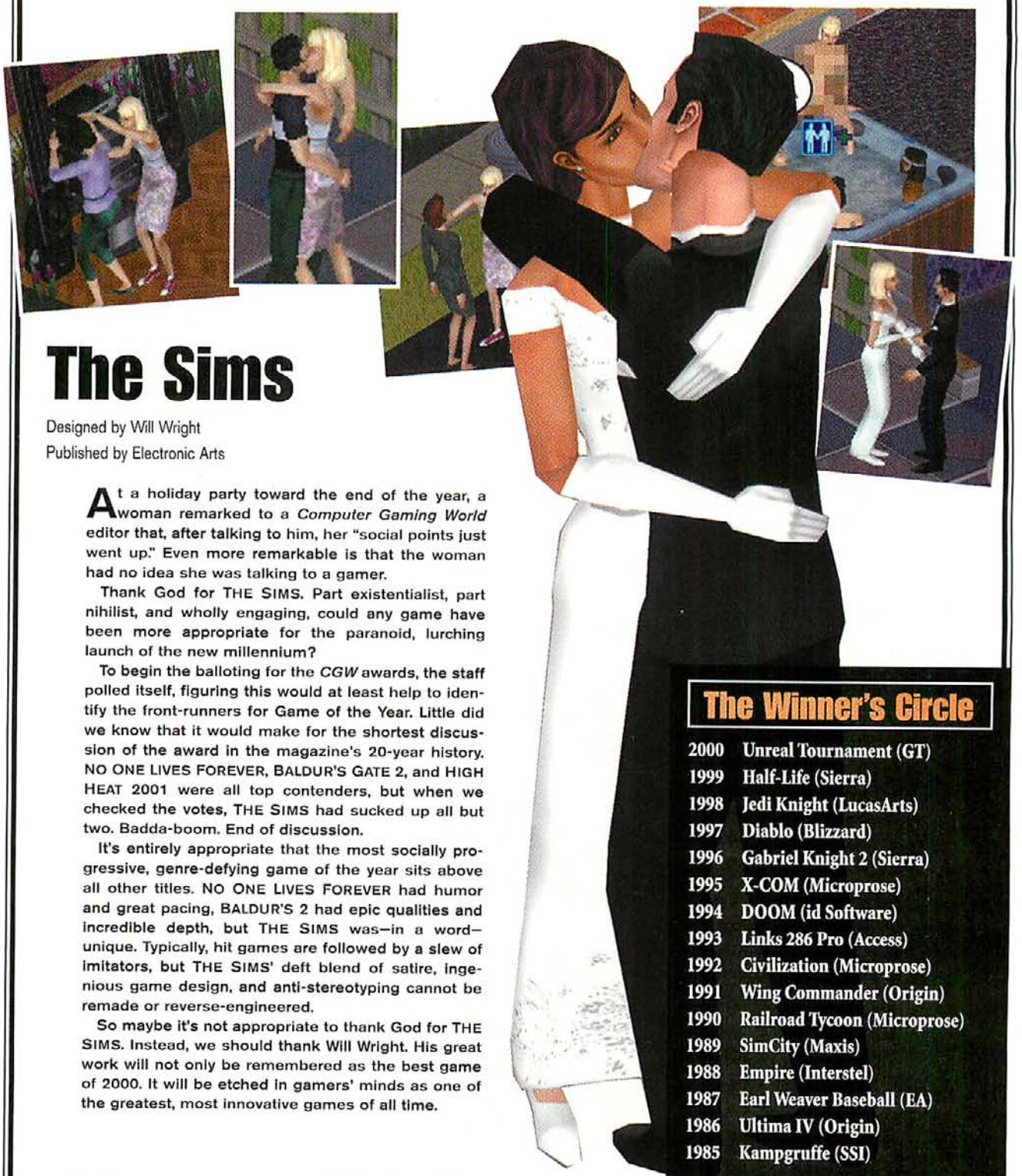
1. EverQuest: Ruins of Kunark
2. The Sims: Livin' Large
3. SWAT 3: Elite Edition
4. Rogue Spear: Urban Operations

ADD-ON

Counter-Strke

If you've ever spoken with a COUNTER-STRIKE fan, you understand why this category was won by the free HALF-LIFE mod. COUNTER-STRIKE's fans exhibit the same mindless, sleepless, obsessive behavior as a TEAM FORTRESS or QUAKE CTF addict. Who can blame them? Not only is COUNTER-STRIKE a great game action-wise, it also rewards players for behaving rationally. And the real-world damage system adds more paranoia than even SYSTEM SHOCK 2 could produce. While the other contenders in this category were definitely influential and brought entire worlds of possibilities to their respective games, COUNTER-STRIKE surpasses them all with a minimum of effort. Why else would it be the most popular online shooter in the world?

2001 GAME OF THE YEAR



The Sims

Designed by Will Wright
Published by Electronic Arts

At a holiday party toward the end of the year, a woman remarked to a *Computer Gaming World* editor that, after talking to him, her "social points just went up." Even more remarkable is that the woman had no idea she was talking to a gamer.

Thank God for THE SIMS. Part existentialist, part nihilist, and wholly engaging, could any game have been more appropriate for the paranoid, lurching launch of the new millennium?

To begin the balloting for the *CGW* awards, the staff polled itself, figuring this would at least help to identify the front-runners for Game of the Year. Little did we know that it would make for the shortest discussion of the award in the magazine's 20-year history. NO ONE LIVES FOREVER, BALDUR'S GATE 2, and HIGH HEAT 2001 were all top contenders, but when we checked the votes, THE SIMS had sucked up all but two. Badda-boom. End of discussion.

It's entirely appropriate that the most socially progressive, genre-defying game of the year sits above all other titles. NO ONE LIVES FOREVER had humor and great pacing, BALDUR'S 2 had epic qualities and incredible depth, but THE SIMS was—in a word—unique. Typically, hit games are followed by a slew of imitators, but THE SIMS' deft blend of satire, ingenious game design, and anti-stereotyping cannot be remade or reverse-engineered.

So maybe it's not appropriate to thank God for THE SIMS. Instead, we should thank Will Wright. His great work will not only be remembered as the best game of 2000. It will be etched in gamers' minds as one of the greatest, most innovative games of all time.

The Winner's Circle

2000	Unreal Tournament (GT)
1999	Half-Life (Sierra)
1998	Jedi Knight (LucasArts)
1997	Diablo (Blizzard)
1996	Gabriel Knight 2 (Sierra)
1995	X-COM (Microprose)
1994	DOOM (id Software)
1993	Links 286 Pro (Access)
1992	Civilization (Microprose)
1991	Wing Commander (Origin)
1990	Railroad Tycoon (Microprose)
1989	SimCity (Maxis)
1988	Empire (Interstel)
1987	Earl Weaver Baseball (EA)
1986	Ultima IV (Origin)
1985	Kampgruffe (SSI)

SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

BEST ART DIRECTION
MDK2

Games like NO ONE LIVES FOREVER, ALICE, GIANTS, and SACRIFICE proved that artistic imagination had caught up with boundless technological improvement in the development of 3D games this year. But MDK2's comical blend of large-scale Gaudi-esque alien structures, 1950's retro-futurism, and a touch of *Little Shop of Horrors* was something extraordinary. The art direction in RED ALERT 2 and CRIMSON SKIES was also noteworthy, but MDK2 really knocked us out.

BEST STORY
Players of THE SIMS

The best story of the year wasn't meticulously plotted or deliberately written—it was born solely in the obsessed minds of the millions who played THE SIMS. While other designers tried to burn their imagination onto CDs, Will Wright's masterpiece set the imaginations of the players afire. Need proof? Check out the albums at www.thesims.com, and marvel at the infinite possibilities of humanity, both actual and virtual.

BEST GAME WITH THE WORST NAME
EVOLVA

We greeted this game with snickers and derision. You can't judge a game by its cover, but the title did sound a bit questionable. After a few minutes of tinkering, we discovered EVOLVA has a nifty mutation system, and we began to appreciate its clever design. This is a four-star game that's definitely worth diving into, regardless of how it sounds.

BEST RESURRECTION
STAR TREK Games

Once again, there was no shortage of Trek games last year. But for the first time, most of them were actually top-notch. ELITE FORCE, STARFLEET COMMAND 2, DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN, and KLINGON ACADEMY all garnered at least a four-star rating. Unfortunately, there still were klunkers, like NEW WORLDS, CONQUEST ONLINE, and ARMADA. But the overall quality of Trek games is light years ahead of what it used to be. Send a message to Starfleet: Huzzah!

BEST UNKNOWN GAME GOD
Monolith's Craig Hubbard

How many movie directors develop the story, write the script, direct the action, help build the sets, work on sound design, and then edit their own film? Not many. Game designers have to wear more hats, but Monolith's Craig Hubbard must have them stacked to the ceiling. The designer of NO ONE LIVES FOREVER wrote the script, directed the voice work, and designed the gameplay situations, which are some of the freshest and most rewarding in any game. For a total unknown, he sure blew us away.

BEST OPENING SCENE
STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

No game has ever captured the feeling of an episode of *Star Trek* better than ELITE FORCE. At the start, you're in a Borg ship fighting wave after wave of deadly cyborgs. You're taking heavy casualties, and the Borg just keep coming! Then, just when you think you're not going to make it out alive....Queue the holodeck fade out, bring in the credits, roll the opening shots. Just like the real thing.

BEST BATTING AVERAGE
Interplay

What the heck were they smoking at Interplay this year? And where can we get some? In one remarkable 12-month span, the gaming giant released—among other great titles—MDK2, ICEWIND DALE, BALDUR'S GATE 2, GIANTS, SACRIFICE, and

BEST CUT-SCENES
GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

Gleefully silly, brilliantly voice-acted, and refreshingly well-directed, the lavish cut-scenes in GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO were one of the primary reasons the game hooked us—what kind of twisted animated genius awaited us after we completed the next mission? We kept playing just to find out.

Lineage
The Blood Pledge
A pledge in blood is never to be broken, unless the body has spilt the last of its blood.
Multi-Player Online Game
LINEAGETHEBLOODPLEDGE.COM
Download and play today !
nc Interactive
RATING PENDING
RP
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-0772 for more info.
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Internet connection and online fees required. Windows ® 95/98/2000/NT

STARFLEET COMMAND. No, they didn't bat 1.000 (cough, STAR TREK NEW WORLDS, cough), but their overall record was as good as any one company has had in years. Bravo, guys.

BEST SCREENPLAY
No One Lives Forever

How else can you describe the brilliant sense of timing and material in the incidental henchmen dialogue, the originality of levels such as the parachute drop, and the snappy dialogue uttered by a hand puppet? In the past, we've focused on the story aspect of games, but NO ONE LIVES FOREVER really shows what happens when a good script and clever gameplay come together in a seamless whole. NOLF's pacing, execution, wit, and originality distinguish it well beyond everything else out there.

VILLAIN(S) OF THE YEAR
Shwing-Shwang and H.A.R.M.'s Evil Hand Puppet

Shwing-Shwang and H.A.R.M.'s evil hand puppet

Who says bad guys have to be bad? They can also be as cool as a big bad voodoo daddy or as freaky as a guy who constantly has a hand up his bum. Above all, they can be funny—like this year's co-winners: Shwing-Shwang from MDK2, and H.A.R.M.'s evil hand puppet from NO ONE LIVES FOREVER.

PLEASANT SURPRISE OF THE YEAR
MAJESTY: THE FANTASY KINGDOM

A real-time strategy game where you didn't control your troops and concoct extravagant tactical maneuvers? Who'd want to play that? Surprisingly, we did. MAJESTY: THE FANTASY KINGDOM sim hooked more than one of us with a quick-paced, hands-off formula that defied our expectations and won our hearts.

ALCHEMISTS OF THE YEAR
Laziest Men on Mars

CHECK OUT THE CD-ROM

Thank you, the Laziest Men on Mars, for brilliantly spinning the leaden wordplay of DAIKATANA into solid gold on your wickedly funny MP3. The game's three protagonists engage in a spirited three-way sex scene—all done completely with actual dialogue from the game. It's on this month's CD, gentle reader; listen and laugh until your head hurts, or visit www.conhuge-co.org/.

Worst games
COASTER OF THE YEAR

Talk about putting the "dog" in dogfight. All of this year's Coaster nominees had strong arguments for why they should be recognized as the bacterial undercoat lurking well beneath the bottom of the barrel. Almost all of these titles languished in development for years, were relentlessly hyped, and then blindly launched themselves into a series of spectacular pratfalls. Shouting "I can fly! I can fly!" these resolutely earthbound melons threw themselves from their towers of hubris, landing as gracefully as a gross of rotten honeydew.

But the biggest putrid melon, the wormiest fruit with the biggest spray of putrescence when it hit the unforgiving ground, was DAIKATANA, a shooter doomed to be remembered for its needing four years to get those robotic frogs and mosquitoes just right. In spite of the horrible cut-scenes, the idiotic roadblocks that were your sidekicks, the garish fanboy art direction, the amateurish level design, and the unforgivably stupid save system, for one brief shining moment early in the Greek levels, DAIKATANA actually didn't totally suck. But that brief respite only made the ensuing offal even more awful. In the end, playing DAIKATANA was as much fun as gouging out your eyes and packing the oozing sockets with rock salt.

Did the game live up to the hype? Did DAIKATANA make you John Romero's bitch? Totally, utterly, and completely. Anyone who bought this execrable piece of garbage would have to spend four years in a Turkish prison to get any further screwed.

FINALISTS

1. Messiah
2. Dukes of Hazzard
3. Star Trek: New Worlds
4. Star Wars: Force Commander

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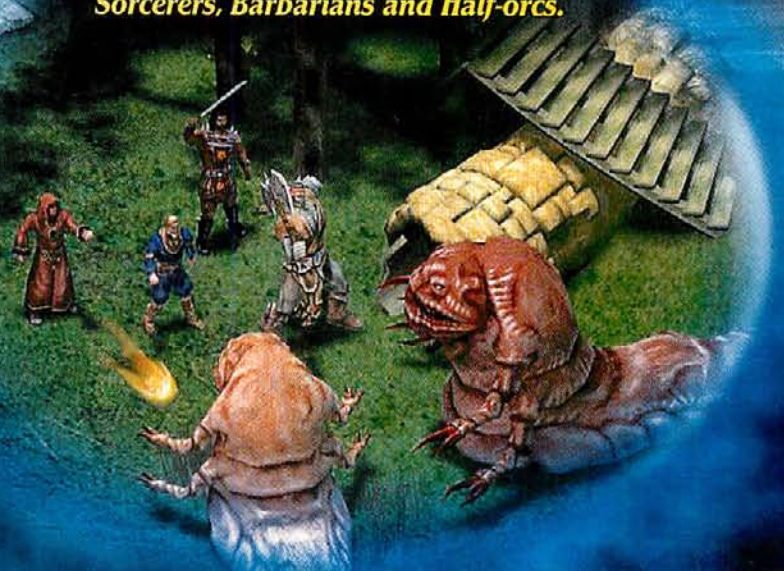

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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GAME studios

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IN STORES NOVEMBER 2000

PlayStation

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MOTUL

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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APRIL 2001 REVIEWS

It makes me not want to even glance at Evil Avatar. The near-daily announcements that some game I'm really looking forward to playing with my friends online or on the *CGW* LAN is – for whatever stupid reason – chucking its multiplayer mode. Not that there's anything wrong with single-player mode, not if it's done right. But good multiplayer consistently brings me back to a game, and for developers to give up on multiplay in a game that screams for it, because they don't have the time or don't want to make the effort, is downright criminal.

Two high-profile games reviewed by *CGW* this month made such announcements partway through their closely watched developments. The respective developers of ONI and B-17: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH crushed their fans by canceling multiplayer modes, and the end results are two games that smack of unrealized potential and incompletion. Two big games that turned out to be big disappointments.

The first time I played ONI at E3 1999, Bungie had a LAN set up (on Macs, no less) for deathmatch. Taking on other players with my fists instead of guns was almost a revelation, a near-perfect blend of fast-paced PC-style deathmatch, with awesome console-style fighting game moves. I was hooked. I couldn't wait for the daily "server's up" cry at 4:30pm to start kicking my coworkers asses (literally). Sure, it's fun to frag Jeff Green with a rocket launcher or flak cannon, but running up behind him, putting a knee in the small of his back, and cracking his spine? Now that's something special.

And B-17's promise of letting a whole group of networked players take control of the various positions on the same Flying Fortress had some of the *non*-flight simmers on the staff ready to take off into the wild blue yonder. Anyone can have fun shooting down Nazis, as long as one grognard is at the controls.

As single-player–only games, both ONI and B-17 are reduced to the point that their numerous flaws are laid bare. The addition of multiplayer wouldn't magically convert them into good games, but a game with a weak single-player campaign and a great multiplayer mode has at least one fun aspect. That same game without multiplayer doesn't have much going for it at all. *–Tom Price*

APRIL REVIEWS

GAME	RATING
Oni	★★★★★
B-17: The Mighty Eighth	★★★★★
Rowan's Battle of Britain	★★★★½
Project IGI: I'm Going In	★★★★★
Star Trek: Starfleet Command 2	★★★★★
EverQuest: Scars of Velious	★★★★½
Blair Witch Volume 2: The Legend of Coffin Rock	★★★★★
Blair Witch Volume 3: The Elly Kedward Tale	★★★★★
Anne McCaffrey's Freedom: First Resistance	★★★★★
Kingdom Under Fire	★★★★★
1NSANE	★★★★★
No Escape	★★★★★
Airline Tycoon	★★★★½
Dino Crisis	★★★★★
Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars	★★★★½
Combat Command 2	★★★★★

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

★★★★★

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

★★★★½

Very Good Worthy of your time and money, but there are drawbacks.

★★★

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

★★

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

★

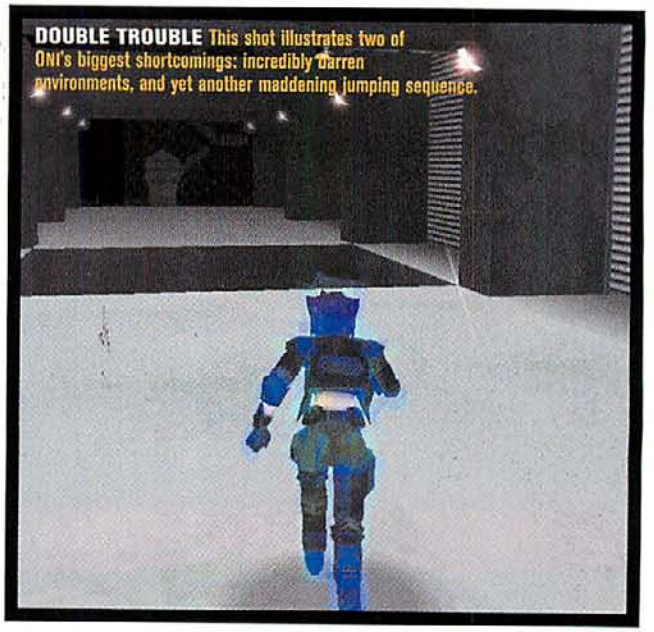
Abysmal The rare game that gets it all wrong. Pathetic. Coaster material.

Ed note: These rankings in no way reflect the listening habits of CGW, with the exception of George, who still can't understand why the New Kids broke up.

SPOTLIGHT REVIEW: ONI

Fighting good. Everything else bad.

O-No!



DOUBLE TROUBLE This shot illustrates two of ONI's biggest shortcomings: incredibly barren environments, and yet another maddening jumping sequence.

I had high expectations for ONI. Bungie's reputation is among the best in the business, and their concept for a game inspired by Japanese anime sounded like a perfect fit for ONI's unique mix of hand-to-hand combat and high-powered weapons. Unfortunately, ONI's heroine Konoko was fated to be the bastard child of a corporate custody battle. It was ripped from its original creators and handed over to the Gathering of Developers as part of Microsoft's purchase of Bungie last year. (G.O.D.'s owner, Take Two, owned a stake in Bungie, which forced Microsoft and Bungie to part with Bungie's baby.) And it shows. You can even pinpoint the exact moment that the developers seemed to give up on the game. But we'll get to that in a minute.

Streets of Rage

reviewed by Alex Handy

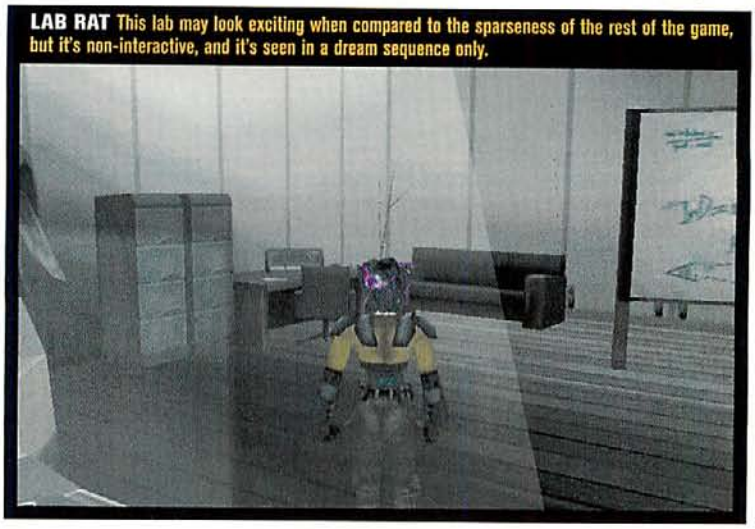
The basics of the game are awesome, and indeed, the balls-out fighting action is ONI's best feature. But the repetitive nature of the combat ultimately brings about the game's downfall. There is no multiplayer support. There is no skirmish mode. There aren't even any difficulty settings. Thus, you must play the single-player game, and you must play it over and over again.

There is nothing but the story-driven game itself to play with. While there are levels that you may want to return to, most of those levels come later in the game, and you run the risk of giving up before you reach anyplace fun. Many of the earlier levels are barren, and for lack of a better word, lame. At times it feels like you're running through a Stanley Kubrick movie: long blank halls and empty white walls.

And you can't save. At least, not in any useful way.

At some point, ONI was redesigned to be a PlayStation 2 game. Thus, the save feature was raped and left crying and violated in the corner. Instead of a friendly save-anywhere feature, ONI opts for a stingy, memory card–friendly series of automatic save points. Once a game is saved, everything you've done before is thrown out, and whatever door you just went through locks.

As if it weren't bad enough that the save system belongs on a TV-based game system, the save points themselves come five or six steps after the places where you'll most need them. ONI is a constant battle to get through wave after wave of heavily armed enemies and repetitive jumping puzzles simply to reach the next save point before some jerk kills you and says an annoying catchphrase. The distance between save points has the power to turn the most stout-hearted gamer into a keyboard-throwing, subwoofer-kicking pile of goo.



LAB RAT This lab may look exciting when compared to the sparseness of the rest of the game, but it's non-interactive, and it's seen in a dream sequence only.

Once, Twice, Three Times a Key Hunt

As a gaming package, ONI – the mauveheaded stepchild of the new Microsoft-Bungie conglomerate – is just as sparse as its environs. It's obvious that a lot of care and thought went into the fighting aspects of the game, while the rest of the game was slapped together in order to meet a ship date. Actual gameplay is even more simplistic than QUAKE: Fight, then open doors.

There are three kinds of doors in ONI: the unlocked, the locked, and the triple

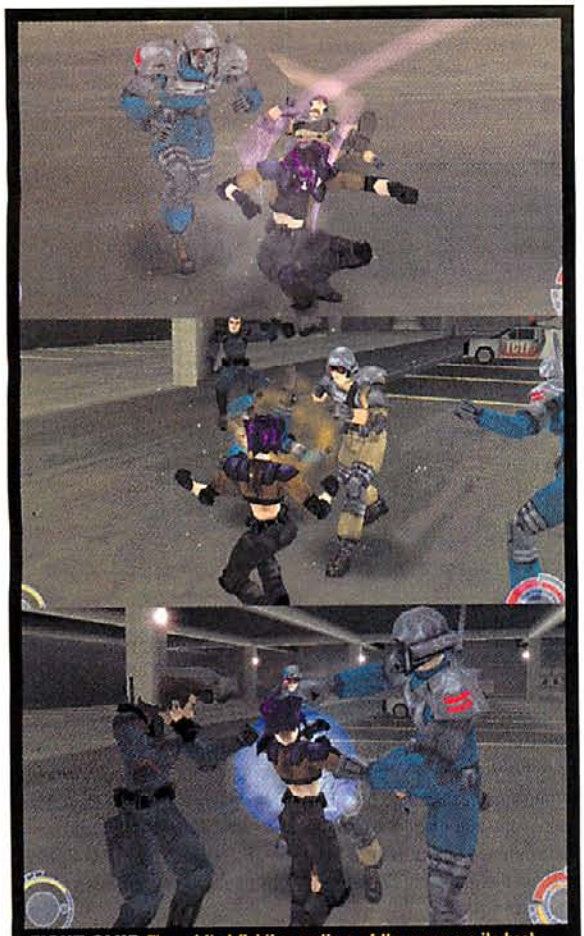
CGW RATED

PROS
Great fighting action; awesome sounds and music.

CONS
Stupid save system; simple gameplay; empty environments; general half-assedness.

Requirements: Pentium-II 200, 3D card, 32MB RAM. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-II 300, Voodoo 3 card or better, 64MB RAM.
3D Support: Direct3D **Multiplayer Support:** None

Publisher: Gathering of Developers • Developer: Bungie • $35 • oni.bungie.com
ESRB Rating: Teen (13+)



FIGHT CLUB The spirited fighting portions of the game are its best feature. As the game progresses, you'll have to try to dispatch enemies quickly as fights blossom from one or two enemies attacking to four or five – as alerted opponents rush to the fray and surround you. Thank God for the devil spin kick!

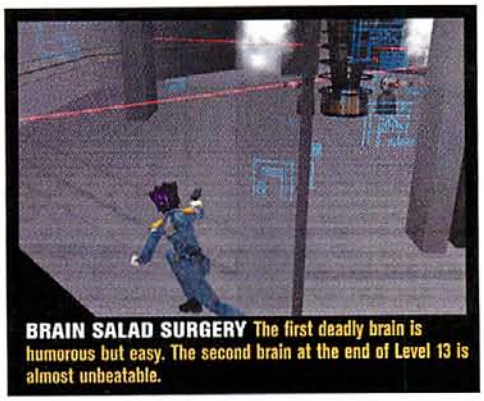
locked. There are no keys, only computer consoles that unlock other doors, or in some rare instances, three consoles that unlock one door. In fact, some doors and switches don't even need to be thrown: Once you reach the next save point, everything you just did is ignored anyway. Yes, there are some other items you'll discover, such as the grappling hook, but they're simply needed to trigger the next cut scene: You never actually get to use them.

At least you get to try out some interesting weapons. Most notable is the screaming cannon, which fires a slow yet agile leech projectile whilst emitting a loud shriek. This brings up another of ONI's better points: sound. The music rocks, and the sound effects are top notch.

More Plot Holes Than a Jerry Bruckheimer Movie

It's a shame that the plot can't compare with the excellent foley work. Bungie is usually good with their plots, as anyone who played MARATHON can tell you. Unfortunately, ONI comes off as a bad sci-fi novel rather than an epic anime flick.

Most computer games err on the side of too little plot. Some, like NO ONE LIVES FOREVER, have almost too much plot. ONI's plot is just broken. At the end of the game, there are unexplained plot twists,



BRAIN SALAD SURGERY The first deadly brain is humorous but easy. The second brain at the end of Level 13 is almost unbeatable.

