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First review! Giant robot demolition

Civilization 2

Full review, and Sid Meier speaks about his next game

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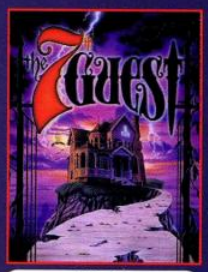

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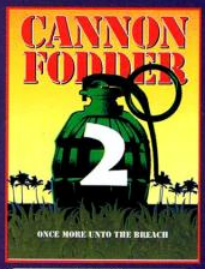

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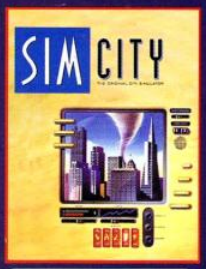

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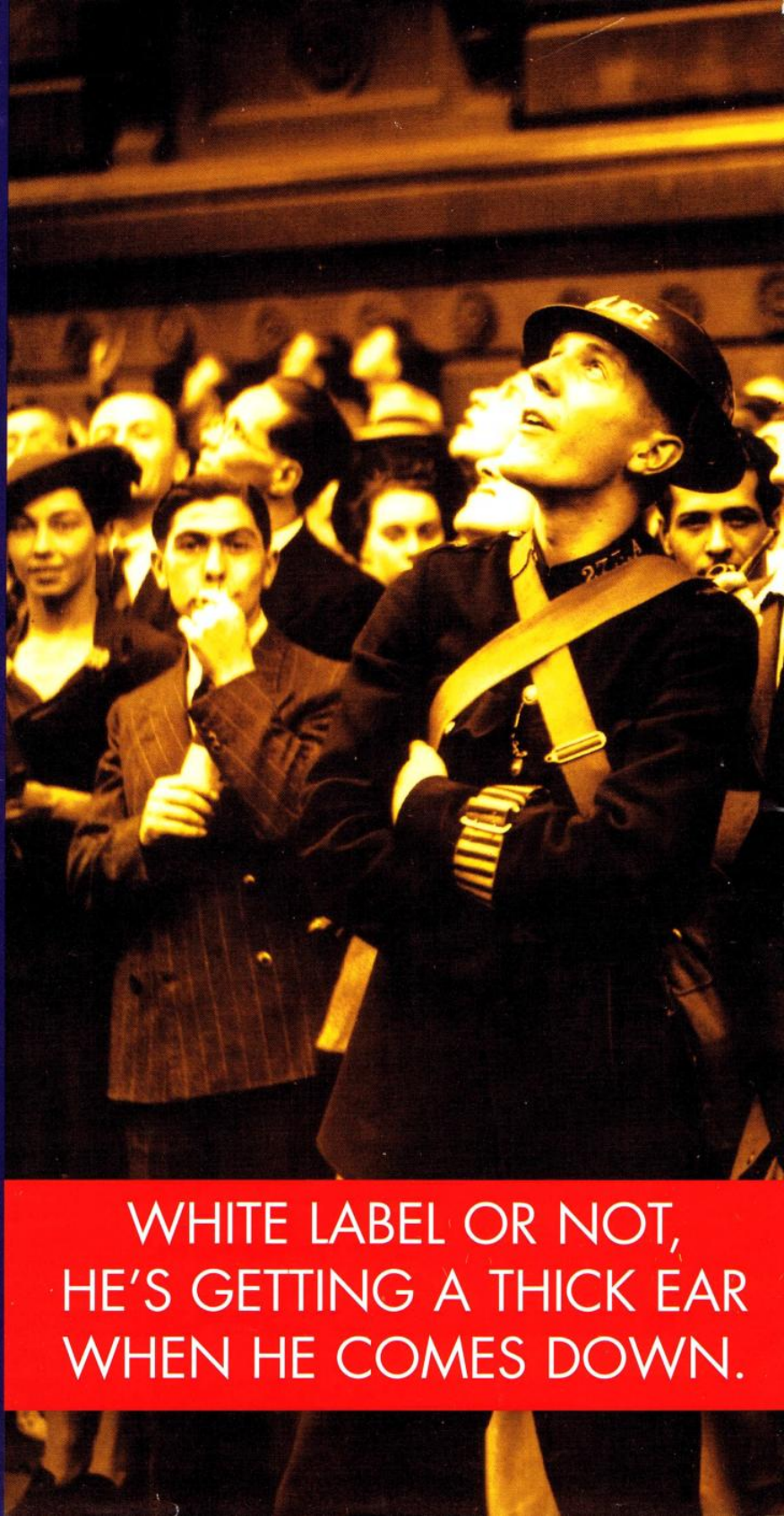

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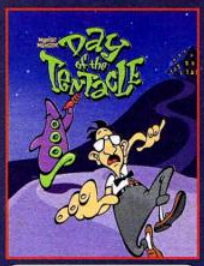

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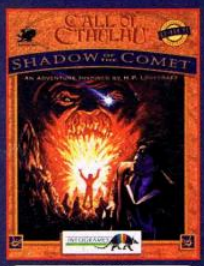

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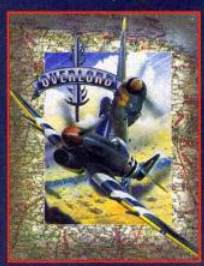

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PC GAMER

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It's on the way from Adeline, the creators of *Little Big Adventure* and *Alone In The Dark*, and it's astonishingly impressive. We investigate.

50 Radio Days

As the capabilities of PCs and games consoles grow closer, it's inevitable that we're going to see more and more console-to-PC cross-over. One company that's particularly well-placed for all this is Sony, with their Psygnosis attachment.

144 Win a Pentium

That's right! In conjunction with MicroProse, we offer you a Pentium 100 with a copy of the brilliant *Grand Prix 2*.

60 Civ 2

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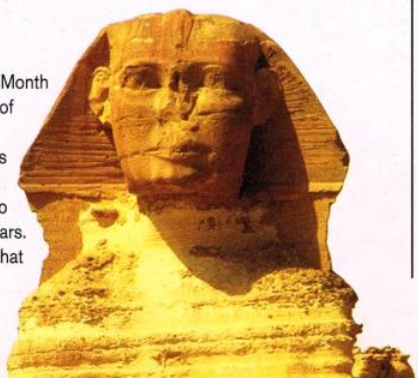

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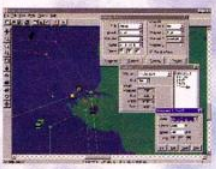

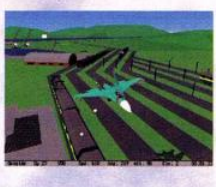

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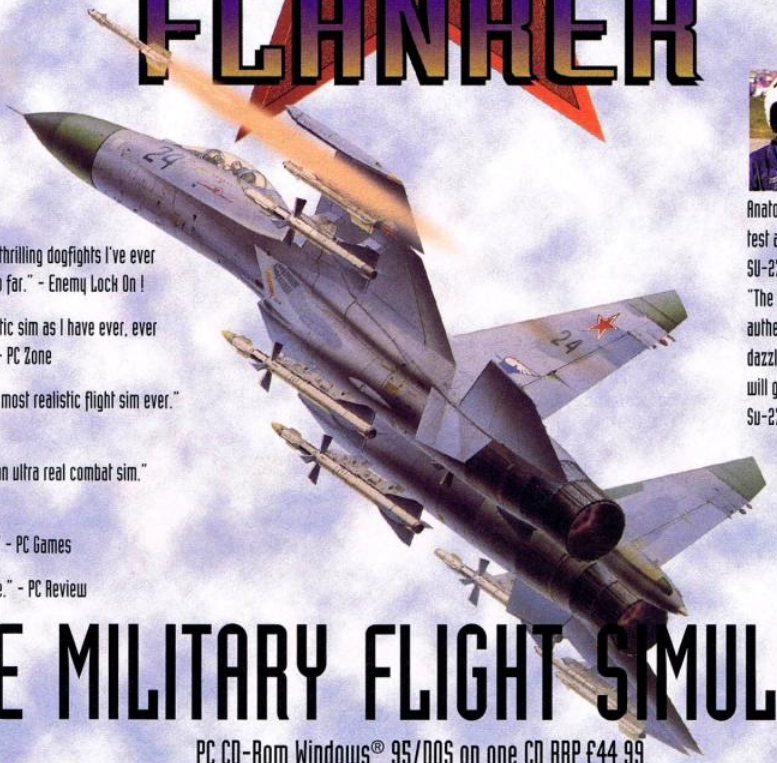
"This really is as realistic sim as I have ever, ever experienced on a PC." - PC Zone

"SU-27 looks to be the most realistic flight sim ever." - PC Power

"It's simply amazing...an ultra real combat sim." - PC Attack

"Scorchingly realistic." - PC Games

"The detail is incredible." - PC Review



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Jonathan Davies
Editor

The best PC game we've played

This month has been a little strained, and, as the final elements of *PC Gamer* are slotted into place, I have allowed myself a small glass of malt whisky. I have not eaten for many hours, however (Mrs Brown is away visiting her sister), and the effect of the spirit is more pronounced than I had anticipated. I trip on the edge of the Chinese rug on the floor of my office, strike my head on the mantelpiece and collapse beside the fire, unconscious.

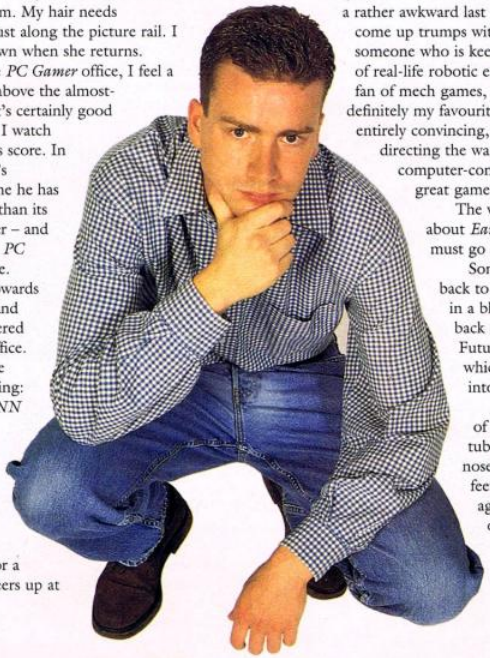
Then something strange happens.

I begin to rise into the air, and am able to look down upon my prone form. My hair needs trimming. And there is dust along the picture rail. I must speak with Mrs Brown when she returns.

Floating out into the *PC Gamer* office, I feel a certain pride as I levitate above the almost-completed March issue. It's certainly good to see *Civ 2* in there, and I watch James deliberating over its score. In the end he decides that it's definitely the best PC game he has ever played – even better than its already-excellent forefather – and correspondingly awards it *PC Gamer's* highest-ever score.

As I begin to drift towards the window, I look back and see a worried crowd gathered around the door of my office. Someone is picking up the phone, and another is asking: "Who will review EA's *TNN Bass Fishing* now?"

Now I am circling above the streets of Bath, where video cameras watch sinisterly over the population. It feels peaceful up here. I hover above the Abbey for a moment, and a pigeon peers up at me enquiringly.



I fly higher and higher, leaving Bath and travelling at great speed across the West Country. The English Channel rushes beneath me, and presently I arrive over Lyon, in France, where Adeline are now back working on *Time Commando.* They're a splendid bunch, they really are, staying at the cutting edge of both technology and good game design, and I am eagerly looking forward to the completion of *Time Commando,* as well as *Little Big Adventure 2.*

Across the Atlantic now – I overtake Concorde at 40,000 feet – to the home of Sierra who, after a rather awkward last few months, have come up trumps with *EarthSiege 2.* As someone who is keenly awaiting the advent of real-life robotic exoskeletons I am a big fan of mech games, and *EarthSiege 2* is definitely my favourite so far. The robots are entirely convincing, and I've enjoyed directing the war against the evil computer-controlled ones. It is a great game.

The world must be told about *EarthSiege 2! PC Gamer* must go on!

Something is drawing me back to Bath. The world passes in a blur and I find myself back at the monolithic Future Publishing building, which reaches menacingly into the night sky.

I awaken in the arms of James, who is waving a tub of Play-Doh under my nose. Clambering to my feet, steadying myself against my 18th century oak desk, I find I am just in time to sign off the final pages of *PC Gamer.* You will like them, I trust. PCG

CD GAMER

It's the best CD we've ever had! Not only have we tidied up the presentation, but it's stuffed with an incredible selection of demos which you simply won't find anywhere else. Truly, this is a month for celebration.

Rebel Assault 2

We weren't overly impressed by *Rebel Assault 2* when we reviewed it in the January issue. It'd be fine if it was a film, we felt, but you'd have to be a rich man indeed to spend £50 on it. Here, though, you can play a chunk of it for no more effort than it takes to pop in our cover CD.

Toshinden

Here's one of those games that sort of appeared out of nowhere. We'll be bringing you the full story behind it next month, hopefully, to coincide with the release of the full game, but in the meantime allow our CD to demonstrate its PlayStation-sourced powers as you tussle with 3D baddies.

EarthSiege 2

We're enormous fans of enormous robots here at *PC Gamer,* and welcome Sierra's latest simulation with open arms. It is, we reckon, just about the best robotic exoskeleton game yet, just a stomp ahead of the also-great *MechWarrior 2,* and we're delighted to be able to bring you the first demo of it.

Command & Conquer

Good grief, yes. *Command & Conquer* has trampled the PC world like a gigantic dinosaur, selling more copies since its release than just about every other game put together. It's brilliant, but, if you've been waiting to play a demo of it before opening your wallet, this month's CD should contain all the proof you need.

Warcraft II

Here's an absolutely brilliant game which we urge everyone to play. It's sort of *Command & Conquer* with orcs, in a way, and is hugely compulsive as you attempt to build up your army of swordsmen and elven archers, construct a mighty navy and sail forth for the orcish homelands. May they perish, with their green skin and lizard-like lips. The full version is in the shops now.

Descent 2

You'll already have gasped at the rolling demo of *Descent 2* that came with our January issue. Now play the game for yourself. We present to you the shareware version, with all the improvements it makes over the original, and point out that the full version will be on sale at the end of March.

Crusader: No Remorse

By far the biggest explosions we've seen in recent years come courtesy of Origin's *Crusader,* which we reviewed back in our October issue last year, and for which a demo has only just become available. Try it for yourself, but be warned that the baddies tend to die in horribly unpleasant ways.

Rayman

We review *Rayman* this month, and discover that it's the PC's best platform game yet, just a smidgeon better than *Earthworm Jim.* It's unmistakably French in outlook, with the sort of bizarre cartoony characters that our trans-Channel chums do so well.

Abuse

Also reviewed this month, *Abuse* has links with id Software, which is perhaps why it's been so eagerly received by the PC gaming community. It's also a great game, of course, as you'll discover within seconds of firing up the shareware version of it contained on our CD.

Seek And Destroy

Epic MegaGames have established themselves as one of the biggest names in PC shareware, with *Tyrian* being perhaps their best-known, and best, title. They've got some even better stuff lined up for this year, and first to ride over the crest of the hill is *Seek And Destroy*, a nifty helicopter-based shoot-'em-up. Play it and then order the full version without hesitation.

Shockwave Assault

As pre-rendered shoot-'em-ups go, EA's *Shockwave Assault* is a fairly respectable one – we gave it 62% when we reviewed it last month. Dip your toe into our demo and see what you think.

Cyberia 2

Another pre-rendered shoot-'em-up, *Cyberia 2* immerses you in a threatening concrete and steel world where everyone seems intent on killing you unless you get to them first. The full game ought to be available within the next couple of months.

Cyril The Cyberpunk

A game of which you're unlikely to have heard. Allow *PC Gamer* to correct this, allowing you to appraise yourself fully of its merits.

Compuserve sampler

In conjunction with Compuserve, we present you with a special taster of their services, allowing you free access for a limited period not only to the Compuserve network, but to the entire Internet as well.

WADS AND ADD-ONS

Cheet Sheets 46

A huge selection of crafty tricks for making games easier. We frown upon this sort of thing, but permit you access to it nevertheless.

Doom, Doom 2 and Hexen WADs

These ought to install themselves automatically with your copies of the respective games, further enhancing your enjoyment of them.

Before You Start

We strongly recommend that you free up as much expanded memory as possible. You can do this by editing the config.sys file yourself.

Type EDIT\CONFIG.SYS <ENTER> from the C:\ prompt, and a screen will appear. Look for the line which has the words emm386.exe in it. Replace the text which appears after emm386.exe with the word RAM. The line should now look something like this:
device = c:\dos\emm386.exe RAM

Alternatively, one easy route to more memory is to use the memmaker program. This should not be undergone unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, however, but reverently, discreetly and soberly, duly considering the causes for which memory was ordained. Especially if you use a boot menu or a joint DOS-Win/Win 95 set-up.

Please note that we have come across compatibility problems with PCs using CD-ROM cache programs other than MSCDEX, which is supplied with MS-DOS. The most up-to-date version is included on CD Gamer.

The DOS Menu

To start with you need to put the CD into your CD-ROM drive, and select it by entering MS-DOS, and typing D:<ENTER> or whichever letter you use for the CD.

Next you must start the menu by typing go<ENTER>. If you insert the disk from Win95, the menu will start up automatically.

On the main page there are four large buttons: **Playable Demos, Hot Previews, Shareware,** and **Doom And Heretic Add-Ons.** To access these, either press the appropriate keys, or use your mouse to click on their buttons.

Each of the four areas is laid out in the same way, with a list down the left-hand side of the page, and various actions on the right. The important ones, **Play Direct from CD, Play Windows Game** and **Install Game to Hard Drive,** are enabled and disabled according to the functionality of the game.

For most of the games, the best thing to select is **Play Direct From CD**, and due to the nature of the game, this normally installs it to your hard drive anyway. Most games will be put entirely in your c:\pcg directory so that you can find it all afterwards.

If you're running Windows 95, and the **Run Windows Game** is selected, then please do **NOT** select this option as this is designed for Win3.1. Just select **Play Direct From CD** instead.

Got A Problem?

CDs are funny things; they either work or, well, oops. This means that if you can see the files on the CD, either by typing dir<ENTER> at the DOS prompt, with the CD selected, then the chances are that you have a working CD and you should run through the above steps again.

If, on the other hand, your CD-ROM drive refuses to run or read the disc, then you should either phone our Technical Support Manager, Trevor Witt, on 01225 442244 or, alternatively, e-mail or write to him at the following address:.

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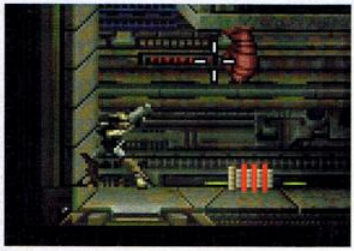
COVERDISKS

For the ever-dwindling number of our readers who are sticking to their floppy disk drives, we've crammed everything of quality that we could possibly find onto a couple of three-and-a-half-inchers.

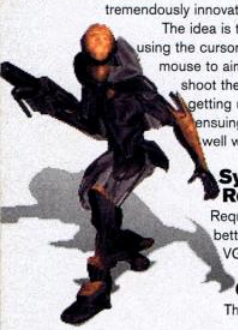
Abuse

Here's the first game from a new American company called Crack dot Com, which is run by Dave Taylor when he's not programming bits of *Quake* for id Software. It looks a little old-fashioned, being a



platform-based shoot-'em-up, but is in fact tremendously innovative.

The idea is that you dash about using the cursor keys, and use the mouse to aim your gun at things and shoot them. It takes a bit of getting used to, but the ensuing explosions are well worth the effort.



System Requirements

Requires a 386/33 or better, 4Mb of RAM and VGA graphics.

Controls

The basic essentials are the cursor keys for moving, the mouse to aim your gun, the left mouse button to fire and the right mouse button to change weapon.

Duke Nukem

In all the excitement surrounding *Duke Nukem 3D*, it's easy to forget the Duke's humble origins as a platform game character. We rectify this by providing you with the first ever *Duke Nukem* game, which looks pretty ropey these days but is actually rather entertaining.

System Requirements

Incredibly, *Duke Nukem* will run on absolutely any PC at all, including a really dismal 8086 with 512K of RAM from about 1985.

Controls

Ctrl – Jump, **Alt** – Fire, **Left/Right** – Left/Right, **Up** – Activate.

The Doom 2 'Quake' WAD

Strictly unofficial, this WAD has been produced by studying the pictures of *Quake* that have been released so far and sort of designing a level for *Doom 2* that looks a bit like them. You ought to be able to fool your friends for seconds before they denounce you as an impostor.

Before You Start

We recommend that you check you have got enough conventional memory to run the *PC Gamer* Coverdisk demos. (The first 640k of the Memory Map.)

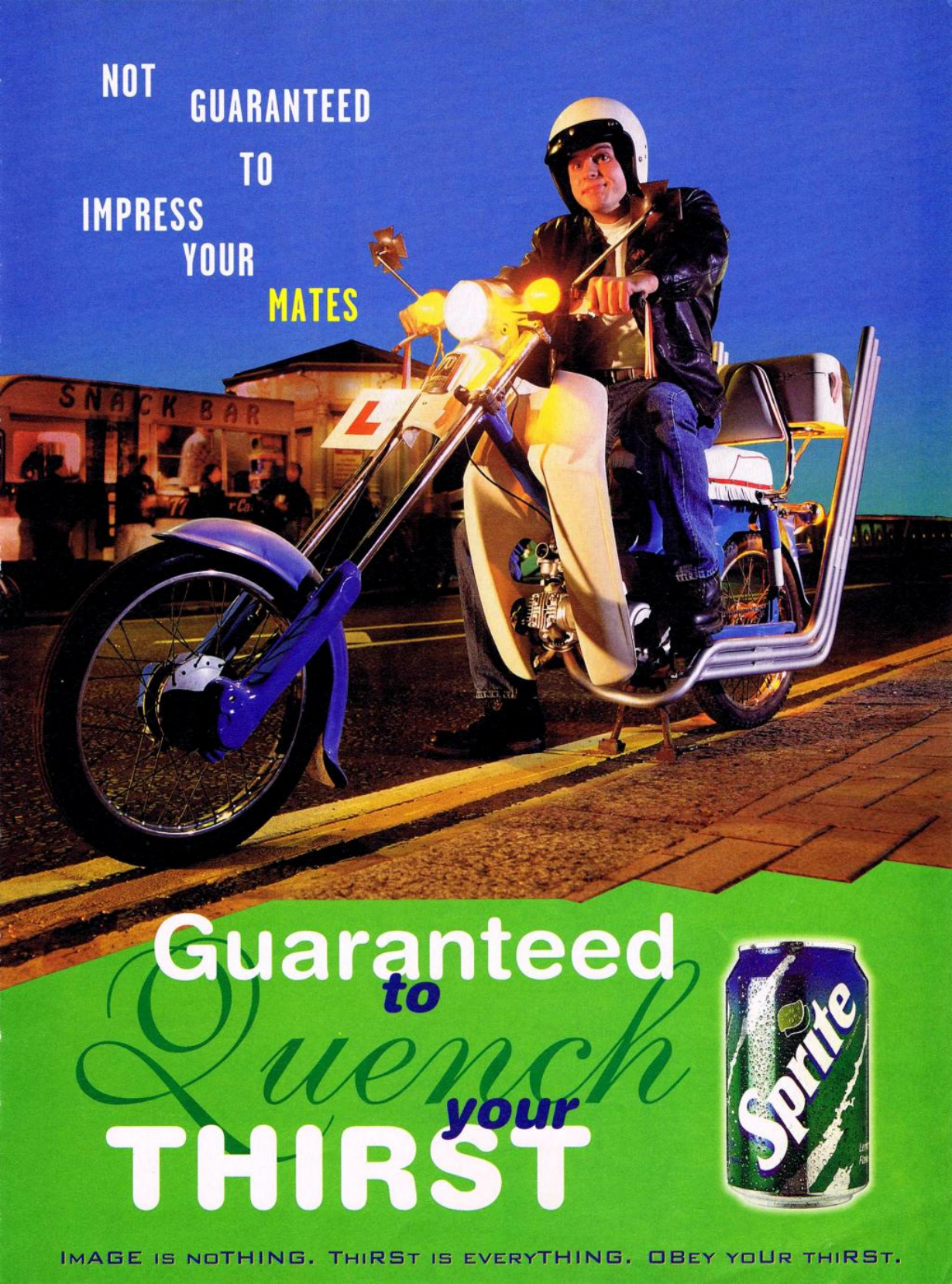
Even if you have a PC with 4Mb of RAM, that doesn't mean you'll automatically have enough conventional memory to run the Coverdisk programs. Check how much RAM you have free by typing: MEM <ENTER>. If the figure beside the line 'largest executable program size' is less than around 550K, your system probably isn't set up properly. To free up more memory read the 'Before You Start' boxout on the previous page.

Got A Problem?

If, after following the above steps, you're still having trouble, or if the game simply won't install at all, it's just possible that you have a defective disk. If you're convinced that a disk is dodgy, return it to the address below and a new, working version should be returned to you within 28 days.