UPSY-DAISY Admittedly, Konoko's throws are really cool.

inconsistencies, and generally messed up story lines. There is a ninja you must defeat, and a great deal of Konoko's internal dialogue involves her mysterious connection to this ninja. But after you defeat the ninja, nothing is explained. You're left in the dark as to why she felt connected to him. Another time, Konoko is cornered with no way out. After she remembers something her uncle said about the biodisposal vats, she realizes that there's a way she can escape. Problem is, her uncle never mentioned the vats. While these sort of enigmas could be attributed to an emulation of Japanese anime, an art form that seems to revel in keeping audiences in the dark, it's more likely that they're due to the script author being the one guy in the office who passed English in college.

Konoko, We Hardly Knew Ye

It is actually easy to pinpoint exactly when the ONI team decided to give up. Throughout the game, Konoko keeps a diary that intimates plot devices and also explains new moves. After Level 10, the diary goes silent until Level 14, where it is filled with two hastily written plot items and a lame disarm move that seems to have been forgotten during the development and thrown in at the last minute.

So much disappointment, so little space. The cut scenes are done in-engine with small anime pictures of the speakers overlaid on the screen, yet no mouths move, and even the anime portraits are completely static. The enemy AI is pretty good, but at times it has perfect aim, and it never fully comprehends how to use explosives without blowing itself up. Also, you can't take ammo out of weapons, it's very easy to waste a clip by reloading an already full gun, and the blocking system is unreliable – unless you're using a weapon, in which case you simply can't block at all. The jumping puzzles are inane and repetitive, the regular puzzles are also bad, and the bosses are lame.

One boss, the deadly brain, is arguably the Dumbest Boss Ever in a fighting game. The deadly brain literally requires you to turn off the same four switches surrounding it three times in a row. You end up simply running laps around the brain, hitting switches to kill it.

And then, in mission 13, you get to do it all over again. This is fun?

But still, you may come back and play ONI over and over. The fighting is an absolute blast and the graphics, though sparse and desolate, are quite pretty. Too bad there's no multiplayer or skirmish mode so you could fight without all the silly plot. Overall, ONI is a blemish on Bungie's good name. While there was a time when Bungie could have been considered infallible, that time has definitely passed. Let us pray that they don't ruin HALO. CGW

It requires four engines to fly. Hasbro gave it two.

It Bombed

Just what the hell is it with Hasbro publishing completely broken simulations? Like FALCON 4.0 and GUNSHIP! before it, B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH follows proudly in their fine tradition of bugginess, unfulfilled promises, and the biting-off-more-than-one-can-chew approach.

B-17 is actually a sequel, but it somehow lost the "II" along the way. Perhaps Wayward Design, the developer of both games, wanted to avoid embarrassing comparisons to the original (and in some ways superior) sim. Regardless, it's obvious Wayward never intended to deliver B-17 as it stands now. Whether it was an overly ambitious design, or another example of how Hasbro prematurely ships a game (or both), B-17 needs a lot more work. But if all this doesn't scare you off and you have a lot of persistence, B-17 can be worth the effort: It boasts a lot of "I don't believe what I just saw" moments, and some truly unique gameplay.

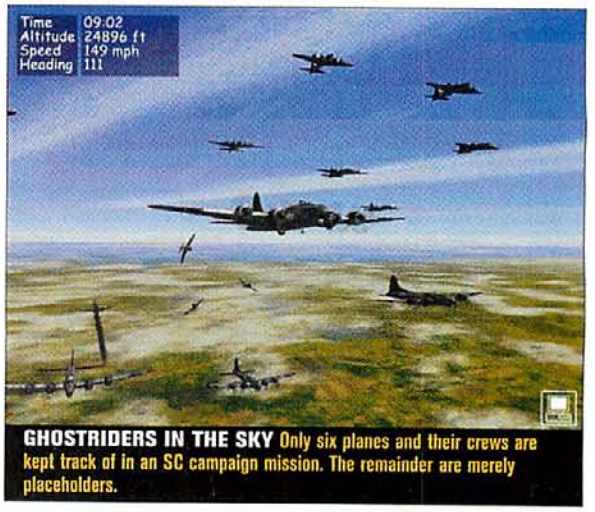
B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

reviewed by Gordon Berg

Woulda, Coulda, Shoulda

Truth be told, B-17 is not a flight sim in the traditional sense. It's far more accurate to call it a bomber-management sim with major role-playing overtones, or perhaps a wargame that implements a full 3D mode. The game was originally intended to be all three, primarily by employing a thorough AI that would be capable of running all aspects of the game by itself. That way, players could take as much or as little control of each feature as they wished, allowing them to do everything or hardly a thing at all. Unfortunately, much of what was promised for B-17 is either missing or non-functional enough to ruin the intended experience, leaving players with few working options.

Hardcore bomber enthusiasts and fans of the original will be disappointed because broken instrument readings and the complete absence of the promised engine management feature means there's really not much to do as a bomber pilot. Hardcore flight sim enthusiasts will be disappointed in the overly forgiving flight model. The bomber behaves uncharacteristically of its historical namesake, and the fighters show very little in the way of the distinctions that made them unique. Plus, the AI itself demonstrates incompetence and/or bizarre behavior far too often: Even if you wanted to let the game handle matters all by itself, you'll often wish it wouldn't try.



GHOSTRIDERS IN THE SKY Only six planes and their crews are kept track of in an SC campaign mission. The remainder are merely placeholders.

That's the Third Reich Down There

B-17 comes with both individual missions (training and historic) and two distinct manners of campaign. Never before has a training mission been so unhelpful or frustrating. The learning is essentially via trial-and-error, given the sparse directions in the manual and the complete lack of in-game direction. The historic missions, although welcome, are few and limited in scope. For instance, many famous air-raids – like the bombing of Dresden – are missing. The campaigns themselves are nice because of their two separate natures. The historic campaign allows you to play the Bomber Commander, worrying only about your lone bomber and its crew making it through the 25 required missions. The Strategic Commander is like the Bomber Commander campaign, times 12: You have 12 bombers and crews to look after, as well as being responsible for each mission's planning and targets. This campaign is fully dynamic in nature and is ultimately the most rewarding.

IT'S A "CIVIL" WAR Only true military targets can be attacked; you won't be firebombing Dresden in B-17.

Terror in the Skies

The experience inside the B-17 itself is where one feels the greatest joy as well as the greatest frustration with this game. From a gunner's perspective, trying to

CGW RATED

PROS

Stunning graphics; accurate bomb-run recreation; manning the guns is a blast.

CONS

Not many planes in the air; no multiplayer; buggy and clearly unfinished.

Requirements: Pentium-II 300, 128 MB RAM, 700 MB hard drive space. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-III 500, 256 MB RAM.

3D Support: Direct3D **Multiplayer Support:** None

Publisher: Hasbro Interactive • **Developer:** Wayward Design • **$45** • www.b17flyingfortress.com

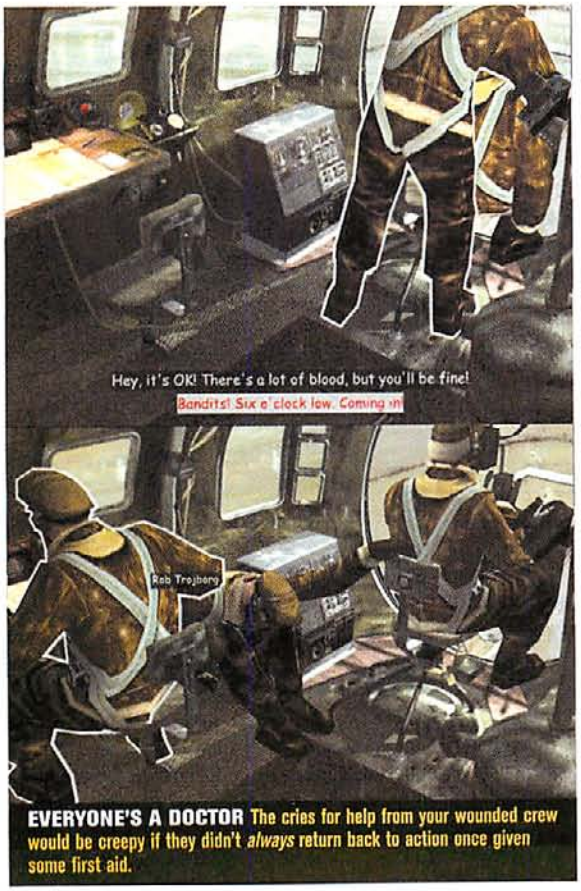
ESRB Rating: Teen (13+); animated violence.

shoot down a FW-190 or Me-262 as it roars past is practically worth recommending this title to just about anybody. But the Luffwaffe pilots deliver far more damage from consistently ramming your bombers than from actually shooting any down, forcing you to turn off mid-air collisions. And by the way, where are the aerial bombs and rockets?

What's worthwhile, though, is the effort to master the part of the Bombardier. Learning the Norden bombsight and putting the bombs on target well enough to satisfy the game's stringent definition of success is strangely compelling. It takes a while to figure out which approach to the target works best and how to compensate for drift. You'd best learn, though, because the AI won't do it for you and only the bombs from your own plane will score any hits.

Even though the AI offers a "superior initiative" setting, you're better off without it. Plan to take a hands-on approach – otherwise, your crew's actions will drive you crazy. Members will swap stations for no apparent reason and at the absolute worst times (for example, the tail gunner might replace the Bombardier right before a bomb run). Furthermore, given how often your crew gets wounded or how badly your plane is damaged during a flight, you'll want to make sure the crew remains in place to administer first aid...or worse, to put out a fire. It can't be underscored enough how watchful an eye you need to keep on your crew, because sometimes it will cost you the entire flight if you don't.

Moreover, if your plane suffers enough damage to both engines on the same wing, you'll have to fly the bomber back yourself: The AI pilot can't handle such a predicament, and you'll experience first hand just how long those flights were. At times like this, it would have been nice if further gameplay concessions were made, such as in in-flight save or even a simple autopilot.



EVERYONE'S A DOCTOR The cries for help from your wounded crew would be creepy if they didn't *always* return back to action once given some first aid.

Graphics and Sound to Both Please and Annoy

The visuals in B-17 are without a doubt the best yet ever witnessed in a flight sim, yet the delivery of these visuals help to detract from the overall experience. Both the terrain and sky look truly fantastic, but they draw-in to your monitor's screen so slowly that this practically kills whatever immersion they helped create. The sound is also equally compelling, offering a dynamic feel that is just as effective as any graphic to help lure you in – when it's not fading out. The best example of both sound and visuals comes when flying through flak: It's just as scary to listen to as to look at. The visible damage effects suffered by the planes can also make a claim to being the best ever: It's both fascinating and unnerving to actually look through giant holes in your airplane. It's a wonder these planes made it back at all.

It should go without saying that only the latest and greatest hardware will do any of this justice. In fact, it takes a high-end system just to run the game in a semi-stable fashion, let alone worry about acceptable performance. Stuttering and crash-to-desktops are legion, plaguing a wide variety of users and their systems. One solution is to set up your computer's permanent swap file to a size of 1GB, despite the total RAM present.

Even with several delays getting to market, Wayward still didn't finish what they set out to make. What was intended to be the end-all be-all of flight sims, and a game that offered something for everyone, has instead managed to alienate both simmers and gamers alike. Despite all this, B-17 can still deliver a lot of compelling gameplay, but you'll have to suffer through too much to enjoy it. CGW

Strategic Daylight Bombing: The American Perspective

■ Counter to the British philosophy, The United States intended from the start to bomb Germany by day. Perhaps it was complete faith in their personnel and equipment, but the Americans still believed they could succeed with a concept Germany abandoned and Britain shunned: strategic daylight bombing of vital targets with deadly precision. Both sides felt that if the U.S. was successful on this score, the war would be over quickly. As a result, some of the fiercest and most desperate fighting this side of the Battle of Britain took place over the skies of Germany. In the end, the B-17 proved that by itself it was formidable, but not invincible. America suffered staggering losses of planes and personnel, while the total production output of warplanes in Germany actually rose. Although America could ultimately win a war of attrition, it avoided doing so once the long-range escort capability of the P-51 Mustang arrived on the scene.

See the British perspective on page 93

ANY LANDING YOU CAN WALK AWAY FROM... Despite your best efforts, this is often the end result.

Rowan flies off into the sunset with what's likely to be their last sim ever

Truly Their Finest Hour

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD EDITORS' CHOICE

If there's going to be only one thing you take away from reading this review, let it be the following: Rowan's BATTLE OF BRITAIN is the single greatest dog-fighting experience ever. Got that? Good. And kindly note that I didn't say Rowan's BATTLE OF BRITAIN (BOB) is the single greatest flight sim ever; BOB has a few too many problems to claim that title just yet. But even if what's wrong with BOB remains part of its permanent "feature" list, there's no denying this game has forever changed the face of simulated dogfights by sheer virtue of the number of planes it can draw simultaneously on your computer screen.

FROM UP HERE, YOU ALL LOOK LIKE ANTS!

Quantity Has a Quality all Its Own

Not since Microprose's EUROPEAN AIR WAR (EAW) has a sim even come close to the staggering number of planes BOB puts in the air around you. While EAW managed over 200 planes at one time, BOB can exceed five times that amount. Hence, for the first time ever, there's a sim out there actually capable of delivering the true number of aircraft present during the London "Blitz." Granted, the majority of these planes are bombers flying in tight and simple formations, but when you look out your cockpit window and see hundreds of escort fighters starting to engage your squadron in a complex aerial dance, it's hard not to stare at your monitor in amazement.

ROWAN'S BATTLE OF BRITAIN

reviewed by Gordon Berg

Numbers on such a grand scale don't mean a thing, however, if the computer-controlled planes can't behave individually and believably. For the most part they do so in BOB; at the highest settings, you'll have to work for each kill. Unfortunately, sometimes you have to work too hard. Unless you can destroy the enemy with a sustained burst lasting a good two to three seconds (which is historically correct for the weaker RAF guns), your attack may be for naught. After a set of amount of time, smoking planes sometimes magically "heal" and head for home at top speed, almost as if an overriding subroutine kicks in.

At full realism, BOB's flight models are fairly convincing. There is the threat of the occasional spin, but for the most part, the aircraft are easy enough to fly. Because the game faithfully models the slightly under-powered engines of the era, you'll need to keep your speed up if you want to avoid constant stalls (unless you enable the power-boost cheat). Granted, BOB's flight model won't induce the kind of terror that can be felt while flying EAW, but the vast number of enemies about you will.

BOB won't win any awards for the "best eye candy," but the game has its moments and the overall effect is much better than that of MIG ALLEY, Rowan Software's most recent award-winning flight sim. Pyrotechnics are still one of Rowan's weakest areas. The smoke and explosions look blocky and unrealistic, and the tiny debris from damaged planes looks primitively drawn. The terrain itself is a vast improvement over MIG ALLEY, but that is largely due to the bright palettes used to paint the English countryside (compared to the drab tones Rowan used for Korea). The terrain in B-17 and COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2 looks better, though, which probably explains why some are already importing CFS terrain tiles into BOB.

The plane models themselves are nice and sport realistic markings, convincing battle damage, and decent 3D cockpits. Better still, for the first time ever in a Rowan sim you can actually enable volumetric clouds to fly and hide in, and they're gorgeous. It's truly breathtaking to see a sunset in BOB with the clouds turned on. But you'd better have the latest and greatest in hardware if you plan to enable the weather. Even on my 1GB Athlon/Voodoo 5500/256 RAM system, I had to

CGW RATED

PROS
The best dogfights and the most planes seen in a WWII sim yet.

CONS
Not compatible with all video cards; non-intuitive radio and view system.

SCORE ONE FOR THE FATHERLAND The 109's cannons make quick work of this Spit.

Requirements: Windows 95, 98, ME, Pentium-II 233MHz; DirectX 7-compatible 3D card w/ 8MB RAM; 450 MB hard drive space; 6X CD-ROM; mouse. **Recommended Requirements:** Pentium-III 400MHz, DirectX 7-compatible 3D card w/ 16MB RAM or greater, 550MB hard drive space, DirectX 7-supported sound card, joystick.

3D Support: D3D **Multiplayer Support:** IPX or TCP/IP, modem, or direct serial link; 2 to 8 players.

Publisher: Empire Interactive • **Developer:** Rowan Software Ltd • **$40** • **www.empireinteractive.com/BOB/**
ESRB Rating: Everyone

BLITZKRIEG! The Stuka proved to be ineffective in BOB.

dial down some of the settings to get a playable frame-rate.

History Repeats Itself

Aside from the provided training and historical missions, the heart of BOB ultimately lies in the recreation of the famous battle itself. With the ability to fly for either side of the conflict, the time frame of those two long months in 1940 is broken down into four phases, each a potential starting point for your campaign. While the beginning of each phase accurately reflects the historical damage and relative strength of numbers for both air forces of the time, the subsequent events do not. BOB's campaign is truly a dynamic one.

The actual flying in BOB is merely a tactical extension of the strategy portion of the game. There is no role-playing aspect of an individual pilot, per se, like other sims: You simply hop into a plane at your choosing, usually when an encounter is about to ensue. Although you are forced into the role of Commander, you do not necessarily need to act like one and can simply watch events play out on their own. But if you want to please Churchill (or conversely, Hitler), you'd best get involved in the minutia and figure out how to marshal your limited resources and battle-weary pilots (if you're British), or what to attack (if you're German). The best part for me was testing out the attack/defense theories and strategies that have been scrutinized for the past 60 years. Good luck avoiding invasion if you let Germany continue to attack the RAF instead of restricting them to historical civilian targets, and good luck trying to defeat the RAF before September 15th if you keep attacking London's docks instead of airfields.

Every Ace Takes a Little Flak Now and Then

What keeps BOB from being awarded five stars is typical of an initial Rowan release: minor bugs, incompatibilities, and broken features. The sim is fairly stable for the most part, but the occasional lockup or crash-to-desktop can occur. Worse are the potential graphical problems, depending on your video card (and your willingness to experiment with different "tweaks"). Apparently, the stuttering from MIG ALLEY has returned for an encore. In addition, an awful banding of the sky occurs when you run the game in 16-bit mode; but upping the resolution to 32-bit to get rid of it is tougher on frame-rates (and for me, turned the entire terrain dark). It's obvious this sim still needed a bit more time, despite some stability fixes from the prior European release.

Nevertheless, although my head sometimes chastises this sim for what it's got wrong, my heart is singing the highest praise for what it has right. Not since I first started flying simulations have I been this engrossed. With a thousand planes on the screen at once, BOB has brought me closer than ever before to the most famous air battle of all time. CGW

YUCK The banding in 16-bit mode is a real distraction.

SEE THE DIFFERENCE? 32-bit mode looks much better, but at what cost?

Opposing View of Daylight Bombing:

The British Perspective

■ If the Battle of Britain taught England's Bomber Command one thing, it was the notion that bombing targets during the day was utter suicide. Even with the Luftwaffe's numerous advantages, the cost Germany paid in men and aircraft over the skies of England was heavy indeed, something the British couldn't themselves afford when it was their turn to attack. Hence, Britain took to the night skies when they bombed targets on the continent. Granted, less planes and men were lost this way, but history has shown us that these night attacks were only half as effective as they once were thought to have been. It took the arrival of the Americans to again make effective strategic daylight bombing a reality.

See the American perspective on page 91

This warrior has no heart

Wooden Soldier

PROJECT IGI: I'M GOING IN

reviewed by Raphael Liberatore

A good tactical simulation has a deft blend of realistic combat and weaponry, real-world locations, tense tactical situations, a compelling storyline, and gameplay that demands you rely on your brain as much or more than you rely on your reflexes. But where these qualities run to the very core of games like ROGUE SPEAR and SWAT 3, there's only a thin layer of these elements coating PROJECT IGI. While it's not as bereft of realism as DELTA FORCE 3, the shortfalls in its gameplay ultimately make IGI inconsequential.

You play a former SAS commando named Jones, now working as a freelance operative for both the U.S. and U.K., called into action to stop a group of terrorists from detonating a stolen nuclear warhead. As this lone wolf, you're trained to use a variety of weapons and are impossibly physically fit – you can run forever carrying more armaments than a Delta Force armory and never get winded. A series of 14 hefty missions tasks you with taking out baddies, rescuing informants, driving vehicles, stealing jet aircraft, hacking computers, and disarming warheads.

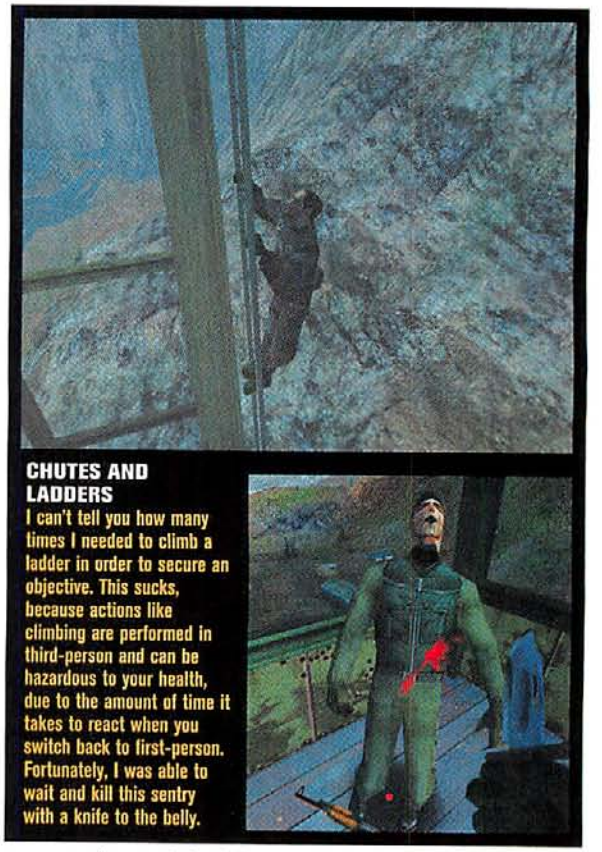
Every tac sim begins and ends with realism. It's the most integral part of any combat simulation, and to its credit, IGI does contain realistic elements like the variety of weapons and tools needed to complete each mission, ballistic models, realistic locations with weather elements, and combat models that force you to aim for the head because the bad guys wear tactical armor. By themselves, the above features are adequate, but the game lacks other key components like a training mission or kill house, and a multiplayer game.

There are more noticeable shortcomings, starting with the AI. There's very little intelligence in this artificial intelligence, and it robs the missions of the dramatic tension that makes for a winning tac sim. You can snipe enemy soldiers one by one, and they'll never react to the guy who just dropped dead next to them. Other times, they just wander like buffalo grazing in the prairie, ambling past dead comrades as you pick them off. When they do react, they tend to all rush at you in a straight line – unless they're popping out of a wall to shoot you in the back. Forget about realism; how *fair* is that? Especially when the lack of any in-mission save means you've spent over an hour clearing out an area?

Like most tactical sims, you enjoy access to a large arsenal of weapons, but you're usually poorly armed and must find them in the mission. Equipping yourself with what you loot from dead guards or supply caches will give you access to the Glock 17, MP5SD, grenades, SPAS-12 shotgun, LAW rocket, M4, AK-47s, Drugnov sniper rifles, and other real-world weapons. Most weapons characteristics follow a realistic model, with muzzle rise and bullets penetrating doors and body armor. You'll quickly discover how fast the AK-47's muzzle kicks when you fire it full auto and your aim suffers. But the logic of the weapons is lost when you can tote more weapons than a commando could ever dream of owning, let alone carrying. And while you may end one mission armed to the teeth, this doesn't necessarily mean that you'll get to keep the weapons you've accumulated – apparently your character feels it necessary to drop all the ordnance he fought for in favor of packing just a knife, a pistol, a submachine gun, and his unswerving faith in himself. Frankly, I'd rather have the sniper rifle.

Graphically the game is solid, with the huge outdoor environment vistas having much better texture and scope than the bland buildings. But the best feature is IGI's sound. The environmental ambiance of soldiers walking, doors and gates closing, security cameras beeping, thunderstorms crackling, and firefights popping are all well done and juice up the atmosphere, especially during the stealth portions of the game.

In the end, PROJECT IGI can still be called a tactial sim, but barely. With no in-game save, dumb AI, and no multiplayer component, IGI just doesn't hit the mark. PROJECT IGI can be fun to play, but it lacks the rewards of a ROGUE SPEAR or SWAT 3. CGW



CHUTES AND LADDERS
I can't tell you how many times I needed to climb a ladder in order to secure an objective. This sucks, because actions like climbing are performed in third-person and can be hazardous to your health, due to the amount of time it takes to react when you switch back to first-person. Fortunately, I was able to wait and kill this sentry with a knife to the belly.

CGW RATED

PROS
Stable engine with a decent amount of weapons and equipment.

CONS
Dumb AI and no in-game save feature.

Requirements: 300MHz Pentium II, 64MB RAM, 4X CD-ROM, 8MB VRAM 3D-accelerated video card, 500MB hard drive space.
Recommended Requirements: AMD Athlon or Pentium III, 128MB RAM, 16MB VRAM 3D-accelerated video card.
3D Support: Direct3D, Glide. **Multiplayer Support:** None

Publisher: Eidos • Developer: Innerloop • $40 • www.eidos.com
ESRB Rating: Mature; animated blood and violence.

This five-year mission could have spent a few more months in drydock

Captain's Quarters

STARFLEET COMMAND 2: EMPIRES AT WAR

reviewed by Bruce Geryk

Making a successful real-time strategy computer game out of the incredibly complex '80s-era, turn-based boardgame *Star Fleet Battles* was the equivalent of making a functioning radio out of stone knives and bearskins. The combination of an excellent graphics engine, variable-speed gameplay, and an intimate understanding of what made *Star Fleet Battles* compelling turned what could have been a clunky disaster into one of the best games of 1999. Unfortunately, it looks like Interplay is set upon proving that space-lightning never strikes twice, because the sequel, STARFLEET COMMAND 2: EMPIRES AT WAR, is as safe and derivative as its predecessor was daring and original.

STARFLEET COMMAND 2 is a real-time strategy game in which you can control up to three ships simultaneously in space combat. As the captain, you manage your ship's energy by assigning it to various departments such as shields, weapons, transporters, and electronic counter-measures. Despite the real-time element, the game requires a lot of strategy and knowledge of the rules, and the selectable game speed ensures that even the most cerebral (or least coordinated) gamers can play at a comfortable pace.

At first glance, STARFLEET COMMAND 2 looks very much like its predecessor. This impression lasts through the second, third, and fourth glances as well. The two games look virtually identical, and only a side-by-side comparison reveals that the ship models are better, especially at close ranges. Some nifty details have been added, like animations for point-defense weapons, but for the most part the changes to the tactical game are nothing more than the introduction of two new races (the Mirak and the Interstellar Concordium), improved fleet control, and a variety of weapons tweaks. The real changes were supposed to be made to the campaign mode, which was the original game's acknowledged weak spot.

FLEET ADMIRAL You can still only be on one bridge at a time, but overall command is improved.

SPACE CAN BE PRETTY Not only is the gameplay deep, but the special effects are special indeed.

The campaign in STARFLEET COMMAND was nothing more than a series of randomly generated missions that weren't very different from one another, interspersed with scripted scenarios. STARFLEET COMMAND 2 adds a strategic map composed of hexagons that regulate movement, and the game's Dynaverse 2 engine (so called because it's an improvement on the dynamic universe system used in the first game) generates political events that govern the relationship of the various races to one another. It's an ambitious concept that manages to fall flat on its bulging Klingon nose.