PC Gamer March Disk,
TIB PLC
TIB House
11 Edward Street
Bradford
BD4 7BH

● *PC Gamer's* Coverdisks are thoroughly checked for all known viruses, and independently certified before duplication. While every care is taken in the selection, testing and installation of the *PC Gamer* Coverdisks software, Future Publishing cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage occurring during their use. You are strongly advised to have recent, verified back-ups of all important files before installing any new software.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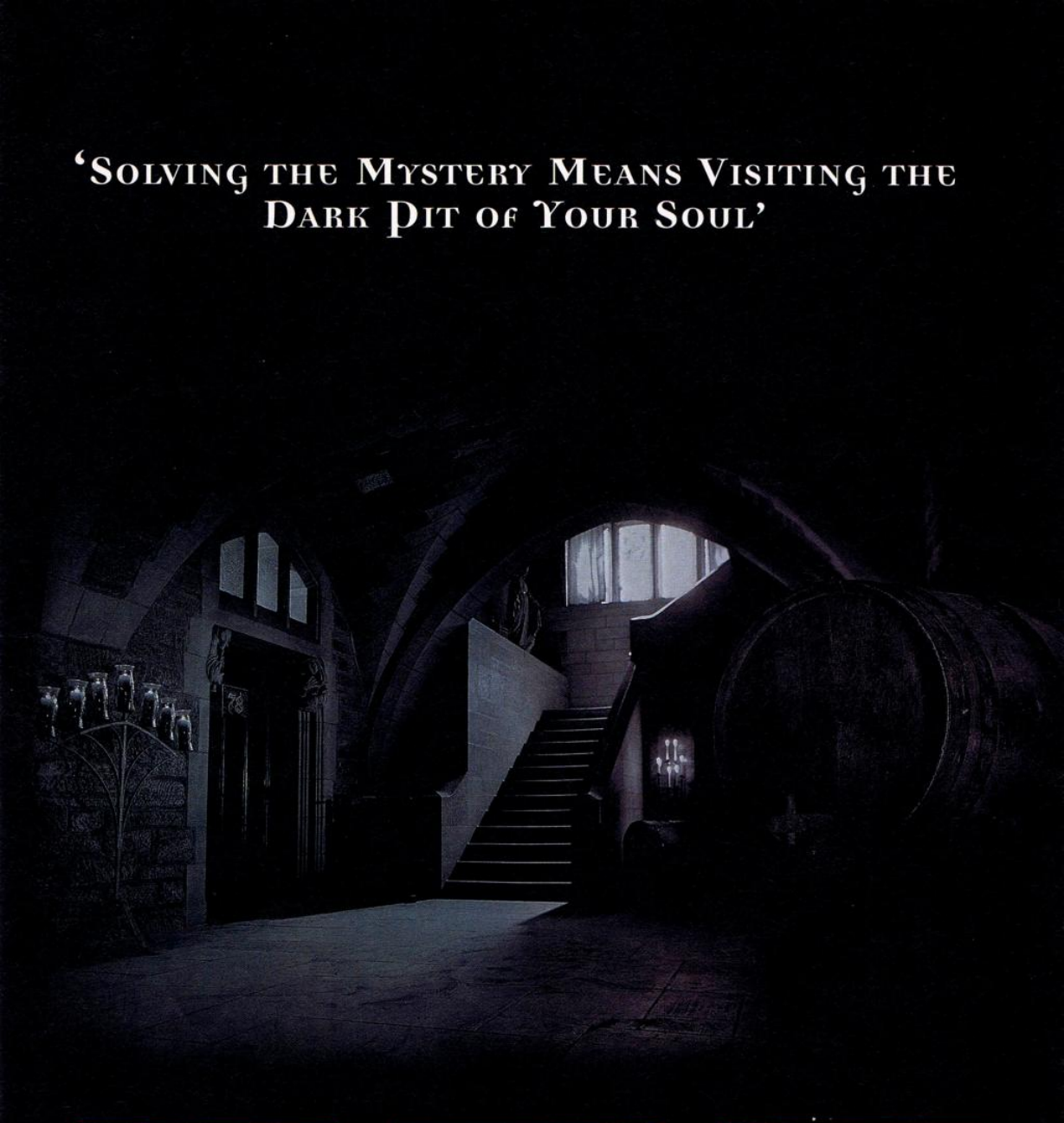

WARP.

Acclaim entertainment, ltd.

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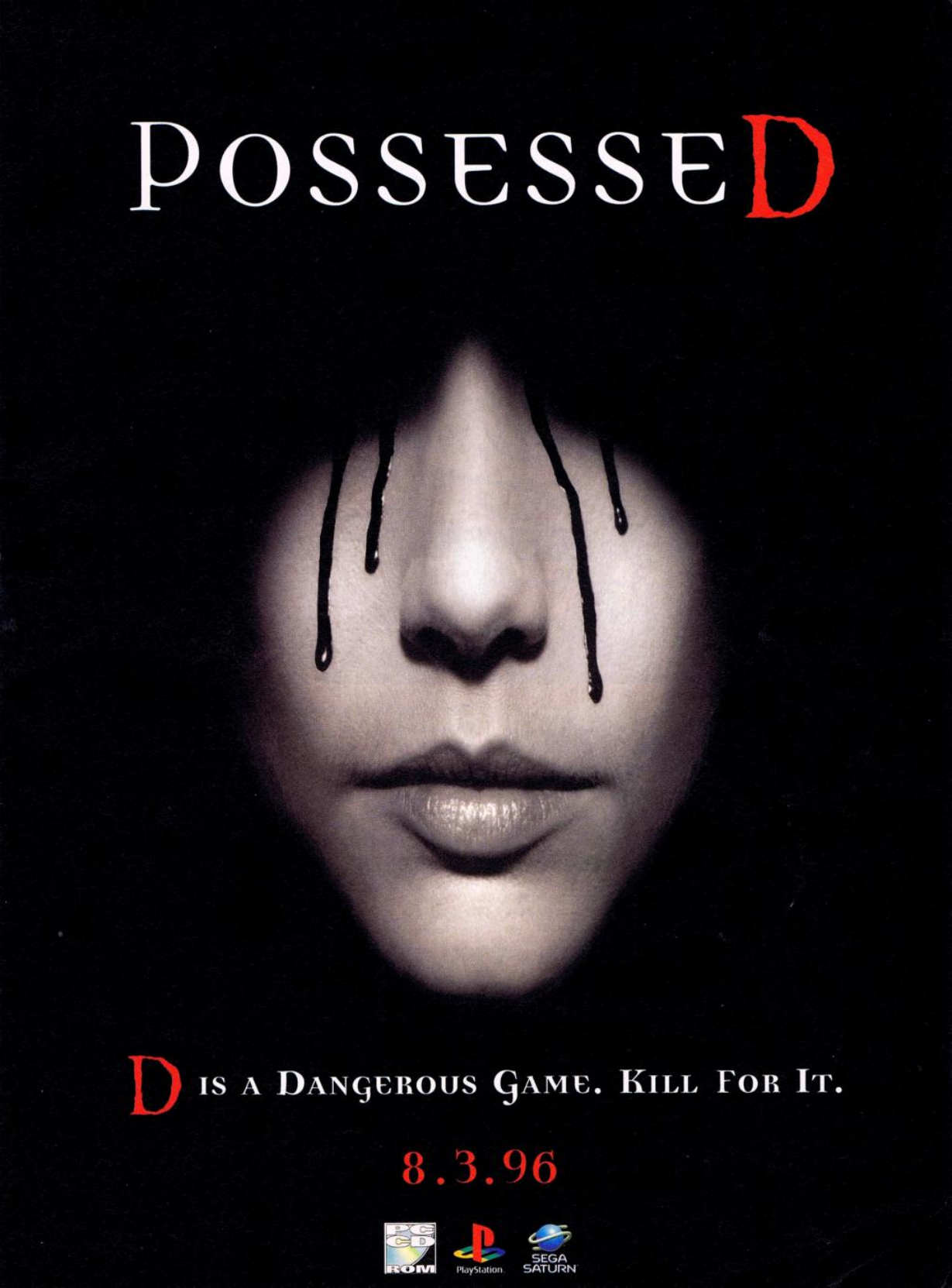


D IS A DANGEROUS GAME. KILL FOR IT.

8.3.96

PC CD ROM PlayStation SEGA SATURN

Technology

Life can get pretty hectic when there are five pirates trying to kill you. Give 'em a thermal grenade to sort 'em out once and for all.

This is the next game from Looking Glass Technologies, the people behind *Flight Unlimited*. And we all want it.

By JAMES FLYNN

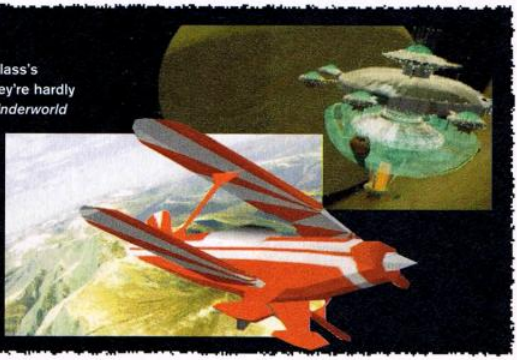
Looking Glass Technologies turned up unexpectedly in London two weeks ago, and four hours later everyone present was clamouring for a copy of their next game. From a cursory glance and an hour's playing, ***Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri*** seems to have the potential to become a benchmark for mixing action and strategy elements.

Looking Glass's previous effort, *Flight Unlimited*, was commended in every magazine for being an exceptional game, but it's only now that the hardware necessary for playing it is becoming widespread. *Terra Nova* looks even better, but mercifully hasn't increased the demands on the processor to a significant extent. The TED engine that drives the game is undoubtedly one of the most advanced available today.

"Our terrain goes out miles and miles and with no haze," says project manager Richard Flyer. "We're not

Looking back...

In case you're thinking "How can Looking Glass's technology be so good?", remember that they're hardly newcomers to the games industry. *Ultima Underworld* was the first true 3D world ever to appear on the PC and the technology was developed for Origin by Looking Glass. *System Shock's* engine made that weird and wonderful playing style possible and also came out of LG's Boston offices. Other titles in which they've been closely involved include: *Deep Space* (1984), *Chuck Yeager's Flight Trainer* (1986) and *Space Rogue* (1989), and, of course, *Flight Unlimited* (1995).

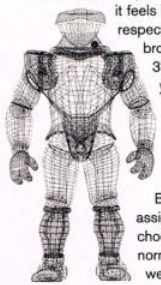


bombardment

One of your grenades causes a bit of a ruckus (left). **The story is told via video footage and rendered graphics** (above).

using bitmaps in here as shortcuts, either. The sky moves properly, the water produces pure reflections, and there's a full range of realistic weather effects such as rain and lightning." The result is a world with a fully textured horizon where it should be, not an inch from the camera. In a way it must be irritating for Looking Glass, because the perfection of the environment makes you take it for granted and forget about its beauty.

The way the game initially seems to play could be described at a stretch as a bizarre mix of *Syndicate* and *System Shock*. *Syndicate* because there's a strong tactical element to planning missions, but when it comes to the crunch it's all reflexes and co-ordination, and *System Shock* because it feels in some vague respects like its distant brother. Each of the 37 missions sees you kitted out in a mobile powered suit and up against a similarly equipped variety of enemies. Before each assignment you get to choose from certain normal and special weapons and also team-mates to assist you. These footmen can be given a multitude of orders in the field, and seem to scuttle off happily to carry them out. It's the best system of its kind I've seen so far.



The interface may look Amiga-ish but it manages to communicate complex orders very easily. Order your team around (left window), **set waypoints on the versatile map** (central window) **and then get down to it with the weapons** (right).

The plot focuses on your continuing struggle for freedom against the oppressive Earth Hegemony. For once it's this way round and your Strike Force Centauri is the last chance of success. Fighting over four planets with different gravities, climates and terrain, you must repel the attackers. The missions are filled in with 30 minutes of quality video footage that Richard says is deliberately corny.

One aspect of the game that looks horrific at first is the control system. You have nine keys to control your suit's basic movements plus the mouse to select status screens, set waypoints, target enemies, release scout drones and everything else. There are shortcut keys for some actions, but the whole system becomes totally instinctive after a few minutes.

● We ought to be reviewing *Terra Nova* next month, and there'll be a demo on our CD too.

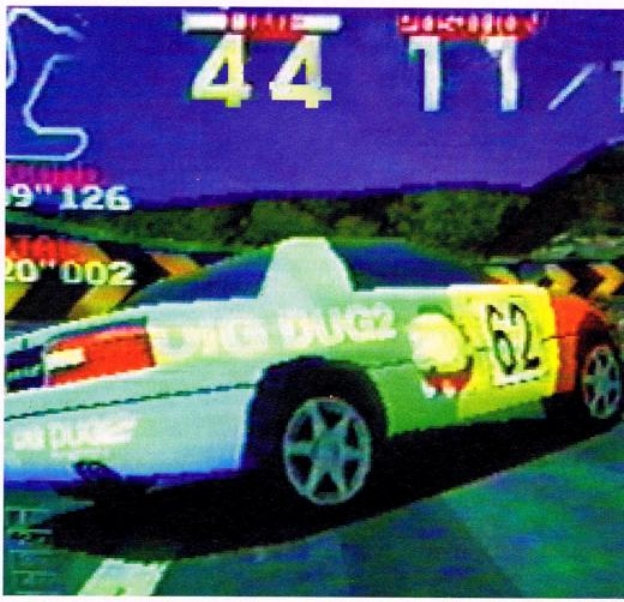
Looking forward...

With Looking Glass now publishing their own games it's entirely up to them what they do next. First up will be a network add-on for *Terra Nova*, due for a September release. *Flight Unlimited 2* is also in the works, and less of a purely stunt-flying concept is promised. Con Hantzopoulos, game designer at Looking Glass, explains: "Graphically, we're taking what we've learnt so far and pushing it much further. Because most people navigate at 3,000 feet or below, we're working really hard on the ground detail, so expect to see hangers, airfields, buildings, even large monuments. We're now getting it down to one metre per pixel, yet still aiming for 15 frames per second on a P75 machine."

Further down the line (in fact still taxiing across the design board) is *Flight Combat*, which will also make use of the rebuilt *Flight Unlimited* engine. The aim is to have a combat sim that focuses on how the aerial manoeuvres are performed as you fight. "It's the project everybody at Looking Glass wants to work on," admits Hantzopoulos. The game should be with us in about a year.

State of the

The nVidia chip brought *Virtua Fighter Remix* onto the PC. Now NEC and Videologic bring you *Rave Racer*, an arcade-perfect conversion running on their brilliant new 3D graphics accelerator. PowerVR, it would appear, gives your PC the power to outclass the consoles... By JAMES FLYNN



This is *Ridge Racer*, Namco's all-time classic driving game. *Rave Racer* looks even better, and the PowerVR should be able to do this on your PC.

It sounded too good to be true – *Virtua Fighter Remix*, running on the PC with texture-mapped fighters that looked just as good as the original console version. And yet we gave it 90%, because in terms of graphics and gameplay, *VFR* takes Argonaut's *FX Fighter* and beats it to a sobbing pulp with a very large stick. It's just a shame that the 'large stick' in question is actually Diamond Multimedia's new Edge 3D graphics accelerator, and that to pop one inside your PC will cost you a cool £250.

On its own, the humble PC can't keep up. The futuristic plastic lunchboxes we know fondly as the super-consoles all rely on custom graphics chips to handle the processor-intensive demands of 3D. The PC must juggle everything itself: graphics, sound, peripherals input, the lot. With games like *EF2000* and *Grand Prix 2*, fast 3D depends both on the speed of your PC's processor and the quality of the game's code. In VGA, a Pentium has little trouble drawing fairly complex 3D environments at a reasonable frame rate. But maintaining a jerk-free display in a 640 by 480 mode is pretty much impossible. Cue the 3D graphics accelerator stage left...

PowerVR

NEC's new PowerVR technology, developed in conjunction with graphics card giant Videologic, is the latest 'wunderchip' to offer realistic, real-time 3D imaging on the PC. Like Diamond's nVidia card that powered Sega's *Virtua Fighter Remix*, PowerVR allows games developers to have arcade-quality 3D graphics without rupturing the PC processor. NVidia was good, but after two hours looking at PowerVR, which was running a flawless demonstration of Namco's *Rave Racer*, this is way better.

Why? Well, unlike the other 3D accelerators you may have read about, the PowerVR chipset uses a unique design to speed up its graphics performance. Typically 3D controllers have three memory systems: Z-buffer, texture and frame-buffer memory. The PowerVR card, on the other hand, has dumped the Z-buffer memory requirement, incorporating it into the two remaining chips to give a huge performance increase.

Its unique PCX1 architecture combines an Image Synthesis Processor (ISP) and a Texture Shading Processor (TSP). The ISP chip takes care of image synthesis which includes hidden surface removal, shadow generation and depth cueing. Because this hidden surface removal, more popularly known as Z-buffering, is carried out via the ISP chip, no Z-buffer memory is needed which speeds up performance and makes PowerVR more efficient than its rivals.

The TSP chip then looks after the texturing, shading and display management and together the two chips deliver a performance that can proudly boast a sustained 257,000 (one million peak) 100 pixel-size

Hello. I'm PowerVR and I can do this:

1. Real shadows can be cast from any object over any surface and updated every frame.
2. PowerVR's equivalent 32-bit Z-buffer makes solid outdoor objects a reality.
3. Pixel-perfect hidden surface removal.
4. Anti-aliased textures stop shimmering.
5. Perspective-correct textures do not bend or warp.
6. Shading doesn't change when an object is rotated.
7. Translucence can be applied to whole objects, polygons or individual pixels for effects like dirty glass, fire, water and simulated lens flare,
8. True logarithmic fog calculated by pixel.
9. Real-time, real colour 640 by 480 resolution with MIP-mapping, fogging and shadows over the whole scene.
10. Capable of between 250,000 and one million textured 100-pixel triangles per second in real time.

Objects that are tricky shapes like mountains will benefit from the ISP.

art

***Tekken* is a truly exceptional game, arguably the best beat-'em-up available today. If the PowerVR's claims come good quickly (remember GLINT anyone?), it could become the standard. Its main rival will probably be Rendition.**

triangles-per-second in 640 by 480 at 30 frames per second and in 16.7 million colours. (If this is true, it's a huge figure). Of course, every one of these pixels can be textured, fogged, lit and shaded.

In comparison, a 133MHz Pentium under its own steam can produce 10,000-20,000 polygons per second, the nVidia card can churn out up to 100,000, while graphics accelerators like Cirrus, Rendition and Matrox can shift about 170,000. As for the competition, Sony claim that the PlayStation can shift a peak volume of 300,000 polygons per second, but a more realistic average speed is reckoned to be much lower at 80,000-90,000 polygons. NEC are proudly claiming that PowerVR can deliver "four times the power of a PlayStation for half the cost". They're probably not wrong. *(I can draw five polygons per second, if anyone's interested, but only by cheating. – Ed)*

So what?

As far as games are concerned, the biggest feather in NEC's marketing cap is their strategic alliance with arcade giant Namco. The two companies have joined forces to try and establish the PowerVR chipset as the world standard for 3D. For starters, PowerVR is fully compatible with industry-standard APIs (Application Programming Interface) such as DirectX, Microsoft's Reality Lab and the imminent Direct3D. Together developers will be able to program real-time 3D graphics that are superior to those now wowing the kids on the 32-bit consoles.

Need more convincing? Tad Otsuki, general manager of Namco reckons: "PowerVR will provide PC users with 3D performance and realism far beyond conventional PC 3D games systems. We are confident that PowerVR has the highest level of performance and functionality among the current 3D graphics chipsets available or under development. With PowerVR, PCs will be able to surpass home consoles in 3D graphics performance and realism providing the ideal partner for Namco PC games titles."

Namco are so impressed with the power of PowerVR that they've formed a special PC project team and plan to release *Rave Racer, Tekken* and *Air Combat 22* to take advantage of it. The company reportedly ported the *Rave Racer* code to PowerVR in less than two weeks, and a jaw-dropping teaser was running on the system when *PC Gamer* saw it. Both Gremlin and Psygnosis have also announced that they're developing games that will support the card, while a further eight companies have yet to go public.

So forget about nVidia and ignore 3D Blaster. From what we've seen, PowerVR will be the most powerful 3D graphics accelerator available for the PC. With Namco, Psygnosis and Gremlin already in the bag, the future looks very bright indeed. Hardware accelerators are poised to be the next big thing, and if PowerVR lives up to expectations, its competitors are going to have a hard job reaching the battlefield.

Psygnosis and Gremlin are just two companies that have made their support for PowerVR public.

The logo. And that's about all I can say about it. Oh, it's red.

Notice all the perfectly cast shadows from the frisbee base.

Texture mapping complex 24-bit objects onto cylinders.

Curves are the key to creating natural looking features.

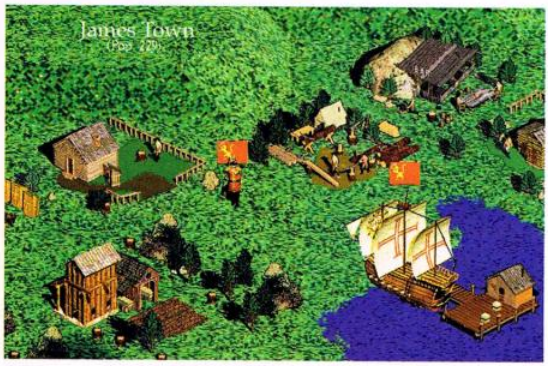
Old task, new approach

Choose whether to butcher innocent natives or treat them with a modicum of respect in Interplay's *Conquest Of The New World.*

By JAMES FLYNN

Conquest Of The New World is Interplay's first attempt to compete directly with US rivals MicroProse in the strategy genre. A demo appeared on last month's CD Gamer, and we're looking forward to reviewing the game, hopefully next month.

In keeping with the current trend towards flashier graphics in strategy games, *COTNW* employs an isometric 3D perspective. The map features crisply drawn and highly detailed environments over which your units will be crawling. Individual battles are also depicted in 3D.



Elevated 3D scenery makes a comeback in *Conquest Of The New World.*

(Left) **The game will contain a tutorial just to get you started.**

(Below) **Every three months your progress is assessed by the local rag.**

Exploring the unknown is a vital element of the game, and when you start you'll just see one ship on one square surrounded by blackness. From here you're on your own, and how you survive is up to you. Setting off into the wilderness with explorers, a few troops and a settler you must locate and claim prominent natural features such as mountains and rivers. Your king back home is an insecure chap, and only by providing these billion-ton trinkets can you hope to remain in favour.

As you explore, your main priority is to locate suitable areas for your settlements. Large flat areas with mountains, trees and rivers are perfect, but predictably enough these are rare. If you want to trade with your homeland, you'll need a port as well, and these can only be built by the ocean. Once you're burning trees and slaughtering animals efficiently it's probably time to go and harass a few innocent natives with your trained military, or, if you haven't got the money, why not pop

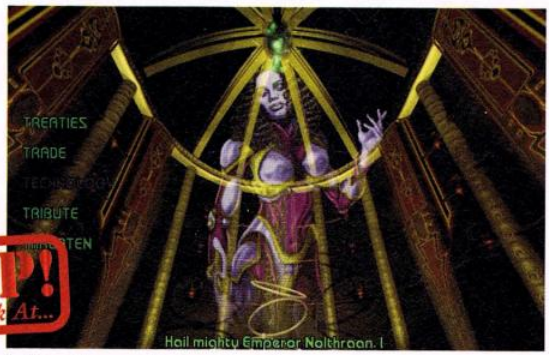
Masterly timing

The original was frequently compared to *Civilization*. Can *Master Of Orion 2* keep up with the pace?

No space sim seems to have captured the public's imagination like some of the ground-based counterparts. Simtex's *Master Of Orion* and The Logic Factory's *Ascendancy* are probably the two that have come the closest, but even these, despite being fine games, seemed to suffer from the lack of mainstream sci-fi/other-worldly appeal on the shelves. Simtex are now back with the sequel, which promises a slightly different playing emphasis and improved presentation.

Master Of Orion's popularity was never in doubt, but the sequel has been changed slightly to play more like *Master Of Magic* (a blatant *Civ* clone if ever there was one). This can obviously be seen as both good and bad depending on which game you prefer. The basics of the game universe will remain relatively unaltered, however, with a similar universe packed with 13 familiar alien

SCOOP! Your First Look At...



(Left) **Good heavens, it's Sean Connery!**
(Above) **Great Scott, it's mighty Emperor Nolthraan II**

round for a peace pipe and give them a Western disease instead?

Trading with your home country, the Indians and your rival powers will play an important role in setting yourself up long-term. At the start of the game you can choose to play the English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch or French. Alliances will have to be formed (and undoubtedly then broken) if you are to become the dominant power.

If all this sounds exactly like *Colonization*, don't worry. From what we've seen of the game the aims are the same but the way you achieve them is very different.