While the spontaneity of a dynamic universe should create an immersing atmosphere, the way it's implemented results in the opposite impression. The hex grid is ugly, the news seems to be spewed from a random number generator, and the missions themselves feel unconnected to anything that's actually going on in the larger universe. It's an incredibly clumsy system that appears cobbled together for an entirely different purpose: online *Star Trek*.

The real attraction of Dynaverse 2 was to be its online component: a persistent multiplayer gameworld in which players could roam the galaxy and complete missions, progress in rank, and upgrade their spacecraft within the context of a series of galactic wars. Sadly, it was not to be. Shortly before the release of STARFLEET COMMAND 2, intended host Flipside.com was reorganized by its owner, and Taldren was left without any servers. Interplay stepped in to run its own, but this meant a lot of re-coding of the campaign engine, which hasn't been completed as of this writing. So STARFLEET COMMAND 2 is left with a centerpiece feature that simply doesn't work. To top it off, many users have reported bugs and instability in the solo game as well.

Despite the flat and uninspiring campaign, STARFLEET COMMAND 2 still boasts some of the best starship combat strategy available anywhere. Unfortunately, the single most important element that was to distinguish the sequel from its predecessor is very much a work in progress. If you've never played the original, STARFLEET COMMAND 2 is worth the purchase price. However, veterans of the previous game will find little extra gameplay to justify the expense. Save your money for a new set of Spock ears. CGW

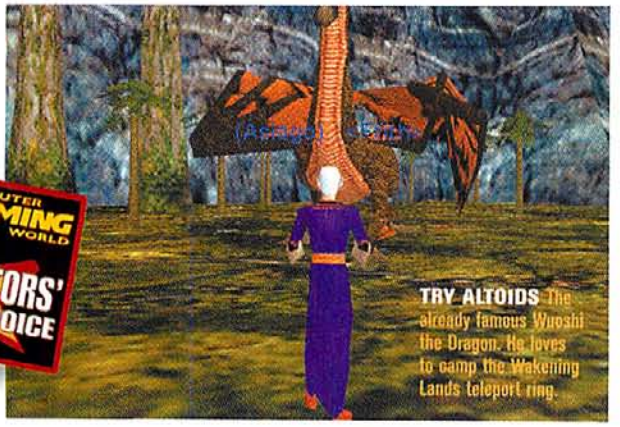
CGW RATED

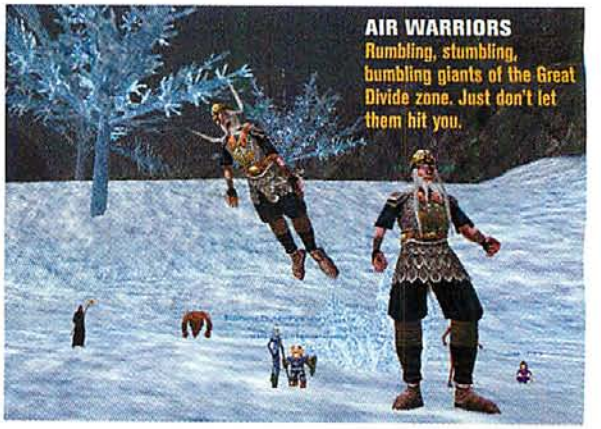
PROS
Superb tactical-level gameplay...

CONS
...that isn't duplicated at the strategic level.

Requirements: Pentium-II 350 (Pentium-III 500 if no 3D card), 64MB RAM, 550MB hard drive space.
Recommended Requirements: Pentium-III 500, 128MB RAM, 16MB 3D graphics card.
3D Support: Direct 3D **Multiplayer Support:** Direct TCP/IP (2-6 players), Mplayer.com; one CD per player.

Publisher: Interplay • **Developer:** Taldren • **$45** • **www.interplay.com**
ESRB Rating: Everyone; animated violence.





The EVERQUEST expansion will keep hardcore players happily addicted

Verant's Brave New World

EVERQUEST: THE SCARS OF VELIOUS

reviewed by
David "Asiago" White, Level 52 Wizard

EVERQUEST widows, your troubles are not over yet. In response to an ever-growing, ever-more-experienced audience of addicts, Verant has once again expanded the EVERQUEST world of Norrath with the SCARS OF VELIOUS expansion pack. The result is a must-buy for seasoned EVERQUEST players.

Although there are no new player races or classes (as in RUINS OF KUNARK, the previous expansion pack), and the level cap is still at 60, what you do get is an entirely new continent of 19 zones (including two new planes of "good" gods), and a multitude of new dungeons, quests, spells, and magic items. All in all, it's enough to keep you sleepless for many months to come.

Verant was serious when they suggested VELIOUS was for characters level 30 and above. Most of the monsters you'll battle are actually far higher than level 30, and they are tougher, for the most part, than their KUNARK or ANTONICA peers of the same level. Most VELIOUS monsters have a high magic resist which makes standard enchanter-mesmerize or other crowd-control tactics less of a sure-fire bet. There's also a rumor that the well-known 32,000 hit-point cap for EVERQUEST monsters has been lifted, and some VELIOUS monsters may even have more than 100,000 hit points.

The fighting is worth it, though, because the monsters are carrying some great loot. Actually, when this expansion first shipped, reports of the loot from the new continent were astounding: Precious items that surpassed anything in the pre-VELIOUS game were dropping frequently off rather accessible monsters. After a few weeks, Verant issued a patch that "nerfed" many of the drop rates on some of the too-easy-to-get items, but the great loot still exists in some areas.

You will see the Ry'Gorr orcs camped 24/7 on every server, because the loot they drop is incomparable to the challenge. Loot from the three main races also tends to be fairly outstanding; named dragons, for example, drop talismans with stats similar to the legendary Necklace of Superiority, which vary in power depending on how powerful the dragon is.

And speaking of the three races, Verant has cleverly designed the faction between the continent's Coldain Dwarves, Frost Giants, and Velious Dragons to hang in delicate balance. This is a key feature of VELIOUS and will make the gaming experience different for players depending on who you choose to side with. For example, if you slay a creature of one of these factions, you will gain faction in the other two. If you do a quest for any of these factions, you will lose faction with one or both of the others.

No matter which side you take, however, the dragons, dwarves, and giants all have equivalent quests for the excellent new armor – for every class. And if you're a total hellion and have mucked up your faction with all, then you still may have a chance to get the equivalent armor dropped by creatures in the Plane of Growth. That you can get the same armor in every location is probably a feature put into place so that players are less afraid to pick one of the three factions to favor, but it isn't necessarily very creative.

There is also far more interactivity in some of the new quests, as well as multi-stage quests where quest-reward items continue to get their stats incremented at each stage of the quest; these items can start as newbie-level magic items and progress to planar-level.

All in all, Verant has done it again with another expansion that continues to enrich the EVERQUEST experience. Creating an entire continent for players of level 30 and above addresses the shifting demographic of players on the servers, as this two-year-old game continues to mature with its loyal and growing player base. At the time of this writing (a month and a half after its release), still much of the new continent remains unmapped by the EVERQUEST community (as of this date, Plane of Mischief still hasn't even been found), and many secrets are likely yet to be discovered. With SCARS OF VELIOUS, Verant has given its hardcore players a rich, generous slab of their favorite gaming addiction. CGW

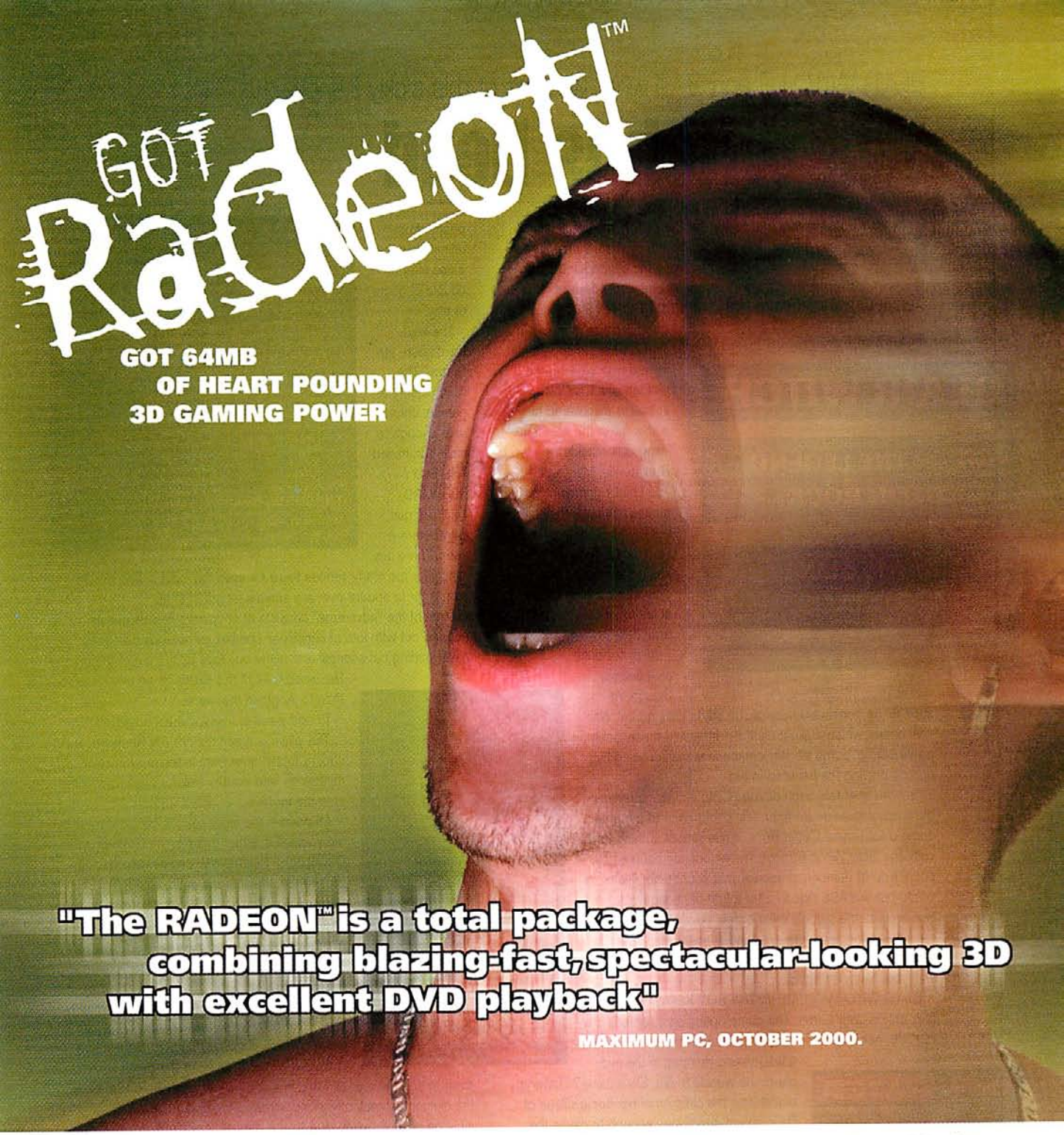
CGW RATED

PROS
Lots of high-level adventuring; lots of really great loot.

CONS
Level 30 and above only; some monsters more difficult than their level.

Requirements: Windows 95/98/2000, Pentium 200, 64MB RAM, 600MB hard drive space, Internet connection.
Recommended Requirements: Pentium-II 350MHz, 128MB RAM with 16MB video RAM.
3D Support: Direct3D or Glide. **Multiplayer Support:** Internet

Publisher: Sony • Developer: Verant Interactive • $20 • www.everquest.com • ESRB Rating: Teen



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BLAIR WITCH 2 and 3 kill what was left of this sickly franchise

The Witch Is Dead

BLAIR WITCH

VOL. 2: THE LEGEND OF COFFIN ROCK

VOL. 3: THE ELLY KEDWARD TALE

reviewed by Brett Todd

It's been a bad – very bad – year for the *Blair Witch* franchise. First, there was the lousy sequel to the movie. Then, there was the first PC game, which stunk. Now we have the second and third games in this formerly cool universe, and guess what? They stink too.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME 2: THE LEGEND OF COFFIN ROCK has a good premise. It opens in 1886, when an apparently injured man wearing the uniform of a Civil War soldier is discovered by a little girl in the now-familiar woods outside Burkittsville, Maryland. The child's grandmother nurses him back to health, but by the time he gets back on his feet, the girl has gone missing and grandma is telling the ex-soldier that only he can save her.

All is not quite as it seems, though. As soon as he begins his mission, he starts having Civil War flashbacks, which make it clear he's traveled these lonely paths before; some sinister presence is manipulating him and controlling the haunted forest.

But the brief tale soon devolves into an incomprehensible saga, and aside from the title's reference to the gruesome discovery at Coffin Rock, it has almost nothing to do with The *Blair Witch Project*. The woods are haunted by some kind of demonic presence that sounds not like a witch, but like Abe Vigoda after a fifth of cheap rye. Solutions to the game's meager few puzzles make no logical sense. And, absolutely nothing is scary. Hell, even the ghosts are corporeal entities that can be taken care of with your trusty six-shooter.

BLAIR WITCH VOLUME III: THE ELLY KEDWARD TALE fairs only slightly better. The game opens on a winter's day in 1786, not long after the title character has been tied to a wagon and dumped in the middle of the woods to die. Elly's crime? Drawing blood from the children of her home village of Blair, an act suspicious enough to cause the God-fearing locals to charge her with witchcraft. Disappearances follow shortly thereafter, and rumors begin to fly that the old woman has survived to wreak her vengeance on the townspeople through sorcery. This, of course, kicks off the *Blair Witch* legend.

It's an intriguing story – certainly better than the tales told in the first two games – and it might even be good enough to prevent a few people from uninstalling the game after a couple of hours of play.

The key words here are "a few." The vast majority of gamers unfortunate enough to have purchased THE ELLY KEDWARD TALE will quit long before it ends. There are simply far too many serious flaws for even the most indiscriminate consumer to endure over any serious length of time.

THROWING SPARKS Magic stones can stop a zombie, er, dead in its tracks in ELLY KEDWARD. They produce some dramatic pyrotechnics, too.

Most of the "adventure" consists of shopworn Fed Ex quests padded out with lots of senseless combat, extraneous dialogue, never-ending cut-scenes, and numerous trips in and out of the maze-like woods. All of this exists for no other reason than to lengthen the game.

To add insult to injury, there's no payoff.

The villain is a demon, not Elly Kedward, and cheesy Indian mysticism is the predominant mythology, and not the sinister paganism hinted at in the movies.

Of course, the most serious obstacle to enjoying yourself in either game is the Gathering Of Developers' NOCTURNE engine, which hangs around the necks of the entire BLAIR WITCH trilogy like a Pentium-powered albatross. In all three games, it handicaps the gamer every step of the way. It looks and sounds good, but it just isn't able to handle the intended quick pace of these games.

All player movements are stiff and unresponsive. It typically takes three or four tries just to pick up items. Awkward camera angles also make it difficult to do what the game asks, or even to see the monster that is killing you. In COFFIN ROCK, even the elementary task of walking across a log is rendered nearly impossible on one occasion due to the distant, awkwardly placed point-of-view.

THE SOUTH WILL RISE AGAIN Ghostly Confederate soldiers haunt the Burkittsville area and lend a spooky air to your quest in COFFIN ROCK. One question, though: Why can you shoot them?

The *Blair Witch* phenomenon is dead. Cheap marketing stunts like this hackneyed series of computer games and the atrocious *Blair Witch 2: Book of Shadows* have turned one of the scariest films ever made into a cornball industry no different than that powered by the likes of Jason and Michael Myers.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to pop *The Blair Witch Project* into the DVD player and try to forget I ever experienced this nightmarish trilogy. CGW

CGW RATED

PROS

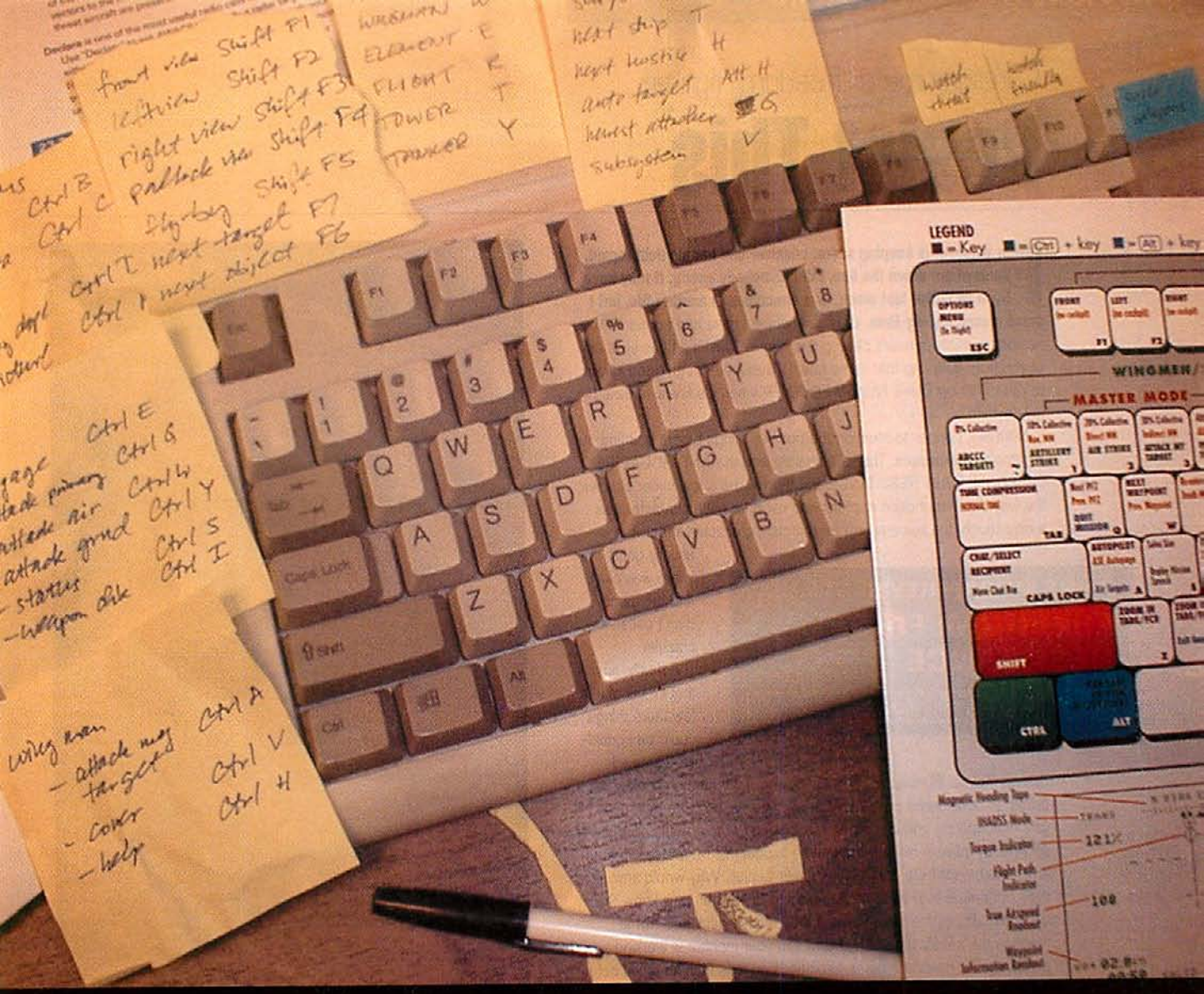
Each game features the NOCTURNE engine—the best shadow simulator available for the PC.

CONS

Recreating spooky-looking shadows is all that the NOCTURNE engine is good for.

Requirements: Windows 95/98/2000, Pentium 200, 64MB RAM, 600MB hard drive space, Internet connection.
Recommended Requirements: Pentium-II 350MHz, 128MB RAM with 16MB video RAM.
3D Support: Direct3D or Glide. **Multiplayer Support:** Internet

Publisher: G.O.D. • **Developer:** Vol.2: Human Head Studios; Vol.3: Ritual Entertainment • **$20** • **www.godgames.com** • **ESRB Rating:** Mature



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Consider me a "freedom" fighter

Resist This

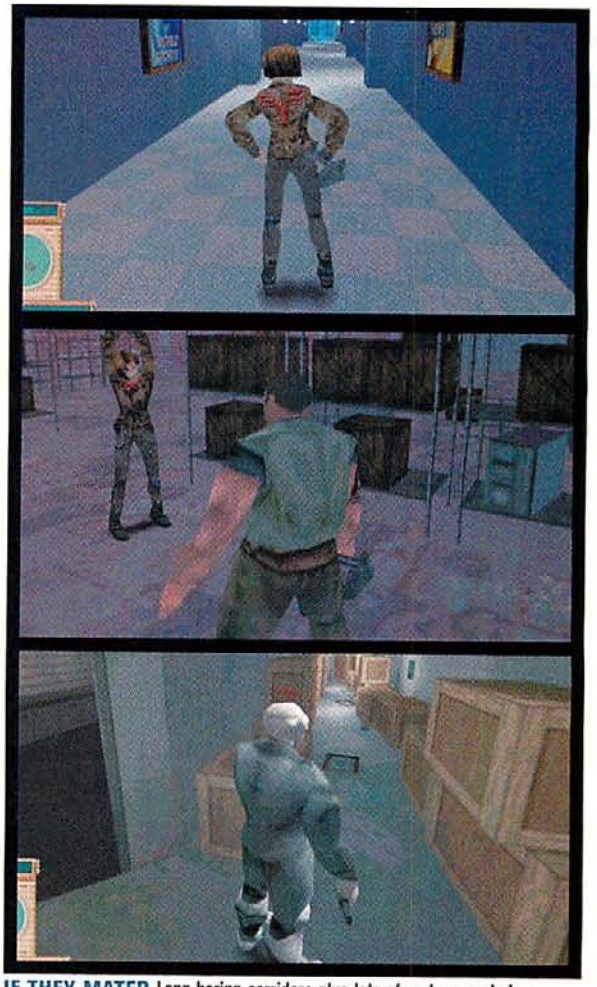
For whoever is keeping score, consider one karmic debt repaid. Somewhere down the line, I did somebody wrong. It may have been an editor last week, or a concubine in another life, but I owed somebody big-time. Why else would I have had to endure the seemingly endless hours playing this game? Maybe if I can save any of you from suffering that same fate, I'll acquire enough good karma to get to review DUKE NUKEM FOREVER when it's finally released in my next life.

Normally, I prefer to mention the positive things before pointing out a game's weaknesses. That is a challenge with ANNE MCCAFFREY'S FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE, but there *were* a few minor plusses; the way different motion capture was used for each character was a nice touch, the voice-acting for the main character Angel was usually good, the score was okay, and the game didn't cause any crashes.

ANNE MCCAFFREY'S
FREEDOM: FIRST RESISTANCE
reviewed by Joe "Biter" Bailey

Actually, now that I think of it, a few more things could be considered shrewd design moves. Eliminating all the annoying configuration choices could be considered positive. After all, who needs more than two graphics options and one screen resolution? One size fits all, doesn't it? And, of course, making the mouse hypersensitive and leaving out any mouse-sensitivity control was sheer genius. Why would anyone in their right mind ever want to *stop* playing FFR when they know that to do so would require them to reset their mouse defaults? Not to mention the satisfaction of knowing that your monitor is working properly after hearing it reset resolutions no less than six times before the game starts. You just can't put a price tag on peace of mind!

Unfortunately, even a White House press secretary couldn't spin some of the game's negatives into positives. Of these, two of them absolutely ruin the game. The pacing is awful. It will leave you distracted, disinterested, and longing for bed. Note to developers: Wandering corridors looking for some elusive foozle doesn't make for memorable gaming. And path-finding AI that couldn't fall from a plane and hit the ground makes all that wandering oh-so-much-more enjoyable. When your compatriots aren't getting stuck in walls, they are getting killed by wandering into kill zones. Leaving them behind is not an option, as they are occasionally needed to perform tasks specific to their talents. You know, really tough tasks like prying open a box, or climbing a two-foot high ledge. The game's visual design caters to vast, empty, cubist-inspired levels that somehow still manage to tank the frame-rate of a 733 MHz GeForce-based machine. And there are enough crates and corridors to make even veteran gamers retreat to a corner, assume the fetal position, and mutter repeatedly like Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man*.



IF THEY MATED Long boring corridors plus lots of crates equals long corridors full of crates. That's ground-breaking level design.

Oh wait, that's four things. Actually, only mentioning four things was an oversight on my part, as I forgot about the anemic sound effects, TOMB RAIDER-like clipping, and voice-acting that is often more caricature than character. Oh, and as homage to level design 101, there was actually a sewer level. Have they no shame?

At least the plot is original. You play the part of a freedom fighter trying to liberate the Earth from an alien invasion. Along the way, there are keys to find, doors to open, and dialog trees to explore. You've never seen anything like it! No, really! (If you notice a certain odor right now, don't blame the dog; what you smell is sarcasm.)

Playing this game is like getting a cavity filled. It's relatively painless, but you will find yourself squirming in your chair wishing it would end. Then again, 50 dollars is a small price to pay for erasing karmic debt. CGW

CGW RATED

PROS
Will probably create a few job openings at Red Storm.

CONS
Just about everything else.

Requirements: Pentium-II 300 MHz with 3D acceleration, 96MB RAM, Win 9x, 4x CD-ROM, 475 MB hard drive space, DirectX 7.x-compatible sound, DirectX 7 or higher.
Recommended Requirements: Pentium III, 16+ MB VRAM 3D accelerator, SBLive!, 1GB hard drive space, Win 98.
3D Support: DirectX 7.x-compatible 3D accelerator. **Multiplayer Support:** None

Publisher: UbiSoft • **Developer:** Red Storm Entertainment • **$50** • **www.redstorm.com**
ESRB Rating: Teen (13+); animated violence.

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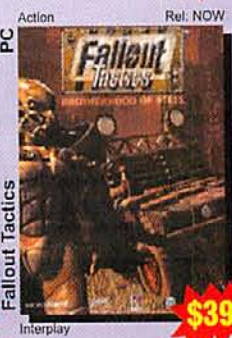

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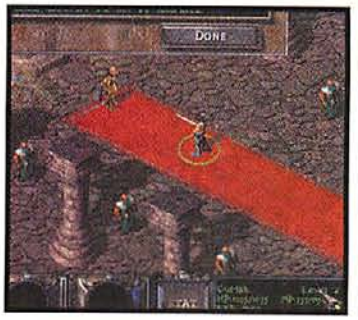
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE



Everybody knows that Korea is STARCRAFT-crazed, so it's not a big leap of faith to assume that homegrown Korean game developers would look to the American developer of that game for inspiration. And since imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the old maxim "give 'em what they want" must have a Korean translation, the idea of doing a game that combines two of Blizzard's most well known games – DIABLO and WARCRAFT – must have seemed like a slam-dunk idea. *In Korea.* On this side of the ocean, KINGDOM UNDER FIRE is nothing more than two amateurish clones of two of the most cloned games ever, seemingly built with the STARCRAFT tile set. This game would never have seen the light of day if an American developer had submitted this game to any publisher but G.O.D.

★ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

On one hand, KINGDOM UNDER FIRE is a traditional fantasy-themed RTS along the lines of WARCRAFT or WARLORDS: BATTLECRY. You'd think that anyone who'd played one of those traditional RTSs would be able to jump right into KUF. But unfortunately, the game suffers from such incredibly bad AI and pathfinding problems that at times it becomes ridiculously frustrating. For example, the guard function is almost completely useless because the selected escorts will form an immovable barrier around the guarded unit, often trapping it in corners or against walls. If you tell a unit to move to a spot anywhere off-screen, it'll assuredly get caught on at least one rock or tree along the way. It is cool how your units acquire experience, but that's mostly wasted on missions that can be won only by rushing.