A bit of native unrest. The combat system is relatively simple and takes place as a sub-game.

● Discover whether Interplay have made inroads into MicroProse's territory next month.

Twinkle twinkle little star system maps with lots of windows.

(Below) **Just one of many screens where you get to play with the inner workings of your empire. Lots of advances here.**

races and the same enemies, who have been recuperating on a secret planet after the first game.

The biggest visual change (and it seems to be the same with just about every sequel these days) is the complete upgrading of the front end interface to feature SVGA graphics. The results are worth it, and all colonies are now depicted as little growing cities, every building is displayed separately on the map, and individual windows may be opened up to access the numerous solar systems and status screens. It's still a little Space 1999, but everything looks to be well placed, easy to read and accessible.

Master of Orion 2: Battle of Antares is set just before humanity makes the jump to light speed, but the colonisation of planets within the player's home solar system is already a profitable reality. The start of the game focuses on your rapid expansion into other stellar systems before the true business of securing your gains with up to 30 ships each and dealing with the enemy starts to dominate. Or, if you have a network, dealing with up to seven friends…

● *Master Of Orion 2* is scheduled for release in the next couple of months.

Readers Most Wanted

James Flynn writes: "I'm sitting here in snow-covered Bath having just seen the very flash *Terra Nova* in grime-covered London. And I was thinking, which other games am I currently looking forward to as much? *Quake*, of course. *Dungeon Keeper*. And *Into The Shadows* looks lurvely. But what do *you* want to play? From next month we'll be adding a new bit to our charts section called 'Readers Most Wanted' (unless we can think of a more original title, that is). And if you write in and tell us which upcoming games you're most looking forward to, we'll compile the results into a chart and send one person each month a game for their trouble. It'll be great." Thank you, James.

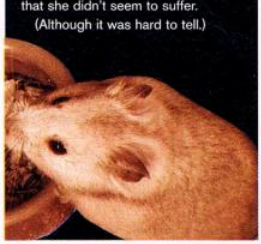
Credited

Apologies this month to Roger Wong, from whose Internet *Command & Conquer* FAQ we drew part of December's *Command & Conquer* tips book, and who ought to have been credited at the time. You can find Roger's FAQ at **http://kublai.pacificrim.net/~solaris,** where it's constantly being updated with new stuff.

We will miss her

This month marked the sad passing of Winnie the hamster, who has slept in the corner of our office since *PC Gamer*'s inception. We will miss her, but draw comfort from the fact that she didn't seem to suffer.

(Although it was hard to tell.)



Burn-up

***PC Gamer* tails the latest title to come out of the Scavenger garage.**

There's no doubt about which new company has made the headlines buzz with anticipation more than any other during the past few months. Scavenger, the name behind the stunning *Into the Shadows*, has yet to release a PC game, but the Los Angeles-based company is more than a one-game outfit. In fact, they're working on around 20 other titles, one of which, ***Scorcher,*** is relatively complete.

Scorcher initially looks like a conventional futuristic racing game, with you sitting on an energy-shielded Hyperbike as it belts its way through six levels packed with an assortment of tunnels, leaps and plummets. Daniel Small, Scavenger's MD, sees it as substantially more than what's available elsewhere though.

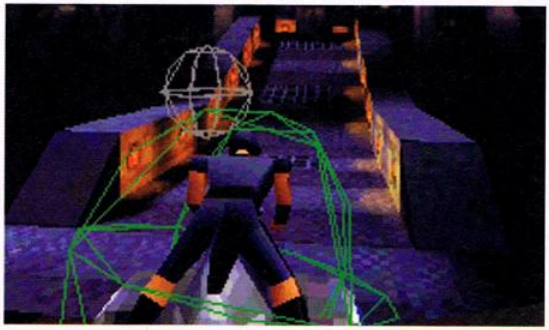
"You've got loop the loops, pits, tubes… stuff you've never seen before in a PC game," he enthuses. "And it's all 3D collision. We check every polygon every frame. All other games use 3D displays but still only have 2D collision. This technique lets us use curves as opposed to bitmaps for all our surfaces." Not only this, but *Scorcher* runs in 32,000 colours at around 30 frames a second on an average Pentium. It can either operate in a small, super-high-res box or be blown up to look like it's in SVGA.

According to Small, the combination of technical prowess and back-to-basics gaming values that Scavenger seems to possess has resulted in developers trying to flock to the company from across the world. "Scavenger is just the publishing label," says Small, about to enter recruiting mode. "We put together teams across the world, let them choose their own names to give them a sense of identity, and let them go. We pay exceptional royalties from this approach, with 20-30% of what we earn going to the team itself. There's no-one at the company who is not directly associated with their games."

It's easy to get over-excited by Small's promises but remember that no-one other than the developers has ever actually played these games. The truth will be out in May at E3, where Small says Scavenger have a huge stand that will show off all their titles. And you can count on *PC Gamer* to be there.

● *Scorcher* is due for release during the summer.

All these tubes feature true 3D collision detection in real time.



The game will feature a variety of camera angles to play from.

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Gadgets

CH Throttle

£70 CH (0121 327 4499)

It might look like a nonsensical luxury, but once you've tried the Throttle you'll never want to let go of it. There's something great about shoving it forwards and watching your afterburners light up in *Top Gun*, and it gives you a much better feeling of 'being in control' than joystick-mounted throttles. It plugs between your joystick and your PC, and your keyboard runs through it too. It's then got 12 programmable buttons (including a 'hat' and a waggly two-way switch) so you can pop all your weapons selectors and flaps and stuff on it and never have to touch the keyboard again. **89%**

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Would you kill for your country?

SCOOP! Your First Look At...

Set to killer

Two-tenths of the Earth's population bought MicroProse's last Star Trek game. So how's their next one shaping up?

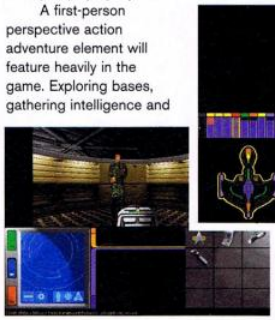
By JAMES FLYNN

Spectrum Holobyte's *Star Trek: The Next Generation* was released last year and immediately became one of the fastest-selling PC games of all time, staying at number one in the charts for many weeks. The next game in the series, ***Star Trek: Generations,*** has been public knowledge for a while, but it's only now that *PC Gamer* has managed to unravel the space-time mysteries that are trans-Atlantic telephone calls to developers, to bring you the latest situation report.

"We've got to make the player believe that they're playing the movie," says *Generations'* producer Simon Ffinch. "But as it's a game we can give the player freedom to explore the world for himself, and they'll find that it deviates a fair bit from the movie." The film, which of course contains every manner of cinematic technique and special effect, tells the story of The End Of Cap'n Kirk (hurrah) and introduces the new cast led by Captain Picard. To reflect this command metamorphosis, the game contains a variety of playing styles.

A first-person perspective action adventure element will feature heavily in the game. Exploring bases, gathering intelligence and freeing hostages is what made Star Trek hugely enjoyable and tacky in the first place, and 30 years later it's the same, bar the tackiness. The point-and-click element will also hopefully be retained, but, of course, The Enterprise will remain your operations base and now it has updated tactical and stellar cartography rooms. The Paramount-quality cut scenes will run at 640 by 480 in 65,535 colours, and the real-time engine will be capable of similar SVGA in 256 colours. At this stage all the graphics look relatively primitive, but the situation will improve within the next six months or so.

● *Generations* is due for release in September. You can expect a fuller examination in *PC Gamer* before then.



The real-time exploration section (left) **is still early, but was vital for the development of the game. Take on a Bird of Prey** (above).

PC GAMER Recommends

The best releases of the last few months...

Duke Nukem 3D

Was this magazine late on sale? Now you know why. Hope it wasn't too far to the newsagent.

Tempest 2000

The air turns purple as we realise that Level 69 is very difficult indeed.

Warcraft II

This fiendish little game will probably never sell as many as it should.

Grand Prix 2

Full detail on a P166 at 25 fps. Occasionally we know we're spoilt.

Virtua Fighter Remix

It'll set you back over £200 to play it, but you'll love every last bone-crunching minute.

Terminator

We still think his feet move too slowly, but Simon's been glued to the screen.

Return of Zork

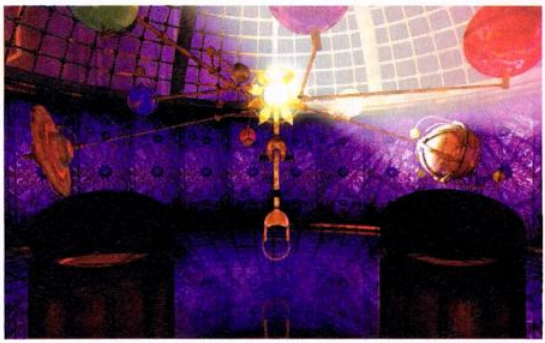
***Zork.* If you're relatively new to games, this word will probably be double-Dutch. If you're not, you may know that the last *Zork* game sold over a million copies. Here's the sequel.**

A couple of years ago Activision's *Return To Zork* was released, and was the latest in a series of *Zork* games stretching back to the beginning of time. One of the first CD games, it was highly dubious in the gameplay stakes but hugely popular nonetheless. Now ***Zork: Nemesis*** is about to be released.

The first thing that strikes you about the game is the way it uses the CD-ROM compared to its predecessor. In the intervening two years technology has progressed to such an extent that it's now possible to play full-screen 16-bit, pre-rendered cut scenes at an acceptable pace. But, according to Cecelia Barajas, *Zork: Nemesis'* producer, it's the game that's important. "I'm going for a sense of immersion – the sense of being transported into the world," explains Barajas. "Anything that would encumber your progress is needless. We're aiming for a minimal interface, 16-bit graphics, 15 frames a second and Q-Sound to achieve this feeling of just being there."

The attention to graphical detail within the environments is astonishing. Whether this will make it a great game is another matter altogether, but the stories seem far-fetched, detailed and, most of all, genuinely imaginative. "The sense of magic is really important, and we have four independent but connected worlds for the player to explore on his travels. The game's going to be at least three CDs worth when it's finished," predicts Barajas.

● *Zork: Nemesis* is due out in March.



The puzzles are rewarded with a variety of pre-rendered scenes. The plot focuses round magic and astrology in the *Zork* universe.

Click where you want to go and all the video is streamed off CD.

Where are they now?

No-one, it seems, finishes their PC game on time these days. Here, therefore, we keep you updated with ETAs for the most eagerly-awaited ones.

Afterlife (LucasArts)	April
Creation (Bullfrog)	Summer
Command & Conquer: Red Alert (Westwood)	June
Descent 2 (Interplay)	End March
Dungeon Keeper (Bullfrog)	May
Ecstatica 2 (Psygnosis)	October
Grand Prix 2 (Microprose)	1st week March
FIA F1 (Psygnosis)	Possibly unshelved
Heart Of Darkness (Virgin)	June (yeah)
Into The Shadows (Scavenger)	May
Magic: The Gathering (MicroProse)	April
Quake (id)	May
Ridge Racer (Psygnosis)	April/May
Spycraft (Activision)	March
Syndicate Wars (Bullfrog)	June
Terminus (Scavenger)	December
Time Commando (EA)	June
Urban Decay (Psygnosis)	Early 1997
Warhammer 40K (Mindscape)	March
X-COM: Apocalypse (MicroProse)	June
Z (Time Warner)	May

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PC ZONE - 96%

"Stunning presentation coupled with captivating gameplay makes this the best of its kind"
PC GAMER - 95%

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VISA Access

The past and future of shareware

Epic MegaGames move forward with Electronic Arts but stay true to old values.

You can tell that some games come from a shareware background immediately, but think of this as veiled praise rather than a criticism. The relatively small budgets of most shareware companies like Epic to keep their underlying principles while bolting on high-quality graphics.

Indeed, ***New Order*** (which we mentioned briefly in *PCG* 24), which works a bit like *Desert Strike*, is a game that a couple of years ago no-one would have believed a shareware company could produce. The isometric SVGA graphics scroll smoothly under Windows 95 and are drawn as well as you could hope for. Particularly impressive are the lighting effects, which emanate from the mushrooming explosions accompanying the demise of yet another enemy structure. Smooth shading briefly highlights the dingy jungle for a short distance before plunging you back into darkness.

***New Order* runs entirely in SVGA. It's unsubtle but pretty.**

Seek And Destroy is a slightly more sedate affair, more reminiscent of the Amiga. Which isn't entirely surprising as Vision programmed it for that ancient machine first, as computer games historians will recall. Hop into a helicopter, power up your guns and zoom over the jungle, merrily blasting away with your missiles and guns. All basic enjoyable fun.

● *New Order* will take hold next month, and you can play *Seek And Destroy* on this month's CD.

***Seek And Destroy* is pure Amiga action ported to the PC. It's a fun little game that's on our coverdisk and will be reviewed next month.**

Gadgets

Suncom FX3000

£30 Suncom (01454 326532)

The FX3000 is cheap, and feels it, with a decidedly hollow feel. It has a short travel which is good for arcade games but rather over-sensitive for flight sims, and the throttle control seems to have been adapted from a Walkman's volume control: it's horrid. The trim controls are awkwardly positioned on the underside, and the free headphones seem rather quiet, although there's a handy connection and volume for them on the cable. Tom Cruise would frown upon it, but then he's rich. **58%**

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The exile returns

Another prerenderathon from our pals at Cryo.

Arch-cynic Gary Penn gave the original *Cyberia* 34% when he reviewed it in our March issue of last year, and you'd get the same result were you to show the game to any member of today's *PC Gamer*. It's a CD full of pre-rendered scenery that you sit and watch while moving a cursor over any baddies that appear and clicking on them. And, while looking lovely, having obviously taken ages to produce, it's really not a 'game' in the *PC Gamer*-endorsed sense of the word.

And so, a year on, France-based Cryo have almost finished ***Cyberia 2***. It would appear to be along largely similar lines, with a futuristic cyberpunky world scrolling steadily by and baddies flitting about just asking to be shot. There are some bits where you walk along corridors (or, perhaps, the camera glides along corridors) and baddies shoot at you. They look quite good, although it's still the same routine. And there'll doubtless be some puzzley adventurey bits too, but in the first game those tended to play second fiddle to the shooting.

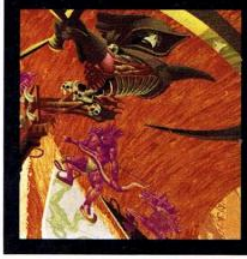
At least they disappear properly when shot, rather than being 'disguised'.

It's *Rebel Assault 2* without Darth Vader then, by the looks of it, or a pre-rendered version of *Panzer Dragoon*. Naturally we hope we're wrong, but we can't honestly say *Cyberia 2's* at the top of our eagerly-awaited list.

● *Cyberia 2* is scheduled for release in the next few months.

Also responsible

Although Mike Stemmle (see LucasArts' ***Afterlife*** diary last month) is undoubtedly a man of great talent, we neglected to mention certain equally gifted colleagues in the feature. So, deepest apologies to Sean Clark, who was co-project leader on Sam and Max, and also to Steve Purcell, whose sick mind created S&M themselves (and who is, according to Stemmle, one of the ten funniest men on the planet). While we're grovelling here, *The Secret Of Monkey Island* was, of course, a Ron Gilbert creation with a little help from friends Tim Shafer and David Grossman, who were also responsible for *Day Of The Tentacle*. And they're just some of the names that have made LucasArts the huge success they are today.

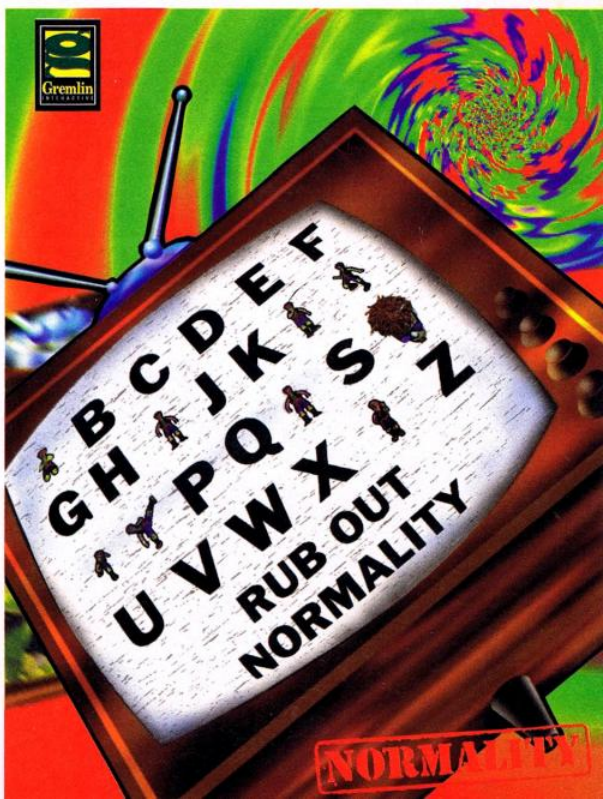


In and out

Fast Attack, which is imminent from Sierra, is a submarine game for serious propeller heads, looking as if it contains a remarkable amount of detail. It's based on the largest and most advanced US nuclear submarines and you have to negotiate your way through 60 detailed missions as commander. It looks terrifyingly complicated to us, but we will brave it nevertheless.

● *Fast Attack* is due out from Sierra about now.

Dive! Dive! Dive! Awoooo-ah! Awooo-ah! Booom-splooosh!



EYEWITNESS

Zzzzzzzzz

Z's still out there. It's just sleeping peacefully.

A year ago ***Z*** was the new white hope of British gaming. The Americans seemed to be invading and taking all the accolades while the British lounged around in the particularly pleasant sun. And then, as *Z* and *Command & Conquer* prepared to fight it out, one on them didn't turn up for the battle. Since then it's all gone rather quiet, so we phoned up Bitmap Brothers' head honcho Eric Matthews and asked him, "Is *Z* dead?"

"The game's finished," says Matthews. "Pretty much all of it has been since last October. But we've got hardware compatibility problems to fix, multi-language renderings for a simultaneous European launch, and network synchronisation problems to iron out just for starters. Having spent four years on this project it's going to be perfect when it's released. We've got around 50 bugs left at the moment, but we're putting it through some bizarre testing to make sure we get them all. We're not going to have a *Frontier 2* on our hands."

See the Bitmap's web site on http://www.bitmap-brothers.co.uk

The main other task that's taking extra time is the designing of the multi-player levels. Matthews is determined not just to plonk several players on a level designed for one because there are always best and worse places to start, making for an unfair contest. Instead, the team has specifically designed six levels each for two-, three- and four-player gaming. Add to this the 20 single-player missions and there's some longevity in this excellent looking and hugely promising game.

● The Bitmap Brothers' *Z* is now scheduled for a late-May release.

All the multi-player levels have been specially designed to play fairly.

Charts

▲Up ▼Down ● Non-mover ✪ New entry ◢ Re-entry

The top three shuffle round un-dramatically this month and the changes result in *Command & Conquer* regaining its No. 1 position, the great-value *Screamer* still selling strongly, and the humdrum *Rebel Assault 2* doing predictably well. What we really want to see, though, is more of you buying the brilliant *Warcraft II*.

An awful lot of you must have Pentiums out there for *EF2000*.

***Command & Conquer* seems to be doing just that to the charts.**

Top 20 *CD-ROM*

1	▲	Command & Conquer	Virgin
2	▼	Screamer	Virgin
3	▼	Rebel Assault 2	LucasArts
4	▲	Worms	Ocean
5	▲	TFX: EF2000	Ocean
6	▲	Championship Manager 2	Domark
7	▲	The 7th Guest	White Label
8	▼	FIFA Soccer 96	Electronic Arts
9	▼	Actua Soccer	Gremlin
10	◢	Rebel Assault	White Label
11	▲	Flight Simulator 5.1	Microsoft
12	▼	Destruction Derby	Sony
13	▲	11th Hour	Virgin
14	▼	Grand Prix Manager	MicroProse
15	▲	Star Trek TNG: A Final Unity	MicroProse
16	▼	The Dig	LucasArts
17	▲	Day Of The Tentacle	White Label
18	◢	Sam & Max Hit The Road	White Label
19	✪	Warcraft II	Zablac
20	◢	SimCity	White Label

Top 10 *Floppy Disk*

1	▲	The Lion King	Virgin
2	▼	Doom 2	Virgin
3	▼	Worms	Ocean
4	▼	The Jungle Book	Virgin
5	▲	SimCity 2000	Maxis
6	▼	Aladdin	Virgin
7	▼	Flight Simulator 5.1	Microsoft
8	✪	Powerdrive	US Gold
9	✪	Scrabble	US Gold
10	▼	Sensible World Of Soccer	Renegade

Top 10 *Budget*

1	●	X-Wing	White Label
2	▲	Sam & Max Hit The Road	Kixx
3	▲	Easy To Learn Computing	Premier Collection
4	◢	Day Of The Tentacle	White Label
5	▼	Doom	Micro Star
6	✪	Professional CV Writer	VCI Software
7	●	Formula 1 Grand Prix	PowerPlus
8	✪	Thomas The Tank Engine Collection	Alternative
9	✪	Word Games For Windows	Premier Collection
10	✪	Ultimate Soccer Manager Add-on	Impressions

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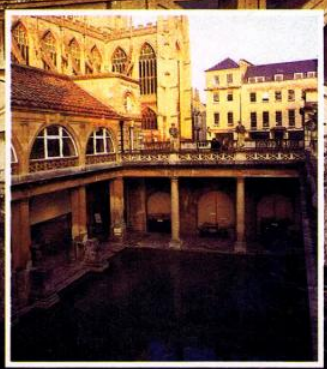
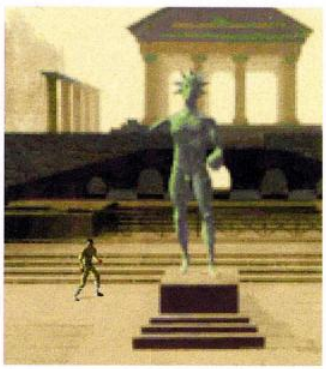
Time

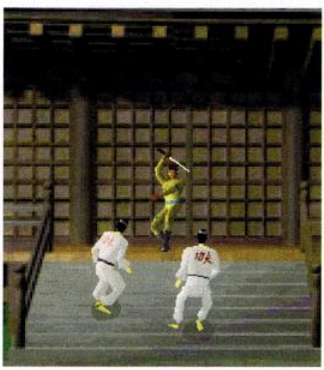


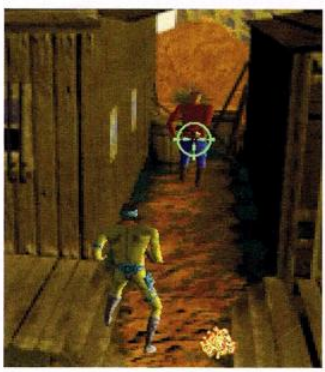
team

Due out in June, *Time Commando* will be Adeline's first game since *Little Big Adventure*. PC Gamer's investigative apparatus moves silently into operation.

By JONATHAN DAVIES







BASED IN NEIGHBOURING France, Adeline are unquestionably one of the most talented development teams in the Western hemisphere. I will personally box the ears of anyone who tries to claim otherwise. Dodgy save-game routine aside, their *Little Big Adventure* remains one of my all-time favourite games, and I would cite the cruelly violent Twinsen and his sinisterly-occupied world as a formulative influence upon my life.

Adeline are great, basically, and, along with their Gallic chums at Delphine, have been responsible for a disproportionate number of the PC's most inventive and enjoyable games. *Another World, Alone In The Dark, Fade To Black... LBA* of course... there'd never been anything like them before, and, while the rest of the world struggles to catch up, the French have a habit of getting one step ahead again.

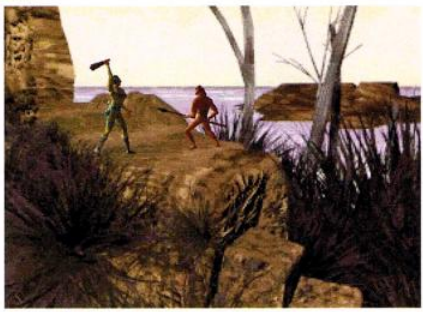
Rumours of a new time-travelling game from Adeline called *Time Commando* therefore caused my ears to prick.

Two figures

I pulled on my overcoat and caught up with Adeline in, conveniently enough, *PC Gamer*'s home town of Bath, where, I calculated, they might just be researching *Time Commando*'s Roman stages at the popular Roman baths.

(Left) ***Time Commando* can zoom right in when circumstances demand it...**

(Below) **... and right out just as easily. All this happens automatically as the background is spooled off the CD, although Adeline promise there'll be none of the confusing camera switches of *Alone In The Dark*.**



Spotting two figures, who I recognised as Frédérick Raynal and Serge Plagnol, crouched beside the Great Bath, I approached them discreetly and peered over Serge's shoulder at the screen of his laptop PC.