The game switches gears to move into RPG mode, which has a lot more in common with DIABLO's hack-n'-slash style than a traditional BALDUR'S GATE–type of gameplay, not that that's a bad thing. But the world has enough DIABLO clones, and there's nothing unique enough about KUF to make it stand out.

My advice to Korean developer Phantagram is this: Next time, don't bite off more than you can chew. And don't rehash something we've seen a million times before, just because the original game was great (actually, that goes out to all game designers). We love DIABLO and WARCRAFT as much as anyone, but we don't like cheap imitations that bring nothing new to the table. *–Tom Price*

Genre: Strategy/RPG • **Publisher:** Gathering of Developers • **Developer:** Phantagram
$40 • www.kingdomunderfire.com • **ESRB Rating:** Teen; animated blood and violence.

NO ESCAPE

Genre: Action • **Publisher:** FunCom • **Developer:** FunCom• $30 • www.funcom.com • **ESRB Rating:** Teen; animated violence, comic mischief.

Ponder the irony that a company from Norway – a region that birthed the violent, fascinating Viking culture – pumps out a tame, light-hearted little shooter.

NO ESCAPE attempts to offer arena-style fragfests, but sans blood. Contestants are merely "knocked out," even by ludicrously powerful weapons like plasma cannons or rocket launchers. The televised deathmatch premise could have been social commentary, but the presentation keeps it in "just-plain-goofy" territory. The winner isn't the person with the most frags, but the one who gathers the most money in an arena after a set time limit (via taking cash scattered about, or knocking people out and snatching theirs).

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

The level design is mostly a variation on the "two elevations around a central pit" theme, the third-person camera combines with the wonky controls for some aiming issues, and the sound is pedestrian. It all just ends up soliciting a reaction of "eh." If you really desire a kid-friendly action game, buy an N64. FunCom should stick to making adventure games.

–Thierry Nguyen

1NSANE

I'll admit it. At first glance, 1NSANE didn't look like much to me. I assumed it was just another budget arcade racer built on an obsolete graphics engine being foisted on the naive WalMart gaming crowd. But once I got into the game, I realized a few things. First, 1NSANE is a lot more fun than I expected, thanks in part to a host of gameplay options that go beyond the typical race-around-the-track variety. 1NSANE sports such four-wheel frolic as Capture The Flag, Return The Flag, Demolition Derby, Pathfinder (where you may clear all the checkpoints in any order you want), and many more, along with the standard lap racing.

But the varying gameplay isn't all that makes 1NSANE unique. 1NSANE's graphics engine (with the exception of some pedestrian particle effects) is stunning, rendering beautiful large-scale environments at different times of the day, and highly detailed vehicles. And the physics engine is one of the best we've seen in years, with cars flipping over and rolling, shocks bouncing independently and even breaking, and driver models that are programmed to show real-life movements via inverse-kinetics. For an arcade racer, it looks pretty damn real.

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

Despite the fact that there are no official car-maker licenses, 1NSANE includes over 20 vehicles ranging from baja bugs to tricked-out pickups to behemoth eight-wheeled army trucks. The big truck racing class may be the best one in the game. Who knew that off-road racing in huge diesel beasts would be so much fun?

Each vehicle offers multiple paint jobs and customizable suspensions that you can enjoy from a variety of camera angles. You can also use the camera to look around, which makes for a pretty cool effect when you look across your cab to your rival driving next to you.

All told, 1NSANE has a lot to offer: eye candy, adrenaline-pumping excitement, and lots and lots of replay value. If you're looking for the best 4x4 game out there right now, avoid the SUV commercial known as 4X4 EVO, and go with 1NSANE. You'd be crazy not to. *–Tom Price*

Genre: Racing • **Publisher:** Codemasters • **Developer:** Invictus
$30 • www.codemastersusa.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone

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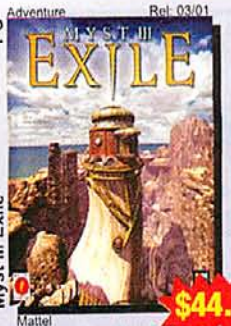

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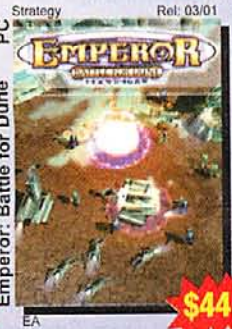

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AIRLINE TYCOON

What to make of AIRLINE TYCOON? To paraphrase a television ad: "Hey, you got a business sim in my arcade game! Hey, you got an arcade game in my business sim!"

The European roots of AIRLINE TYCOON are clear from the get-go: Every character has a British accent, and there's a *je ne sais quois* continental flavor to the game. You select one of four airlines to run, choose an international airport as your home base, take your place at the airport manager's table for a daily briefing, and off you go to run your airline.

★★★½☆

You choose from a free-play option or from a variety of "missions," scenarios with different winning conditions ranging from being the first to move a certain number of passengers, to being the first to offer space travel. All scenarios take place in the middle of a quirky airport, with your on-screen persona literally running back and forth between a newsstand, travel agency, duty-free shop, bar, air museum, bank, air broker, kerosene dealer, and more. Each has a necessary function in order to build your successful airline.

Making money involves acquiring orders (profitable assignments to transport people or cargo) and scheduling flights to fulfill those orders. Getting the orders at the expense of your competitors forms the core of the game. The complications involve sabotage, deal making and breaking, investing your money in various assets and options, making sure your planes are serviced well enough to keep from from falling out of the sky, and other sundry tasks.

Therein lies the rub. While Monte Cristo makes no bones about AIRLINE TYCOON being a "lite" sim, success requires digging surprisingly deep into a game that is more complex than its whimsical surface would indicate. It's kind of like biting into a bonbon and hitting a lump of steak – two great tastes, but you're not sure they mesh. Does the complexity add depth to an otherwise fanciful game, or do the graphics and humor lighten up an otherwise complex sim? Either way, AIRLINE TYCOON is a uniquely pleasant diversion if you're in the mood for a not-so-serious business simulation.

–Jeff Lackey

Genre: strategy • **Publisher:** Monte Cristo • **Developer:** Spellbound Software
$20 • www.montecristogames.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone

DINO CRISIS

DINO CRISIS for the PC is a great beginning for survival-horror newbies, but not much that's new for fans of the PlayStation version. The enhanced graphics are subtle, and real-time graphics are sharper than the PS-1 version. Capcom has allowed you access to the Operation Wipeout level and outfit changes right from the start. The storyline is the same, and is just as intriguing.

You are Regina, special task force member and weapons specialist. As keyboards go, the control is adequate, though (no surprise) better if you have a gamepad – the control legacy is especially apparent in having to use arrow keys to select letters from an onscreen keyboard. You will wind through the hallways and rooms of a secret research compound solving puzzles, killing packs of surprisingly clever dinosaurs, or just running away from them outright.

★★½☆☆

My biggest gripe is the ugliness of the text, which just seemed too pixelated for reading eight inches away from the screen. As a game in the survival-horror genre, DINO CRISIS has exciting gameplay and story, and is well worth the price if you haven't played it already. Veterans move elsewhere. *–Wen Laws*

Genre: Action/adventure • **Publisher:** Capcom • **Developer:** Capcom • $19 • www.capcom.com • **ESRB Rating:** Mature; animated blood, gore, and violence.

COMBAT COMMAND 2: DANGER FORWARD

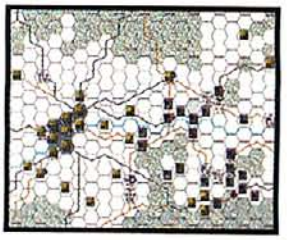
Genre: Wargame • **Publisher:** Shrapnel Games • **Developer:** Boku Strategy Games • $40 • www.shrapnelgames.com • **ESRB Rating:** Not rated.

Judging by this game's looks, it wouldn't seem out of place at a 1975 boardgame convention. Appearances aren't always deceiving. While the game isn't a port of any specific board wargame, it's obvious from first glance that this is essentially a boardgame in concept that uses the computer for its presentation.

However, the way in which the game puts you in control and makes vital information easy to reach makes it one of the most successful attempts to use the computer to manage the tedious parts of a wargame, while leaving those parts as a fundamental element of design. The interface allows you to quickly display everything from command level to disruption, and play flows incredibly smoothly.

★★½☆☆

The game simulates company-level WWII combat, with hexes depicting a half-mile of terrain, and turns representing two to six hours (depending on day or night). The graphics are austerely functional, and the sound is less so. There are 20 scenarios, ranging from a hypothetical Operation Sealion to the Battle of the Bulge; they generally concentrate on the Mediterranean theater. There is also a scenario editor for custom design. Grognards will be happy to find all of the game's charts and tables included in the printed manual.



COMBAT COMMAND 2 is great for wargamers looking for a compact game that's easily playable by mail or in a couple of solo sittings. It's not pretty, but within the context of the genre, it's very satisfying. *–Bruce Geryk*

DIRT TRACK RACING: SPRINT CARS

Genre: Racing • **Publisher:** WizardWorks • **Developer:** Ratbag • $20 • www.wizworks.com • **ESRB Rating:** Everyone

There isn't much call for sequels to $20 games. Of course, there are exceptions. Like Ratbag's DIRT TRACK RACING: SPRINT CARS, a cheapo follow-up to cheapo predecessor DIRT TRACK RACING, one of the best wheel and pedal releases of 2000.

★★★½☆

The sequel picks up where the first game left off, and is more of an expansion pack than a stand-alone effort. You still run around in circles on dirt tracks, but now you do it on 20 new tracks behind the wheels of (surprise!) sprint cars. These monstrosities – which look a lot like dune buggies that have swallowed hang gliders – are bigger and more powerful than the hunks last time. This makes it more difficult to maneuver your ride around the oval tracks, and changes the playing field nicely for veterans of the original game.

As the saying goes, expect a good time, not a long time, from DTR: SPRINT CARS. Although the gameplay is fast and frenetic, all you do here is drive in circles. Fun or not, the repetition will wear on anybody in short order. Even the intriguing career mode – where you can enter racing circuits in the Pennzoil World of Outlaws Series and customize your car with all sorts of performance upgrades – drags when you discover that spending the money you won at the track is more enjoyable than winning it. Still, unless you demand 1957-like buying power from your entertainment dollar, you'll get more than $20 worth of amusement out of this game.

–Brett Todd

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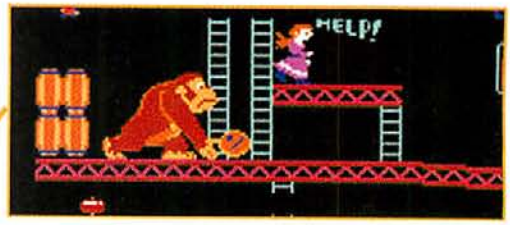
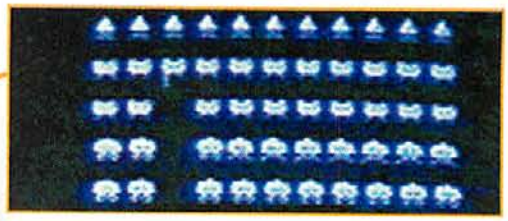
COULD MameCE BE WindowsCE'S KILLER APP?

BY WILLIAM O'NEAL





They'll think you're working, while you're running arcade games in MameCE. Casio's Cassiopeia EM-500 ($500).

Created in 1996 by Nicola Salmoria, Mame (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator) is an arcade emulator that allows you to play classic stand-up arcade games like PAC-MAN, DONKEY KONG, and SPACE INVADERS, to name a few, on a personal computer. Just install the basic application and download the ROMs of your favorite classic games, and—in theory—you're ready to play.

We say "in theory" because while over 2500 ROMs (comprising over 1400 individual games) are available, getting them to work with your particular Mame installation is often no easy task. But since *CGW* readers are so smart, we'll leave the fiddlin' up to you.

Mame's latest iteration, MameCE, works on Compaq's iPAQ, the Cassiopeia, and HP's Jornada. MameCE is basically just a port of the Windows version made to run on PocketPCs. While it'd be foolish of you to expect games like MORTAL KOMBAT to work on a CE device, it's pretty easy to while away the hours playing DONKEY KONG. Visit **www.mameworld.net/mamece3/** to find out more. *CGW*

on the cutting edge

Look at My Thingy

Gadget gawking at CES with Bill and the boyz

Every January, techie types descend on Las Vegas to attend the Consumer Electronics Show (CES). While gaming hasn't typically been the show's primary focus, the introduction of Microsoft's Xbox was literally and figuratively at center stage.

Bill-ionaire Gates walked a packed auditorium through his vision of the house of the future. The only reason that anyone sat through this rehashed lecture on the digitally connected home was to see the device enshrouded at center stage. After about an hour or so, Gates got to the point and dramatically removed the veil, giving the world a glimpse of the device that he hopes will help him take over our living rooms—now that he owns our offices: Xbox.

Gates and his team of developers showed off a few of the titles that are currently in development for the Xbox, including ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODYSSEY, MALICE, and TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2. The crowd favorites were definitely MUNCH'S ODYSSEY, a follow up to ABE'S ODYSSEY, and MALICE, an awesome-looking game where you play a character named Alice that's hell with a mallet.

But if there's one thing that CES 2001 will be remembered for, it's not some digitally connected home of the future. Sure, companies love to talk about stuff like that, but if there's anything that the high-tech world learned from last March's market "correction," it's that cool ideas don't pay the rent.

So what is every electronics company doing to make money? Making MP3 players. You think we're kidding but we're not. We're talking about every kind of MP3 player you could—and in some cases would not want to—imagine. Ever wanted a combination digital camera/MP3 player? Fujifilm thinks so. There were more combination watch/MP3 players than we care to count. Samsung even has a combination cell phone/MP3 player that for some reason we think actually makes sense.

It seems that manufacturers have come to the conclusion that we're all tired of carrying around multiple devices: PDAs, cell phones, MP3 players, and watches. And if this year's CES is any sign of things to come, someday we'll all carry just one device that does everything you could ever possibly want it to do.
—William O'Neal

>>> Will Power

William O'Neal

Change Is Good...Right?!

C'mon, Cletus, there's a new deputy in town!

■ Being expected to fill former hardware editor Dave Salvator's big-ass shoes is in many ways a double-edged sword. Having known Dave and the *CGW* gang for years—and having cut my technical editor teeth under Dave's tutelage—I thought I had a pretty good idea what was expected of me. That all changed on day one, when I showed up and was told that I have free reign to change the hardware section as I see fit.

Whoa. It's one thing to come in and keep doing what your predecessor has successfully done for four years. It's another thing entirely to come in and start changing stuff. But if one thing's certain, it's that in *CGW*, Dave created a hardware section that is highly respected.

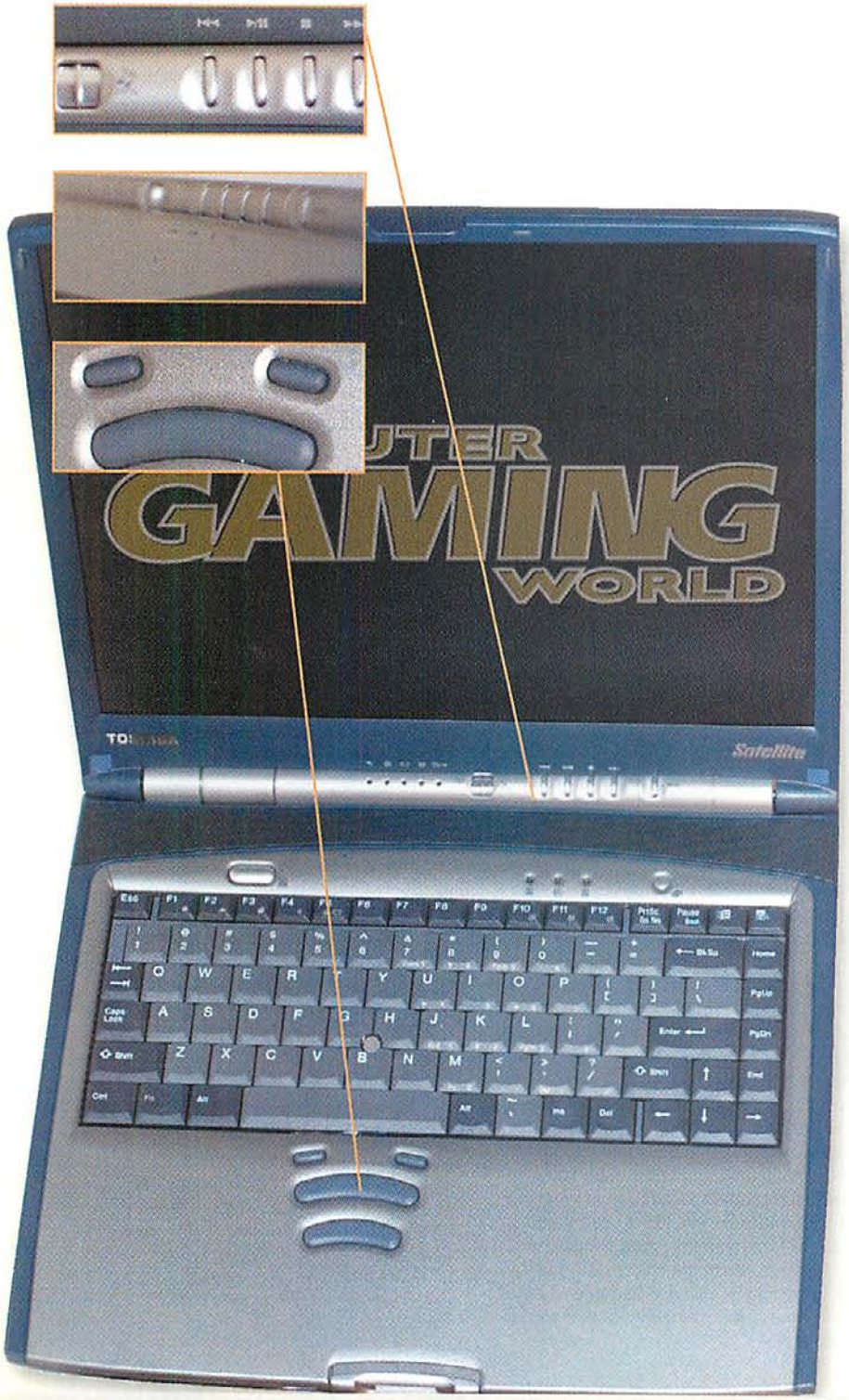
So my charge is twofold: to maintain the standards that Dave and Loyd Case have set, while giving the hardware section my own voice. Changes? Sure, there'll be some. I intend to open the hardware section up to include more than just graphics cards and joysticks,

continued on page 109

>>> Industry Bytes

WEARABLE PC Hitachi and Xybernaut Corp. are developing a wearable computer that they hope to market later this year. The PC consists of a palm-size computer and an eyeglass-shaped display. Users put the computer in their pocket, view content on the display, and control a "mouse" with their hand. It will also recognize voice commands. Estimated price: $1,700.

DREAMCAST CANNED Sega will cease production of new Dreamcast consoles this year once their stockpile of parts is depleted. The console company has changed its strategy to focus on making PlayStation 2 and Game Boy Advance games, and most observers expect them to make ▶



tech hype

IT'S ABOUT TIME!

Finally, game-worthy performance on a laptop

Gamers have been waiting for years for a graphics chip manufacturer to get with the program and give us laptop users something that we can actually game with. Sure, ATI and S3 have both produced mobile chips that boasted decent QUAKE III frame-rates and performance. The thing is, we don't want decent; we want excellent.

Enter graphics juggernaut nVidia. Their vaunted GeForce line of graphics processors may have singularly heralded the doom of one-time leader 3dfx. Furthermore, as hardware prices continue to plummet (years ago, a true desktop replacement would have set you back a good five Gs), it's now possible to get a sweet laptop for under $2000. The thing is, though, if you wanted to play games other than MINESWEEPER, you were outta luck. And that's where nVidia—with their much anticipated GeForce2 Go chipset—comes in.

We recently got our hands on one of the first laptops to ship with this chipset, the Toshiba Satellite 2805. On the surface, this laptop sports your standard high-end setup: Pentium-III 850MHz CPU, 128MB RAM, 20GB hard drive, DVD-ROM drive, and a 15" LCD. It's nVidia's 16MB GeForce2 Go chipset that sets this baby apart from the barbarian horde of other portable systems.

Preliminary tests yielded QUAKE III frame-rates upwards of 69fps at 800x600, and 44fps at 1024x768! Come back next month as we pit the Toshiba Satellite against Dell's GeForce2 Go-powered Inspiron in a no-holds-barred battle for gaming laptop supremacy. *—William O'Neal*

Toshiba Satellite 2805-s402 | $2,749 | www.toshiba.com

>>> Industry Bytes

an Xbox announcement as well. Microsoft denies rumors that Xbox will support Dreamcast games. Sega will continue to make Dreamcast games and they stress that there are 100+ titles in development. They also have plans to leverage their Dreamcast technology into set-top boxes, PCs, and cellular phones, so you may be able to play Dreamcast games on your PC in the future.

WAITING FOR WHISTLER Keep an eye out for Whistler, Microsoft's follow-up to Windows 2000. Now entering into its second beta stage, the Internet is awash with rumors that the look and feel of the OS's

PC SALES SIMMER **PC manufacturers shipped 134.8 million units in 2000, 14.5 percent more than in 1999. The rate of growth was well below the 23.3 percent increase the PC industry logged in 1999, according to tech research firm Gartner Dataquest. So that's why people think the PC is dead? Give us a break!**

review

Winning Gamepads

P1500 RUMBLE PAD

■ Could Saitek's P1500 Rumble Pad be the last gamepad that you ever buy? We can't answer that question, but we *can* say that this baby has it all: USB and Gameport connections; 15 buttons, triggers, and switches; an analog joystick; an 8-way D Pad; force-feedback; and an analog-to-digital mode. The included software makes the Rumble Pad easy to configure, including a handy auto-configure component for the game being played. Once installed, the software scans your hard drive, cataloging your games, then updates them with a profile—either with the included CD or via the Internet. It's also fully programmable with Saitek's Gaming Extensions (SGE). Pretty darn cool.

When it comes to ergonomics, the Rumble Pad's compact and sturdy design fits most hands, and its layout offers easy access to the multitude of buttons, triggers, switches, and joystick needed for those fast twitch responses. Saitek's proprietary Rumble force-feedback motors, self-powered and located in each handle, are a blast and the technology is impressive. In games like MOTOCROSS MADNESS 2 and STAR WARS POD RACER, the pad's precision and design actually enhance your racing performance. For the measly price of $29, this pad—with its quality, performance, programmable buttons, and software features—simply put, can't be beat. —*Raphael Liberatore*

Saitek Industries | $29 | www.saitek.com

THRUSTMASTER FIRESTORM DUAL POWER GAMEPAD

■ Every now and then, you get your hands on a product that's so close to perfect that you're just dying to give it five stars. And that's the case with Thrustmaster's FireStorm Dual Power Gamepad. Sporting everything you'd want in a gamepad: a USB connection, an 8-way D-pad, two analog controllers, mouse and keyboard emulation, 13 programmable buttons, and rumble technology that boasts Immersion's industry-leading TouchSense technology, the FireStorm is damn near to perfect.

Simply put, the FireStorm feels really good. It's a relatively big gamepad, but it felt nice in my hands. (Don't worry, while I share a last name with Shaq, that's where the similarities end.) Its rubberized coating and dual motors (which provide the force-feedback) give the FireStorm a solid, weighty feel that many other gamepads lack. And the 13 programmable buttons mean that you're sure to have some leftover when you're done programming this thing.

Ironically, it's that abundance of buttons that is the FireStorm's sole weakness. While the gamepad was flawless in EA Sports' SUPERBIKE 2001, where you only really use the D-pad and two buttons for accelerating and braking, in FIFA 2001, the pad's profusion of buttons actually got in the way. Few things mar a gaming experience like being one-on-one with Brazil's goalie, only to accidentally change the camera angle. Chances like that aren't a dime a dozen. —*William O'Neal*

Thrustmaster | $40 | www.thrustmaster.com

WILL POWER (CONTINUED)

as you can see on these pages. That being said, however, we'll continue to give you the basics that you've been coming back for.

TECH MEDICS

Up the PCI Creek

I recently purchased a 700MHz Pentium III with 128MB RAM and "integrated 3D AGP graphics." I know that this is not the ideal setup for games, but price was a priority, and we use the Pentium mostly for word processing. I have a Voodoo2 1000 PCI board, and it works okay. I would like to upgrade my Voodoo2 board. Am I restricted to PCI graphics cards? I am not a computer expert, but I don't see an AGP slot on my motherboard. If I have to stick to PCI graphics cards, which one should I get? Should I just keep the one I have?

If your machine shipped with "integrated 3D AGP graphics," then there's a 100 percent chance that it *doesn't* have an AGP slot. In other words, you're f***. As far as which card you should buy – and you *should* buy a new one – check out the ATI Radeon SDR 32MB. It's not the fastest card around, but you can pick one up for around $150. It's also one of the few "decent" cards that boasts a PCI option.**

Using Two Gamepads—Not as Hard as It Appears

I have a Sound Blaster 16 in an ISA slot and a Monster Sound MX200 in a PCI slot. I want to use the game ports on these cards to hook up two gamepads, but when I have them installed at

continued on page 111

desktop has undergone some "significant changes."

POWERVR: NOT DEAD YET Imagination Technologies and ARM recently signed an agreement whereby PowerVR graphics chips will be developed alongside ARM microprocessor cores. In light of Sega's Dreamcast debacle, this move could breathe some much needed life into PowerVR.

MOBILE DURON AMD recently announced the availability of its Mobile AMD Duron chipset. NEC is expected to be the first manufacturer to ship laptops using the chipset. According to AMD's press release, NEC's LaVie U series of notebooks will boast the 700MHz Mobile AMD Duron processor.

RADEON RIDES HIGH Riding the popularity of its Radeon graphics processors, chip manufacturer ATI announced a return to profitability in January.

Maybe the 3D graphics wars aren't over.

Killer Rigs

BUILDING THE ULTIMATE GAMING MACHINE

Power Rig

Component	Manufacturer	Price	The Skinny
Case	Antec SX-830	$213	300 watts, 8 bays, plenty of cooling
Motherboard	ASUS A7V	$140	Via KT-133, AGP 4X, Solid mobo
CPU	AMD Athlon 1.2GHz	$530	Hail to the king, baby
Memory	384MB of PC133 SDRAM	$300	Quantity has a quality all its own
Graphics	Hercules Prophet II Ultra 64MB	$500	Can you say gigapixel?
Disk Controller	Adaptec 29160 Ultra 160 SCSI	$190	Slightly faster, but also PCI 64 support
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	$20	You still have to have one
Hard Drive	Quantum Atlas 10k – II (Ultra SCSI)	$850	Now at 36GB
Backup	Creative DVD-RAM drive	$270	5.2 gigs of backup
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer 6x SCSI DVD-304S	$170	New Pioneer slot-drive DVD
Monitor	KDS AV-21TF 21"	$700	Trinitron tube, perfectly flat, beautiful color
Audio	Sound Blaster Live! Platinum 5.1	$99	Your sonic world in 5.1, four- or two-channel
Speakers	Cambridge SoundWorks Desktop Theater 5.1 DTT3500 Digital	$300	Loud, clean, and packed with features
Networking	3COM Etherlink 10/100 PCI	$40	Reach out and frag someone
Networking Hub	Netgear DS108	$95	Multiplayer & DSL modem support
Keyboard	Microsoft Natural Keyboard Pro	$59	Natural in, Newtouch out
Mouse	Microsoft IntelliMouse Explorer	$60	No balls, no crud – no shit!
USB Hub	Logitech WingMan 7-port USB Hub	$70	Get them USB ports upstairs
Flight Joystick	CH F16 Combatstick USB	$65	Onboard throttle. It just feels right.
Rudder Pedals	CH Pro Pedals USB	$100	Nearly perfect foot placement
Game Pad	Microsoft SideWinder GamePad Pro	$35	'Cause you gotta play sports games, too
		Total	**$4,806**

Lean Machine

Component	Manufacturer	Price	The Skinny
Case	Antec Gemstone Case	$100	In black, of course
Motherboard	ASUS A7V	$140	Solid, stable, Socket A Athlon motherboard
CPU	Athlon 900 w/cooling fan	$265	Supersonic Thunderbird
Memory	128MB PC133 SDRAM	$100	128MB, squeezed in
Disk Controller	Built-in UDMA/33	$0	It's in there
Graphics	Guillemot Prophet II 32MB DDR w/ nVidia's screaming GeForce 2 GTS	$290	3dfx, thanks for the memories
3.5" Floppy Drive	Teac	$20	Still gotta have it
Hard Drive	Maxtor Diamondmax 6800 Plus 20.4GB drive	$135	Plenty fast and cheap
CD-ROM/DVD	Pioneer DVD-105S	$120	Slot-drive DVD
Monitor	Optiquest Q95	$300	Solid 19" monitor at a budget price
Audio	Sound Blaster Value	$45	R.I.P. Aureal
Speakers	Boston Acoustics BA-635	$60	Good highs for bottom dollar
Modem	Actiontec PCI Call Waiting Modem	$70	Solid performance, good price
Keyboard	Microsoft Internet Keyboard	$20	Cheap, nice add-on buttons
Mouse	Logitech USB Wheel Mouse	$25	Better than the "gaming" mouse
Joystick	Logitech WingMan Extreme Digital	$39	Solid 3D joystick with USB
Game Pad	Microsoft SideWinder GamePad Pro	$35	How many ways can you say "TONY HAWK 2?"
		Total	**$1,764**

The Fine Print: All recommendations based on actual evaluations and testing. Prices listed are average low quotes from Web price search engines like www.computershopper.com or www.pricewatch.com. Lists compiled by Dave Salvator and William O'Neal.

review

Creative Video Blaster MovieMaker

i–Spielberg

■ If you've ever seen an iMac commercial, you'd think personal computers were made for two things: thinking "different," and making and editing home movies. While the former can be simple—and free—the latter actually requires that you buy some hardware.

Until recently, that hardware would've been a PCI TV-tuner card. Now, however, you don't have to go mucking around inside your computer to get video. You simply plug the Video Blaster MovieMaker into your machine's USB port and you're good to go. The only hitch: Its simplicity doesn't come without a cost.

Getting the MovieMaker running went smoothly enough: I installed the software, including Ulead VideoStudio 4.0, plugged in the USB cable, and my system recognized it instantly. Bravo! I then connected my VCR to the MovieMaker to cull some of the best scenes from the BMX video "Expendable 2." And this is where the MovieMaker's simplicity began to detract from the overall experience. While PCI-based video capture devices require that you actually open up your computer's case to install them, the throughput on those devices is as fast as your motherboard's PCI bus. In other words, you hit play on your VCR or camcorder, and the video appears almost instantaneously on your screen. The Video Blaster MovieMaker, however, being limited by the throughput of your USB port, can't boast this kind of performance. Hit play on your VCR or camcorder connected via the MovieMaker, and there's a noticeable delay between hitting play and the video appearing on your computer screen. Also, the Video Blaster MovieMaker doesn't ship with TV-tuner capabilities, so there's no pulling good

videos off of ESPN.

In the Video Blaster MovieMaker's defense, while the video that appears on the screen during recording is as choppy as the Flemish Cap, the final video is smooth. What this means, however, is that you'll have to spend some time editing the final MPEGs more than you would have to if you were using other—faster—video capture devices.

As an entry-level video-editing tool, the MovieMaker is a decent option. It's more expensive than, say, an ATI TV-Wonder—which comes in at under $100—but it's significantly easier to set up. Also, if your only rig is a laptop (read: no PCI slot) or if you don't have any free PCI slots, then it may be the only game in town.
—William O'Neal

Creative Labs | $200 | www.creative.com

WILL POWER (CONTINUED)

the same time, they don't work. Is there any way to get both pads functioning with my sound cards?

Well, do you want to do things the hard way or the easy way? The hard way is to change one of the card's resources, since game ports have the same settings by default. Typically, ISA cards don't like to do this, so you should try to change the Monster Sound's resources, if the card is willing.

The easy way will cost you a little more. Go to Best Buy and pick up a pair of ThrustMaster FireStorm Dual Power Gamepads – they're USB, so you can plug both of 'em into your USB hub. And, they kick ass. Or buy a pair of Microsoft SideWinder Gamepads. They're available for game ports or USB, and you can plug one into the other for simultaneous use. Magic, dude.

Video-Capture Conundrum

I have an Alienware T-Bird 1GHz with a GeForce2. I just got an ATI All-In-Wonder 128 and have it in an old Pentium 225MHz. The (video) capture is really bad because the Pentium is such a slow machine. Can I have both the GeForce2 (in the AGP slot) and the All-In-Wonder (in the PCI slot) in my Alien, and then use the All-In-Wonder for (video) capture, or be able to switch between graphics cards?

This *should* be possible. The thing is, though, since both cards are 2D/3D cards, you'll have to find out if the ATI card is okay *not* being the primary card. If, however, you don't mind spending $100, your best option is to buy an ATI TV-Wonder video capture card. It has all of the video capture capabilities of your All-In-Wonder, and it'll make your GeForce2, as well as your knees, happier.

Bigger Bitpipe Wanted

I need a truly kick-ass modem for my Dell 8100. Any suggestions would be appreciated. I don't care how much it costs.

Wow! I wish I had it like that. If money truly is "no object," then why settle for some weak-ass modem? I called Verio, who, according to their own marketing scheme, "is the world's largest web hosting company and leading provider of comprehensive Internet services." Impressive for real. Anyway, we spoke to one of their vaunted sales representatives, and according to him, for about $20Gs you can have a T3 installed in your house. You should also expect to pay about another $20,000 to $40,000 a month for the service, depending on the kind of bandwidth you use whilst playing DOOM II and SIN.

Or better yet, get a cable modem.

Many moons ago, Wil O'Neal was the Technical Editor at – don't laugh – Computer Life Magazine. He's also worked at CNET: The Computer Network, ComputecMedia, and a bunch of dumb-ass dot.com companies. Send him a message at william_o'neal@ziffdavis.com, and he'll be sure to send it straight to the "Trash" folder.

>>> Industry Bytes

NANOFANS Researchers at the University of Colorado at Boulder have developed tiny fans – they can fit on the head of a pen – that they hope will someday be used to cool computer chips. According to an article in NewScientist, the fans are etched into thin silicon sheets, which are then folded into shape. Each of the fan's eight blades are less than half a millimeter long. The innovation could eliminate the need for large, noisy fans on computers.

Sign of the Apocalypse?

ROBOT LOVE An Australian inventor has submitted a patent for a robot that can perform sexual actions with the use of motorized limbs, Reuters reports. The robot can respond to commands over the Internet and to touch and sound commands through sensors on its body. Participants equipped with a virtual reality visor and a sexbot will be able to see, hear, and to some degree, feel each other over the Internet. Teledildonics, here we come.

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NEW EXPANDED SECTION!

Gamer's Edge

16 PAGES OF TIPS, TRICKS, CHEATS, & STRATEGIES

Giants: Citizen Kabuto

Meet the Meccs | PLUS: mission tips for the entire game

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COUNTER-STRIKE

Tactics PAGE 123

SACRIFICE

Strategies PAGE 120

CHEATS FOR ALL OUR GAMES OF THE YEAR

- No One Lives Forever
- The Fallen
- MechWarrior 4: Vengeance
- Giants: Citizen Kabuto
- MDK2
- Majesty
- Need For Speed: Porsche Unleashed
- Icewind Dale
- Baldur's Gate II
- Deus Ex
- FIFA Soccer 2001

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PLUS:

- Oni
- Starfleet Command II
- Front Office Football 2
- Red Alert 2
- Diablo 2
- American McGee's Alice
- Kingdom Under Fire

COMPUTER GAMING WORLD AND SYBEX PRESENT

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

This section tells you about those wacky Meccaryns and their missions, and explains how to use their weapons, fancy Jetpacks, and other essential items to the utmost advantage in GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO. There's enough important information about handling the high-tech weaponry and gadgets owned by Baz, Reg, Tel, Gordon, and Bennett that we need to break it down here for you!

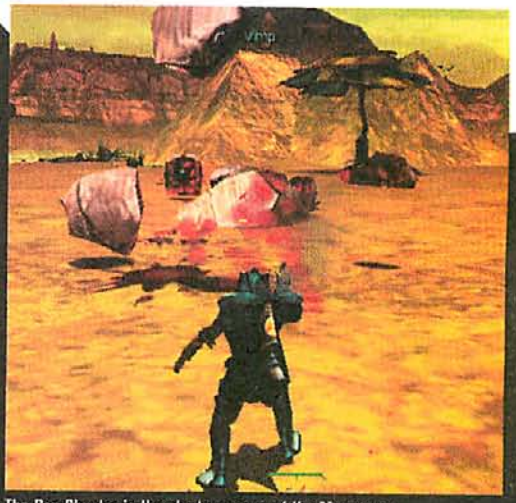
Baz, Reg, Tel, Gordon, and Bennett are five of the jolliest space aliens you'll ever meet.

MEET THE MECCARYNS

The Meccaryns (known as Meccs) are five cockney space aliens who have become stranded en route to Planet Majorca, a holiday planet. Their fortunes take a turn for the worse when their ship is eaten by the giant space Gibbon fish and subsequently "excreted" into the vicinity of the island. Ultimately, these five whimsical, albeit advanced, aliens just want to get their ship running so that they can begin their vacation on Planet Majorca. In the world of GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO, however, they'll have their hands full just staying alive!

MECC WEAPONS

The biggest difference between the Meccs and the other races in GIANTS is their reliance on technology for their weaponry. When it comes to fancy guns, the Meccs are the team to beat! From the Millennium Mortar to the Machine Gun, Mecc devices of destruction can do the job in a hurry.



The Pea Shooter is the staple weapon of the Meccaryns.

BY BART FARKAS

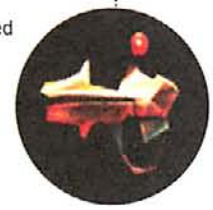
Be sure to pick up the Official Strategy guide from Sybex to get comprehensive walkthroughs of the entire game, devastating strategies, hardcore multiplayer tactics, and detailed info!

Text excerpted and abridged from SYBEX's *Giants™: Citizen Kabuto: Sybex Official Strategies & Secrets*. For more information, visit **sybexgames.com**. Look for it where computer games and strategy guides are sold.

WEAPONS

THE PEA SHOOTER GUN

This is the Meccs' basic weapon, and although it doesn't pack much of a punch, it'll do nicely in a pinch. Perhaps the biggest benefit of the Pea Shooter is that it never runs out of ammunition, making it an excellent weapon for chipping away at far-off turrets and buildings. Remember that when three or more Pea Shooters are being used on the same target (say when you have Reg and Tel with you), a lot of hurt can be dished out in a hurry!



RPG

One of the most powerful and functional weapons in the Mecc arsenal, the RPG fires a grenade that is not affected by gravity—it will fly in a straight line (it won't sink as it travels over distance), even for targets that are very far away. The RPG does have a limited range, unfortunately, but for the most part, anything you can see in Zoom Mode can be hit with the RPG. Not only does this weapon do a significant amount of damage to anything it hits, but if you aim at a Sea Reaper's head, the enemy can be taken out with just one shot! This technique (shooting off the heads of enemies) is a great way to pick off lone patrols without drawing much attention to yourself.

MACHINE GUN

The Machine Gun is like a high-powered Pea Shooter. It delivers a massive amount of firepower in a short period of time, but of course, such devastation comes at a price: The Machine Gun isn't of much use over anything but the shortest distances. Still, all that rock 'em, sock 'em short-range potential makes it an essential part of your arsenal. With a full clip, the Machine Gun holds 2,500 action-packed rounds of ammunition. Here are just a few of the Machine Gun's uses:

- To mow down large groups of enemies at close range, take advantage of the Machine Gun's high rate of fire and its spray-type shot dispersal. Even at medium range, it'll send your adversaries ducking for cover.
- To turn an enemy structure into rubble, there's nothing better than unloading a Machine Gun clip. A few hundred rounds will turn even the Reaper Guard Barracks into dust.
- To instill panic in the hearts of those in an enemy base, fire from afar with the Machine Gun. You won't hit much, but the barrage of incoming projectiles will send your foes scrambling!

PROXIMITY MISSILE

This weapon is truly a handy-dandy invention. Although the Proximity Missile behaves much like a standard RPG shell, it has an added bonus: It will explode when it gets within 50 feet of an enemy target. There are two fundamental uses for this weapon. First, you can use it to track down a dodging, weaving enemy who is difficult to hit, thus eliminating the need to aim precisely. Second, the Proximity Missile can be used against groups of enemies; just fire it into a pack of adversaries and watch it explode, doing splash damage to the whole gang.

MISSILE LAUNCHER

The Missile Launcher is similar to the RPG, but a projectile it fires does splash damage to anything in the vicinity when it detonates. A great use of the weapon is to shoot it at enemy Barracks. Not only does this harm nearby foes, it also damages the building itself.

The Sniper Gun will take Reaper Guards down with one shot!

SNIPER GUN

Even though you can zoom in with any weapon you are using, the Sniper Gun adds an extra level of accuracy and speed to a long-range shot. The Sniper Gun shoots a bullet that arrives at its target almost instantaneously and inflicts a substantial amount of damage, so you can pick off foes lurking in Guard Towers with ease if you can land a head shot. (If you hit their bodies, it may take a second shot to bring them down.) The downside to the Sniper Gun is that it has a rather long reload time, making it difficult to fire quickly on a large group of enemies.

BY GEORGE JONES

MISSION TIPS

MECC MISSIONS

SEARCH FOR TEL: THE WAX SMARTIES

This early mission can pose some unexpected difficulties, particularly if you're trying to catch the Smarties as they fall. What many gamers may not realize is that you don't need to make mid-air catches to complete this mission. Simply wait until the Smarties hit the water, and then rush to pick them up. If you're fast enough and use your Jetpack, you can pluck them from the water and avoid piranha damage.

THE BATTLE

Don't get too caught up with dying in this real-time strategy mission. Just make sure you don't quit out of GIANTS when you do pass away. Because

HOMING MISSILE

The Homing Missile works just like it sounds: It will actually alter its course to hit the specified target. To get it to work, keep the trigger pulled for three seconds while aiming. Once you've done so, another crosshair will snap onto the target, and you'll know that you can let go and let the missile do its work. This obviously isn't a good weapon for fast-paced, close-up battles; instead, use it to take out adversaries from afar. It's particularly handy if you're in a rush and just want to fire and forget, but keep in mind that you must have a line of sight on an enemy in order to get a "lock," so don't go thinking you can fire around hills!

MILLENNIUM MORTAR

This is the Meccs' big daddy gun. If you want to wreak maximum havoc in the enemy base, use this weapon. When fired, the Millennium Mortar will lob a large shell wherever you're aiming. When the shell arrives, it'll explode in a rather spectacular fashion—then a shower of smaller explosive projectiles will fly out and explode yet again! Of course, the Millennium Mortar has a limited range, but it can still cause serious pain from afar, especially if you happen to have the high ground on the enemy. This is a weapon that you absolutely must use when you come across a large group of enemies huddled together.

Do the work of many RPG shells with just one shot of the Millennium Mortar.

MISSION TIPS

when you do—and you will—the game remembers all of your structural progress up until that point. The game even repairs all of your existing buildings.

In this mission, you should only get your Smarties and Vimp meat from one location, which is to the right of your starting point. If you're standing on the Smartie drop-off point, facing the bar, head through the natural entrance on your right. Go up and over the hill, and traverse the narrow little valley. As soon as you clear the valley, you'll see a village. Take out the sniper in the tower, and you're all set.

On your first sortie into the village, order your fellow Meccs to accompany you, and simply maneuver them into picking up Smarties with you. This way you'll only have to make one trip to the village. Four Smarties is all you need to get past any of the RTS missions.

When gathering Vimp meat, return to the same location. The Vimp travel in a circular pattern, growing a little bigger each lap. And bigger Vimp mean more meat chunks. Mmmm...meat chunks.

Once you've used your Meccs to gather meat, leave them behind near Borjoysee when you travel away from the base.

First, build the Gift Shop. Then build all the walls up as soon as you can.

Once you build the House Party, place turrets on top of the mountains abutting the most frequently attacked walls around your base. Also, be sure to place a turret near Borjoysee—this will prevent him from getting kidnapped.

Once you have the Pipe Bomb, it's time to end the mission. Don't forget to grab one of those instant Gift Shops, which you can set up at the halfway point to prevent long trips back to HQ.

Remember that the mission objective is simply to destroy the Barracks, not all of the surrounding enemy infantry as well. Don't worry about trying to take out the Reaper Guards either. Just place the bomb near the entrance as soon as you can, and stay alive until it detonates.

DELPHI'S MISSIONS

GENERAL TIPS

You can use little burst of Sprint to climb up the largest mountains. Just tap Sprint periodically, and keep aiming your targeting reticle higher and higher.

Use your sword. It's way more powerful when you're up close, simply because there's no firing time required. Plus, it's a heck of a lot more fun.

Water. Use it. Frequently. The monsters will wait.

Two tactics work well against Evil Reapers. First, when they cast that annoying time-slowing spell, use Sprint to jump out of the spell's range. Second, use your sword against the Reapers—three or four quick thrusts are all you need.

In the base-building missions, use your Hail and Fire spells. Hail is extremely effective since it allows you to individually target multiple units as they try to break through your defensive walls.

Much like you'd do in the Mecc basebuilding missions, build walls as soon as you can every time. Also, place turrets on top of the mountains near the protective walls. And don't worry about killing all the guards—simply cast Tornado as soon as you can and get out of there.

DELPHI'S STORY I: YAN'S PEACE MANTRA

You'll encounter a couple of spellcasting Raiks as you make your way towards Yan's place. Don't rush, and use your Sniper bow to pluck away at each Reaper as she speeds towards

PACKS

MECC PACKS

Meccs have a very cool spot on their backs where one of several unique packs (in addition to the standard Jetpack) can be fitted. While these backpacks all give your Mecc special abilities, they have a downside: Adding an extra item adds weight, which reduces your ability to gain altitude. The one exception to this rule is the Jetpack upgrade, which improves your basic pack and does not add any excess poundage. Here's a look at the various add-ons you can strap on your back.

JETPACK

The Jetpack is essential to quick and efficient Mecc travel.

The Jetpack is the near-constant companion of your Meccs. Obviously, having a Jetpack that will allow your Mecc to fly around makes travel considerably easier. The only downside is that the amount of time your Jetpack can fire continuously is severely restricted. So use this device carefully to get the most out of it. Here are a few key things you need to know:

- Jetpack fuel burns very quickly, but it replenishes at a rapid rate as well.
- You can hover with your Jetpack, and even gain altitude, but you'll come back to the ground in a hurry when your fuel runs out. If you hold down the Jetpack button (the right mouse button by default), you'll get occasional spurts of thrust, but not enough to keep you airborne.

TIP

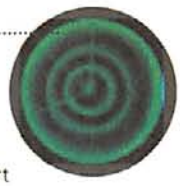
If you take to the air in the range of SAM Turet, you'll soon be blasted with surface-to-air missiles! Always be on the lookout for these deadly turrets, which are sprinkled around the islands in both single-player missions and in multiplayer games (if your opponents are worth their salt).

Except for early in the single-player game, all Jetpacks have a Nitro-boost (activated with the spacebar by default). This Nitro-boost gives you a short "kick" that'll send your Mecc fairly high in the sky. However, the Nitro doesn't recharge until your feet are on the ground (or a structure) again.

You can also use the Jetpack to increase your speed when you are traveling over land. As you're running along, you can make yourself slightly airborne and clear minor obstacles without having to slow down.

REPAIR PACK

This is a special attachment that can be used to heal both yourself and other team members, or even repair structures. In multiplayer action, it's always a good idea to have one of your team members carry a Repair Pack. Keep in mind that you cannot exchange packs with your disciples or multiplayer friends; you can only benefit from their generosity.



SHIELD PACK

The Shield Pack provides a temporary shield when it's activated. Your Mecc is well protected when the shield is active, but because the Shield Pack uses Jetpack energy, it only lasts a short time; however, the Shield Pack only drains about one third of the energy that the Jetpack drains for flying. It's best to use the Shield Pack when you're storming into an enemy base in a firefight and need the temporary shield protection. Remember that the energy consumption is based on how long you use the shield, not on how many hits you take.

BUSH PACK

One of the more ingenious little items in the Mecc arsenal, the Bush Pack uses Jetpack energy to turn your Mecc into a bush! This means that you can sneak past enemy guards in both single-player and multiplayer action. Of course, if opposing (human) players see a bush walking toward them, they're probably going to know what's up. In certain situations, however, you can use this accessory to sneak up on adversaries and hide from enemy patrols. As a rule of thumb, the computer opponents never quite figure out what's going on with a Bush Pack, but you can safely assume that human opponents will be very suspicious of a bush sneaking past them.

you. You should be able to kill them before they even get close.

Once you get to Yan's little home, cast Fire Wall, and fire off as many Hellfire arrows as you can. Then wade in and clean up the rest of the Reaper Guards with your sword, dipping into the water to periodically heal yourself.

THE LOST REAPERSKI: REAPER SKI ESCAPE

Don't even worry about taking out all the enemies en route. You have one primary purpose: to escape. Use your turbo boosts to break through the two ice walls as you make your way into the heavily populated central area. The key to the ramp is simpler than it looks—just use your turbo right when you hit the bottom of the ramp.

QUEEN SAPPHO

Taking out the Queen Reaper is actually pretty easy. The secret is to stay as close to her as you can. As soon as the mission begins, quickly attack

DEPLOYABLE TURRET

This handy item can be dropped nearly anywhere you want to spray Machine Gun fire. Deployable Turrets are best used when you're assaulting a base thick with enemies. Just drop a turret right in the middle of their stronghold. The resulting confusion will usually provide the edge you need to be victorious. Another use for a Deployable Turret is at choke points, where it can take care of advancing enemy troops. Indeed, a narrow canyon that's guarded by such an emplacement can be a thorn in your enemy's side.

POP-UP BOMB

Pop-Up Bombs are effective but very heavy.

While it's the heaviest item a Mecc can carry (don't try flying with one on your back), the Pop-Up Bomb is also the most powerful weapon in the Mecc arsenal, and we're not kidding! When this bomb goes off, you want to be somewhere far, far away. Not only does the Pop-Up Bomb destroy everything within a large radius of ground zero, it also ripples the ground and damages anything that gets caught in the shockwave. Drop one in the middle of an enemy base and let 'er rip!

MISSION TIPS

her with whatever weapon you're holding. You should be able to get a bunch of quick strikes in here. From this point on, use Sprint to keep following her around and the water to heal yourself. This will prevent the Queen from casting Slow Time on you. As you keep following her from perch to perch, fire away with your Sniper bow (un-zoomed) whenever she's near you. It won't take that many shots.

KABUTO

GENERAL TIPS

Eat early and eat often, and you won't die. Kabuto can even eat Rippers and gain health, plus it's a lot easier than trying to kill them all.

When you're attacking a Barracks, stand right by the entrance and simply pick up and eat the Reaper units as they emerge.

To move around faster, make like the Incredible Hulk and jump.

When the evil Raiks cast their Slow Time spell on you, use your leaping ability to clear the spell bubble.

THE FINAL BATTLE

Appropriately, fighting the real Kabuto is the toughest mission in the game. During the first fight, all you need to do is hit Kabuto with one crushing attack. But when he comes back to life, you're going to have a tougher time using Baz to hit his weak spot. Use your Jetpack and Nitro-boost to get up in the air and avoid the shockwaves he creates. One other tactic that works is to jump into one of the shielded bunkers. This move allows you to get in a few quick, easy shots on the big guy.

Once Kabuto moves up to the top of the hill, don't worry about shooting him, just use the Jetpack and Nitro to avoid the burning rocks he throws at you. Once he comes back down, keep up the attack.

As far as ammunition goes, RPG rounds work the best, but anything will do.

ITEMS

MECC ITEMS

In addition to the impressive array of weaponry and Jetpack accessories, Meccs have access to a number of other useful items. Here's a rundown of how to use these additional devices.

MINE

The Mine is just what it sounds like. Drop it on the ground and it will burrow into the earth, leaving only its top aboveground. If any enemies come near the deadly device, it will pop up and chase them down! Once a Mine has been activated, it will blow up when it touches an enemy or if five seconds have elapsed, whichever comes first. One popular tactic in the halls of Interplay is to place Mines in areas that have been scorched by previous weapon fire. These black marks make it impossible to see a Mine, so it it difficult for your enemies to avoid getting blown up.

HEALTH SYRINGE

When your health is getting low, hit yourself with a Health Syringe (defaults to the "H" key), and you'll recover roughly 30 percent of your health indicator. Because you can only carry one Health Syringe at a time, try to use each one as soon as you come across it. A good rule of thumb is to use your current Health Syringe just before you pick up a new one. You can acquire Health Syringes from dead enemies as well as Gift Shops.

Even if you're afraid of needles, you'll need to get used to this one.

GRENADE

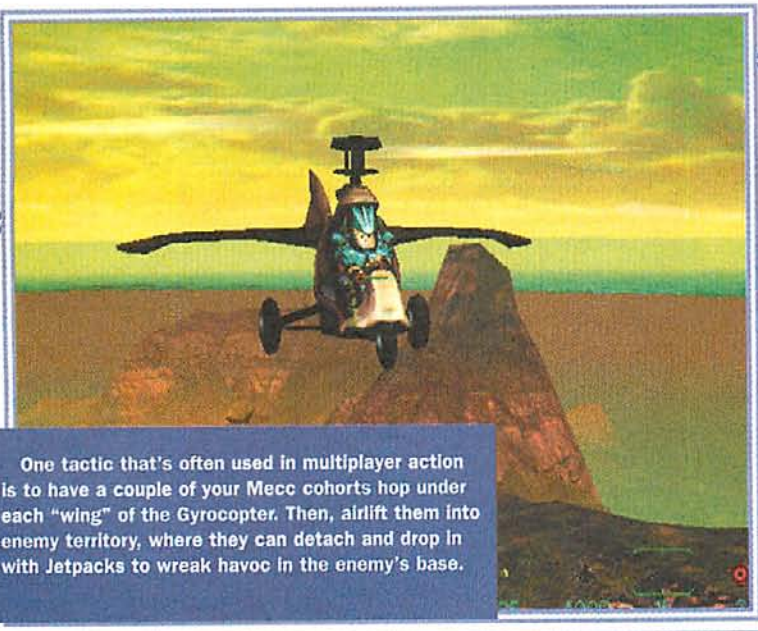
A grenade works just as you expect: You activate the device, then lob it at your enemies. Of course, a Grenade's range is only as far as you can throw, which isn't particularly far in GIANTS. To get around this, many Meccs use Grenades when they're in the Gyrocopter (or just after they've jumped out of it), or when they're flying with their Jetpacks. Guard Towers are also great locations for lobbing Grenades.