Through the steam rising from the curative spa waters I saw the most astonishing graphical display I have witnessed so far this year.

LBA's excellent animation is carried over into *Time Commando*, so the characters all run and jump about like real people. In particular, the satisfyingly realistic violence remains, so baddies reel back unsteadily when you kick them in the stomach.

But where once there were simple-if-stylish Gouraud-shaded polygons, now everything is fully texture-mapped. In particular there's a fantastic spotty sabre-toothed tiger near the beginning of the first, prehistoric, level whose tail flicks angrily and who pounces on you with terrifying realism.

That's not all, though. *LBA*'s fixed isometric view has been abandoned, and we now have characters who get bigger and smaller as they walk into and out of the screen. In that respect *Time Commando* looks more like *Alone In The Dark*,

although with the blocky triangles replaced by curved textured surfaces which barely lose detail as they get closer.

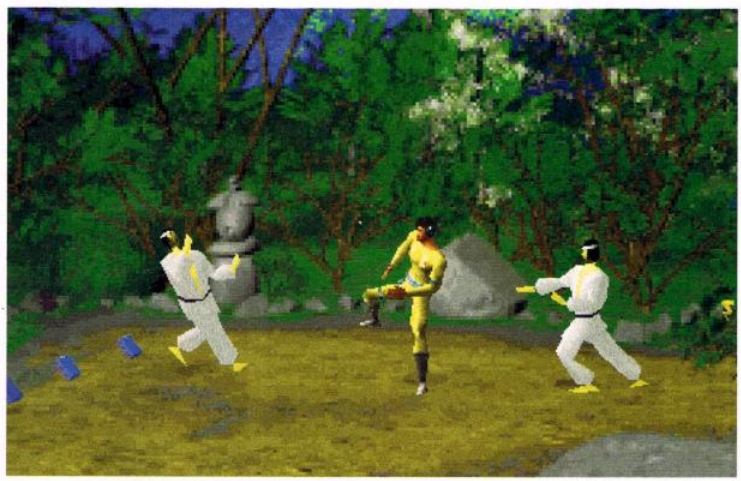
And! *Time Commando*'s most innovative feature, however, is the way the backgrounds work. For the most part they're static, like *Alone In The Dark*'s. But when you reach trigger points at the edge of the screen they scroll smoothly in 3D, being spooled cleverly off the CD. Each level of *Time Commando* in fact consists of a pre-rendered 'route' through the level on which the characters are overlaid. And, although the word 'pre-rendered' normally spells disaster, in *Time Commando* it really seems to work, with the game moving at your own pace, and the advantages of pre-rendering being used to lend the game an incredibly cinematic feel. The camera can zoom in and out and pan around smoothly, and all the time the backgrounds remain detailed and attractive-looking.

He's got a gun!

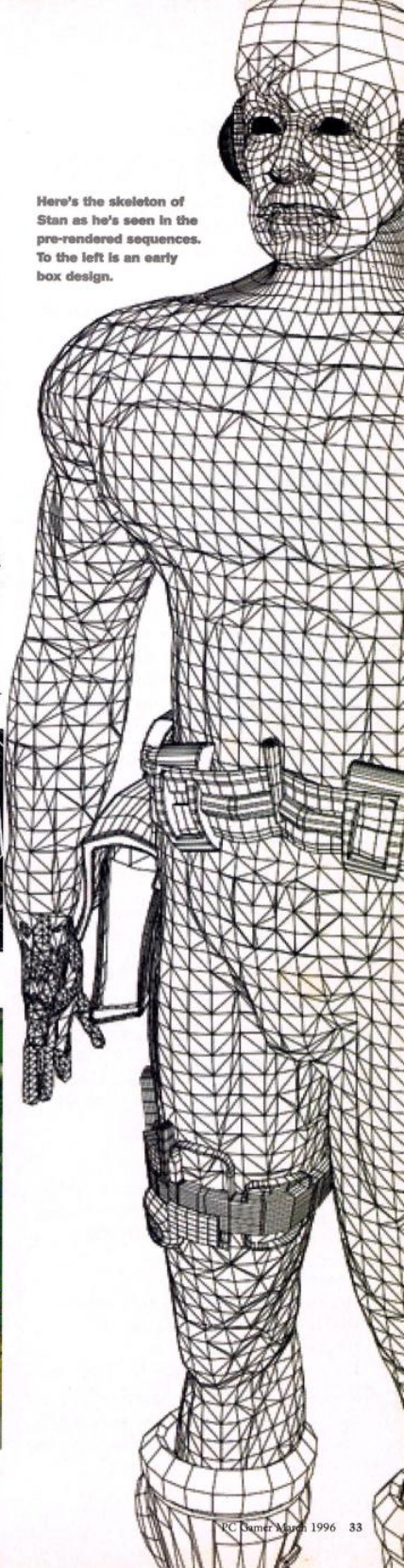
The Wild West Level, for example, opens with a close-up of a town's nameplate, with the old "~~200~~ ~~100~~ 2 inhabitants" joke. The camera then pans up and across to give a view of your character standing at the gates of the town. A Mexican-looking bloke is sitting wrapped in a blanket by the wall. As you approach him the camera pans down and moves in closer. Oh no! He's got a gun! Blow him away and you can take his gun

Stan tentatively pokes the errant time bubble.

"It's a completely new engine. We've seen the demo of **Into The Shadows**, and it is quite impressive, but angular – only good for buildings. In **Time Commando** you are outdoors, so we had to do something different."



Stan's fighting techniques adapt from time period to time period. Here he's employing morris dancing.



Here's the skeleton of Stan as he's seen in the pre-rendered sequences. To the left is an early box design.

Time travels

Time Commando is being spilt into nine levels, each set in a different period of Earth's history, and sub-divided into two stages. They run thus:

Prehistory

Battle your way past irate cavemen and cavewomen, as well as the excellent sabre-toothed tiger.

The Roman Empire

Lots of centurians and toga-clad baddies to watch out for amongst the collonades.

Medieval Japan

The enemies here are trained in the martial arts, or are otherwise plump sumo wrestlers

Medieval Europe

Details of this level are scarce, so you must use your imagination. Picture a sort of RPG without the orcs, perhaps.

The Conquistadors

The first half of this level is set on a ship, we learn, and then you're wandering around Aztec temples.

The Wild West

Gunfights ahoy, with baddies tumbling from roofs and panicking horses.

20th Century

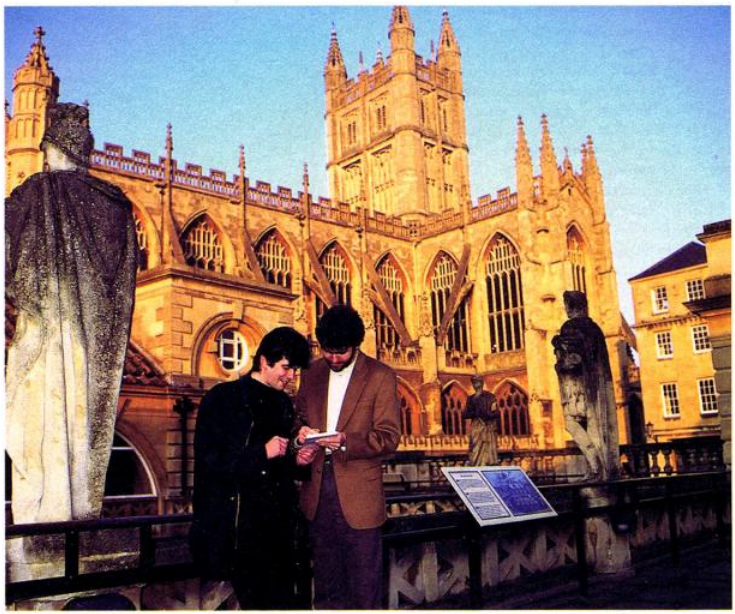
Adeline aren't sure about this one yet – World War 2, possibly. We recommend the 1970s, but, then, we probably ought to be locked up.

The Future

This'll be sort of semi-Manga style, with laser bolts zinging everywhere and mech suits you can climb into and stomp about in.

The Final Confrontation

You plunge into the heart of the computer itself in a battle to the death. There's a surprise here which Adeline asked us not to reveal.



Frédérick and Serge share a joke. No, actually they're finalising the design of a statue.

"Our engine interpolates frames of animation, so the characters move at full speed on slower machines but are animated more smoothly the faster the processor you have."

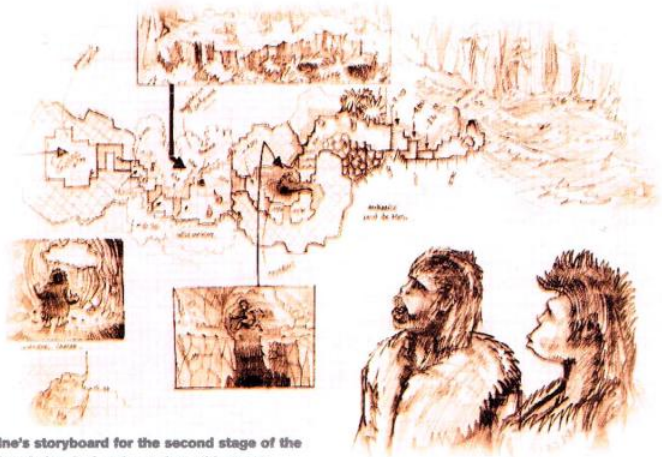
☛ and then run amok, shooting baddies off rooftops and running sideways past doorways with your gun blazing. At various points there are buildings you can enter, whereupon the view might switch completely to a fixed *Alone-In-The-Dark*-style one from the corner of the room. Other sections scroll continuously. At one point you get to blow up a building, and the characters and backgrounds are so well integrated that you're not sure whether the explosion is pre-rendered or not. (There's still work to be done here – at the moment distant baddies occasionally float in front of the foreground.) It's a proper interactive movie – cinematic, but with you always in full control.

I cough politely.

"Aïe!" Serge looks up at me, surprised, and snaps closed the lid of the laptop. A conversation ensues between him and his partner in rapid French, with lots of exaggerated hand gestures. They get up, and I follow them up the steps into the Sacred Spring, matching their quickening pace and smiling when they glance backwards. Eventually they stop, breathless, and I am able to ask Frédérick about *Time Commando*'s graphics engine.

"It is a completely new engine," he says. "Textures, Gouraud shading, all the top technology. We've seen the demo of *Into The Shadows*, and it is quite impressive, but angular – only good for buildings. In *Time Commando* you are outdoors, so

Name: **Frédérick Raynal**
Job: **Game designer/programmer/boss**
Age: **29**
Birthday: **15th March**
Place of birth: **Brive, France**
Previous games: **Popcorn, Alpha Waves, SimCity CDTV, Alone In The Dark, Little Big Adventure**
Favourite PC game: **Little Big Adventure**
Hero: **Twinsen**
Favourite music: **Art Of Noise**
Favourite TV programme: **Dream On**
Preferred fighting technique: **Magic ball**
Dream car: **Ferrari F1**
Person would most like to be stuck in a lift with: **Bill Gates** *(Erk. – Ed)*
Motto: **A game is a product only when it's in the box.**



Adeline's storyboard for the second stage of the prehistoric level, showing points of interest.

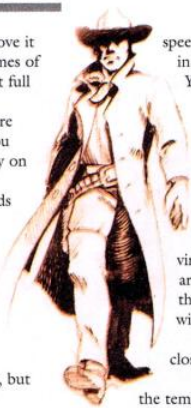
"There will be laser guns shooting everywhere. Piooow! Like in Star Wars."

we had to do something different."

"It's like *Alone In The Dark* but with moving cameras," Serge confirms.

Cautiously, Frédérick opens the laptop and presses a key. A frame counter appears in the corner of the screen as he plays, showing that *Time Commando* can animate characters at 24-25 frames per second in VGA on a Pentium 90.

"In SVGA it will still do about 22 frames per second," he says, "and we can improve it further. Our engine interpolates frames of animation, so the characters move at full speed on slower machines but are animated – Uh? Il m'a frappé! – more smoothly the faster the processor you have. *Time Commando* will run okay on a DX2, but we are targeting it at Pentiums. As well as the backgrounds we also stream 3D information off the CD, which speeds things up."



Panic-striken

Serge begins to edge away, but I move neatly into his path and ask him to explain *Time Commando*'s plot. He looks mildly panic-stricken, but proceeds bravely.

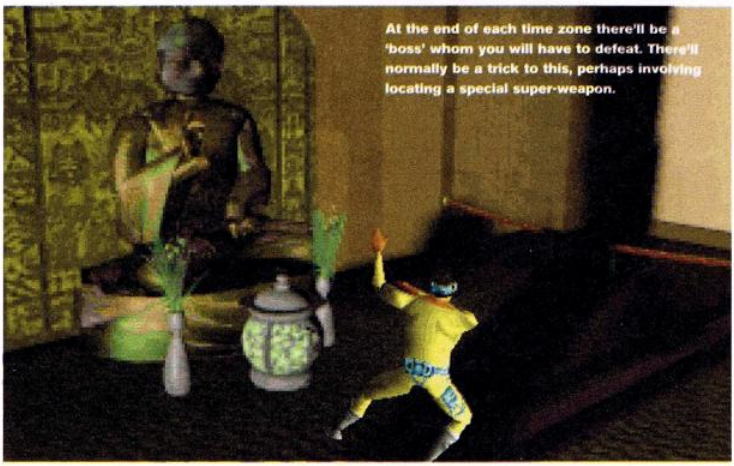
"Bof," he begins. "It is the future, and, to speed up computers, their CPUs are placed in a little bubble where time moves faster. Your character..."

Your character is currently called Stanley, but Adeline are receiving conflicting advice on the name's suitability, and are considering Brad, Max or Mike instead. I assure them that Stanley is a perfectly splendid name.

"... works at the Historical Tactical Centre where, to train soldiers, virtual reality simulations of historical battles are run. Other companies are jealous of their technology, and attack the computer with a virus."

I study the screen. This virus more closely resembles a fish.

"The effect of the virus is to expand the temporal bubble so that it absorbs the technicians gathered around it, and also



At the end of each time zone there'll be a 'boss' whom you will have to defeat. There'll normally be a trick to this, perhaps involving locating a special super-weapon.

Stanley's friend Betty. Stanley wonders what to do, and sticks his hand experimentally into the bubble. It doesn't seem to hurt, so he takes a deep breath and steps inside."

After a scary bit where Stanley is whirled back through time, images of battles and historic events flashing through his head a bit like that bit with Dr Zarkov in Flash Gordon, our hero finds himself deposited in a prehistoric forest. Almost immediately he's attacked by a caveman.

You see, because you're not actually in the real past but a VR simulation of it, and because the purpose of the Historical Tactical Centre's computer is to train soldiers, everyone you meet will, basically, attack you. *Time Commando* therefore proceeds purely as an action game, with puzzles cast aside in favour of punching, kicking and the employment of any weapons you either find lying around or wrest from baddies. This may come as something of a surprise to *Little Big Adventure* fans.

"After *LBA* we wanted to do something quick and easy," Frédérick tells me, making towards a Roman hypocaust system. "A small action game. That was the plan. But it became huger and then huger and then huger, and here we are, a year later, still working on it. Everything we do seems to end up taking 18 months. It is still an action game, however. There is no real adventure, no mystery."

"A small action game. That was the plan. But it became huger and then huger and then huger, and here we are, a year later, still working on it. It is still an action game, however. There is no real adventure, no mystery."

Time Commando looks in many ways like a sort of advanced scrolling shoot-'em-up, especially once you've found some guns and things. In fact, thinking about it, *"Time Commando"...*

"Yes, originally it was meant to be sort of like *Commando*, the arcade game."

Frédérick and Serge move towards the exit, pausing only to pick up a selection of postcards of architectural interest.

Piooow!

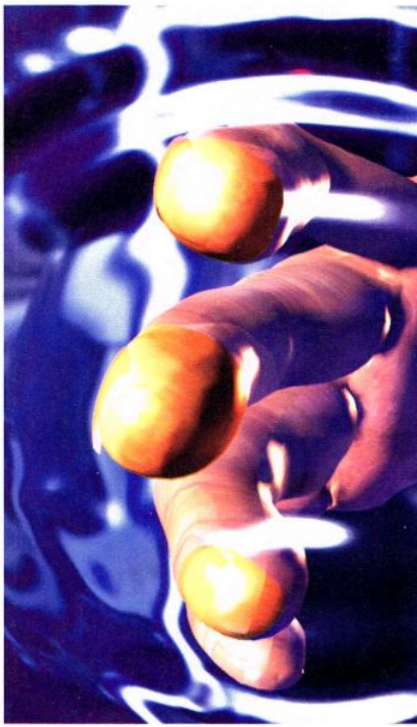
The weapons in *Time Commando* are excellent, too – shotguns in the Western level which your character whirls around, Arnie-style, as he reloads them, and we're promised robotic exoskeletons in the later sci-fi level.

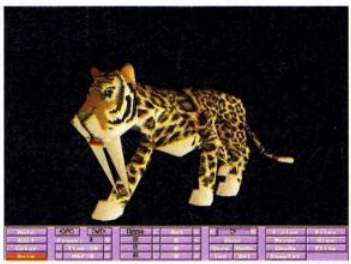
"There will be laser guns shooting everywhere," Frédérick says, brightening for a moment. "Piooow! Like in Star Wars."

And, although we didn't see any of them, each level will end with a 'boss'.

"At the end of the first level there is a giant... how do you say, 'beer'? No. Ha ha. Bear. To kill it with your club will take about one hundred hits. But if you are clever you can find a big, heavy club – when you carry it you walk like this." Frédérick convincingly effects the gait of a

Name: **Serge Plagnol**
Job: **Producer/lead programmer**
Age: **25**
Birthday: **5th October**
Place of birth: **Toulouse, France**
Previous games: **Alone In The Dark, Little Big Adventure**
Favourite PC game: **Worms**
Hero: **Frodo out of Lord Of The Rings**
Favourite music: **Paolo Conte**
Favourite TV programme: **The X-Files**
Preferred fighting technique: **Baseball bat**
Dream car: **Jaguar E-Type**
Person would most like to be stuck in a lift with: **Jodie Foster**
Motto: **If you know how to do it, it's not worth doing it.**





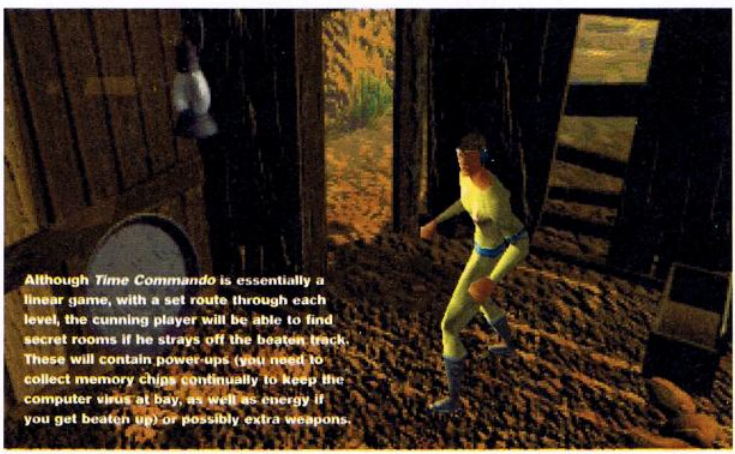
To design the characters for their games, Adeline have developed a package called Animit, which designs textures, positions polygons, and generates animated sequences. The tiger looks brilliant when you see him moving up close, and you feel much more comfortable when he's within his CAD confines.

man carrying a big, heavy club. "It is too slow to kill ordinary baddies, but the bear moves really slowly, and if you time it correctly you can kill it with three or four hits."

Serge's hand grabs Frédérick's arm and pulls him into a taxi, which he has hailed while I was distracted by Frédérick's talk of giant bears. The door slams, and with a squeal of tyres Adeline are gone.

Back in my office I summon James Flynn, and relate to him my findings. He seems concerned by the "no puzzles" motif, expressing the wish that Adeline will have a last-minute change of heart and pop a few in.

I, however, predict that *Time Commando* will be excellent – kind of like *Fade To Black* without all the wandering around looking for keys to open doors. The bits of it I've seen are spot-on, and if what Adeline are saying is true, it should get more and more exciting the further into it you play. I look forward to wrestling with that sabre-toothed tiger myself. PCG



Although *Time Commando* is essentially a linear game, with a set route through each level, the cunning player will be able to find secret rooms if he strays off the beaten track. These will contain power-ups (you need to collect memory chips continually to keep the computer virus at bay, as well as energy if you get beaten up) or possibly extra weapons.

Adeline on Windows 95

Given the uncertainty surrounding Windows 95, and its suitability for games, we were curious as to what Adeline reckoned to it.

"It is a good thing," Frédérick nods. "I'm not proud to say it, but it is the truth."

Mainly, it seems, its advantages lie in hardware compatibility.

"You just have to ask it: 'Do you have 640 by 480?' 'Yes I have.' 'I would like it.' It took us one hour to install *TFX* with DOS. We can write much simpler procedures with Windows 95."

What about speed, though? No-one quite seems to believe that Windows 95 doesn't slow things down.

"We are producing two versions of *Time Commando*, one for DOS and one for Windows 95. They both run at exactly the same speed. The 3D routines are exactly the same – there is no problem writing to the hardware."

What of Little Big Adventure 2, though?

Time Commando sounds excellent, but it's a far cry from the adventurey world of *Little Big Adventure*. Fear not, however, *LBA* fans – also under development at Adeline is *Little Big Adventure 2*, which is due out in October.

"We are not going to use texture mapping on the characters like in *Time Commando*," says Frédérick, gazing up at a statue of the goddess Minerva. "*LBA* had a distinctive look, and we are going to keep it for the sequel."

Also to stay is the flip-screen isometric perspective. At least, for the indoor sections. Once you step outside, however, an entirely new graphics engine will come into play with a camera tracking your character through moving 3D backgrounds. And *LBA2* will be much bigger, too, being set over three planets.

There's one thing that won't be carried over into the sequel, though.

"Everybody hated that save-game feature," Frédérick sighs. "It's a shame. I was proud of it."

Instead, *LBA2* will have straightforward save and load facilities. (Phew.)

Here's *Little Big Adventure*. *Little Big Adventure 2* will, of course, be better.

Roger Zelazny
CHRONO
"It's a highly polished game that offers endless hours of brain teasing play. I loved it".
PC Review.
"Awesome graphics and sound effects create an atmospheric setting for a very unusual storyline".
Computer Life.
"Slick, smooth and engrossing. Adventure with attitude... how refreshing".
PC Review.
"Superb 3D rendered graphics create an atmospheric setting for this twisted tale of deceit and intrigue".
PC Review.
US GOLD
Capstone
INTRA CORP INC
DREAMFORGE INTERTAINMENT INC
Available on PC CD ROM

and Jane Lindskold PRESENT

MASTER

Find yourself on a mission to re-start time itself

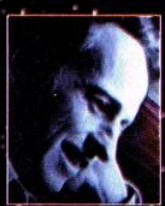
On a futuristic suburban street the night sky is backlit with explosions, the rumble of munitions is audible at a distance.

This is the final wipeout of Pasqua. An entire world raided and stripped of its wealth, its citizens killed or sold into slavery.

The perpetrators seek immunity from justice through the purchase of new identities and the creation of fabulous new universes.

Korda, the Chronomaster, has a mission to find them.

In this groundbreaking graphic adventure, find yourself on a quest in worlds where time has stopped and science and magic co-exist.

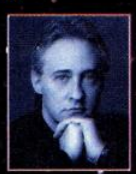


Roger Zelazny

Is one of the premier science fiction writers of his generation. During his career he has won six Hugos and three Nebulas as well as an array of other major awards in the field. His Novella "The Last Defender of Camelot" was adapted by George R.R. Martin as an episode of the new Twilight Zone.

Featuring the voices of:

Ron Perlman ("Beauty & The Beast") as "KORDA, the CHRONOMASTER"



Brent Spiner ("Star Trek: The Next Generation") as "MILO"

Lolita Davidovich ("Intersection") as "JESTER"

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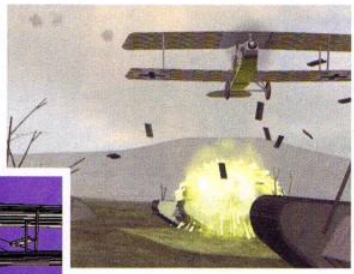
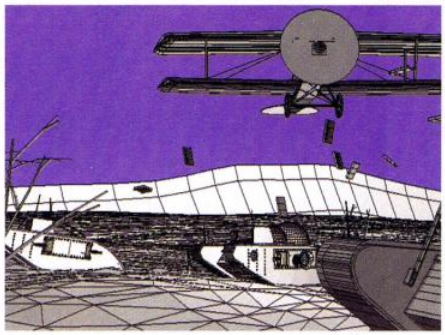
The Making of Flying Corps
Rowan's Diary of a Game

This month we drop our scuba-diving gear, pull on our flying goggles, and head back to Rowan to find out how *Flying Corps* is coming along.



A DIY rendered sequence for you. Try not to colour over the lines.



OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF months, the most significant development has been our real-time contoured landscape model. There should be a picture somewhere on the page showing what Paul has achieved so far. The countryside around the Somme isn't dramatic, so we can't use snow-capped mountains to show off the techniques. However, when you get down to ground level and do some chasing, it should be exciting enough. The screen resolution is 640 by 480, which means there's 20% more detail than the SVGA mode used in our old model. The refresh rate is good on a P90 and we'll be making it even better.

Providing the data for the landscape has proved to be something of a challenge. We need two sets of data: contour and colour. The landscape is made up of thousands of triangles, so we need to know the height above sea level of each point on the triangle. The colour data is used to determine what colour to paint the triangles. For *Flying Corps*, we need to provide this data for two areas of France, and we'll need up to 800Mb of CD space. *Flying Corps* could become a two-CD flight sim.

> ***"We've developed techniques which involve using WWI maps and black and white photographs taken during reconnaissance as a guide for producing the colour data."***

These days most developers use satellite photography to provide contour and colour data. This presents us with a problem: *Flying Corps* is set in World War I. Although we can use modern altitude data because that won't have changed much over the last 80 years, modern colour data is no use to us at all. It's the colour data that's used to distinguish between woods, trenches, fields, roads and settlements. These things change. For example, on the WWI maps, Bourlon Wood, which was of strategic importance during the Battle of Cambrai, extended to the Fontaine road. These days the wood is a fraction of its previous size. At this reduced size it would have had much less impact on the battle.

To get over the problems, we've developed techniques which involve using WWI maps and black and white photographs taken during reconnaissance as a guide for producing the colour data. At present, the best source for altitude data seems to be that used for Cruise Missile guidance.

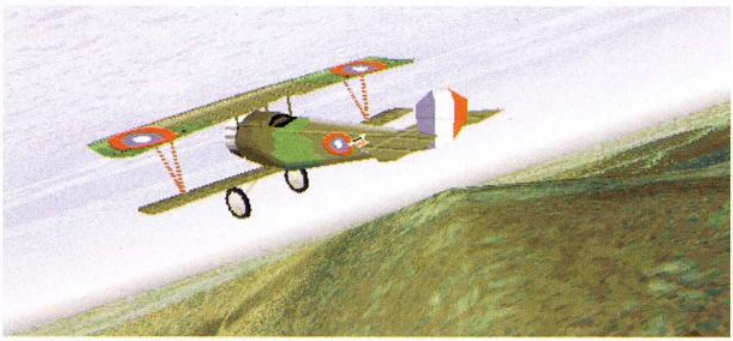
In my previous article, I mentioned that we'd been over to the Somme area to see it for ourselves. We took hundreds of colour photographs of the landscape to help determine the correct palette for the game. In addition, we wanted to find some landmarks that survived the war and which we could include in the landscape.

Our best find was the chateau used by Richthofen during Bloody April 1917. The picture was taken from a narrow cobbled road. A few yards up the road and on the other side you'll find the field that was known as Roucourt Aerodrome.

The cloud cover can be set at different altitudes, and above this cover we'll have the fluffy clouds that Paul's now working on. In *Flying Corps*, weather and the contoured landscape have a big impact on combat tactics. The player will have to look at weather, wind and time of day before developing the tactics for the mission. For instance, in a balloon-busting mission, if the cloud cover is low, the player will be able to fly over it. Providing that his navigation is up to it, the player will burst through the cloud layer and shoot down the balloon before the enemy knows what has happened. On clear days it'll be better to hug the contours and keep out of sight until the last moment. Eddie Rickenbacker, the leading American ace of the war, attacked at the first light of dawn. He approached with his engine cut to reduce the chance of being heard.

In the next instalment of my diary, I'll go into some detail about flight models. Over the last couple of months I've been investigating why the Camel turned quicker to the right than to the left. Most people in aviation will tell you it's because the Camel had a rotating engine: the cylinders as well as the prop rotated. I think this is only part of the reason, and I need to get to the bottom of the problem before I revise the flight model for *Flying Corps*.

Rod Hyde, Rowan Software Ltd



THE BIG MATCH

FIRST LEG - PC CD-ROM

ACTUA vs FIFA

"Without doubt the best footie game on the PC... A real FIFA beater." **PC ZONE**

ACTUA 92% **FIFA 84%**

"Yes. Actua Soccer is better than FIFA 96." **PC ANSWERS**

ACTUA 91% **FIFA 88%**

"A slick, fluid footer sim which rides the challenge of FIFA, slotting it calmly in the corner." **PC GAMER**

ACTUA 83% **FIFA 79%**

"FIFA 96...is overshadowed by Actua Soccer. EA must by now be throwing darts at pictures of the Gremlin development team. Better luck next year!" **UFG**

ACTUA 89% **FIFA 82%**

"Beats FIFA 96 to the top of the league." **C&VG**

ACTUA 93% **FIFA 91%**

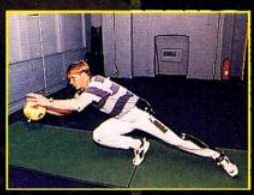
"Actua Soccer is better than FIFA 96 – FACT!" **GAMEPRO**

ACTUA 92% **FIFA 92%**

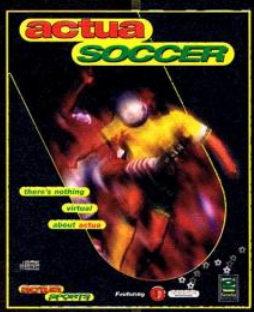
FINAL SCORE

ACTUA 6 FIFA 0

Featuring commentary by Barry Davies - the U.K.'s No1 sports commentator.



Real captured motion from top international footballers using Interactive Motion Technology.



SECOND LEG - PLAYSTATION

"Actua soccer is the most playable and realistic footy release on the PlayStation – and therefore the best... makes it's 32-bit footy peers look amateurish and shoddy"

GAME OF THE MONTH – 9/10 - SONYPRO

PC ZONE CLASSIC

PC FORMAT Gold Award

actua SOCCER

PC CD-ROM

PlayStation

PC-CD ROM available now!

actua SPORTS SERIES

PlayStation available Jan'96

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Gremlin INTERACTIVE

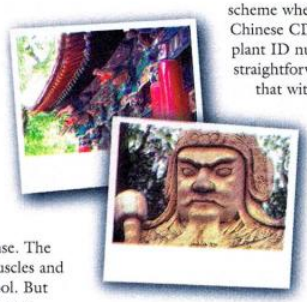
The Spy

He's the globe trotter who makes a drama out of a crisis. The crisis – software piracy. The drama – read on...

"WE'RE SENDING YOU out to China. Got a bit of business for you to take care of." China. I hadn't been there for five years. My old stomping ground. Was it a Hong Kong thing? The rights surrounding the island? A big league political thing for me to blow open? No. "Some of our agents have uncovered a piracy ring and we want you to go in there to check it out."

My controller leaned back in his leather arm chair doing that irritating thing he does with his hands. "Obviously we can't send you in there armed up, but go by and see Bob on the way out – he's got something you might find useful. You'll be strictly incognito on this job... and we don't want anything going wrong." My controller leaned forward and a sneer came into his voice. "Your exposé on Psygnosis changing their name to Sony Interactive Entertainment wasn't only wrong, it also jeopardised some of our undercover operatives."

I wish he wouldn't keep bringing up the Psygnosis thing. We had it on pretty good information that they were going to start producing Sega Saturn titles – *Wipeout, Destruction Derby* and *3D Lemmings* were just some of the game names dropped in association with the Saturn. But the surprise that came straight out of left field, was how Sony would handle the shift. How they'd react to this threat to the PlayStation. We'd suspected that Psygnosis were moving away from their corporate uber-personality after a few cagey conversations regarding the Namco arcade conversions. Psygnosis were distributing *Ridge Racer* – and then they weren't. Now the deal's 'on hold'. And no-one's even talking about the PC conversion of arcade games like *Alpine Racer*. The big surprise? They changed their name back to Psygnosis – dropping all that Sony nonsense. The Japanese were flexing their muscles and it was being felt up in Liverpool. But this wasn't the case I was being set loose on. I was on my way to China.

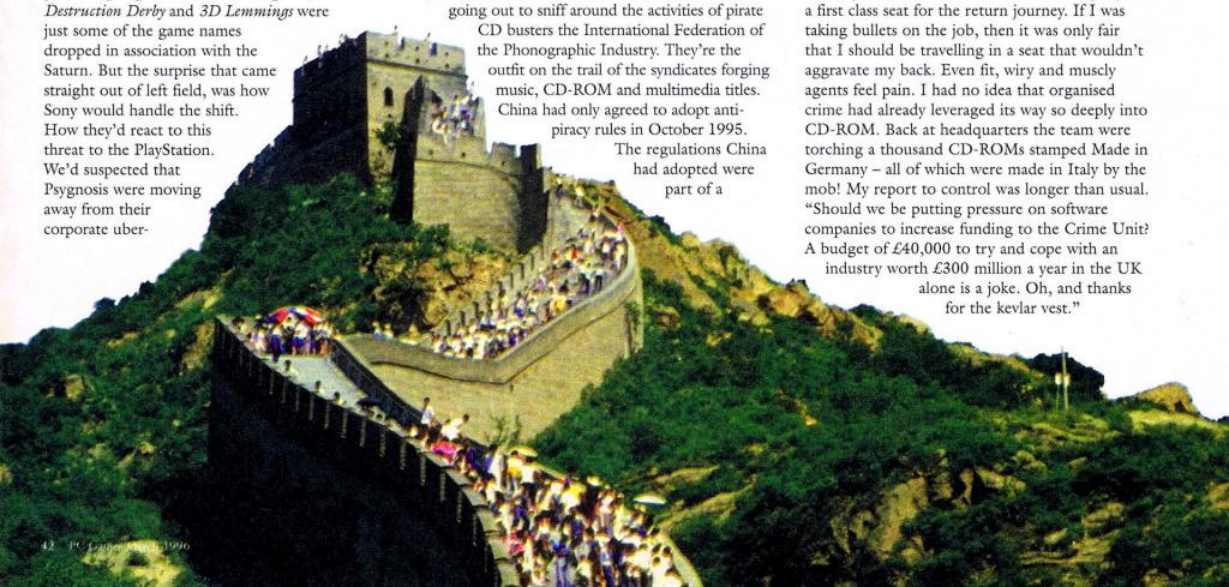


We always fly economy class when we're on a job. Being a top international secret agent means I've got to keep fit, and so a wiry, muscly form like mine would stand out a mile in the obese wide seats of first class. The flight was as long as ever, but it gave me a chance to look over my notes. I was going out to sniff around the activities of pirate CD busters the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry. They're the outfit on the trail of the syndicates forging music, CD-ROM and multimedia titles. China had only agreed to adopt anti-piracy rules in October 1995. The regulations China had adopted were part of a scheme whereby every one of the 30 or so Chinese CD pressing plants would press a plant ID number into each disk. Seemed straightforward enough. The plan was, that without the number it would be illegal to sell the disc and Chinese authorities would be able to prosecute anyone doing so. But something had gone wrong. Very wrong.

"I was revisiting the empty IFPI offices when a shattering of glass was followed by two bullets in the back. They thudded into my kevlar vest. Winding me. Bruising me."

I cleared customs and headed straight for the IFPI offices. They were deserted. The filing cabinets were already attracting dust and it looked like the building had been vacated in a real hurry. A few phonecalls and a visit to the local low-life turned up nothing but dead ends. My real answers took a much more forceful form. I was revisiting the empty IFPI offices when a shattering of glass was followed by two bullets in the back. They thudded into my kevlar vest. Winding me. Bruising me. But leaving me free to spy another day. Good old Bob. He'd turned down the application for the cyanide pen, but was convinced I'd need the vest. Normally I wouldn't wear one on a job. I hadn't even spotted the sniper, but the message was clear. The IFPI had been run out of town. It took a fairly aggressive exchange with a local software pirate to confirm the theory. There'd been rumours of a contract put out to kill the staff of the office. I'd wandered into a gangster thing.

I got the hell out of China – booking myself a first class seat for the return journey. If I was taking bullets on the job, then it was only fair that I should be travelling in a seat that wouldn't aggravate my back. Even fit, wiry and muscly agents feel pain. I had no idea that organised crime had already leveraged its way so deeply into CD-ROM. Back at headquarters the team were torching a thousand CD-ROMs stamped Made in Germany – all of which were made in Italy by the mob! My report to control was longer than usual. "Should we be putting pressure on software companies to increase funding to the Crime Unit? A budget of £40,000 to try and cope with an industry worth £300 million a year in the UK alone is a joke. Oh, and thanks for the kevlar vest."



PEACE HAS A PRICE...

DEFCON 5

AVAILABLE ON PC CD-ROM

GT Interactive Software (Europe) Ltd.

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MILLENNIUM INTERACTIVE

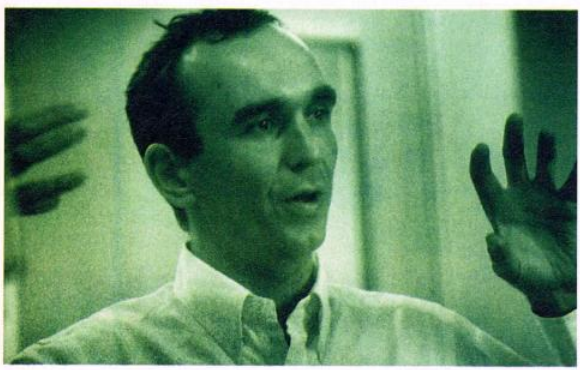
The Hot Spot

Still no *Dungeon Keeper*, then. What exactly are Bullfrog playing at? The Hot Spot isn't prepared to pussy-foot around.

BULLFROG, EH? DON'T you just love them, and their endearing way of bestowing classic after classic on the eternally-grateful PC-owning public? Where would we all be without stonking games like, er... *Hi-Octane?* No, that can't be right. *Magic Carpet 2?* We've covered that ground pretty extensively already. In fact, come to think of it, what was Bullfrog's last great game? *Theme Park* was yonks ago, after all. And how come, if *Dungeon Keeper's* supposed to be their great shining new hope, it's just been delayed for two months, supposedly for being a bit crap? We thought it was about time someone asked head honcho Peter Molyneux what he was playing at.

PCG: So, what's going on with *Dungeon Keeper,* then? It was supposed to be the best thing you'd ever done, but now you seem to have decided it's rubbish.
PM: *Well, I wouldn't say 'rubbish', exactly. But the criterion we set is: if a beautiful 17-year-old girl came down to the office completely naked, and started* ("Humming a catchy tune to herself" – Ed) *while you were playing the game, and then said, "Come on, big boy, take me* ("Down to the shops for some groceries" – Ed) *now", would you say, "Hang on, I've just got to finish this level"?*

PCG: And, er...
PM: *It didn't quite live up to that.*



PCG: Right.
PM: *There were lots of great things you could do and everything, but in the end it was just, well, aggravating to play.*

PCG: That's a bit of a familiar story.
PM: *Well, look, all right.* Magic Carpet 2 *is definitely a bit hard to control as a shoot-'em-up.*

PCG: We didn't say anything about *Magic Carpet 2.* It's been a bit of a while since you had a big hit, isn't it?
PM: *I suppose, looking at our last couple of releases, you could say that. But if you look at* Hi-Octane, *in a way we're proud of it, because it only took us a very, very, very short time to produce, and the reason for that is that we were effectively told to produce it by the powers that be. They demanded one of our games be out in six weeks, and since we couldn't finish* Dungeon Keeper *or* MC2 *that quickly, we produced a whole new game in six weeks instead. I mean, it wasn't a big hit, but it was a good effort for that amount of time.*

"I wasn't down the pub, I was down the gym. I had a stiff neck."

PCG: So it was rubbish, but at least it was fast rubbish under pressure, yes?
PM: *Well, exactly, yes.*

PCG: You must be a very rich man by now, Peter – why would you care anyway?
PM: *Well, I'm not so rich that I didn't have to work until 3 o'clock this morning.*

PCG: What? We rang up at 7 pm last night and Kevin said you were down the pub.
PM: *I wasn't down the pub, I was down the gym. I had a stiff neck.*

PCG: From tipping your head back to drink too many pints of lager, probably.
PM: *What?*

PCG: Nothing.
PM: *I've never done this for the money – going down to a Caribbean beach and sitting around for the rest of my life just doesn't appeal to me.*

***Dungeon Keeper:* Game? Or merely a cunning ruse to divert attention from Peter Molyneux's debauched weekend activities in Margate?**

PCG: Some people would say that just betrays a lack of imagination – having all that cash and not being able to think of anything better to do with it than write some more PC games.
PM: *Well...*

PCG: ... about hospitals and stuff.
PM: *But unless all your friends have money, it's useless. You can't say "Let's all go to Barbados", because they're all skint.*

PCG: You're loaded, you could pay.
PM: *Well, I would. Honestly. I tried to organise a ski-ing holiday this year, and I said "Look, don't worry about the money", but no-one would come. They didn't want to be, you know, money-grabbing or charity cases or whatever.*

PCG: Maybe they just don't like you.
PM: *Don't like me?*

PCG: Don't like you.
PM: *It's a possibility, I suppose.*

PCG: Well, it's always worth considering.
PM: *So what I'm actually doing is going down to Margate for the weekend. But at least I've got so much money I can completely empty the cuddly-toy crane-grabbing machines.*

PCG: That's the spirit. Peter Molyneux, thank you very much.

(Aw. Poor Peter Molyneux. Whatever the uncompromising Hot Spot might reckon, we think he's lovely, and we'd certainly go skiing with him. We'll be further exploring his reasons for postponing Dungeon Keeper *next month. – Ed)* PCG

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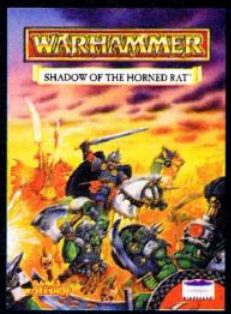

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Cables

Overhead, thousands of feet above the clouds, a formation of B-52s can just be made out, leaving long vapour trails in the sky. All is calm. Then the jungle explodes, all life extinguished by a carpet of letters.

Dreaming of DF2

One of the best PC games of 1995 for me was *Dark Forces*. And, what seems like eons ago, I heard and read somewhere a sequel was due in early 1996. But, having just read the 1996 Preview section in the January issue, I did not see it mentioned. Can it be that I have been well and truly shoved down the garden path regarding my sources?

Also, apart from *Afterlife*, no mention was made of any LucasArts graphic adventures or Star Wars-themed software.

Oh well, back to *The Dig*, and watching the Star Wars trilogy for the 100th time and dreaming of *Dark Forces 2*.

N Vicars-Harris, Colwyn Bay

LucasArts are currently re-jigging their 1996 plans, with the result that Monkey Island 3*, which was to be released this summer, has been postponed. We'd be greatly surprised if they weren't planning a new Star Wars game, though. The precise form it might take still eludes our agents, but they are sure to uncover more details over the next few months.*

Make the PC

Why didn't you make the *PC Gamer* Top 50 like you did last year in your December edition?

Can I expect an answer?

Paulo Vieira

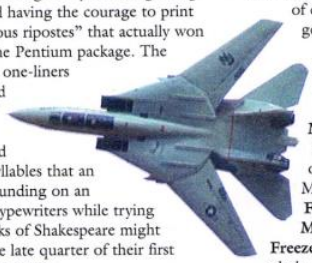
Good point. We're planning something along these lines for the very near future.

Freeze: Crk. Break!

Thank you for responding to my letter regarding competition 24, and having the courage to print the eight "glamourous ripostes" that actually won some lucky skunk the Pentium package. The fact that these witty one-liners consisted of the kind of random interpolation of individual letters and unpronounceable syllables that an infinite numbers pounding on an infinite number of typewriters while trying to produce the works of Shakespeare might have achieved by the late quarter of their first millennium is disheartening.

I can only assume my postcard got lost in the post.

For your edification, and that of your readers, I present below the competition-winning one-liners that never actually arrived, in the hope that they will inspire others to strive beyond the limitations of cruel and crooked fate, and beat those goddam monkeys at their own game.



Freeze: Crk. I see them, "Magnum". I'll take the one on the left, and you take the other.
Me: Crk. Right!
Freeze: Crk. Oh, I see. You take the one on the right, then... I have missile lock.
Me. Crk. Use your Sidewinders.
Freeze: Crk. Eh? Your sandwiches?
Me: Crk. Either lunch out or punch out!
Freeze: Crk. Hey buddy, we got bogies to splash.
Me: Crk. Then use your Kleenex.
Freeze: Crk. Break! Break!
Me: Crk. No time for coffee right now!

Full of orcs

After reading the February issue of your wonderful magazine I found that there weren't any mistakes in it at all. This made me fear that next month's Cables page would be empty,, as it is usually full of stupid letters about double commas and other such trivial complaints. So I have decided to write in myself, so as not to leave a nasty hole in your superb publication.

Why is it that nearly all games coming out at the moment are set in such terrible time periods? If it's not 2000-and-something, it's some ancient fantasy world with technology very similar to the Dark Ages. What's wrong with the good old 20th century? I'd much prefer to play with proper machine-guns and tanks than naff, silent lasers and flimsy bows and arrows. *Wolfenstein 3D* was an excellent game and, even though *Doom* is technically superior, it isn't quite as satisfying. *Heretic* and *Hexen* were set ages ago and every other first-person 3D shoot-'em-up is set in the future. It's the same with strategy games. I liked *Dune 2*, and *Command & Conquer* was fine, but *Warcraft*, *Warhammer* and so on are full of orcs and other green monsters. Bring back people and real weapons!

And I wonder how many people write in having noticed the double comma mistake in my letter.

John Cogman, East Preston

Freeze: Crk. Aaargh! I'm hit!
Me: Crk. That'll be last night's curry.
Freeze: Crk. No, "hit". I'm bailing out!
Me: Crk. What? You sprung a leak?
Freeze: Crk. Yeah, buddy. Give them one from me! Over and out!
Me: Crk. Good chute… bad shoot!

As you can see, all the really bad lines are provided by 'Freeze'. Personally, I just don't think he's straight-man material.

I'll be back…

Mike Eustace, Leeds

Nope, your postcard arrived fine. Unfortunately, not only did it walk straight into the obvious 'bogies' and 'bit' gag traps, but it contained 'coffee break' and 'leak' lines of such lamentable quality that we were compelled to discard it instantly.

-90-16Mb version

Please don't tell me Origin aren't going to produce any more *Ultima* games. I found only two Origin games in your 1996 preview. Tell me

you're wrong. Tell me you forgot all about Origin. Tell me Origin will come out with a super-high-res-3D-surround-sound-Pentium-90-16Mb version of *Ultima 9* and/or *Ultima Underworld 3.*

Guido Brink, The Haque, Holland

We are never wrong – you should know that by now. Apart from The Darkening *and, at last,* Wing Commander IV, *Origin do indeed seem to have gone a bit quiet, with nothing planned for the rest of the year. Be assured, however, that the world will hear from the* Ultima *series again.*

I'm not typing

First, I would like to compliment you on making such a frighteningly close-to-perfect magazine. Your reviews are nearly always right, and your previews very informative. But I'm not typing this letter to slobber all over you with compliments. Actually I typed it because I'm still waiting for a game to come out which you previewed in the March issue of 1995. The name of this game is *Magic: The Gathering.* It was supposed to be published by MicroProse before the summer of 1995. Will it still be published, or have MicroProse shut the whole thing down?

Ron Derksen, Landgraf, The Netherlands

Tch. MicroProse, eh? They're still working on Magic: The Gathering *– in fact, now that he's finished* Civ II, *Sid Meier himself has taken a hand in it – and it's currently due for release in about May.*

WHO YOU ARE

DES O'CONNOR KNOWS WHO YOU ARE. YOU ARE SAFE.

Anon, Leicestershire

Phew.

Chased by a Tyrannosaurus Rex

Your article on the development of 3D games in issue 27 was fascinating. You quote Ron Hyde (Rowan Software) saying: "It was only the very first generation of home computers like the ZX80 and 81 which didn't have any 3D games on them." But that statement is to ignore possibly the first 3D home computer game I can think of (and certainly one of the best): *3D Monster Maze* by J.K. Graye Software.

> ***"Seeing that hulking mass of black squares, plus signs and letter 'o's sent shivers down your spine!"***

Few games until *Doom* could inspire such fear in the player. The aim of wandering around a 3D maze trying to find the exit while being chased by a Tyrannosaurus Rex was just too much with the lights out. It was all black and white, and there was no sound. But seeing that hulking mass of black squares, plus signs and letter 'o's sent shivers down your spine! True fear and the inescapable desire to shout "Shiiiiii…" while pressing the 'forward' key as quickly as possible was elicited by the simple words "HE'S BEHIND YOU!" printed at the bottom of the screen. Finding the swirling exit was incredibly relieving. "You have eluded him," it said. But not for long…

Black and white, no sound, two frames per second max, small playing area, wobbly RAM pack... fantastic game. Jay Wilbur sums it up perfectly: "You can have piss-poor tools, a piss-poor engine, but if you're designing a good game with it, you've got something great." Give me *3D Monster Maze* over the likes of *Destruction Derby* any day.