FLARE

If you hear a missile warning lock, it means you've got only a second or two before you are going to get smoked. At the sound of the warning, set off a Flare in hopes that it will distract the incoming Missiles. Flares usually work, but if you're in a situation where there's a crossfire of SAM Turrets, you might want to try turning off the Jetpack and walking.

MECC DISCIPLES

Quite simply, Mecc Disciples are groupies who will hang around with you (in single-player mode) and do whatever you do. Therefore, if you're attacking an enemy location by firing your Pea Shooter, you'll also get friendly fire from your Disciples! This can make the job of taking out a SAM Turret with just a Pea Shooter much easier. After all, three or more guns are better than one!



TIP

One tactic that's often used in multiplayer action is to have a couple of your Mecc cohorts hop under each "wing" of the Gyrocopter. Then, airlift them into enemy territory, where they can detach and drop in with Jetpacks to wreak havoc in the enemy's base.

MECC GYROCOPTER

Perhaps the coolest gizmo in the entire game, the Gyrocopter gives you the ability to fly for indefinite periods of time while strafing the ground mercilessly. It even enables you to give your Mecc friends a lift. To get a Gyrocopter, you must first have a Party House—only then will you be able to construct a Gyrocopter Pad.

What makes the Gyrocopter so handy is that it has an unlimited amount of fuel and an unlimited amount of ammunition for its main gun. The downside? While we wouldn't call the Gyrocopter fragile, it certainly can't endure much punishment.

The machine gun is not the Gyrocopter's only weapon. The chopper also comes stocked with three Millennium Bombs, which behave just like Millennium Mortars. You can restock the Millennium Bombs and repair your Gyrocopter by taking it back to the landing pad, but it's not always easy to get back to your base if you're being hit with a barrage of surface-to-air missiles.

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sacrifice

How to dominate with gods and monsters by Tom Chick

RAGE...BUILDING Let your enemies do the work for you by smacking them with Blind Rage first.

HOT UNDER THE COLLAR

The conventional wisdom about Pyro is that he does a lot of damage. This is true, but it's not the whole picture. In addition to slamming fireballs into things and watching them burn, wizards who follow Pyro have a few nasty little tricks up their asbestos sleeves. Blind Rage is an often-underestimated spell, since it's not obvious how it works. Rather then simply turning one creature against its allies, the spell's effect extends across *all* creatures in a large area. Hit an enemy army with Blind Rage before you go into battle, and they'll be busy fighting each other as you join the fray. You'll have an even easier time of it if you soften up squabbling enemy creatures with a Rain of Fire or Explosion.

Pyro's phoenix is a great wizard killer not only because it does a lot of damage from long-range, but also because it drains enemy mana. For this reason, it's also very effective against long range artillery units like the boulderdash and mutant; the phoenix can reach them easily, and his mana drain will deprive them of ammo. Alternatively, the warmonger's Firewalk is a great way to quickly get past melee troops to take out missile firing creatures.

STRATOS

SOULS ON ICE

Stratos has a million and one ways to interrupt a wizard, so make sure you take advantage of this ability by focusing your attacks on the enemy's wizard. The silverbacks and yetis, as well as Frozen Ground and Freeze spells, can lock him in an ice cube. Most of Stratos' units will also just knock him down. The seraph will fling him into the air with the crackling power of her Cage Pull. The Tornado is the most disruptive spell of all, whipping armies into the air and rendering them helpless until they eventually land. If you target a wizard with Chain Lightning, the bolts will almost certainly strike his mana hoars too, weakening them. Throw in a Cloudkill for follow-up, and the enemy wizard will find himself without a mana source. Finish him with some speeded frostwolves to chase him down.

Since Stratos' strength is in ranged attacks, he has to be careful to use his few melee creatures wisely. The storm giant's Call Lightning ability, which increases attack damage, can be tricky since doing so weakens him. As a counteractive measure, cast a Heal spell immediately before calling lightning. The ongoing healing will offset the damage of the lightning, and your storm giant will be galvanized and at full health.

WHOA THERE, HOSS Before crackling the air, you should heal your giants to make sure they don't become weak while zapping their foe.

NO POT OF GOLD HERE Big, burly troll-folk plus helpful healing via Rainbow equals nigh-invulnerable bruisers.

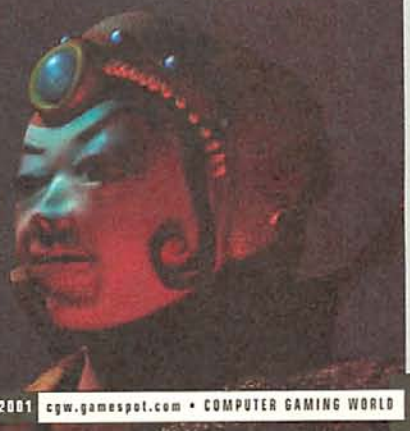
THE RAINBOW COALITION

For sheer staying power in a fight, you can't beat the combination of trolls with the occasional Rainbow. The trolls are superlative melee sluggers whose powers of natural regeneration allow them to stand up to a beating. Unlike other units, they'll continue regaining health no matter what they're doing.

By showering them with the helping healing hand of a Rainbow from time to time, or even just a scarab for back up, Persephone can field an army that just won't go down. Throw in an ent with his Protector special ability, and your trolls will be virtually unstoppable.

The combination of using Persephone's Grasping Vines to hold an enemy wizard immobile and shrikes to interrupt his spells is an effective way to shut down another player's spell casting. But Persephone's wizards are well protected against similar shenanigans. The Ethereal Form spell is the most effective personal shield in the game. Unlike the other gods' shields, it blocks *all* forms of damage. Although it doesn't last long, it recharges quickly, so you can essentially run it in pulses—15 seconds before it turns off and then another 15 seconds before it's ready to be cast again.

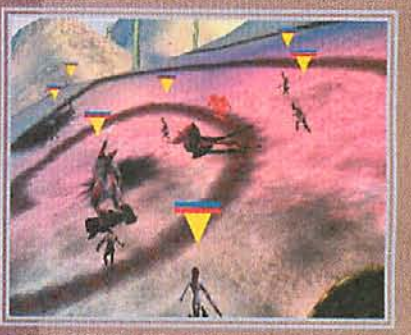
PERSEPHONE



JAMES

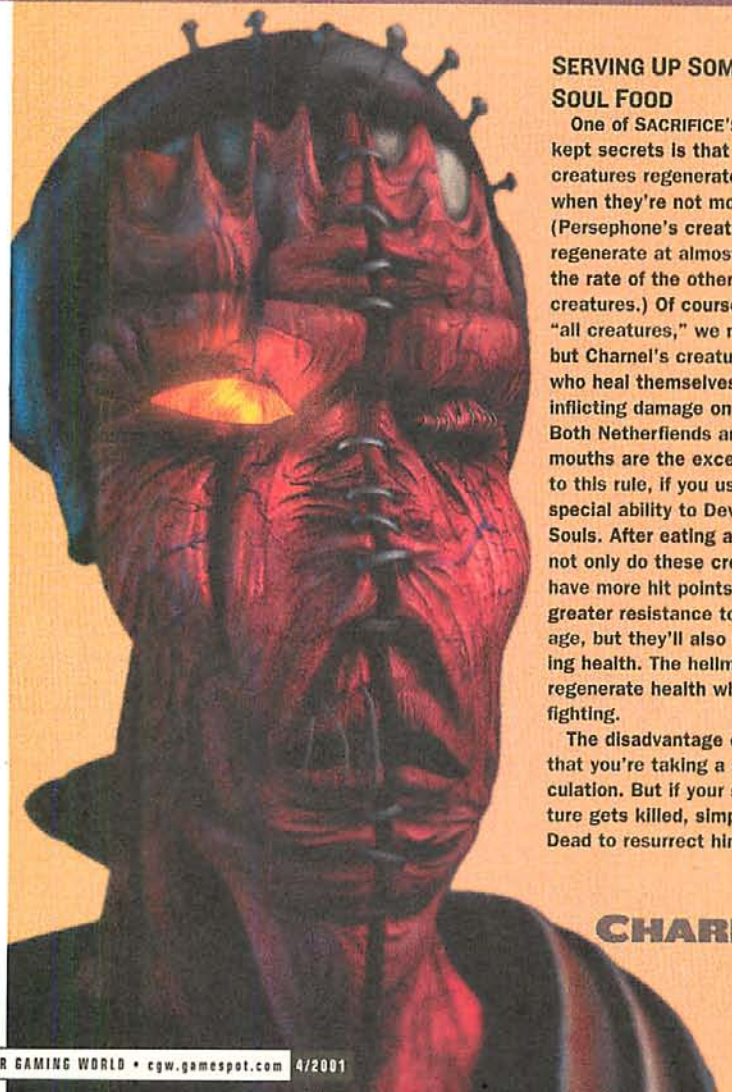
JAMES DIGS A SOUL HOLE

James' Bore is one of the few spells that can single-handedly and irreversibly change the balance of power in a game by knocking souls out of circulation—the souls of any creatures lost down a Bore hole are gone for good. Of course, the spiral pattern of the cutting stone that opens the hole is the equivalent of a big neon sign around its area of effect, so anyone not thoroughly distracted will simply get out of the way. The trick is to find someone busy with something else; better yet, find two someones busy with something else, namely, each other. In a game with more than two players, hang back until you can catch the other two wizards in battle. Then cast Bore in their midst. They likely won't notice until it's too late, and you'll be facing two substantially weakened opponents. James also has all the tools needed to poach enemy souls from a distance. Bovine intervention will always gib a creature, leaving a blue soul up for grabs. Follow up with a Soul Mole to snatch the soul from its previous owner, and James' wizards can gradually tilt the soul balance in a game.



DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT... While some hapless fools are busy spellslinging at each other, smack them with a Bore, and watch them fall.

DEAD SOUL WALKING Call up Death whenever you please, since you can just make your units get back up again.



CHARNEL

SERVING UP SOME SOUL FOOD

One of SACRIFICE'S best-kept secrets is that all creatures regenerate health when they're not moving. (Persephone's creatures regenerate at almost twice the rate of the other gods' creatures.) Of course, by "all creatures," we mean all but Charnel's creatures, who heal themselves by inflicting damage on others. Both Netherfiends and hellmouths are the exception to this rule, if you use their special ability to Devour Souls. After eating a soul, not only do these creatures have more hit points and greater resistance to damage, but they'll also begin regenerating health. The hellmouth can even regenerate health while moving and fighting.

The disadvantage of doing this is that you're taking a soul out of circulation. But if your soul-fed creature gets killed, simply use Animate Dead to resurrect him, and he'll still have the abilities he gained by eating souls. Animate Dead is a crucial part of Charnel's tactics in any battle. It costs relatively little mana, and it recharges quickly, so you can keep up with even the worst casualties. In fact, feel free to summon Death in the middle of a battle to panic the opponent. Death doesn't discriminate between friendly or enemy creatures, but unlike the other gods, you can quickly resurrect your own slain units.

Counter-Strike

Your COUNTER-STRIKE survival course by Raphael Liberatore

So which side do you want to play—Counter-terrorists or Terrorists? Whoever you choose, live and learn these pointers as fast as I'm giving them. First, know the map and its objectives. Scout for nooks and crannies in each map, looking for cover and dark places for defense, concealment, or ambushes.

Small, dark places also make great sniping positions. Buy armor and a helmet first, since these items will increase your ability to take damage.

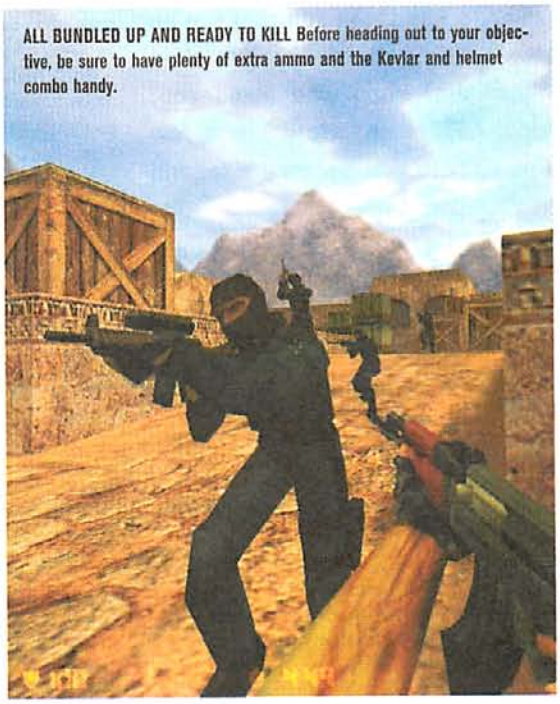
If you're not defending, always keep moving. Crouch, jump, and weave from side to side; this movement breaks up your pattern, making you tough to hit. Jumping around corners makes it difficult for ambushers to score an instant kill. Zigzag when charging an attacker. Switch to lighter weapons (such as pistols) when you're on the go to increase your maneuverability. Change your patterns; smart players always take advantage of their opponent's patterns. Upgrade your pistol when you get the extra cash—utilizing a better pistol can really make a difference.

CIRCLE TIME Strafe around corners to give yourself a better chance to pop your enemies' heads open when you see them.

Always go for the headshot. Try firing in bursts since this will increase your accuracy. Full-auto tends to be less accurate. Try keeping your crosshairs at head level. If you have the money to afford them, buy grenades and toss them around corners where you suspect the enemy is lying in ambush. Use flashbangs since they tend to be more effective than grenades; both weapons are useful against rushes.

Always make sure that you reload before a big firefight. If you have a powerful weapon, don't hesitate to shoot through doors and walls. Check for ambushes before rushing in to rescue hostages or disarm bombs. A smart team will wait for you to make your move on the objective before setting the ambush. Keep your ears open; sometimes you can hear the enemy approaching. Likewise, try crouching and holding down the Shift key in order to move stealthily.

Add a team of two-man snipers for direct-action assaults. Make sure that snipers move into position with other weapons, such as a submachinegun or pistol ready, since shooting on the run with a sniper rifle is asking for trouble. Study the map and find the best killing zones for enhanced fields of fire. Make sure that sniper teams are in place before ordering the assault. Cover your team while watching their approach to the objective. Sometimes it's a good idea for a sniper to temporarily switch to a smaller weapon and glance around just in case someone is sneaking up on him. When you do have a target in site, snipe quickly. Waiting for that perfect shot may give your opponent enough time to react. Assaulters should always travel in groups. Numerical superiority during the firefight works most of the time. Make sure that you and your teammates don't get in the line of each other's fire. Try the wedge or staggered formation when assaulting an objective.



ALL BUNDLED UP AND READY TO KILL Before heading out to your objective, be sure to have plenty of extra ammo and the Kevlar and helmet combo handy.

HIT THE NET: GAME GUIDES

There are two invaluable sites when it comes to getting help for your game: GameSpot's GameGuides (**gameguides.gamespot.com**) and Gamefaqs.com (**www.gamefaqs.com**). Most major title, such as BALDUR'S GATE II or GIANTS, usually have GameGuides written up soon after their release. If there isn't a GameGuide for it, surely some enterprising user has done the legwork and written up an FAQ for the game.

Popular GameGuides (as well as ones for this year's winners) are as follows. Tune in next month for another listing of popular/appropriate GameGuides and highlights of fan-made strategy guides. *—Thierry Nguyen*

- **MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE**
  www.zdnet.com/gamespot/guides/pc/mech_warrior4/
- **BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN**
  www.zdnet.com/gamespot/guides/pc/baldurs_2/
- **COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2**
  www.zdnet.com/gamespot/guides/pc/red_alert_2/
- **NO ONE LIVES FOREVER**
  www.zdnet.com/gamespot/guides/pc/nolf/
- **SACRIFICE**
  www.zdnet.com/gamespot/guides/pc/sacrifice/index.html
- **THE SIMS**
  www.gamespot.com/guides/sims_gg/

Front Office Football 2001

Building a dynasty by Jeff Lackey

So you think you can run an NFL franchise better than that bozo who owns your local NFL team? Here are a few tips to help you become a legend in your own time.

While it's tempting to focus on high-profile players, obtaining a good coach is critical to building a winning team. Hire a coach who is relatively young and has high ratings in key categories (such as new talent, quarterbacks, and play calling). Most importantly, make sure that your coach is highly rated in avoiding injuries, or you'll find your team hobbled with hurt players every season.

Once you acquire that hot coach, it is imperative that you pair him with an excellent scout. Remember that your only evaluation of talent is from your scout. Without a good scout, you're just guessing when you sign free agents, debate trades, select draft choices, and set your depth charts.

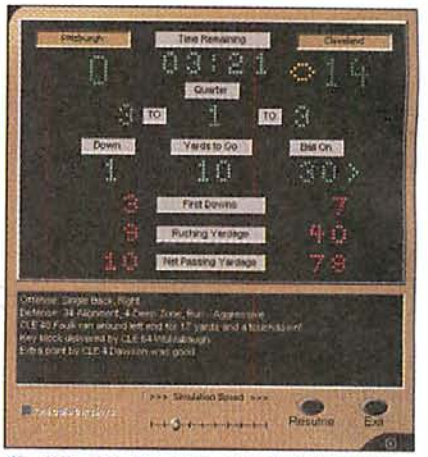
As in real life, the AI will "scout" your team for trends and tendencies and make corresponding game plan adjustments. So, as in real life, if you have a big game coming up, you'll increase your odds of winning if you change your team's game plan. Along the same lines, use your scouting report of the opposition to prepare for their specific tendencies.

Got a bad case of wanderlust and want to move to another franchise? After the hiring phase for coaches and scouts, look in the game menu for "choose new team." If you've selected a team that considers your record worthy, you will be hired as that team's new coach.

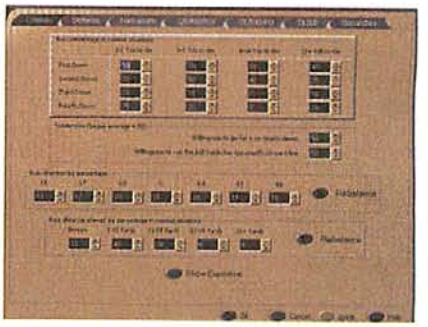
When you're trying to find that future superstar running back, pay particular attention to the breakaway speed rating. A running back with a high rating in that category will usually gain a lot more yards than his other ratings might predict.

A new feature in FRONT OFFICE FOOTBALL 2001 is the ability to select the percentage of time that your defense will blitz, as well as the blitz percentage by position. So if you have some wild man linebackers with great pass rushing skills, but your secondary is composed of hit-shy sissies, set your positional blitzing accordingly.

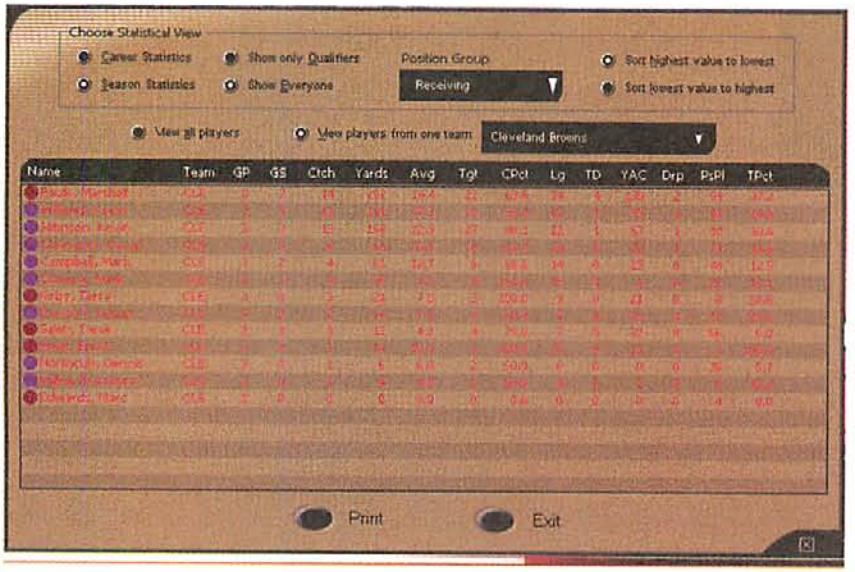
Don't get so hung up on ratings that you ignore how your players are performing on the field. For example, if it's halfway through the season, and you notice that a backup wide receiver is consistently making more catches for more yards than a starter with better ratings, move that hoss into the starting job! After all, you don't win the game by having the team with the best ratings—you win as a result of player performance.



HE - MAY - GO - ALL - THE - WAY! Put it all together, and start measuring your finger for that Super Bowl ring!



PLANNING FOR SUCCESS Make sure that you set a game plan that fits your team's personnel.



SCOUT, GET ME THE STATS, STAT! Keep an eye on your players' performance stats, and make sure your most productive players are high on your depth chart.

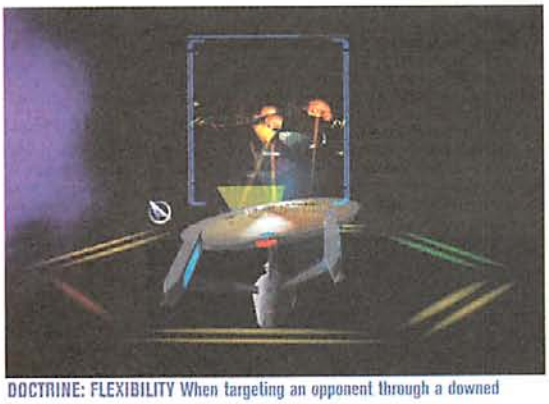
Having a good draft can make or break your team's future. Realize that the consensus ratings of players in the draft represent the average opinion of all scouts and are frequently inaccurate. If you have a good scout (you do have a great scout, right?), you can get a better evaluation of draft talent by exiting to your team roster screen and asking your scout for his recommendations for free agents with less than one year's experience. The draft candidates will be clearly marked, and you'll get a much more accurate assessment from your scout of the their potential.

A trick that FRONT OFFICE FOOTBALL 2001 aficionados have discovered is to set your game plan to pass 75 percent to 85 percent of the time when you're in a second down situation with only one or two yards to go for a first down. The AI almost always expects a run in that situation, and you can break a lot of big plays if you pass.

Starfleet Command II

Klingon crippling 101 by Bruce Geryk

The tendency of new captains is to simply select all of the weapons that can fire and then unleash them in a single salvo ("alpha strike") against an enemy ship.



DOCTRINE: FLEXIBILITY When targeting an opponent through a downed shield, have several weapons groups to choose from for sequential fire.

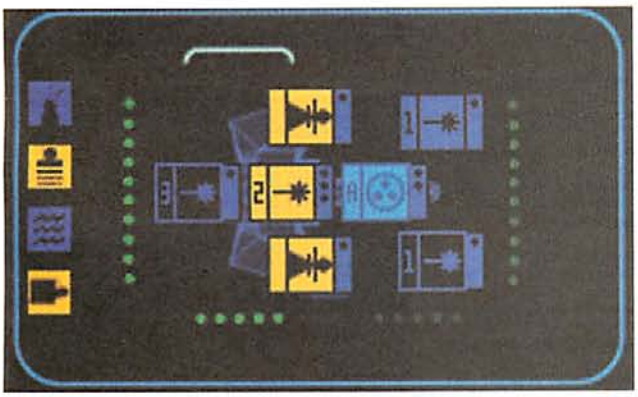
However, because of the way that damage is allocated in the STARFLEET COMMAND series, this tactic can often be less effective than a series of individual attacks, at least if your aim is to knock out your opponent's weapons first.

An alpha strike that gets a lot of damage past an enemy's shields will knock out some systems, but much of this damage will be spread to nonweapon internal systems like engines, or to hull integrity. In a fight against an opponent with similar capabilities, battles are often won by the captain who tips the balance of weapons ever so slightly in his favor, and then takes advantage of this. The trick is to space your attacks out individually, as this gives each hit a chance to be allocated to a weapons system. This was a crucial tactic in the board game *Star Fleet Battles* (upon which the STARFLEET COMMAND series is based), and can be replicated in the computer games by waiting a second or so between shots, which makes a big difference in which systems take damage. Check the .pdf of the *Star Fleet Battles* rules (in your STARFLEET COMMAND 2 folder on your hard drive in a folder called Sfb) for some insight into this.

Need an online source for information about the STARFLEET COMMAND games? **www.starfleetuniverse.com.**

The problem with this kind of successive attack is that a maneuvering enemy may be able to present a different shield to absorb more damage between shots. So when you face a rapidly turning ship, if you have a brief opportunity to hit a damaged or downed shield, hit it with as many different weapons as you can. If you have a maneuver advantage, however, choose your shots carefully, and do as much damage to his weapons as possible. A defenseless starship can be picked off at leisure. If you're fighting a speedier opponent instead, a few well-placed alpha strikes can do a lot of engine damage and take away some of his speed advantage. Understand the tactical situation before deciding how many weapons to fire.

Remember that direct-fire weapons are not the only way to disable your enemy's weapons: Hit-and-run attacks using your transporters are also very effective, especially since you can target individual systems. If you are presented with a downed enemy shield (you can't transport through shields), don't forget this option in addition to using your regular weapons.



THAT'S GONNA LEAVE A MARK Space out your shots, and you'll tend to cripple more specific systems rather than just kinda-sorta scratch all of them.

Dirty Trick of the Month

Readers! A new feature is being added to the CGW Tips section. One with an emphasis on two things: multiplayer and evil. We're looking for the nastiest, most devious trick you can come up with to use in a multiplayer match. A trick so wrought with evil that it will both ensure victory and cause your opponent to curse your name in anguish. Each month, one selected winner will get an honest-to-god good game from us. Next month's winner will get a free copy of COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2, COLLECTOR'S EDITION.

Now, here's what we consider to be a good Dirty Trick.

"Libyan Nuclear Truck: Play as the Libyans. Focus on constructing an Iron Curtain and three demolition trucks. While the Iron Curtain is charging up, position your trucks in an opportune locale. When the Iron Curtain's done charging, use it on your trucks, and quickly move them into positions for maximum damage. When the Iron Curtain wears off, your trucks will deliver unavoidable nuclear blasts to different parts of your opponent's base."

Keep track of your insanely devious tricks next time you're playing someone online, and send us an email (put "DIrtiest Trick" in the subject line) for a chance of scoring this definitive version of RED ALERT 2.

Cheat Codes: SPECIAL GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

In-game just press "T" and then enter the following codes:
mpimyourfather God Mode
mpwegotdeathstar Infinite Ammo
mpkingoftehmonstars All Items/Weapons & Unlimited Ammo
mpmaphole Complete Mission
mpdrdentz Full Health
mpwonderbra Full Armor
mpyoulooklikeyouneedamonkey Add All Armor Options
mpgoattech All Weapon Upgrades
mpasscam 3rd Person View
mprosebud or mpracerboy Spawn Snowtruck

STAR TREK DEEP SPACE 9: THE FALLEN

During the game, press [Tab] or "~," then type in "panacea." Next, press [Tab] or "~," and type in any of the cheat codes below:
god God Mode
fly Fly Mode
ghost No Clipping
walk Disable Fly/Ghost Modes
allammo Full Ammo
killpawns Kill all enemies in the level
skiplevel Skip to next level
open [mapname] Open specified map

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE

Press and hold [CTRL] + [ALT] + [SHIFT], then type:
IY Invulnerability
UO Unlimited Ammo
HF Heat Tracking Off
IB Destroy Enemy Mech
ML Finish Mission with Success

SACRIFICE

While playing, press [Ctrl] + [Shift] + [~]. This will bring up a small text icon at the bottom left of the screen. Type any of the codes below (including spaces):
@ bythepowerofgrayskull Full Heal
@ ihavethepower Full Mana
@ yourbulletscannotharmme The Wizard is Invincible
@ dontfearthereaper Adds Souls
@ castratetheheathens Wizard Can Collect Red Souls
@ timelsonmyside Resets the Spell Timers
@ aplethoraof [monster name] Summon 4 Monsters of [monster name]
@ alliwantforxmasisa [monster name] Summon 1 Monster of [monster name]
@ gimmeglmmeglmme [spell name] Gives Spell [spell name]

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO

During gameplay, press the "T" or "Y" and enter in one of the following codes, then [Enter] to enable:
pleasehealme Full Health
mapshowitall Reveal Map
gimmegifts Opens Stocked Store Where You Are
allmissionsaregoodtogo Access All Levels
basegoveryfast Builds up Base Quickly
basepopulate Base Population
basefillerup Gives Base Energy
ineedspells Unlimited Mana
itsmyparty Instant Party House

MDK2

God Mode
In-game you can press [~] and enter the following string after the "Omen" prompt to get full invulnerability:
mdkGobSetDamageFilter(mdkGetPlayerGob(),0)
This is from the internal game scripting system. Note that this code must be re-entered periodically, because the game "resets" whenever it has to change maps. You'll notice either the hard drive spinning as a new map section is being read, or that you suddenly start to lose health again. Just bring back the console and then press the Up-arrow key to get previous (and only) command and re-initialize.

MAJESTY

While playing, press [Enter], and then type the following codes:
victory is mine Win Game
i'm a loser baby Lose Game
fill this bag Add 10,000 Gold
revelation Reveal Map
build anything All Buildings Available
give me power All Spells Available
cheezy towers Spells Have No Range Limit
restoration Restores Hit Points
frame it Shows Frame Count
grow up Highlighted Hero Gains +5 Levels

NEED FOR SPEED: PORSCHE UNLEASHED

To use these cheat codes, go to the main menu and click "Create Player," and then type in the cheat for the name. Click "Done" (you'll hear a little confirmation sound), and then choose your regular profile and play the game!
Gulliver The Porsches are all shrunk down to the size of radio controlled racers and have little antennas.
Smash Up Using the Skidpad, Destruction Derby-style racing.
Dakar Tired of Street Racing? Changes car physics and tracks to Rally style.
Fuzzyfuz Enables cops in quick race (cops may not appear on all tracks: i.e. Monaco).
Fetherw8 This cheat code makes cars significantly heavier.

ICEWIND DALE

Note: Be sure to back up the original files before proceeding with the following set of codes.
Use a text editor to edit the "icewind.ini" file in the game directory. Add the line "Cheats=1" under the "[Game Options]" section. Start the game, and press [Ctrl] + [Tab] to display the console window. Type: "CHEATERSDOPROSPER:EnableCheatKeys();" (case-sensitive) to enable cheat mode. Then, just press [Ctrl] + [Tab] to display the console window, and enter the following codes at any time:
CHEATERSDOPROSPER:ExploreArea(); Show full map.
CHEATERSDOPROSPER:Hans(); Teleport party to cursor location.
CHEATERDOPROSPER:SetCurrentXP([number]); Give selected characters indicated XP.
CHEATERDOPROSPER:AddGold([number]); Add indicated gold to party total.
CHEATERDOPROSPER:Midas(); Add 500 gold to party total.
CHEATERSDOPROSPER:FirstAid(); 5 healing potions, 5 antidotes, and 1 Scroll Of Stone To Flesh.
Also, just press these keyboard combinations for the desired effects:
[Ctrl] + J Move selected characters to pointer position.
[Ctrl] + R Hea/resurrect the selected character or portrait.
[Ctrl] + Y Kill selected monster or NPC (but no XP is gained).
[Ctrl] + 4 Display trigger polygons (this helps in showing traps).

BALDUR'S GATE II: SHADOWS OF AMN

Open the Baldur.ini file with notepad, and look for a heading called [Program Options]. Under this heading, type "Debug Mode=1," then save and exit. Start your game as normal, and in game, press [Control] + [Space] to start the console. Console Cheats (must be entered exactly as shown):
XP For Your Group
CLUAConsole:SetCurrentXP([XP amount here]) Be sure to have your entire group selected for everyone to get the specified XP. Also, remember that the XP Cap in BG2 is 2,950,000 points, and that you can't use commas when typing in the number (so just type in 2950000 to get the maximum XP per character).
Give Yourself More Gold
CLUAConsole:AddGold([Amount of gold here]) Press [Enter] to activate. Note, like the XP cheat, you can't use commas when typing in your gold amount.
Other cheats are as follows:
Max Stats When generating a character, press [CTRL] + [SHIFT] + 8 to max your stats.
Heal and Jump Just press [CTRL] + R to heal the selected character(s).
Instant Teleport Press [CTRL] + J to jump to the location of the mouse cursor.
Instant Kill Hit [CTRL] + Y to kill the person or monster the cursor is on (no XP is gained though).

DEUS EX

Edit user.ini in the deusex/system folder and change an empty key binding from (example!) "t=" to "t=talk" (do this for all occurrences of "t="). In the game, press T (or whatever key you ended up specifying in the ini file) to make a line "Say:" display at the bottom; delete the "Say" (just press backspace) to make a blank line.
To activate cheatmode, just type in "set DeusEx.JCDentonMale bCheatsEnabled True" (without quotes) in the console. If you do not want to type the "set DeusEx.JCDentonMale bCheatsEnabled True" line, you may alternatively add -haxOr to your Deus Ex shortcut. Example: "D:\games\Deus Ex\System\DeusEx.exe" -haxOr. Now you may type any of the codes listed below:

god God Mode
players only Freeze Enemies
invisible true/false Invisibility On/Off
behindview 1/0 3d Person View On/Off
fly Fly Mode
ghost No Clipping Mode
walk Fly Mode Off
iamwarren Turn on EMP Field
allskillpoints Gives All Skill Points
allweapons Give All Weapons
allammo Refill Ammo
allaugs All Basic Augmentations
tantalus Kill Current Target
opensesame Unlock Targeted Door
legend Secret Menu
allhealth Full Health
allenergy Full Energy
allcredits 10000 Credits
allimages All Images

FIFA SOCCER 2001

Type at the Main Menu:
Gimmethemoney Add Money
Playersmaybe Free Players
Bigheads Big Head Mode
Playersarelocked Players on Opposite Team Cannot Move

Reader's Corner: TIPS AND TRICKS

RED ALERT 2

Bombs are one of the best ways to surprise your enemy in multiplayer. (The Russian Crazy Ivan unit is one of the most effective in causing trouble.) Always remember you can put a bomb on just about anything. Here are some examples:

Attack Dogs: Fast and easy to transport to the front line. Rig them up, and the exploding puppies will catch the enemy off-guard every time. They're also great at destroying a squad of GIs quickly.

Terror Drones: If they leap inside a vehicle, they won't explode until coming out or being destroyed. This is a great way to get a bomb onto your enemy's repair facility.

Cuban Terrorists: Rigged with bombs, they give off two explosions.

Buildings: Most buildings can be destroyed with a single bomb. This works well if you know where your enemy is going to try to garrison his troops.

Transports: Rgged transports will explode and release their passengers unharmed. A good tactic with this is to send a hovercraft filled with Tesla troopers, and take out any Prism Towers. You can fill transports with people who are rigged. The bomb stops ticking when they enter, and then explodes upon departure.

Another evil thing to do is to put a Yuri in an IFV and have him force fire right in front of enemy barracks. This tactic will kill most infantry instantly. You can also use this trick with desolators, and have a bunch of them radiate the entire base. With enough men, you can even kill off tanks quickly. This also works in ore fields. *—Daniel House*

DIABLO II

What you'll need is a pair of high-level Sorceresses decked out with magic damage, max cold resistances, a low-level Chilling Armor (too much will hurt you), and a low-level Inferno.

This trick works because of one simple property: Chilling Armor attacks back at ranged attackers. So what you do is get the two Sorceresses to go hostile with each other, and then wander out to your staging area and stand within Inferno range of each other. Next, get both of them to cast Chilling Armor—and make sure it stays active (this means recasting it every so often). One Sorceress should start torching the other one with Inferno. Fire-resistance should soften the blow, but potions will probably be necessary. Ice shards will start firing back at whichever Sorceress is doing the Infernoing. Once the ice shards hit the Infernoing Sorceress, her Chilling Armor will start launching ice shards right back. They will hit the other Sorceress, and then bounce back . Pretty soon you'll have a solid beam of ice shards bouncing back and forth between the Sorceresses. Make sure that your health is up, and don't let Chilling Armor run out! Now the hard part is getting something to walk through the beam. *—Adam Weinhandl*

Adam gets the nod for best of the three reader tips this month. For submitting something so weird and new in DIABLO II, he's getting a copy of CIVILIZATION II: CALL TO POWER, TIMELINE, the Resident Evil *comic book magazine, and a reprint of Frank Miller's* The Dark Knight Returns. *Enjoy!*

DEUS EX

Hey, I just discovered a neat little trick in Deus Ex that give you a bit more inventory space so that you can carry around a bunch of extra toys. All you have to do is enter the inventory screen and click on something (something huge like a GEP gun is more useful though) and drag it until it becomes your cursor. Now, while your cursor is still the gun, hit the escape button on your keyboard. You won't drop the item, but the game wont recognize that you still have it in your inventory and you can carry things in the same spot! You can still select both items that are in the same spots too, so put your plasma rifle on top of your GEP gun and use up only eight precious spaces instead of sixteen! I hope this helps some people through some sticky situations. *—Michael Spina*

Patches Update

No One Lives Forever: Adds ability to review Intelligence via Intelligence Gallery (now you don't have to worry about missing vital info because some swarthy henchman is sneaking up on you) and several fixes. These fixes range from memory leaks to stealth bugs (which were making the stealth missions a lot harder than they should have been).

Giants: Citizen Kabuto: One official main patch corrects a series of crashes in both single-player and multiplayer games. There's also a blood patch, which turns the sanitized green blood back into the original shade of red. Finally, look at the review for the topless Delphi fix.

Sacrifice: There's a patch that fixes a couple of technical glitches, and in particular, fiddles with the game balance of the Fallen unit. However, the most significant addition to this patch is support for TCP/IP games. Now you can sack sac doctors without going through Mplayer or whatnot.

Homeworld: Cataclysm: This five-star expansion receives both bug fixes and balance changes. A lot of the balance changes lie within economy, so if you don't feel like dealing with all-new price schemes (and even build times) on some ships, don't grab the patch.

Jagged Alliance 2: Unfinished Business: Having trouble with either game crashes or CD-ROM wonkiness? This patch should clear things up.

NHL 2001: A lot of the fixes focus on Online Leagues, so you could possibly coast by without updating if you just play alone, but if you're playing on the fancy new "Internet," you'll want to have these fixes in place.

Designer Strategies

Secondary attacks in ALICE

Programmer Joe Waters at Rogue Entertainment has some useful tips on how to kill a certain boss and how to use your weapons in general. Here's what he had to share.

Okay, since it seems that nobody uses the secondary eyestaff attack, and everybody (even the cheat and hint guides) thinks the second Queen is so goshdarnawful tough to beat, here's a hint: Use the secondary eyestaff attack on the second Queen! Yay. The blunderbuss, despite its cool factor, does not have the highest damage/mana ratio in the game if you start with a full charge.

Some additional points about weapons:

- Each boss has a weapon to which it's particularly vulnerable.
- The secondary eyestaff attack will drop projectiles on each visible enemy in sequence. If you've got 10 guys on screen and 10 projectiles, each guy will get blasted on the noggin once.
- Nobody ever uses the secondary icewand ice wall. Everybody complains about how hard the boss projectile attacks (Jabberwock eyebeam and breath, Red King and Queen1 beam attacks, Queen2 projectile attacks) are to defend against. Somebody should try the icewall against them.
- At the entrance to the Tweedle fight (where the three swinging pipes are), there's that one clockwork automaton that is mostly out of range or difficult to hit. If you've got the jacks, the secondary jacks attack will knock Tweedle into the mercury.

Easter Eggs

GLADIATOR and SIMS secrets

DVD: GLADIATOR

Go to the Storyboards menu on the supplemental disc and chose Rhino Fight—a scene that never made it into the film. When the first storyboard comes up, press the Up-arrow key on your remote control, which will highlight the rhino in the center frame. Press 'Enter,' and you can read the script for the proposed scene and even take a look at some of the CGI test footage prepared for it.

THE SIMS

1) Put THE SIMS disk into your CD-ROM/DVD-ROM drive.
2) Wait for the Autoplay screen to come up.
3) Look in the bottom left corner of the Autoplay Screen, and you'll see the Maxis symbol.
4) Click on the Maxis symbol.
5) Enjoy this little Easter egg!

Spotlight Cheats

ONI

Once you complete the game, these cheats should become active. Open your diary by pressing [F1] and type in the appropriate code.

behemoth Makes you larger
bighead Big Head mode
canttouchthis Can't be knocked down
carousel Slow Motion mode
chenille Daodan Power mode
elderrune Regenerate health slowly
fatloot Ammo and health
fistsoflegend Fists of Legend
glassworld Makes most objects breakable
liveforever God mode
minime Mini mode
moonshadow Phase Cloak
munitionfrenzy Creates many weapons
reservoirdogs Last Man Standing mode
roughjustice Gatling Guns mode
shapeshifter Change Characters (with F8 key)
superammo Super Ammo mode
touchofdeath Kill enemies in one shot

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE

While playing, press [ENTER], then type any of the following codes. Note, if you're in RPG Mode, use [.] instead of [~]

~makemyday Enable Cheat Codes
~baegopa Add 500,000 to All Resources
~simsimhae Fast Build
~dayspring Reveal Map
~godblessu Full Health
~amosbemercIful Full Mana
~knowledgeispower Fast Mana Rejuvenation

SEND US YOUR TIPS

Send your tips, tricks, and strategies to **cgw_letters@ziffdavis.com** (please put CGTIPS in the subject line). We'll publish three submissions each month. Please send genuine tips or strategies instead of cheat codes cut-and-pasted from the Internet. One winner will get something pulled at random from the *Computer Gaming World* BozoBin"!

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COMPUTER GAMING WORLD #202

Don't miss it! On newsstands April 6th

INSIDE MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER

by Thomas L. McDonald, DDS • cgwletters@ziffdavis.com

Massively Overcrowded

Too many MMRPGs in the works means some are doomed to failure

One thing is certain about the multiplayer development boom: A multiplayer development bust is coming down fast. Every time I do research for this column, I find new massively-multiplayer titles cropping up like ticks on a sow's belly. Usually the work of small startup developers with high hopes and shallow pockets, more of them are marked for failure than success.

The sad thing is, some of them look pretty good. They're the work of people with a true love for the format and a desire to bring something fresh to the increasingly stale massively-multiplayer world.

Among the newcomers to the preview pages are:

Dawn: "Set to revolutionize the way we think of and play computer games. By incorporating aspects from nearly every popular game genre (RPG, FPS, RTS), Dawn will be a reality in which players will have true freedom." —**www.glitchless.com.**

I'M NOT DEAD YET! DARK AGE OF CAMELOT is one of a number of upcoming MMRPGs that must make themselves heard above a lot of noise in the coming year.

Adellion: "Adellion is placed in a world that outdistances other worlds in sheer size." —from **www.adellion.com.**

Dark Age of Camelot: "Unlike traditional role-playing games in which a player's greatest challenge is fighting computer-controlled monsters, players in Camelot will come face-to-face with their greatest challenge yet, other players." —**www.darkageofcamelot.com.**

Dominion of the Stars: "Dominion of the Stars is a combination of space shooter/RPG that will concentrate on long-term playability and teamwork." —**www.digitaleuphoriasoft.com.**

Project Entropia: "The idea is the creation of one huge game world where all players, irregardless of there being 10,000 or 100,000, find themselves together. Project Entropia is the biggest undertaking ever made by one single on-line game." —**www.project-entropia.com.**

Neocron: "Neocron is an online RPG/e-Community hybrid set in a 27th century metropolis." —**www.neocron.com.**

Horizons: "By far the most ambitious game of its type currently in development." —**www.artifact-entertainment.com.**

The 4th Coming: "A massively multiplayer online role-playing game developed by Vircom Interactive." —**www.the4thcoming.com.**

And so on. No matter how good many of these sound, they're beginning to blur together. Some have good hooks, such as the Arthurian settings of Dark Age of Camelot, the chance to earn cash in Entropia, and the graphics of Horizons. Almost all have meticulous world fictions and ambitious features. Of course, it costs nothing to create fiction and design docs, and plenty to implement netcode. In June, Artifact was getting ready to shut the doors on Horizon due to lack of funding. Although a month later, the company "received private funding to continue," Artifact added that "more financing is needed to complete the project."

Artifact's story could pretty much be repeated for every innovative new independent online game. The scramble for money, attention, market share, and warm bodies never ends. It costs millions to do an online game properly. Without the involvement of a major publisher, most of these titles will never see completion, or will struggle for a short time and then fade away. Online gaming isn't like regular development, where something is created and released; these are products with a pretty hefty ongoing support infrastructure. While the work of these developers is often quite exciting, it's also leading to a continual balkanization of a finite online gaming market, and a market this small can't sustain further fragmentation. Add to this the rapid retreat of investors from anything that reeks of dot.com-ness, and you have a pretty bleak forecast for the indies. CGW

A Few Good Utes

Handy Tools for ASHERON'S CALL Geeks

■ Mad little programmers are always scurrying like fevered mice over their favorite gamecode, trying to make useful utilities to help us all. You can find links to all these ASHERON'S CALL utes and more (as well as some valuable macro programs) at **www.tip.it/wizard/ac** in the Downloads section.

The AC Database: Lists and tracks items, crafters, monsters, weapons, and more. It has a large database that you can easily add to.

SplitPea (Spell Database and Taper Program): This very valuable tool for managing spell research takes some of that scary randomness out of taper calculation. A must for Mages.

AC Location Tracker: This location monitoring utility will lead you back to your corpse every time, as well as calculate the shortest paths and display portals, lifestones, and more.

AC Explorer: Updated database and detailed regional maps, right down to roads and buildings. Customizable and searchable, with a path calculator built in.

by Robert Coffey • robert_coffey@ziffdavis.com

Letting Go and Letting G.O.D.

Gathering of Developers adopts Bungie's bouncing baby

When Microsoft engulfed and devoured Bungie Software in order to plop a bright and shiny HALO on top of the Xbox, the PC gaming community squealed, "It burns! It burns!" applied some soul-soothing ointment, and then set about wondering what this meant for future Bungie titles. Moreover, they wondered what it meant for the survival of Bungie's signature MYTH franchise. Would this *CGW* Hall-of-Famer die ignominiously, or would it be just one more reason to buy Microsoft's console this winter? The answer turns out to be: Neither.

The license has been secured by Take 2 and will be shepherded by Gathering of Developers—and whether that means it's safe and sound remains to be seen.

MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE, a prequel to the series, is rather unique among sequels since it will be developed by a group of people who had nothing to do with the creation of the original. While this has happened recently (BioWare picked up the MDK license from Shiny Entertainment), it's almost unheard of for an entirely different company to carry the banner crafted by another. Sure, games like the MECHWARRIOR series have been put out by a slew of different companies, but FASA was always there behind the scenes, watching over their baby. Bungie is not involved with MYTH III at all.

And this is the point at which the hardcore MYTH fans might start to panic, especially the Mac aficionados who had always been so well served by Bungie's commitment to their platform. But remarkably, the MYTH community hasn't been standing in a corner pulling out their hair and chewing their fists in consternation. This is weird, considering that the game's designers, Mumbo Jumbo, are an offshoot of the action-oriented Ritual Entertainment; while team members have worked on a number of games, including FALLOUT, HEAVY METAL: FAKK 2, and the QUAKE mission pack SCOURGE OF ARMAGON, MYTH III will be their first strategy title.

But Mumbo Jumbo is confident they can live up to the MYTH legacy. This is due in large part to a refreshing lack of desire to make the game "theirs."

Lead designer Scott Campbell puts it this way: "When watching a movie based on a book that I have already read, it bugs me to no end to watch how it was bastardized onto film. I truly hate it when a great idea is ruined just so someone can exert their own creative interests that vandalize the intentions of the story." This attitude would seem to be the very marrow of Mumbo Jumbo's approach to MYTH III. The series has a great gameworld, unique characters, and a trendsetting style of play, so why would Mumbo Jumbo want to mess up a good thing? On the contrary, they only want to expand and improve, with the most obvious augmentation being a sweeping graphical overhaul, including fully 3D units (no more sprites), 16-bit terrain textures with detail mapping, 3D flora that blows in the wind, and more.

And why would they want to alienate a huge segment of their audience by excluding some of their most ardent fans? Bungie may have gone over to the dark side, but Mumbo Jumbo (which is deeply involved in porting many top-shelf games from PC to Mac) is firmly committed to maintaining MYTH's tradition of simultaneous release on both platforms. To further seal the deal, Mumbo Jumbo has enlisted the help of some of the top participants in the MYTH mod community, including Iggy Popped, Fisj, and the man responsible for the wildly popular World War II Recon mod, SANTA'S HEAD.

It all sounds good, and Bungie has to be pleased with the stewardship. Unfortunately, Microsoft declined to offer any of Bungie's views at this time, so we'll have to leave it at that. *CGW* will have an in-depth look at MYTH III: THE WOLF AGE as soon as G.O.D. and Mumbo Jumbo let us. CGW

Conspiracy Theory

■ Nowadays, when a game company announces that it's releasing an expansion pack to a popular game that's free, we're almost willing to praise it on principle alone. GROUND CONTROL: DARK CONSPIRACY is such an expansion pack, giving owners of Sierra's original title 15 new single-player missions and a few new multiplayer maps, as well as a new playable faction with its own unique units. The new missions don't offer much in variety over the gameplay of the original GROUND CONTROL, and the new units and weapons of the Phoenix Mercenaries aren't very interesting either, save a really cool flamethrower tank. But if you're nuts about GROUND CONTROL, then your $4.95 in shipping and handling fees will be well spent. *–Tom Price*

by P. Stefan "Desslock" Janicki • desslock@desslock.com

D&D Voted Off the Isle?

Thanks to Hasbro, Black Isle's *D&D* run may be ending

Step away from that orc, Frogger-boys.

Role-playing (RPG) fans trembled when Hasbro acquired control over the licensing of *Dungeons & Dragons* (*D&D*) computer games, and just a year later, the company has lived up to the fans' lowest expectations. Hasbro had already proved that it had limited interest in hardcore games when it scuttled the acclaimed FALCON series and other projects of industry pioneer, Microprose. Now, Hasbro has thrown into question the future of *D&D* computer adaptations, just when Interplay's Black Isle Studios proved it could do no wrong with the license.

Hasbro still owns the *D&D* franchise but has sold Infogrames the exclusive right to create computer games based upon Hasbro properties, including *D&D*, for the next 15 to 20 years. The existing *D&D* licensees—Black Isle and SSI—will be able to produce *D&D* games until the terms of their existing licenses expire, but then the computer gaming future of *D&D* will be in the unproven hands of Infogrames.

Infogrames is one of the largest publishers in the world, but it doesn't have much experience creating RPGs, and it lacks Black Isle's veteran development teams. Infogrames produced the great adventure game, OUTCAST, which should give *D&D* fans some comfort that the franchise isn't being thrown into the abyss, but it'll likely take Infogrames some time to become competent adapting *D&D*'s complex rules. Even Interplay inflicted poorly conceived dreck like BLOOD & MAGIC and DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN on gamers before it started producing gems like PLANESCAPE: TORMENT.

Of course, Black Isle can still produce non-*D&D* RPGs, and many RPG fans prefer the futuristic FALLOUT games to Black Isle's *D&D* offspring anyway. It's even possible that Infogrames will continue to allow Black Isle to produce *D&D* games, although that scenario is highly unlikely given that Interplay is a direct competitor. SSI and Stormfront Studios also are apt to be denied the opportunity to continue their new gold box *D&D* series following POOL OF RADIANCE : RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR. As an independent developer, BALDUR'S GATE developer Bioware could agree to create *D&D* games for Infogrames, although the companies don't currently know each other well, and Bioware is already focusing on a *Star Wars* RPG for LucasArts.

For at least the past year, Hasbro has tried to design an online-only *D&D* game, but its vision for a multiplayer version of *D&D* was somewhat preempted by Bioware's ambitious design for NEVERWINTER NIGHTS. Hasbro also may have found it difficult to recruit an experienced development team with the necessary expertise for creating online games. Hasbro's reluctance—or inability—to use the *D&D* license it acquired a year ago may be the only positive result of its brief tenure as keeper of the franchise—at least the company didn't shovel out hastily assembled rubbish in order to leverage off of Black Isle's success. But it's pretty sad if the highlight of Hasbro's *D&D* legacy is in *not* creating anything. Once again, gamers may see the end of a popular series because of Hasbro. CGW

Blizzard's Online Woes

Will the cost of battling hackers mean fewer online freebies?

■ The availability of Blizzard's BattleNet service was one of the main reasons DIABLO was such a colossal commercial success, and it proved to be the catalyst gaming companies needed to regain faith in the RPG genre. The free services offered by BattleNet and Westwood Chat – and the release of QUAKE with an online component – largely aborted the pay-per-play ambitious plans of the entrepreneurs who founded TEN, Engage, and Mplayer. RPG fans and other gamers rejoiced.

Then the hackers struck. Since data was stored on a user's computer, it was readily accessible for modification. Open, non-password-protected BattleNet DIABLO games became essentially unplayable. DIABLO II was successfully redesigned to avoid replicating those problems, but the BattleNet log-on procedure recently proved to be susceptible to persistent hacking attempts. Players lost valuable items or had their experienced characters assassinated. To Blizzard's credit, it addressed the problem and undertook to retroactively repair the damage done. But since the game's release, Blizzard has had to devote a ridiculous amount of resources to keeping its free BattleNet service running smoothly and securely.

Since Blizzard's games are commercial blockbusters – at least in part because of the availability of BattleNet – the company will likely continue to maintain the service. But smaller companies have probably avoided launching comparable services because of Blizzard's problems. With online advertising models imploding and hacking attempts getting more prolific and sophisticated, other free services like the Zone and Mplayer may not endure in their current forms. RPG fans often play multiplayer games with familiar groups of players, and since the host of games like ICEWIND DALE can boot obnoxious players or restore saved games, there'll still be plenty of opportunities to play multiplayer RPGs. But it would be a real shame if the persistent efforts of hackers have lessened the viability of free online services.

by Tom Price • tom_price@ziffdavis.com

Rated "X"

Xbox comes out of the closet. Be not afraid.

All Bill Gates seems to do anymore (besides using hundred dollar bills as rolling papers) is give keynote addresses at major technology-related trade shows, so it's only noteworthy when he has a big Microsoft announcement or product to unveil. And boy howdy, did he have a big product to unveil at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas on January 6th, 2001.