Adam Britton, Bristol

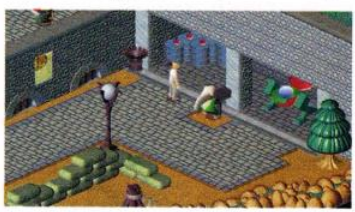
We'll be sure to, and thank you for your elucidation.

Life hasn't been the same

I wonder if you can help me. I am a big adventure game fan, and since I received Electronic Arts' amazing *Little Big Adventure* my life hasn't been the same. I can truly say that it's the best game I have ever played. I have now played it through five times from start to finish. Please, please, please can you tell me if Electronic Arts are planning some sort of sequel to this truly magnificent game, because I haven't found a game to match it since, and I can't imagine playing it even more times.

Marc Alderman, Reading

Incredibly, through the sort of spooky coincidence that could, if not treated with caution, easily bring a letters page into disrepute, we reveal all this month. Turn to page 30. PCG



Please keep letters concise, or they won't fit in, and send them to: Cables, PC Gamer, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or e-mail them to: pcgamer@futurenet.co.uk

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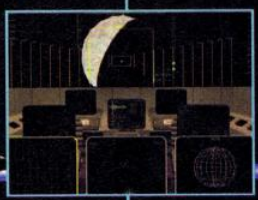

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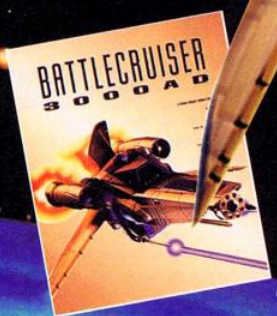

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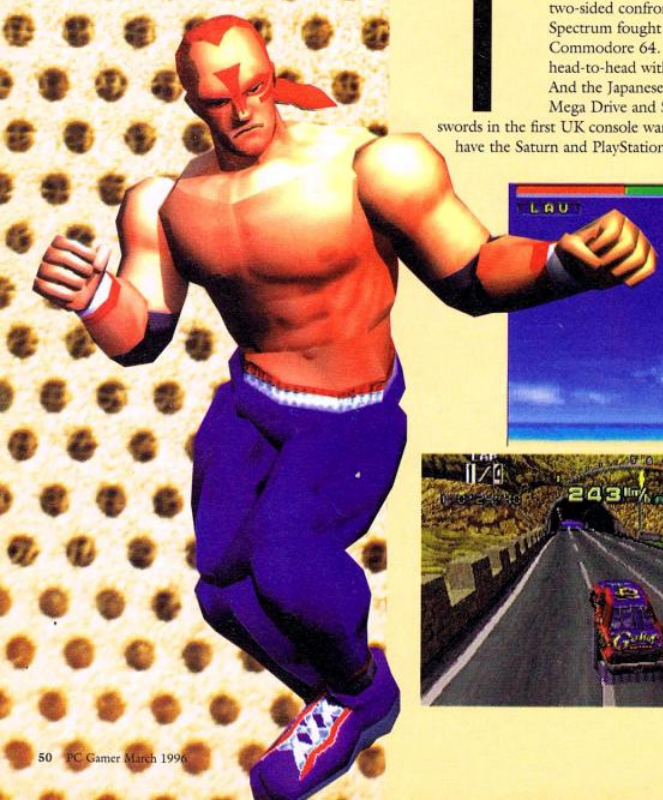
Sony Radio

From humble beginnings, Sony have grown into one of the most enormous global megacorporations ever to grip the world. Video games are their latest conquest, with the launch of the PlayStation. Now they have the PC in their sights. *PC Gamer* brings you up to date. By JAMES FLYNN

THE HISTORY OF VIDEO games has been dominated by two-sided confrontation. The ZX Spectrum fought it out with the Commodore 64. The ST went head-to-head with the Amiga. And the Japanese invaders, the Mega Drive and SNES, clashed swords in the first UK console war. Today we have the Saturn and PlayStation locking horns, with the Jaguar and 3DO as good as dead and the Ultra 64 waiting to enter the fray. There is, though, one significant exception to this all-or-nothing attitude. The PC, being unaffiliated to any one manufacturer, unconstrained by development licences and installed as a matter of course in millions of homes and offices, has for many years remained detached from the squabbles surrounding it. Times are changing, however.

The arrival of the 32-bit consoles has re-



(Above) **Sega's *Virtua Fighter Remix* is an ideal example of the PC benefiting from console game exchanges.**

(Left) And there's no reason to believe that the PC version of *Daytona* won't be an improvement on its console father.

days

vitalised the industry as a whole. A darkened-bedroom-based hobby has almost overnight become an acceptable pastime as huge numbers of those who were playing games in the early 1980s become earners rather than dependents. The suit-clad corporate big-boys have realised that it's possible to earn huge amounts of money from relatively small, almost risk-free investment, prompting massive cash injections from remarkably diverse sources.

And, as the teen-focused industry disappears forever, the PC has also come of age. Once the least fashionable of all machines, it played an integral part in the initial success of consoles and is continuing to help them flourish. Games like *Theme Park, SimCity 2000* and *X-COM: Terror From The Deep* have already become huge successes on machines that were really designed to move fast, real-time 3D. Existing PC action titles like *Doom* and *Descent* have set the benchmark for console-specific games. And many of the graphical adventures that have been PC-only for so long are edging towards the little machines.

But it's already pay-back time.

Sega have co-operated with Diamond Multimedia to bring an improved version of arguably the greatest beat-'em-up ever, *Virtua Fighter*, to the PC via the Diamond Edge 3D card. We reviewed it in the January issue. *Panzer Dragoon* has followed (see page 92), and, if all goes according to plan, *Daytona USA, Virtua Cop, Sega Rally* and *Virtua Fighter 2* will be coming our way this year. Sonic, the most popular video game character in Europe and the US, has rolled on to the PC along with pacifist dolphin Ecco, and there are plans for more 2D conversions soon. It's no exaggeration to say that some of these can be rated among the best games ever created, and now the PC benefits.

> "It is theoretically possible to port every PlayStation game to the PC very rapidly indeed, and this is why there are so many cross-over products arriving today."

But in particular it's the PlayStation that's supplying a steady stream of new titles to the PC. Every PlayStation game is developed on the PC using plug-in cards costing around £2,000, most of which are unofficial cards supplied to programmers by Psygnosis's hardware division, Psy-Q. To comply with Sony's directives, all games must be coded in C using their own libraries, and C is the easiest language in which to port games to other platforms. It is theoretically possible to port every PlayStation game to the PC very rapidly indeed, and this is why there are so many cross-over products arriving today.

The danger is, of course, that PlayStation-specific developers will see these month-long porting exercises as little more than an opportunity to wring a little more money from their titles. Many will be watered down, hurried and unoptimised versions. But there's one company that has already made it perfectly clear that this attitude is unacceptable.

Psygnosis, a Liverpool-based company who're wholly owned by Sony Computer Entertainment, are promising that every game they develop in-house from now on will have separate programming teams for each version. The two will obviously be in close contact, but the feeling is that only with platform-specific research and development will the true potential of the game be realised. It's an unusual (and expensive) move that bodes well for PC gamers. We've already seen good games born from a single-team approach – the tricky but excellent *Wipeout* (*PCG* 24, 92%) and the shallow but enjoyable *Destruction Derby* (*PCG* 25, 86%). But the next wave of Psygnosis conversions to the PC have, the company claims, been held back so that they can be improved, in terms of both graphics and the way they play.

Return Fire **will balance traditional PC strategy elements with more arcade-style action sections.**

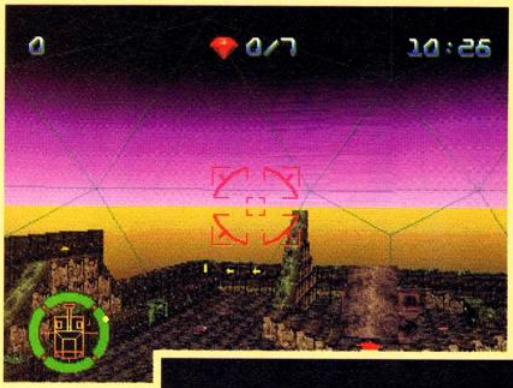
The PC has traditionally been poor at providing simple, easy-to-pick-up games like *Tempest 2000*. Racers are usually the closest it comes.

Assault Rigs

Two years into the development process, most programmers never want to see their games again. So it was something of a surprise when I ventured into Psygnosis's Stroud offices to see four of them locked in very emotional combat playing *Assault Rigs*. If you're using spare moments to play your own game, it's generally a good sign, and apparently it's been happening a lot with *Assault Rigs*. (Apart from brief periods of distraction with *Command & Conquer*, that is.)

And playing it over a network, it's easy to see why. Your only desire is to crush your opponents, and it's strangely challenging yet simple to try. You pilot some kind of VR tank on a futuristic Earth where people fight it out in arenas for the entertainment of the masses. As ever, the plot's largely irrelevant, but the fact is that it's great fun.

The trouble is, when you're playing the programmers it's also rather tricky. The extensive range of guns, missiles, lasers, mines and the strange but superb bounce ammo (which fragments when it hits walls) always seems to be turned on me, and once again my front shield buckles under the onslaught. Which would be fine were it not for the gloating over the headphones. *Assault Rigs* has an in-built facility to talk to any of the other seven players via a microphone that plugs into your soundcard. Hold down one of the Function keys and your own, undistorted words of wisdom pounce on the unfortunate victim. At first it's rather unnerving because we all know that computers never really speak in human voices, but the ultimate in context-sensitive speech has arrived. There are certain technical limitations, but it might be time to dig out that cheap and tacky microphone that



The 3D nature of all the level designs is clear to see from the screen and the editor.

A missile comes streaking towards you, leaving a trail of smoke behind it. Things can get pretty frantic at times.

PlayStation vs PC

The competitive nature of games has spread across to people baiting each other about the relative merits of their machines. In truth the PC stands aloof and alone, exempt from the console squabbles. But it can compete when it needs to.

(Above) **The PC version of *Assault Rigs* has been re-programmed to appear perspectively correct. This means that when you look into the distance there is no warping of the polygon edges.**

(Left) **The original. Note the crinkles towards the bottom of the screen. This is a problem common to just about every PlayStation game where the polygons move off the edge of the screen and have to be clipped to fit.**

came with the SoundBlaster 16 value pack you thought you'd never use.

What is perhaps the most significant technical aspect of *Assault Rigs* is that the extra time, along with the power of the PC, has enabled the programmers to improve significantly on the PlayStation version. Every texture in the game is perspectively correct, which means that there are none of the annoying crumpling, 'fish-eye' effects that are seen on the PlayStation. This is

"What is perhaps the most significant technical aspect of Assault Rigs is that the extra time, along with the power of the PC, has enabled the programmers to improve significantly on the PlayStation version."

particularly important for aesthetic reasons on the VR level, where the grid-like boundaries must remain straight even in your peripheral vision.

Assault Rigs has two basic modes of play. Gem Warz is the preferable single-player option and sees you belting round one of the game's 60 levels collecting the gems within a set time. Rig Rumble is designed more for the eight-player network, and the aim is (as you might imagine) to kill your opponents as frequently as possible. In both modes your survival time is governed by how long you can nurture your separate front, back and side shields.

The volcano level is split by two hanging layers of smoke, but it's the last level that's the most spectacular.

The level design itself promises to be one of *Assault Rigs*' strongest elements. Each level has been designed by one of the programmers, and the variety of minds at work has resulted in an equally varied selection of levels. Some are simple bowls where speed is vital, some are almost entirely based around levels, and others have huge undulating roller-coaster rides for you to fall off and swear at.

Assault Rigs is virtually finished and will be reviewed in next month's *PC Gamer*. Also stand by for a playable demo on next month's cover CD.

Warhawk

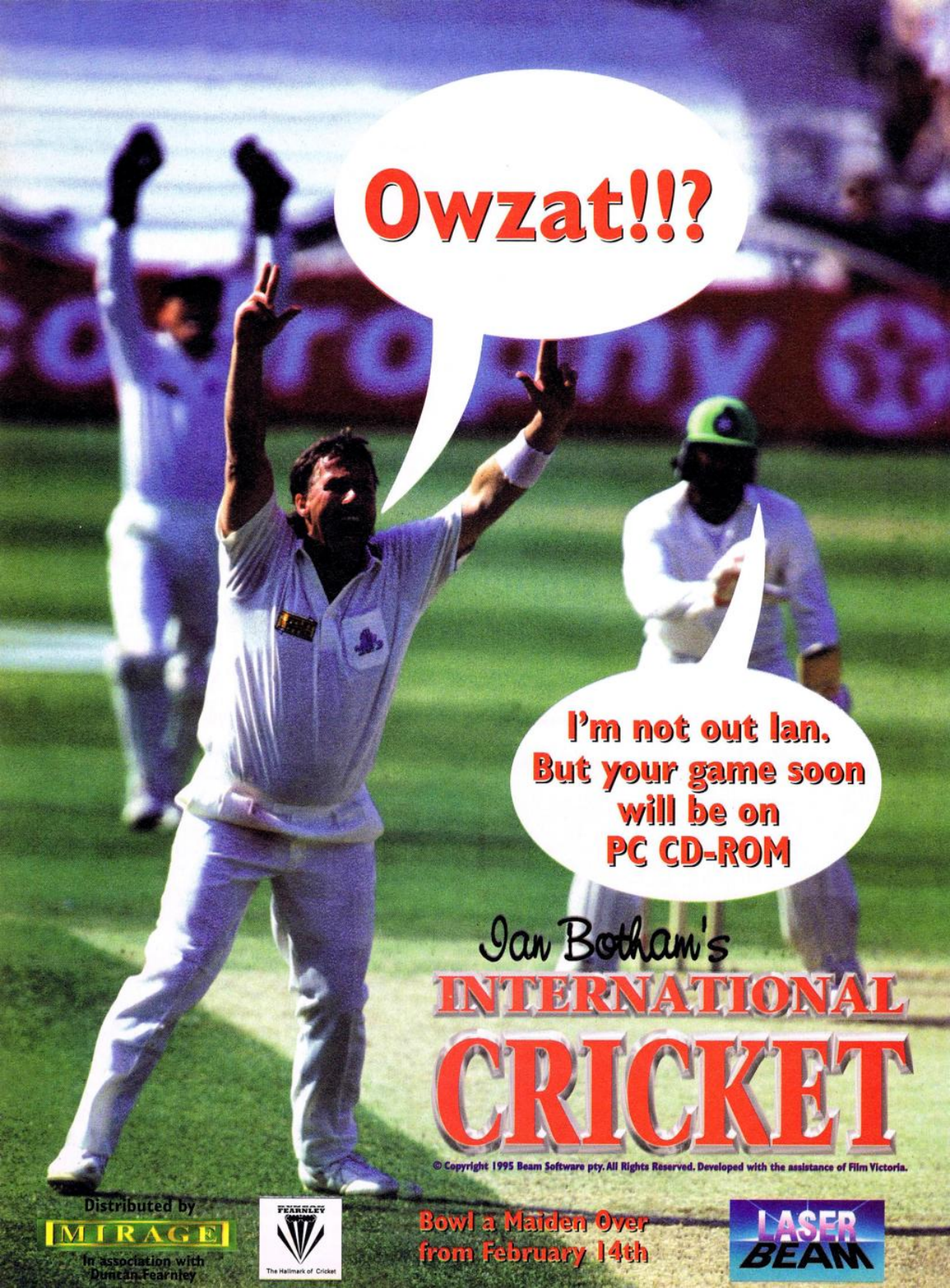
Warhawk promises to be one of the most stylish arcade flight sims available for the PC when it's released next month. Developed by Imagesoft in the US, the PlayStation version was released a couple of months ago, but the extra time spent on the PC version has enabled a decidedly average game to be transformed into a very playable one.

You take charge of a cribbed Alien dropship with an unnerving capacity for destruction. Nothing unusual there, but what is refreshingly different is the purely arcade nature of the entire game. The graphics in particular look completely removed from those the PC normally ends up with. Each of the six levels has a completely independent identity, from swooping down through a Stargate-style pyramid stranded in the desert to belting round floating naval armadas to the spectacular, lightning-strobed fortress. In SVGA with all the texturing on the effect is superb. Realistically you'll need a fast Pentium to get the best out of them, but even in VGA the overall design style is still pleasing.

The weapons follow this departure from the norm as well. Six swarm missiles shoot out in a cone with fiery trails before zigzagging their way to their target. The plasma torpedo streaks out of the front and its power can be regulated by ☛

(Below) **The PlayStation version of *Warhawk* suffered from a last minute rushed feeling. It ran smoothly in high res but ultimately failed to capture anyone's imagination.**

(Above) **The extra time spent on the PC version of *Warhawk* has allowed the programmers to greatly transform a decidedly average game into one that has great potential.**



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Sony

holding down Fire for longer before releasing it, and there's the obligatory Doomsday bomb for tricky situations. In keeping with the arcade nature of the game, all the weapons can be recharged using power-ups that are scattered round the map.

The PC version of *Warhawk*'s extra development time has enabled the programmers to supplement the arcade nature with surprisingly good flight dynamics. The ship feels like it's actually flying, and the afterburner and reverse thrusters throw it around under the forces. If you're a *Falcon 3.0* fan, it's going to feel pretty basic, but compared to most arcade games the physics is excellent.

"The PC version of Warhawk's extra development time has enabled the programmers to supplement the arcade nature with surprisingly good flight dynamics."

Warhawk should be released very soon and you'll find *PC Gamer*'s verdict on it next month.

Take on the evil ice cream van in the futuristic ram-racing game *Twisted Metal*. It'll run in detailed SVGA if you have a reasonable Pentium.

Twisted Metal

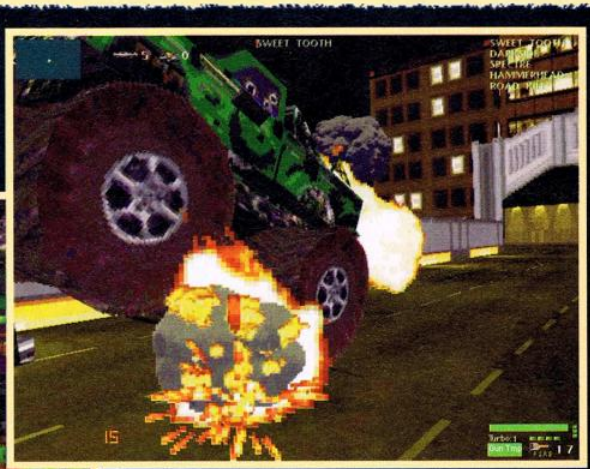
This is another game from Imagesoft that looks like a loose combination of *Destruction Derby* and *Quarantine*. It's 2010, and, as the name suggests, joy-riding is the latest craze to sweep the streets of the US of A. What distinguishes *Twisted Metal* vastly from both *Destruction Derby* and *Quarantine* is the choice of vehicles you get to race in – 12 in all, including ice cream vans, APCs, taxis and a fully armed Humvee (whatever that is). *(It's one of those out-sized Jeeps they had in the Gulf War, and which Arnold Schwartenegger's got. I fear they will catch on with the same set who currently amuse themselves by driving around Bath's narrow streets in Toyota Landcruisers. – Ed)* Add to this the six environments, including LA's river system, a wide variety of guns and missiles and a true 3D SVGA world and it could be your sort of game.

F1

Psygnosis still haven't confirmed whether their *F1* PlayStation racing game will be appearing on the PC, but looking at these pictures we're hoping they'll snap up the licence. Having raved about *Grand Prix 2* last month it's tricky to be equally enthusiastic about a game that I've never seen running, and one that will focus more on the arcade aspect of GP racing. However, if these static PlayStation shots are any indication of the potential quality of any conversion, it's going to be a good year for Formula 1 fans.

Psygnosis are deciding whether to bid for the licence to release an official F1 game. On the strength of these shots, let's hope they do.

(Below) **The PlayStation resorts to a split-screen view to let two players engage each other. A cable can link up two separate machines, but it's only a couple of metres long.**



(Above) **Providing you have access to a modem or network (which today isn't as expensive as it sounds) eight players can fight it out with full-screen displays on the PC.**

Power Soccer

We had a quick look at this one back in *PCG* 25 and it's now on course for a summer release. It's being programmed in France, and with the European Cup taking place at around the same time it could be quite a timely release.

***Powersports Soccer* is being developed by Psygnosis's French programmers. It's certain to rival what's already out there.**

Tenka

It's as yet uncertain whether this game will appear for the PC, but judging by how it's shaping up it should do. A puzzle-orientated 3D action-adventure, the combination of the integrated story line and the technical excellence would surely appeal to the generally more mature PC audience.

Psygnosis, who are programming *Tenka* (above), have just announced they are to release their games for the PlayStation's arch rival, the Saturn.

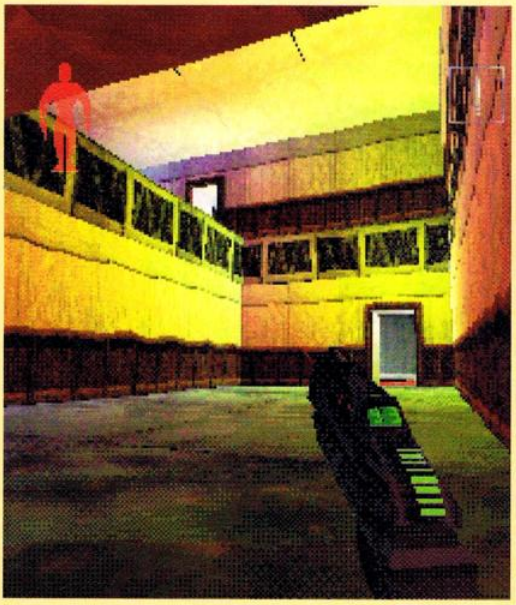
And the rest...

It's going to be a busy 12 months for Sony. ***Urban Decay*** has been delayed until the impending 3D accelerator card battle has calmed down slightly. Work is still progressing on the title, but don't expect to see the game before this time next year. Instead, Andrew Spencer is concentrating his efforts on ***Ecstatica 2***. The original (*PCG* 14, 78%) was welcomed for its looks, style and innovation but was too short and easy for hardened PC adventurers. The sequel promises to change all that, with thousands of locations, sharper characters and more intelligent camera angle switching. There hasn't been any official announcement yet, but expect to see *Ecstatica 2* around December this year.

Psygnosis's in-house developers are already hard at work on ***Wipeout 2***, which will involve a dedicated PC team. The engine's already been improved, and the designers are looking at ways to accommodate the PC's strengths and weaknesses (such as the lack of a decent joypad). ***Destruction Derby 2*** will contain all the goodies that were in place for the original but had to be cut because of time constraints. That pit lane used to work, for example, and would have added a much-needed planning element to the game. Also, expect the track design to be hugely improved and to feature hills, dips, wider bends, etc.

The *Assault Rigs* team is about to start work full-time on ***G-Police***, a real-time 3D *Desert Strike* gyrocopter shoot-'em-up which they're very confident about. ***Sentient*** is also in the works and is a thinking man's RPG. It's set on a futuristic space station and charges you with the task of discovering the cure to a lethal virus. And finally... Psygnosis France are working on ***City Of The Lost Children***, which, as an *Alone In The Dark*-ish adventure game, promises to be typically... French. PCG

***City Of The Lost Children* is still being kept quiet about. The adventure game is due for release later this year.**



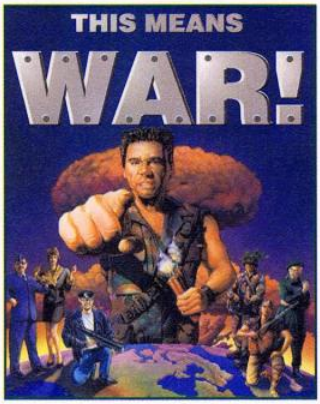
***Tenka* (PlayStation shot) may or may not make it onto the PC. The time being devoted to it would make it a definite possibility, though.**

***G Police* (PlayStation shot) is the next task in hand for the close-knit *Assault Rigs* team.**

WAR IS HELL!

IT'S YOU VERSUS THE WORLD - OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT!

A hideously addictive computer game has infested the world's computers with a virus that has destroyed all power output and made all active nuclear reactors meltdown and explode. This is the Apocalypse that's the starting point for THIS MEANS WAR! MicroProse's latest all-action battle strategy game.



Played in easy-to-use Windows interface THIS MEANS WAR! has high quality 3-D isometric view graphics including the largest selection of objects to build and deploy ever seen in a game of this type. THIS MEANS WAR! is easy to control - which is just as well considering the amount of real-time action that takes place.

Get the logistics right and you can reduce the opposing Command Centre to rubble. Get the logistics wrong and you'll watch on helplessly as marines, heavy infantry, biker gangs, jet fighters, and hovercraft tanks tear into your HQ. We all know that 'War Is Hell' but THIS MEANS WAR! is one hell of a game.

It's toy soldiers gone ballistic (yes, you even get ICBMs to deploy!)

At first, the game area is small with limited objectives. Orders come from Commander Clarke (at first quite severe but later on literally letting her hair down) - who keeps you informed of what's going on in the war; who's attacking or allying with who. She also gives you pointers on what to build next. But, watch out - her signal may be jammed by some of your opponents!

CROCODILE GHANDI

An absolute dictator of ancient biblical proportions and founder of the Church of Universal Siblinghood

MONDO KHAN

Styles himself on Genghis Khan. His army is strictly a mobile force with no central base

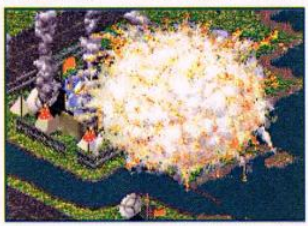
COUNTESS ANASTASIA ROMANOV

Possesses the tactical brilliance of Rommel and the personal habits of an alley cat

AVAILABLE IN WINDOWS™ FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES WITH CD-ROM

You play the commander of the Free World Alliance who must battle against the likes of Crocodile Ghandi, Napolienne, Mondo Khan and many others.

Give orders to rows of soldiers, tanks, planes and helicopters; order engineers to build you bridges, barracks, bunkers and gun turrets.



Create your own military industrial complex. Then take up arms to smash the strongholds of all who stand in your way to the musical background of original music or your own audio CD.

THIS MEANS WAR! IS ONE HELL OF A GAME

MICROPROSE

Spectrum HoloByte - MicroProse World Wide Web Site: http://www.microprose.com

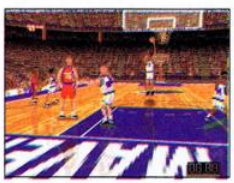
PlayStation

PC CD ROM

Visit EA SPORTS on the Web at http://www.ea.com/

NBA LIVE 96

The NBA, the whole NBA, and nothing but the NBA. You gonna play ball? NBA Live '96 takes you close, closer, closest to the nerve-shredding, teeth-grinding tension of the real NBA. Unique Virtual Stadium™ technology lets you live the game from anywhere on court. So now you experience every alley oop pass, power dunk and tip-in from any angle, whether it's the back row, free throw line or ridin' the pine. New for '96, Create and Trade Player options let you perfect the ultimate scoring machine. But be warned – every player from all 29 NBA teams (plus conference and custom teams) is waiting to pick your players' pockets. Wanna know what you're up against? Just check the stats. Hot Streak indicators show you who's scoring the points and who's making up the numbers. Animated play diagrams illustrate every move and you can call plays on-the-fly for instant results. And when it's raining baskets, the shot display report lets you know which way the wind's blowing. **NBA Live '96. Next Generation basketball.**



VIRTUAL STADIUM VS

EA SPORTS

if it's in the GAME, it's in the GAME™

Civilization 2

Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486, 4Mb, SVGA, Win 3.x/95
Recommended	Pentium, 8Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Early March

Refin

Civilization has reigned supreme among strategy games for four years. What can _Civ 2_ offer to delight further its fans?

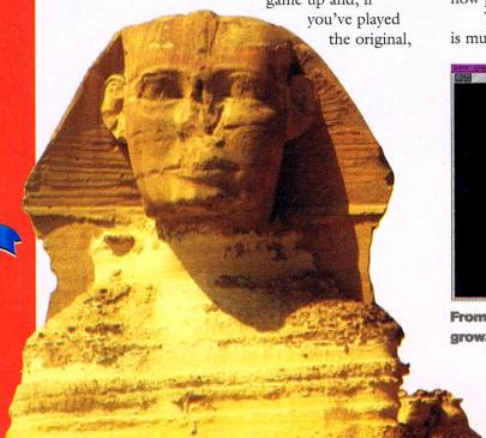
HOW DO YOU IMPROVE on perfection? How do you take a game that almost every programmer in the world would like to put their name to... and make it better? Do you return your baby to the cradle and start all over again – revolutionary concepts, untried themes and surprising settings in an effort to experiment with everything? Or do you look at your grown-up, successful, loved and prosperous child and try to imagine the few bits of it that you could have done just that little bit better? *Civ* all worked fine in the end, but was by no means perfect. And there's no mistaking that for its sequel, the father of *Civilization 2*, Sid Meier, has chosen the latter approach.

At first it's all very disappointing. Start the game up and, if you've played the original, you'll find it's all very familiar. You can use exactly the same tactics to get your first settlement up and running. Find a city anywhere half-decent, whack the science rate up as high as it'll go, build the basic military unit (now warriors rather than militia) to go exploring, follow it up with a phalanx and then a settler, see what advances you've made, and take it from there. But it's at about this stage that the subtle differences that now permeate the game start to become apparent.

> ***"At first it's all very disappointing. Start the game up and, if you've played the original, you'll find it's all very familiar."***

The monetary system throughout the game is much more dependent on your governmental

From small acorns do great oaks (or dictators) grow. This is your starting *Civilization* screen.



Only one game in each issue receives PC Gamer's *coveted Game Of The Month accolade.*

And few – only those scoring 85% or above – will be honoured by a recommended award.

If you succeed, your citizens gratefully build you a throne room. It's been greatly improved over the original.

The view can be zoomed in and out according to your wishes. The more remote views are good for stretegic planning and the closer ones for engaging in combat and moving troops round.

ed

regime than it was in *Civ*. You start off with Despotism, the least productive but simplest form of man management. But as a despot more interested in barbaric suppression than enlightened thinking you can only allocate a maximum of 60% of all available funds to science. Technological advances come slower from the start, but you'll be making some money as compensation. On the harder playing levels technology is everything and so the incentive to change to a more civilised form of government, which can assign more resources to science quickly, is strong. Playing as Monarchy, now a more powerful form of government, the percentage rises to 70%, and as a Democracy it hits the magic 100%. The system works well and makes building the Great Library even more vital.

Playing around with your city production options also brings a major surprise. Now when you switch between Military, Civilian and Wonder production you incur a 50% penalty. No longer can you have hordes of almost-trained librarians taking to the battlefield as legions, presumably equipped with heavy books as weapons. Long-term planning becomes more important and the game becomes harder, and it's impossible to fault the improvement.

In *Civ* it was never long before you were in the grip of an uncontrollable bloodlust urge that compelled you to attack your friendly neighbours. This fact of life hasn't altered one iota, but quite how you go about it has. Every unit still has Attack, Defence and Movement attributes, there are also now Hit-points and Firepower. Each unit can sustain damage equal to its Hit-points

As you progress rapidly (left) the game can get pretty slow as you manage all your cities. One of the new wonders to help you fight (above).

multiplied by ten, and every time a unit wins a round of combat its Firepower rating is subtracted from the loser's Hit-points. Every unit also has a coloured bar overhead representing remaining percentage Hit-points, and they slug it out until one dies. This system not only eliminates all of the one-off absurd situations of trireme splinters sinking battleships, but it leaves victorious units vulnerable to attack if the fight was tough. You can partially repair units by resting them for a turn, and of course they recover faster in cities or in special bases. It's an excellent system, balancing the game perfectly, but still not totally removing the occasional surprise, but not stupid, success stories.

"It doesn't matter how appallingly you treat someone as long as you never promise to treat them well."

The breakdown of your efforts remains.

But what if you can resist fighting to win? Do the new diplomatic approaches work, or are the enlightened Egyptians as stupid as they always were? Well, they're not, but they're still hardly geniuses. The continuous double-crossing that has always been possible is gone forever, and it's been replaced by what could be known as loyalty ratings. Put simply, it doesn't matter how appallingly you treat someone as long as you never promise to treat them well. Seems slightly ropy logic to me, but I'll let the philosophers sort the question out. Particularly on the higher levels there's very little forgiveness, and treaties are meant to be absolute. No matter what improvements have been made, and they are considerable, I can't imagine how you can win on a high level with peaceful expansionism by building a spaceship and without attacking anyone. (I'll try it and let you know if it's possible in the next issue.)

(Left) Win peacefully by discovering all the necessary technologies, building the Apollo Project, constructing a viable craft and flying to a new star system. (Below) Or win by being a complete fascist and wiping everyone else off the face of the planet.

Civilization already had a huge number of possible military units and structures to construct, and now there are even more of both. This is one area which has been tweaked and expanded rather than overhauled radically. Paratroopers, fanatics, cruise missiles and stealth bombers all make an appearance and can now annihilate the 14 new Wonders of the World plus more common

What else could he have done?

TRADING

Trading still seems to be something of an afterthought and could have been used to enforce the more diplomatic possibilities within the game. You can still trade wine extremely profitably with people you are trying to kill yet well-connected megalopolises within your own empire don't seem to want to know about each other. If trading had been restricted, with certain exceptions, to neutral/friendly countries the incentive not to be a Hitler would be greater.

Even failing this, a more detailed structure of supply and demand more akin to *Railroad Tycoon's* would be more interesting. Rather than merely having three goods that the city supplies and three it wants, how about the opportunity to pay lump sums of cash to develop specific businesses? It wouldn't have to be complicated but would have added a new element to the game.

The World. Trade works best with enemy cities over long distances for some reason.

The World War II scenario. Play as Hitler and wipe the French off the face of the Earth.

COMBAT

Enemies still occasionally attack more as individuals rather than groups. I don't want the entire Chinese Army released like wild dogs to capture every small hamlet, but with bigger, fully defended cities this error (how often do you rely on one catapult to capture a walled city?) makes it too easy to defend if you are of a similar tech level. It is much less noticeable than in the original but still occasionally present.

It's still impossible to move from adjacent to one unit to adjacent to another (even if it's a different one). It's particularly annoying when you could be moving round non-offensive units like settlers or walled cities – I mean, are the fortified troops inside likely to come out and do anything about it? This is a definite mistake in some situations.

But basically, considering that this is a game linked to the past rather than a risky step into the future, not much else could have been done, especially when you consider the unmitigated play-testing disasters that most strategy games are.

Huge cities like this take hundreds of years to construct. But they churn out units at an incredible rate.

supermarkets, research labs, offshore platforms and coastal fortresses. To balance the new units, certain A/D/M ratings have been slightly altered for the military, and certain effects and prices of the city's buildings have been changed a little. Battleships have become less powerful and air attacks can be thwarted by SAM sites. The changes are welcome, and do nothing but add to the feel and depth of *Civ 2* while remaining in keeping with the previously established structure.

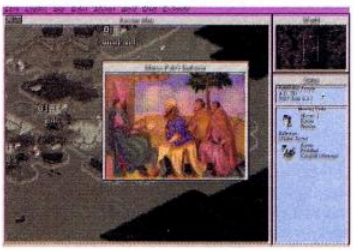
Civ's AI was great until you discovered how much it cheated. It's cleaned up its act to a huge degree (or at least cheats less obviously) and it makes you feel better about being up against the odds. Travellers report when a leader has started to construct, or is about to complete, a wonder so you no longer have the Pyramids spring out of a size three city you'd been intent on destroying for ten turns. It also makes a much greater use of fortresses, particularly on roads three squares out from the city. It makes them a git to get to, but I suppose it's sensible and you can do it too.

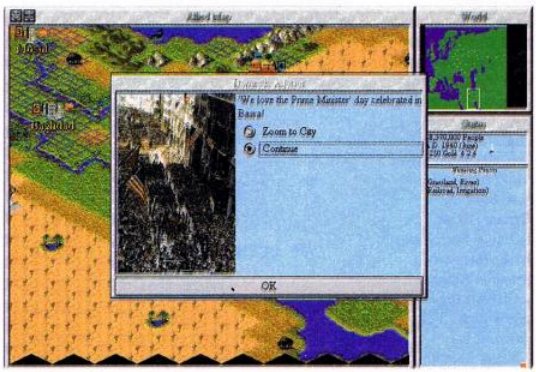
> ***"It's not just me developing a squint over the past few weeks – other people send their catapults merrily off into the desert when they want to attack an enemy unit."***

But undoubtedly the most obvious and radical departure from *Civilization* are the new graphics. Many people thought that if *Civ* had a weakness, it was its looks, but when it was released in 1991 the average machine was a 286/12MHz and they appealed to everyone. Today, it is obviously time to move on, but is an isometric 3D the right direction in which to have headed? In principle, yes, but when you sit down and have to play the game with the number pad, doubts quickly form in your mind. This sounds stupid, but often you don't know which key to press to move your units in a certain direction. It's not just me developing a squint over the past few weeks – other people send their catapults merrily off into the desert when they want to attack an enemy unit. It sounds ridiculous, but it doesn't seem to get easier with time. I never thought I'd like the idea of returning to a 2D display but at times an option would have been useful.

This isn't to say that the 3D approach is worthless, because for the most part the movement problem doesn't come into play (although it's a significant failing when you try to drown your rifleman). The multi-layered zoom facility works superbly and all the units are well-drawn, and when you're up close it's strangely pleasing to see them sitting there looking vicious. The varied city depictions on the main map that change as your city grows are a massive improvement over the bland boxes with numbers, and so are the fake 3D city close-up graphics, replacing those ever faker 3D graphics of the original. *Civilization* was never about its graphics and it's still not. It's just about the only gripe I could find.

When I started writing this review I was determined to say that it isn't a big enough advance over the original, that it's more like Civ 1.5, that the improvements would have been better implemented in *CivNet*, etc. Now, 2,000 words later, I've completely changed my mind. It's been impossible to list all the major changes, let alone the little ones. Most are behind the scenes and only become apparent after weeks of playing, but you'll be able to discover and decide on all those yourself as you play it. JAMES FLYNN





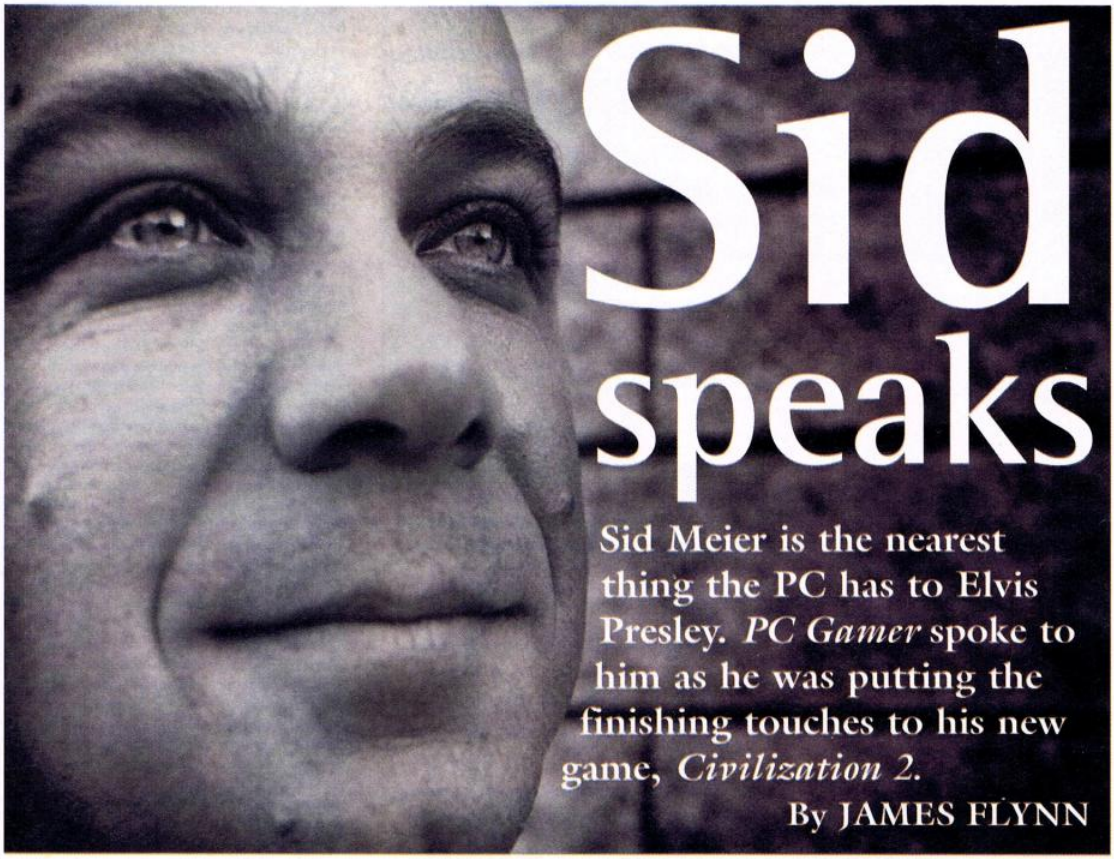
(Above) There's no escaping accountability at some stage. The game is brutally hard to win at playing Emperor or Divinity level. Sometimes they love you, however.

(Above-left) The expanded civilopedia plays animations to you.

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

Even after four years, no strategy game has come close to *Civilization*. And now it's twice as good.

96%



Sid speaks

Sid Meier is the nearest thing the PC has to Elvis Presley. *PC Gamer* spoke to him as he was putting the finishing touches to his new game, *Civilization 2*.

By JAMES FLYNN

SID MEIER HAS BEEN almost single-handedly responsible for creating some of the PC's greatest games. It would be accurate to say that to the uninitiated they appear dull and lifeless. But after a few minutes playing them, without exception you find yourself drawn into whatever world he has decided to create. From commanding a WWII submarine hunting Japanese ships in the Pacific Ocean *(Silent Service)* to, amazingly, actually being fascinated by the inner workings of a North American railroad company *(Railroad Tycoon)*. Along with most PC owners who've played it, Sid regards *Civilization* as his greatest achievement. To date it's sold over one million copies, and has probably 'wasted' more office hours than any other PC game. The sequel is even better, so I asked him how he did it.

At first I was disappointed that *Civilization 2* seemed too similar to *Civ*. But now I've been playing it for a couple of weeks it seems you've added much more than initially meets the eye. Which of the improvements satisfies you the most?

Well, I think there's a couple of things that we're most happy with. For starters, we feel better about the graphics now that they're in high res. One of the major factors people had talked to us about were the 2D graphics. At the time they were fine, but it's been a couple of years now and we're glad to bring the game up to the present. But I think the thing that we're most happy with is that we're able to keep the fun parts of the original *Civilization* and not really lose any of that. *Civ* really worked well, but now we've also added some new things that extend it – more technologies, more units and more improvements.

> "You get so many ideas and so many suggestions that we could have written two or three games."

The additional units make the combat a little more interesting, and they've also meant we've had to change some of the numbers on some of the units to balance things out. So often version two of a game is in some ways better but at the same time it's managed to completely lose what was neat about the original... So I think we've kept the fun parts of the original and then extended them without getting rid of the things that were working on the original version.

You mention the combat. How long did it take you to come up with the idea and get it in place?

Well, we considered an even more detailed combat system first, where you would actually go to a separate screen and resolve the battle, but we found that stopped the game and it was all too much. I think you've really put your finger on what we're trying to do – to make combat seem less random, which was one of the comments about the original game, but still not have it take over the game. I think we found a good balance. We've added a lot more detail so it doesn't seem as random, but we didn't want to turn it into a game that was just about combat. *Civilization's* aim is to arrange a nice balance between the economic, political and military elements, and we didn't want it to go too much towards the

military. Yeah, we're happy with the way that turned out. It adds a little bit more but it doesn't dominate the game.

The last time I spoke to you, you were trying quite hard to strengthen the diplomacy element. Do you feel you've managed to do that? The critical test would be, can you win without fighting?
At one time I thought the answer was no, that you would have to fight to win the game. I'm trying to remember exactly what the strategy was, but I've heard of someone who basically used the strategy of going out and finding all of the little villages that turn into cities and finding as many of those as possible as soon as possible. Apparently they were able to win without actually fighting the other civilisations. I think in general, the idea of the game is that you need to balance some military, some economic and some political, and really you need to do all three to play the game at the highest level. I think anything is possible.

If you had to pinpoint one single element that was the hardest to perfect, what would it be?
Well, I think trying to decide where to stop. You get so many ideas and so many suggestions that we could have written two or three games. We wanted to really find the balance between making a game that, even if you had already played the original *Civ*, there'd be enough new things to make it interesting, without making it so difficult that you had to have played the original version to be able to play the sequel. So we added quite a few new things but we didn't want to lose one critical one – the idea of starting off very simply and growing from there. We did use a lot of the ideas again that worked well with the original game. Doing everything we could think of was a temptation, but we tried to resist the urge.

> "We added quite a few new things to Civ 2 but we didn't want to lose one critical one – the idea of starting off very simply and growing from there."

And you've capitalised on the new technology developments in the intervening years?
Definitely. Both the graphics and the Civilopedia are nice things that we couldn't do four years ago, and it's nice to be able to put some of those things in. We didn't have CD-ROM four years ago.

But you still haven't abandoned your basic, simple design principles despite the temptation?
Generally, we lean towards functional over beautiful, but it's nice to be able to get both. We're trying to do some work on it but again we don't want to lose... I'd rather have it playable than flash. It's more fun to play than fun to look at, but we'll try and get as much of both as we can.

So how long have you been working on achieving this? It did seem to appear rather ☛

The Meier Softography

1) *Silent Service*, a tense game with both action and strategy. 2) *Railroad Tycoon*, a disastrous idea on paper but one that Meier got to work in practice. 3) *Colonization*, a game that Meier put his name to but was developed by Alan Reynolds. It lost the magic. 4) *F-15 Strike Eagle*, his first flight sim. 5) And, of course, the original *Civilization*.

out of the blue last December.
We've just been working away quietly. It's been over a year now since we started, probably closer to 18 months.

How did you start? By collecting ideas from the first game?
Basically from around here, and also from looking at letters and posts on networks and things like that. We just put everything together in terms of ideas and started sorting through to figure out which ones were really do-able. We had a lot of ideas from people connected to the first game.

At its development peak, how big was the team?
It's basically two programmers, and the number of

artists fluctuates. Maybe one or two at the beginning and then at the end we probably had about ten artists working on it just the last couple of months. And then we've had a play-test team on it – that's four or five people – and our sound department was working on it. So probably in the region of twenty people on it altogether.

And you've been play-testing it for how long?
It'll be, like, four months. This is a game that has a lot of features and takes a long time to play.

And your next project is going to be...?
I'm starting to work on *Magic: The Gathering*, the card game. We're bringing that over to the computer now. It's going to be a different challenge to capture the spirit of a game that already exists on a different format. People are expecting a lot from such a famous game, and we certainly don't want to disappoint them.

Meier's magical touch

Magic: The Gathering **was originally slated for release last year but has been delayed, partly to allow Meier to have a closer look at the game. The card-based original's popularity continues to grow.**

The PC version will have a one-player game that combines an adventure section with the card game itself. After wandering around collecting cards you'll meet other wizards and fight it out. A two-player link-up option will also be included. Current plans are to feature the 300 basic pack cards, which will appear in glorious 24-bit colour.

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The game football fans wanted!

Domark, creators of the award winning Championship Manager 2 now give you the chance to test your managerial skills at some of the most famous club and national sides in the world with the launch of the these stand-alone European League Editions.

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REVIEW

Top Gun: Fire At Will

Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486DX, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	Pentium, SVGA
Sound Support	SoundBlaster
Release Date	22nd February

Carrier landings are actually possible in *Top Gun*. Deck fires frequently ensue, however.

For years, flight sims have been getting more complex and more accurate. Here's one that does just the opposite and, for want of a better phrase, cleans 'em and fries 'em.

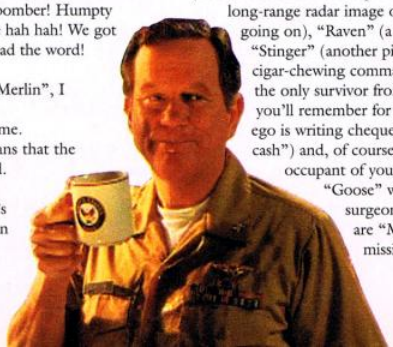
Maver

PERSISTENT *PC GAMER* readers will remember *Top Gun: Fire At Will (Aarghh. – Will)* from our April issue of last year. We spoke of a flight sim for beginners that would feature characters who'd ease you into the game by explaining how the controls worked, a navigator in the back-seat who'd look after some of the more routine flight sim operations, a rendered 3D InteracTive Base™ for you to wander around, and movie-style presentation that would join all the missions up into a story.

Now, after the sort of irksome delays which seem to beset every flight sim, it is here. Some of the original ideas have been dropped – including, thankfully, the IntEractive Base where, no doubt, you'd have to click on the cleaning lady's trolley to arm your plane, or something – and some have remained.