Gates finally opened his kimono and showed us what the Xbox, Microsoft's entry in the next-generation console wars, would actually look like. Reactions to the highly anticipated work of industrial design ranged from "cool" and "spiffy" to "Does that green thing light up?" and "Man, that controller looks like a Dreamcast and a PlayStation controller did it and had a baby." Well, okay—that was my reaction.

The final feature set was also announced, and it was surprisingly close to what we reported it would be when Dave Salvator broke the Xbox story in the December 1999 issue of *CGW*. In short: a 733MHz processor, nVidia graphics chipset (we called that one), 64MB of memory (that one too), DVD-ROM (yep), 8 MB hard drive (close, we said 6), and an Ethernet port (doh, we said a 56K modem—but hey, it was 1999!).

But instead of going into all the physical details of the system (check the February 2001 issue of our sister magazine, *Electronic Gaming Monthly*, for an outstanding exclusive on the development of the Xbox), we thought we'd make a quick list of Xbox pros and cons:

PRO: It's Microsoft. You can't say that word and imply inherent quality all the time, but when it comes to games and game developers, the boys and girls in Redmond know good ones when they see them. And Ed Fries is one of the few bigwigs in this industry who's worth listening to about what makes games good.

CON: It's Microsoft. Okay, they can do peripherals—the SideWinder series of game controllers are top-notch—but the Xbox is some full-scale consumer electronic shiznit, if you know what I'm saying. This is uncharted territory for them and for us gamers as well.

PRO: Sexy technology. I could make some pithy statement about drooling on and/or soiling myself, but I won't. Let's just say that the numbers look hot.

CON: Where's the USB? We were hoping for a bit of expandability in our Xboxes. Isn't that the force that drives the MS business model?

CON: DVD movie playback. You're telling me that I have to buy a separate remote just to watch movies with the DVD player? There's an offer that I can easily refuse.

PRO/CON: The games. Granted, it's way too early to assess the game lineup for Xbox, but a couple of titles are so must-have that they could sell the box alone. Of course I'm talking about HALO, METAL GEAR X, and HALO. Yes, I'm aware I said HALO twice. On the other hand, what's up with Gates trotting out THE ROCK? Does the world need another frickin' wrestling game? And does Bill really think that he's tapping into the lifeblood of console gaming culture by catering specifically to wrestling fans? That's like selling the latest nVidia 3D card by showing off DEER HUNTER 3D. Earth to Bill: A lot of gamers—both PC and console—are intelligent, mature adults who prefer games like PARAPPA THE RAPPER and SAMBA DE AMIGO. Get a clue.

Ultimately, it will be the games that make or break Xbox. Microsoft is even banking on a flagship character called Malice to compete with the Marios, Sonics, and Crashes of the world, while giving successful franchises like ODDWORLD and TONY HAWK another chance to shine. As long as they keep a games-first attitude, Microsoft should have no trouble taking over the world. Wait a minute... CGW

5 Best Console Games of the Year

■ In the spirit of this issue's Game of the Year awards, I'd like to call out some of my favorite console games from the past year. In no particular order:

Jet Grind Radio (DC) One of the most unique and interesting-looking games around, JGR turned out to be as fun as it was weird.

The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64) I thought OCARINA OF TIME couldn't be topped, but I was wrong. The first truly 4D game I've played.

Perfect Dark (N64) GOLDENEYE is a personal favorite, so PERFECT DARK was a must-have. The sheer variety of gameplay options make this one of the most replayable FPSs since UNREAL TOURNAMENT.

NFL 2K1 (DC) The best football game on any platform. Period.

Tony Hawk Pro Skater 2 (DC, PSX, PC) I think I'm going to need a 12-step program to help me with my THPS2 problem.

by Audrey Wells • gamedame@gddomain.com

Maniacal Days of Adventure Gaming

Paying homage to the wackiest LucasArts legacy

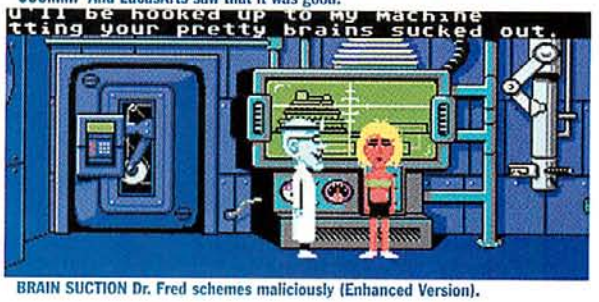
I don't exactly have money pouring out of my ears (being the poor college student that I am), so I can't afford to buy every new adventure game that comes to market. In order to allay these times of want, it's necessary to rummage around in the closets, dig up some of those older games, and reminisce about the "good old days" of adventure gaming.

House of Freaks

Surely you fellow adventure addicts remember the legendary MANIAC MANSION, designed by Ron Gilbert (of MONKEY ISLAND fame) and Gary Winnick, first released in the mid-80s by a small company called LucasFilm Games. Though it has faded somewhat over the years, the game was huge at the time, released for multiple platforms, and even inspired a TV series of the same name.

MANIAC MANSION completely transformed the adventure genre. The PC version featured state-of-the-art EGA graphics: a whopping 16 colors! It had a revolutionary point-and-click interface system that replaced the then-standard textual interface wherein the player had to type in each command. My point is that MANIAC MANSION wasn't just "another adventure game." It redefined what adventures were, how they were created, and how they were played. Plus, it helped to determine LucasArts' position as a major adventure game company—a status it arguably still has today. MANIAC MANSION was so successful, in fact, that all of LucasArts' adventure games prior to GRIM FANDANGO were based on some form of its engine, the now-legendary SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for MANIAC MANSION).

IN THE BEGINNING LucasArts said, "Let there be SCUMM" and there was SCUMM. And LucasArts saw that it was good.



BRAIN SUCTION Dr. Fred schemes maliciously (Enhanced Version).

In MANIAC MANSION, you controlled a group of three teens into the lair of the insane Dr. Fred Edison, his wacky family, and an evil meteorite to rescue a cheerleader from impending brain suction. You selected your rescue party from a ragtag group of seven teens, each possessing special skills that affected how you would progress through the game. By today's graphical standards, the seven main characters were a bit misshapen with reddish, oversized heads that never stopped smiling. They looked like they had gone through one too many nuclear meltdowns of the Mansion. But you had to love 'em. Remember Bernard, the panicky nerd with a pocket protector, thick black glasses, and pants up to his armpits? I'm not surprised that he's the only one of the MANIAC MANSION teens to make it into the sequel, DAY OF THE TENTACLE. And who can forget the Tentacles and the Edisons—especially the horrific Nurse Edna? I've seen some pretty scary-looking monsters in adventure games, but nothing tops that cyan-skinned, pixelated family of freaks.

Now that I think about it, I'm not even sure that I ever finished MANIAC MANSION. That game was incredibly difficult, with the typical LucasArts brand of absurd "logic." I mean, really, who would think of giving soda to a human-eating plant? To make matters worse, the number of ways to get killed verged on ludicrous. One wrong step and the Mansion would disintegrate (whatever you do, don't push the big red button). I don't know if it's even possible to play and beat it without a walkthrough (while maintaining your sanity, of course). I challenge all of you adventure maniacs to dredge up your old copy of MANIAC MANSION and check it out. Can you beat it without a walkthrough? Or even better, can you do it without dying once?

DAY OF THE TENTACLE The brilliant sequel featured the unforgettable Bernard.

Return of the Tentacles

DAY OF THE TENTACLE, the impressive sequel to MANIAC MANSION, was released in the early 90s. The game, designed by Tim Schafer (of GRIM FANDANGO fame) and Dave Grossman, was in many ways a vast improvement over its famous predecessor. By this time, LucasArts had implemented their famous "no dying" policy in adventure games. No matter what you did, you couldn't kill yourself in this game, which reduced a lot of the frustration of the earlier game. Also, graphics technology had advanced greatly, and DOTT adopted an appealing cartoony style, along with a wacky, humorous storyline. This game is still available, and even includes MANIAC MANSION inside of it! A great deal if you've never played them before.

Until Next Time...

Remember the expression, "The older the violin, the sweeter the music?" Respect your elders. Pull out some of those gracefully aged games and give them another shot. Meanwhile, send your comments and criticisms to gamedame@gddomain.com. CGW

By Bruce Geryk • ceremony@net66.com

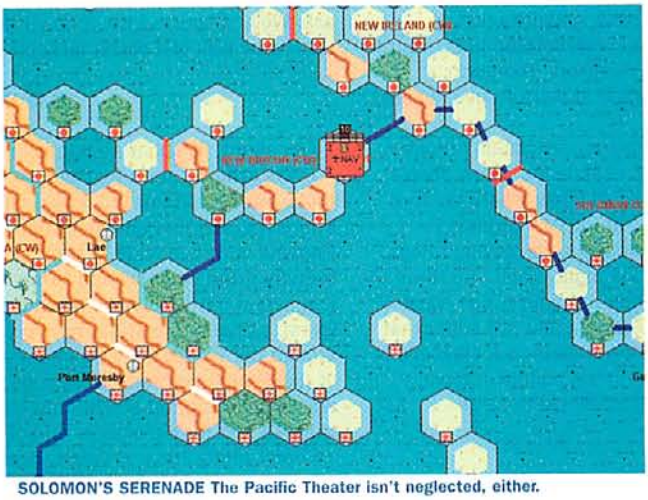
Blazing Computers

World in Flames has been ported to the PC—almost

With the dearth of strategic-level wargames in recent years, it's hardly surprising that wargamers have been clamoring for their favorite boardgames to be converted to the computer.

Avalon Hill's THIRD REICH was the first port of a major strategic World War II boardgame to the PC, but it met with mixed reviews for its clumsy implementation and poor AI. In 1997, Decision Games (**www.decisiongames.com**) released COMPUTER WAR IN EUROPE. Programmed entirely by one person (Gregory Ploussios, then a law student in Boston), the game made it possible for two or three people to play an email game of the monster classic from SPI, and have the computer enforce all the rules. Unfortunately, COMPUTER WAR IN EUROPE had no AI, so its appeal was limited to those who were willing to spend months or years exchanging files, or who wanted to play both sides with the computer acting as referee.

BARBAROSSA Computer WORLD IN FLAMES preserves much of the look of the boardgame.



SOLOMON'S SERENADE The Pacific Theater isn't neglected, either.

Third Time's a Charm?

With two of the "big three" strategic WWII boardgames in digital format, it was perhaps inevitable that someone would tackle the third. Australian Design Group's *World in Flames*, which covers both the European and Pacific theaters, has won numerous awards and built a following among boardgamers; a computer version seems natural. Chris Marinacci, the sole programmer working on the project since its inception in February 1995, has finally gotten to the point where a release date is in sight. The fact that he's doing it in his spare time (he has a full-time job), and that he's gone through numerous moves as well as a divorce and remarriage during this period has understandably delayed the game. Still, six years?

Chris told me that while the above factors played a big role in the delay, another cause was the "interlocking nature" of the *World in Flames* rules. "I was assuming that the programming time would be proportional to the size of the rules," he said. "Because of the way that the various systems interact, though, an arithmetic increase in rules causes an exponential increase in programming time."

"For example, one of the features that I felt was most needed was an undo function for moves. At first glance, this doesn't appear to be too complicated. You just save the original location of the unit and move it back to that hex when its move is undone. Since a move can change the supply status of other units, though, you shouldn't be able to undo the move of a unit after you have moved units for which it affected the supply status. So, the solution is to keep track of which units have been affected by the moves of other units. This provides the maximum flexibility, since you can always undo the move of a unit as long as it has not affected other units which have subsequently moved (unless you undo the moves of the affected unit[s] first)."

Blitzkrieg Imminent

As of this writing, about 95 percent of the game code is in place. Unfortunately, to get the game out the door, work on the AI has had to be shelved for the time being. A "pre-release" version will ship in March, which will sell at a 33 percent discount off the full version. Purchasers of the pre-release will be able to buy the full version for half price. Still, this option will disappoint those anxious to play solo games against the computer.

"I can understand how people feel about an AI," said Chris, "but without a computer game publisher backing us, we don't have the resources to create an AI in a relatively short amount of time, and people have been waiting for this game long enough." Once the pre-release ships, sales will determine how much money can be spent on additional people to work on the AI. "I would guess that [AI programming] would take at least six months in absolutely ideal conditions, with a more realistic estimate being at least a year," said Chris. "Even then, I doubt very much that the AI will be challenging enough for anyone other than the most beginning player."

World in Flames is an absolutely superb design, and a computer version will be quite welcome. But the search for the perfect solo strategic World War II game will likely continue.

For more information, visit www.a-d-g.com.au. CGW

by Jeff Green

DoarkusSpeak

Sadly, Jeff has been bitten by the EVERQUEST bug. Let us weep.

"Hell is other people"
Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit (1944)

You gotta hand it to them old dead French philosophers. They did not mince words. "Hell is other people"—nice, huh? Same to you, fella. At least we're not other *French* people.

The thing is, though, I know where Jean-Paul was coming from. I've never really been a big fan of other people, either, especially if it involves having to talk to them. This is why I like computer gaming. It lets me avoid that whole "human interaction" thing. It's something I can do by myself that I don't have to be ashamed of should I get caught, like my other main hobby.

For me, then, this whole "massive multiplayer" thing has been a problem. As CGW's role-playing editor, it's my job to cover these games, but I've never been able to muster up much enthusiasm. Part of that is the medication I'm on, sure, but part of it is also just the style of gaming itself. Games like ULTIMA ONLINE, ASHERON'S CALL, MERIDIAN 59, DARK SUN ONLINE have always freaked me out. Every time I log on, I feel like I'm crashing someone else's party, where everyone knows everyone else except me. Thousands of people frolicking about, happily yakking, while I'm standing alone, lost, and with nothing to do—until I get killed by a rabbit and have to restart. Ten bucks a month to feel like the new smelly kid at school—gee, where do I sign up?

"Ten bucks a month to feel like the new smelly kid at school – gee, where do I sign up?"

So I'd try for awhile, and then give up. If I couldn't break into the social strata, I'd rebel, out of spite. I'd follow people around and annoy them on purpose. "I know where the treasure is! Follow me!" I'd say. Once, in ULTIMA ONLINE, I crashed a guild meeting, and refused to leave, saying things like, "Hey, did anyone watch Alf last night?" and "All those who want me to be guild president, raise your magic wands!"

Okay, so I had an attitude problem. I admit it. I admit that I might have had better luck making friends in ASHERON'S CALL if I hadn't spent all my time in the middle of town, jumping up and down and yelling at everyone "let's Jazzercise!"

■ ■ ■

It was with feelings of trepidation, then, that I finally sat down over the last two months to give EVERQUEST, the most popular of all MMRPGs, an admittedly belated shot. The result has been catastrophic.

I am addicted to EVERQUEST in a way that happens to me only rarely. WARCRAFT II did it. So did HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC II. And DOOM. I am playing it all the time, constantly. I'm staying up way too late, and—here's where it gets really sad—I am actually *getting up early*, just to play this damn thing. Every waking moment not in front of EVERQUEST involves me scheming to somehow get back to EVERQUEST.

Doarkus, my 12th Level Dwarf Paladin, has become the kind of aggressive, ambitious social climber that puts my other self, that Jeff Green guy, to shame. Green can't get his work done, but there is no quest in EVERQUEST that Doarkus is not willing to stay up all night to complete. Ever in pursuit of some kick-ass armor or weaponry, ever on the hunt for bigger and badder monsters, Doarkus trudges through Norrath with a single-minded obsession. The game's reward system is insidiously compelling. And there's that glorious DING—the most supremely satisfying level-up sound I've ever heard in a game.

And the social thing? Amazingly, I like that too. I've come around. Usually, it's just a matter of getting down to business, which helps. "Wanna go kill some orcs?" someone will ask. Well, of course I do. If only I got offers like that in real life, I'd be less of a social retard.

■ ■ ■

One night, at about midnight, it all came together for me.

I was grouped with four people, and for a moment we broke out of character to reveal our "real-life" personas. There was a father and son from Ohio, a woman from England, a guy in New Zealand, and me. Just then, a friendly druid came by and turned us all into wolves. We laughed at our lupine forms, and then took off through the forest, anxious to test our new powers. Five of us, from all around the world, howling under a digital moon. It was one of those sublime, transcendent gaming moments I live for, where my computer screen and office melt away, and I am truly—if just for a moment—in another world.

I don't really know if Verant does this better than the other guys. All I know is with EVERQUEST, I've finally gotten the massive-multiplayer religion. I've learned how to play with other people and enjoy it. So now that I finally get it, please take this damn game away from me. My family, friends, and bosses are begging you. CGW

Doarkus bows to Tayishaa Solstealer, 24th Level Necromancer, who rescued his corpse from a really bad scene. Send him a Tell at jeff_green@ziffdavis.com.

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- Fixed 8X Max DVD-ROM Drive
- 4X AGP 32MB ATI Rage Mobility™-M4 3D® Video
- Internal 56K Capable® FaxModem
- 59WHr Li-Ion Battery ■ harman/kardon® Audio
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty[2]
- 3-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[10] Included

$1999 or as low as **$60** per mo. 45 mos.[12]

No payments for 90 days. E-VALUE Code: 89004-800319a

DELL™ INSPIRON™ 8000

Multimedia Mobile Desktop

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 800MHz
- 15" Super XGA+ TFT Display
- 128MB 100MHz SDRAM
- 20GB[5] Ultra ATA Hard Drive
- Fixed 8X Max DVD-ROM Drive
- 4X AGP 32MB ATI Mobility™-M4 3D® Video
- Internal 56K Capable® FaxModem
- 59WHr Li-Ion Battery ■ harman/kardon® Audio
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty[2]
- 3-Yr Next-Business-Day On-site Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[10] Included

$2479 or as low as **$74** per mo. 45 mos.[12]

No payments for 90 days. E-VALUE Code: 89004-800324

DELL™ DESKTOPS:

DELL™ DIMENSION™ L Series

Affordable Desktop Solution

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 866MHz
- 64MB SDRAM ■ 20GB[5] Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive
- 15" (13.8" vis) E551 Monitor
- Intel® 3D® AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM Drive
- SoundBlaster 64V PCI LC Sound Card
- PC Speakers
- 56K Capable[6] PCI DataFax Modem
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 1-Yr Limited Warranty[2] ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[12] Included

$829 or as low as **$25** per mo. 45 mos.[12]

No payments for 90 days. E-VALUE Code: 89004-500308

DELL™ DIMENSION™ 4100 Series

Advanced Performance, Smart Value

- Intel® Pentium® III Processor at 1GHz
- 64MB SDRAM at 133MHz
- 20GB[5] Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 17" (16.0" vis, .28dp) E770 Monitor
- 16MB ATI Rage™ Pro
- NEW 8X/4X/32X Max CD-RW/DVD Combo Drive
- SoundBlaster 64V PCI LC Sound Card
- harman/kardon® Speakers
- 56K Capable[6] PCI Telephony Modem
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty[2] ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[12] Included

$1399 or as low as **$42** per mo. 45 mos.[12]

No payments for 90 days. E-VALUE Code: 89004-500313

DELL™ DIMENSION™ 8100 Series

Cutting-Edge Technology

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.3GHz
- 128MB RDRAM
- 20GB[5] Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 19" (18.0" vis, .26dp) M991 Monitor
- NEW 32MB NVIDIA™ GeForce2 MX 4X AGP Graphics
- 48X Max CD-ROM Drive ■ SB Live! Value Digital
- Harman Kardon® HK-695 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- Integrated 3Com® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty[2] ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[12] Included
- Family Game Pack[15]

$1799 or as low as **$54** per mo. 45 mos.[12]

No payments for 90 days. E-VALUE Code: 89004-500317f

DELL™ DIMENSION™ 8100 Series

Cutting-Edge Performance

- Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor at 1.4GHz
- 128MB RDRAM
- 60GB[5] Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 19" (18.0" vis, .26dp) M991 Monitor
- 32MB DDR NVIDIA™ GeForce2 GTS 4X AGP Graphics
- NEW 16X Max DVD-ROM Drive
- Turtle Beach® Santa Cruz™ DSP Sound
- Harman Kardon® HK-695 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- Integrated 3Com® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty[2] ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[12] Included
- APC Pro8T2 SurgeArrest Surge Protector

$2199 or as low as **$66** per mo. 45 mos.[12]

No payments for 90 days. E-VALUE Code: 89004-500321

DELL™ SOLUTIONS:

SOFTWARE & ACCESSORIES

Printers:
- Epson® Stylus 777 Color Printer, add $99
- HP® DeskJet® 932C, add $99 after $50 HP® Mail-in Rebate[16] (Reg. $149)

Scanner:
- HP® ScanJet® 4300Cse, add $99 after $50 HP® Mail-in Rebate[16] (Reg. $149)

Power Protection:
- APC Pro8T2 SurgeArrest, add $39

Software:
- Extreme Game Pack (Dimension™ only)[15], add $99
- Family Game Pack[15], add $99

Camera:
- HP® C315 Digital Camera, add $249 after $50 HP® Mail-in Rebate[16] (Reg. $299)

FINANCING & SERVICES

Payment Solutions:
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Dimension™ Desktop Service Upgrades:
- Upgrade Dimension™ L Series 1-Yr Ltd Warranty[2], 1-Yr At-Home Service[4] to Premier 3-Yr At-Home Service[4], add $119

Inspiron™ Notebook Service Upgrades:
- Upgrade Inspiron™ 3800 and 4000 Notebooks with 1-Yr Ltd Warranty[2] and 1-Yr Mail-in Service to:
  - 3-Yr Warranty[2] and 3-Yr Mail-in Service, add $99
  - 3-Yr Warranty[2] and 3-Yr On-site Service[4], add $219

intel inside pentium® III

Includes Windows Millennium Edition — the home version of the world's favorite software.

[12]Telephone access (call your phone co. for details) and other surcharges for access may apply. Must register within 30 days of receiving computer and accept DellNet/MSN Terms of Service. You agree to be billed monthly fees after the initial service period. You may cancel service at any time. Offer valid for new customers only in U.S. households and must be over 18 years old with major credit card. Limited time offer. [12]Monthly payment based on 13.99% APR FOR QUALIFIED CUSTOMERS. OFFER VARIES BY CREDIT-WORTHINESS OF CUSTOMER AS DETERMINED BY LENDER. Under 90 Days Same As Cash feature, interest accrues during first 90 days if balance not paid within 90 days. Customers not eligible for 90 Days Same As Cash feature may be offered standard 48-month financing with APRs ranging from 16.99% to 23.99%. Example: $1,650 purchase price, at 18.99%, 48 monthly payments at $50. Taxes and shipping charges extra, and vary. From American Investment Bank, N.A. to U.S. residents with approved credit. Availability may be limited in some states. Limited time offer.

Prices, specifications, availability and terms of offers may change without notice. Taxes and shipping charges extra, and vary. Valid for U.S. Dell Home Systems Co. only. For a copy of our Guarantees or Limited Warranties, write Dell USA L.P., Attn: Warranties, One Dell Way, Round Rock, Texas 78682. [4]At-Home or On-site service provided via third-party contract with customer. Technician will be dispatched, if necessary, following phone-based troubleshooting. To receive Next-Business-Day service, Dell must notify the service provider before 5 pm (customer's time). Availability varies. Other conditions apply. [5]For hard drives, GB means 1 billion bytes; accessible capacity varies with operating environment. [6]Download speeds limited to 53Kbps. Upload speeds are less (about 30Kbps) and vary by modem manufacturer and line conditions. Analog phone line and compatible server required. [15]Software, packaging or documentation may differ from retail versions. [16]For rebate details and coupons, call 800-728-9665 for HP. System and monitor purchase may be required for rebate. Intel, the Intel Inside logo and Pentium are registered trademarks, and Intel Celeron is a trademark of Intel Corporation. MS, Microsoft, MSN and Windows are registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation. 3Com is a registered trademark of 3Com Corporation. HP and DeskJet are registered trademarks of Hewlett-Packard Corporation. Dell cannot be held responsible for errors in typography or photography. ©2001 Dell Computer Corporation. All rights reserved.

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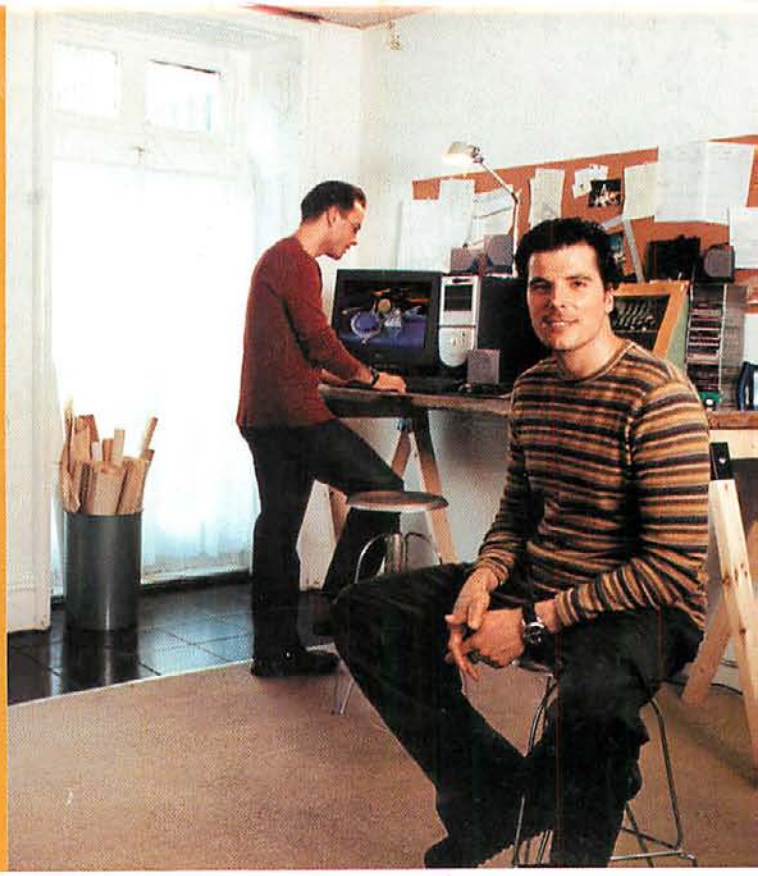

DELL™ DIMENSION™ 8100 Series

Cutting-Edge Performance

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- 60GB[5] Ultra ATA/100 Hard Drive (7200 RPM)
- 19" (18.0" vis, .26dp) M991 Monitor
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- Harman Kardon® HK-695 Surround Sound Speakers with Subwoofer
- 56K Capable[6] PCI Telephony Modem for Windows®
- Integrated 3Com® 10/100 Ethernet Controller
- MS® Works Suite 2001 ■ MS® Windows® Me
- 3-Yr Limited Warranty[2] ■ 1-Yr At-Home Service[4]
- 1 Year of DellNet™ by MSN® Internet Access[10] Included
- APC Pro8T2 SurgeArrest Surge Protector

$2199 E-VALUE CODE 89002-500321

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Introducing the All-New Dell™ Dimension™ 8100 with an Intel® Pentium® 4 processor. Over-the-top performance for those who can handle it.

The Dell™ Dimension™ 8100 takes you to the next level and then some. We're talking speeds of up to 1.5GHz maximized by the latest Intel® Pentium® 4 processors. With up to 1GB of memory, you can multi-task without sacrificing performance. Arming you with quite possibly the fastest and most powerful desktop you've ever seen is just one more way Dell helps you get the most out of your PC. No matter how extreme your needs are.

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