In-flight conversations are still in there, and these take place over the radio throughout missions. These go something like this:

Me: I wonder what this button does.
"Merlin": Splash one Bear bomber! Humpty Dumpty had a great fall! Yee hah hah! We got those suckers! Momma, spread the word!
Me: Pardon?
"Strike": What was that? "Merlin", I didn't copy. Over.
Me: I'm glad it wasn't just me.
"Stinger": "Strike", he means that the bandits have been destroyed.
"Strike": First cruise, kids. Both of you are RTB. That's return to base. Then you can write momma a nice letter telling her what it is to be in hack for a week.
Me: So, er, what is it to be in hack for a week?
"Merlin": He's just kidding about that hack stuff, right?
Me: Eh?



And so on. You even get the odd interactive movie in-joke, like when "Raven" says: "Merlin, how come you always speak for Maverick? Come to think of it, I've never even seen Maverick." The characters who're speaking appear in a little window at the bottom of the screen, and you'll soon become intimately acquainted with "Strike" (your commander back on the carrier), "Hawkeye" (the AWACS aircraft that provides everyone with a long-range radar image of everything that's going on), "Raven" (a woman pilot), "Stinger" (another pilot), "Hondo" (the cigar-chewing commanding officer who's the only survivor from the film, and who you'll remember for the line "Son, your ego is writing cheques your body can't cash") and, of course, "Merlin" (the occupant of your back seat, replacing "Goose" who's now a surgeon). You, meanwhile, are "Maverick". All that's missing is the facility to

(Above) **As well as this view there's a 'virtual cockpit' which tracks enemies, one without any instruments, a chase view, and numerous others.**

(Right) **Here's Cuba, scene of the first campaign. We suspect Hondo is just stocking up on cigars.**

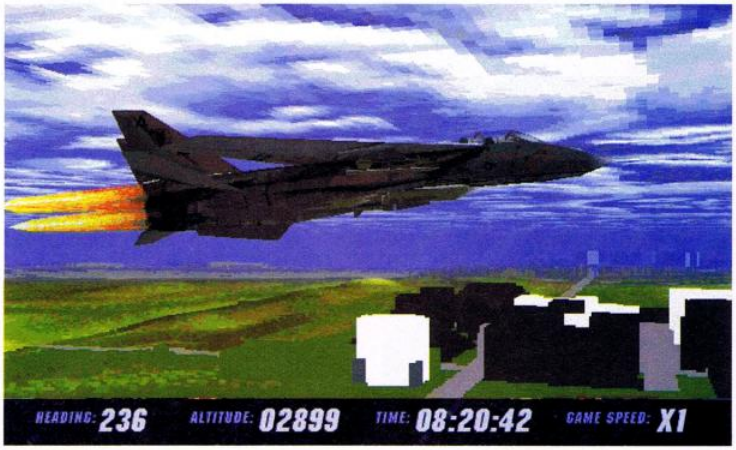
'Be' Maverick

Before the game starts, you're shown a video clip. "Hondo" (who you'll remember from the film) is giving some bloke a bit of a dressing down, wagging his finger at him and saying, "You don't own that plane, the taxpayers do." He walks out from behind his desk, and goes on, "You two are going to Top Gun." Two? He starts advancing towards, bizarrely, the cameraman, explaining that he and the other chap had better get their acts together and be the best. Rather than shouting "Cut!", however, the director allows this to continue, until suddenly you realise that he's actually talking to you. You're, like, Maverick. Welcome to the world of interactive movies.

Because PCs are awful, we couldn't get Top Gun to grab, and had to use MicroProse's pictures.

There are occasional buildings on the ground, but only really around major targets.

ick



reply, *Wing Commander*-style, using multiple-choice responses. But you'd probably only crash while you were fumbling with the keyboard.

The dialogue is supplemented by a window in the bottom-right of the screen. This normally shows a close-up of your selected target, whether it's flying about or spiralling to the ground in flames. However, whenever anything exciting happens elsewhere on the mission it automatically switches to that instead. So you get to see the B-52s you're escorting dropping their bombs on the enemy airbase, or your carrier launching an anti-missile missile at an incoming Exocet, or a formation of F/A-18s peeling away to "RTB". These are all generated in real-time, too, rather than being cop-out pre-rendered sequences, so you can rotate and zoom them just like the main picture.

And then, by means of the in-flight dialogue and video clips between missions, the whole thing's tied up with a storyline. You begin at the Top Gun school, as in the film, flying training missions against your chums with the aim of scoring enough points to become "Top Gun". Then it's into the campaigns, of which there are three, and which I shall explain elsewhere. Each mission starts off with a fairly standard-sounding briefing, but things tend to get more complicated once you're in the air.

> *"You feel genuinely under pressure, which you never do in a drier, more traditional simulation like SSI's* Su-27.*"*

Korea, for example. Your carrier is called in when the North invades the South, and you're sent on a patrol mission. A couple of baddies attack, and you head off in pursuit, but it turns out to be a decoy and a load more baddies come in from the other side. You beat them off, however, and, back on the carrier, you're commended and returned to the flight deck for another mission – bombers are heading for the carrier. On the deck awaiting the launch signal, you see "Stinger" getting attacked and shot down in the little window in the corner. You launch, knock out the missiles that the bombers have launched, and then shoot down the bombers and their fighter escorts. You're then diverted to "Stinger's" crash site, where "Merlin" picks up a strange radio message which doesn't seem to be in Korean. You return to the carrier again and, in more video footage, it's explained that "Stinger" was probably shot down by mercenaries. Then it's back up into the air to escort a flight of Intruders in a strike against the North (which is shown in the little window, of course). But the mercenaries attack, and so on.

Perhaps surprisingly, the upshot of all this is that, more so than in any other flight sim I've played, in *Top Gun* you really feel you're part of a mission. There's a battle raging all around you, other pilots are counting on you, and everyone back on the carrier is standing there with their fingers crossed. You feel genuinely under ☛

All around the world

Top Gun
You begin at the Top Gun school at Miramar, California, where you've got to do things like flying down the Grand Canyon, shooting down your instructor, and playing volleyball without a shirt on.

Cuba
A UA reconnaissance plane is shot down, presumably by the Cubans. You've got to go in there and sort them out. Except, is it actually the Cubans causing trouble after all? Or IS it?

Korea
The North invades the South, and you and your chums are called in to teach the pesky NKs a lesson. Much attacking of North Korea ensues, with you flying air support.

Libya
A civilian airliner is shot down, so off you go to straighten things out. There are MiG-29Fs with special radars to watch out for, and a Russian ship called the Andropov that's acting a bit suspiciously.

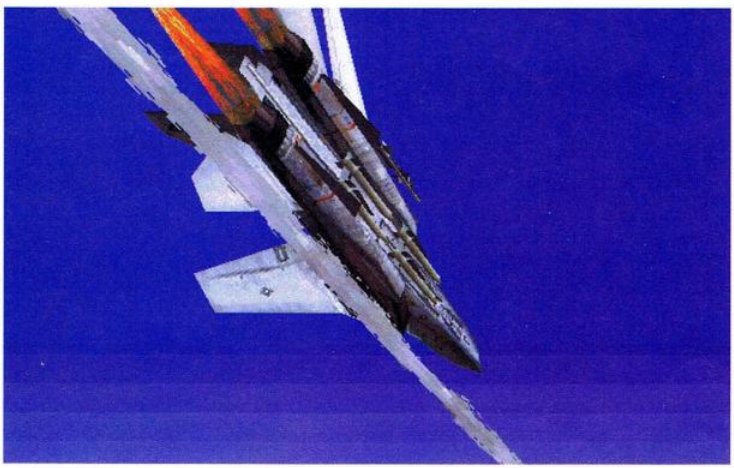
Merseyside
Jimmy Corkhill's drug-dealing business starts to get out of hand, so the US Navy is called in to put a stop to his activities. Actually, not really.

pressure, which you never do in a drier, more traditional simulation like SSI's *Su-27*. And, although the storyline's pretty weak (salvaged only by a neat touch whereby a mercenary called Nomad crops up from campaign to campaign), it does give you a sense of progression. Even by Top Gun standards most of the dialogue's horribly cheesy – if this approach to flight sims is going to, er, take off, proper scriptwriters must be summoned without delay – but at the same time it's tremendously refreshing. I hope that one day all flight sims are like this – even the more detailed, 'high-end' sort.

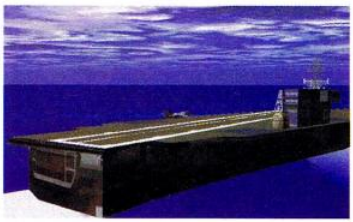
Compared with 'high-end' flight sims, though, *Top Gun* has had a fair amount chopped out. It's been streamlined, if you like. You don't have to switch on the engines, or arm your weapons, or plot waypoints, or spend hours flying to the target area, and there are plenty of options for making things even easier, including an auto-throttle that keeps your speed at the optimum level and an autopilot that'll even fight your battles for you, like the one in *Falcon*. Landings are optional, and you can quit once you've achieved your objective, but you can't beat a twilight carrier landing for rounding off a mission. *Su-27* fans will clearly be reaching for their soap boxes, but, as someone who's played and enjoyed a huge number of ultra-detailed flight sims, I honestly didn't miss having to switch on my engines in *Top Gun*.

"Landings are optional, and you can quit once you've achieved your objective, but you can't beat a twilight carrier landing for rounding off a mission."

Just one second, aero-buffs might be thinking. The F-14. That's the one that carries lots of missiles, including the Phoenix that can shoot down a plane 60 miles away before you can even see it.



All the planes are exquisitely detailed, if your PC's up to displaying them. We are truly impressed.



The carrier looks smashing, albeit PC-crippling.

And having an AWACS feed in the cockpit will surely mean you can see baddies from the minute they take off. *Top Gun* isn't going to degenerate into a *TFX*-style watching-blips-appearing-and-disappearing-on-a-radar scenario, is it?

Happily not. Some of the training missions force you into close-quarters dogfights by limiting you to guns only, and, during the campaigns, you'll have so many baddies coming at you that you'll swiftly exhaust your supply of missiles. (Unless you opt for unlimited ammo, of course.) Most importantly, though, the presentation I've just been describing ensures that, although there probably isn't all that much actual dogfighting per se, there's always something going on. And, with other friendly planes to think of, you can't just zoom around picking off baddies at your leisure. There are reconnaissance missions, too, involving whoosing low over enemy installations, AA exploding on all sides.

Looks-wise, *Top Gun* incorporates most of what you'd expect from a modern flight sim. There are SVGA graphics (on our Pentium, at least) with full texture mapping on all the objects. Your airbrake pops up and down, your tail-planes waggle, your undercarriage retracts, and water vapour streams off your wings when you pull lots of Gs. There are proper lumpy hills; the canyon from the film is reproduced, albeit rather processor-cripplingly; and the clouds work quite well. Your carrier is rendered in incredible detail, too, although it brought our Pentium to its knees. The terrain does go horribly chunky when you're flying low, though, and it'd have been nice to have seen some stars in the sky at night.

Top Gun's a splendid game, basically. Although MicroProse are aiming it at flight sim novices, it features ideas which should be incorporated into all sims, however complex, with immediate effect. With more convincing dialogue, a better way of generating the landscape (something like *Terminal Velocity* would be good, although perhaps I ask too much) and, perhaps, more challenging campaigns (they all seem to start off really easy and not put up any kind of a fight until about halfway through, which is fine at the beginning but began to tax my patience as I became more proficient) it could easily become my favourite flight sim.

Imagine a new version of *Knights Of The Sky* done like this. Cor. JONATHAN DAVIES

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

An intriguing new direction for the flight sim, and an ideal treatment of the film. I approve.

88%

DON'T GAMBLE ON

QUALITY

"It's one of those games you can just keep playing & playing" PC POWER 80%

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REVIEW

Allied General

Publisher	Mindscape
Developer	SSI
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£44.99
Minimum System	486/66, 8Mb, 1Mb SVGA
Recommended	12Mb, x4 CD-ROM
Sound Support	Via Windows
Release Date	Out now

War is fun and the Allied General wants your sons.

THE SUCCESSOR TO SSI'S *Panzer General, Allied General* uses the same game mechanics but transports them, hexes and all, to Windows. The other big departure, as you've probably guessed, is that this time you control the Allied forces. You can opt to play a single battle or embark on one of three campaigns – in Europe, Russia or North Africa.

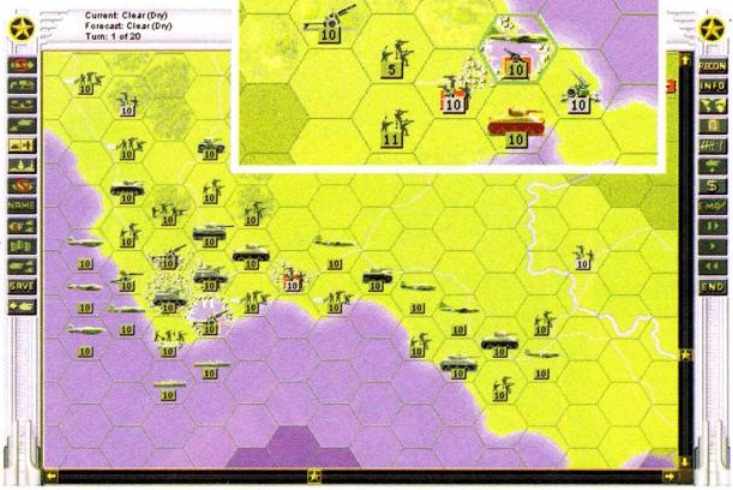
Thankfully, one quick read of the manual is all you need. There are complex rules lurking beneath the surface, determining the outcome of your attacks by considering such factors as entrenchment and experience, but all you need to worry about is the result. And, because everything works so straightforwardly, the skill comes in deciding where and when to make your attack rather than mastering the mechanics of the system.

Each scenario takes place over a set number of turns and has a victory objective. During the campaign you retain your core units from battle to battle and they gradually build up experience. Despite the game's simple appearance, though, it's by no means easy to win your first battles. You need to play each scenario at least a couple of times before you're able to get a grip and avoid getting toasted.

Tactics-wise, you'll find you can use all the skills and tactics you've honed in previous wargames to bear on your opponents. They're good, too, retreating to reinforce, then making sneak attacks to your rear. But the random element in deciding results seems just a little too random at times. Realistic perhaps, but infuriating when you lose a valuable unit in an attack that most of the time would only have damaged them.

You can buy more units using prestige points. You earn these by pleasing high-command, generally by killing lots of Germans and marching through enemy cities.

Preparing to take a city. Use the artillery and bombers to soften up the target before the final assault by engineers. Use the tanks to take out the defending artillery. Heavy anti-aircraft guns can be lethal, they're hot stuff against armour too, so use your artillery on them if you can.



The beaches of Anzio on turn one. You can cheat and turn on the hidden units, but it spoils all the fun of having a unit of Tigers appear out of nowhere and turn your little Shermans into bonfires.

Gripping

Apart from a few frills, *Allied General* is basically the same game as *Panzer General*, right down to the icons used. The switch to Windows has brought one unwelcome change, though – the screen display has slowed down significantly. There seems to be no real reason for this, as *Allied General* isn't exactly taxing graphically. It's also more cumbersome in operation than the original. The main map no longer scrolls when the mouse reaches the edge of the screen, and you have to click on the scroll bars instead, which is frustrating.

"You can use all the skills and tactics you've honed in previous wargames."

I found playing the Allies somehow less rewarding than playing the Germans. For a start the Allies won, which takes away some of the glory when you manage it. It would also have been nice to have seen some action from earlier in the war. By 1942 there was little chance of the Germans winning anything above a minor battle. It would have been interesting to see if the British Expeditionary Forces could have held back the invasion of France, for example.

You get to go to the pictures for a scene-setting newsreel before being packed off to war.

But *Allied General* is utterly engrossing. It's not the most in-depth of wargames – there are no night attacks, smoke screens or the like – but if you rise to the challenge of battle, it grips as well as the best of them.

CHRIS LLOYD

PC GAMER-THE VERDICT

Inside the plain brown wrapper is a tactical treat, which, on the whole, benefits from the Windows treatment.

72%

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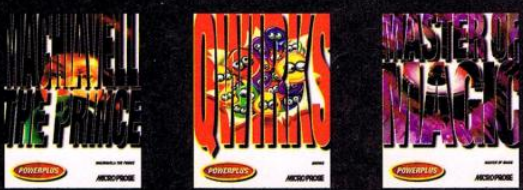

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REVIEW

Rise 2: Resurrection

Publisher	Mirage
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	TBA
Minimum System	486DX/33, 4Mb RAM
Recommended	486DX2/66, 8Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	February

Robots: in theory interesting, in practice not.

Mend

With *MK3* and (for a select few) *Virtua Fighter Remix*, the PC is finally eating heartily at the table of the beat-'em-up. Coming from the worst of culinary pedigrees, is *Rise 2: Resurrection* food of the gods or food for dogs?

WHAT INTRO DOES this game need? With its forebear synonymous with, well, total video game failure (if complete marketing success), *Rise 2* already has the peculiar queasy infamy often associated with the sons of corrupt politicians and the relations of serial killers. Will it be as bad? Will it be worse? Or are we now finally to see what Mirage originally intended? These are the questions that pop into the mind when *Rise 2* is mentioned, and they all link inextricably back to the original.

Rise 1 was developed over two years, which, even for today's 3D polygon-built and texture-mapped monsters, stands as an astonishingly long incubation period. As time progressed and Mirage built up unprecedented pre-release hype, games journalists became increasingly suspicious. Why were there no playable demos available, no rolling demos even? Surely the first year's development must have produced something we could see?

And then it arrived. Reviewers played, paused in puzzlement, giggled and then started the largest, most comprehensive critical mauling ever to leave its saliva on the bloody corpse of a computer game. When the conversion was made to the consoles, the beat-'em-up stronghold, scores as low as 5% were reached.

Now the queue is forming to do it again. But does *Rise 2* warrant such cynicism?

Initial impressions are good. Unsurprisingly in light of the original's sole redeeming feature, *Rise 2* is a good-looking game. The between-play sequences are beautiful – the options interface is slick and the million-coloured loading screens make a pleasant change from the usual "Loading. Please wait" business. Not only are all the fighters exceptionally well drawn, but their fight scenarios do an excellent job of teasing a third dimension into the most 2D of formats.

And to cycle through all the available fighters, looking at each will take a while. *Rise 2* has 18 selectable characters and another ten available via cheats and rewards. While *Rise 1* set some all-time low records, *Rise 2* has at least

Rise 2 provides the bare minimum of beat-'em-up entertainment. Here is some.

ed

I am the resurrection

With the exception of its (admittedly high-quality) graphics, *Rise Of The Robots* suffered criticism for practically every particle of its existence. If it had it, a reviewer kicked it to pieces. If it didn't, the reviewer bit at the stump where it should have been. It was all most unpleasant.

From the accumulated tanks of journalistic vitriol, however, four major criticisms crystallised: the low number of fighting characters, the virtual absence of special moves, the total absence of missile attacks, and the lack of a proper combo system. If successful sequels learn from failures in the original, *Rise 2: Resurrection* should present these areas as strongest suits. Does it? Well kind of...

Characters
ROTR had just seven characters, only one of which was available in one-player mode.
Rise 2 has 18 fully-selectable characters with ten 'hidden' and available as cheats or rewards.
Improvement verdict: Beyond all expectations.

Missile Attacks
ROTR was attacked for offering no missile attacks whatsoever.
Rise 2 gives most of the 18 characters a missile attack. Some get two.
Improvement verdict: Adequate.

Special Moves
ROTR was savaged for its pitiful array of special moves.
Rise 2 offers between 9 and 15 special moves per character, most of which are unique to that character.
Improvement verdict: Good to very good.

Combos
ROTR was held up against a wall and punched for offering no combination attacks.
Rise 2 rectifies this to some extent. Multiple hit combos are now scored on-screen.
Improvement verdict: Passable.

got to be in the running for the title "fighting game with most play characters ever", something it wins with ease. Each character has a decent array of special moves, surpassing by four or five times those doled out in the original. However, it's after this triumph in numbers that the problems start.

With 18 characters, two things are bound to happen. Firstly, because designers are going to be stretched to make 18 different-looking fighters, some of their creations are going to look a bit strange. Some of the protagonists in *Rise 2* look like, well, fairly anonymous pieces of industrial heavy plant actually. Press 'punch' and one bit shoots out. Press 'kick' and another bit, maybe slightly lower, does the same. You'd have trouble calling it punching and kicking, though.

> **"Rise 2** *seems to lack that indefinable spark that sets good games apart from the average."*

As a result of this, and despite the designers' best efforts, the robots do start to feel a bit characterless. Now this is partly due to the fact that there are only three broad groups into which all 18 fit – the humanoid type, the robotic humanoid type, and the power-loader-from-Aliens type – but mainly because robots are machines and, no matter how much you may love your car/PC/rechargeable-Black-and-Dekker, and with the odd movie/TV exception like R2-D2, machines do not have personality. Not one you can imaginatively become in a fight, anyway.

And it's at the level of personality that *Rise 2* fails. You could point to rather clunky animation and the difficulty in pulling off special moves, but you'd still only have criticism knocking the game down to the mid-70s score-wise. What leaves *Rise 2* cold on the canvas is the fact that you don't care very much who wins. *Mortal Kombat* and *Street Fighter II* had characters that went on to have films built around them. *Rise 2's* robots will be lucky to get a special section in Exchange & Mart when they go on sale for scrap. Like a punch-drunk boxer (and the original), *Rise 2* simply fails to connect.

Transformers, now they were *quality* toys

There's no doubt that the glaring errors present in the original have been corrected. It has everything one could expect from a modern 2D beat-'em-up and sometimes offers a little more. However, maybe because the fundamental game concept is flawed, or because, after so much time spent has been spent by so many people, *Rise 2* seems to lack that indefinable spark that sets good games apart from the average.

Rise 2 is not terrible. Sadly, though, it's still no more than average. Before anyone starts pencilling in a *Rise 3*, serious consideration should be given to the possibility that, for robots, this is as good as it gets. JAMES ASHTON

PC GAMER-THE VERDICT

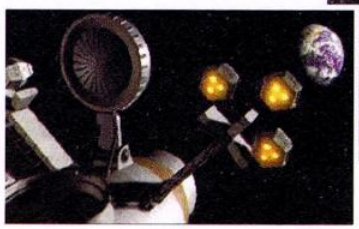
Nowhere near as bad as the first. Nowhere near as good as the best.

64%

REVIEW

EarthSiege 2

Publisher	Sierra
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486DX2, 8Mb, Win 95, joystick
Recommended	P90, SVGA, 16Mb RAM
Sound Support	All Windows 95 soundcards
Release Date	March



SVGA cut scenes break up the game, detailing the (cheesy) plot as they come and go.

Staggeri

Hopefully it won't be much longer before they invent robotic exoskeletons. Until then, here's the latest, and best, artificial replica.

FIRST, ROBOT FANS HAD *EarthSiege*. Then Activision brought them the fabulous *MechWarrior 2*. And now, to a steady "phwee-chunk phwee-chunk", comes *EarthSiege 2*, with graphics that stun and enough firepower to knock your granny's thermal socks off.

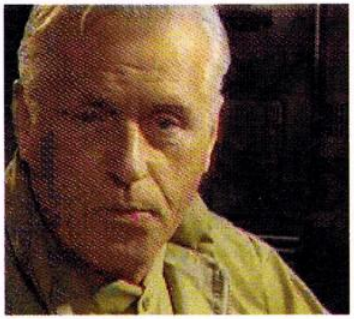
This is just the ticket. Detailed visuals, growling servo noises and shiny polish smeared over all the parts, and all under Windows 95. Sierra have stolen Activision's thunder even before they've had a chance to release the Windows 95 version of *MechWarrior 2* later in the spring.

Windows 95? Indeed. And, despite the fact that you're probably already reaching to turn the page, thinking: "Windows 95 games are so slow on my system. Even the cursor jerks about the place," I implore you to bear with me. I've got some good news. Very good, in fact, for here is an action game, where the shifting of polygons and pixels and complicated stuff like that actually counts for something, that happily trots along under Microsoft's not-so-new operating system. With a speedy graphics engine, and the choice of playing in either 640 by 480 SVGA mode or plain old 320 by 200, you can be pretty sure that *EarthSiege 2* is going to run quite merrily on your machine. (Providing you've got at least a DX2, that is.)

Why am I placing so much emphasis on *EarthSiege 2's* smooth running? Because when you're playing a simulation, where realism is one of the main factors keeping you progressing from one of the 50 main missions to the next, smoothness counts, big time. Try aiming your twin machine guns at a HERC (that's a very big armoured robot piloted by you, a friendly human or an enemy Cybrid) that's 250 metres away when the crosshairs are dancing about like a moth in the wind. It ain't easy, particularly when your PC-run

"Here is an action game that happily trots along under Microsoft's not-so-new operating system."

The exterior views of the HERCS show off the texturing details to the full.



This chap is your commander and he gives you the low-down on every mission.

The special effects, especially the fire, adds to the feel of the game – just look at those buildings burn!

RECOMMENDED PC GAMER March 96

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You can target HERCs from an incredible distance – here there's one on the far horizon.

opponent doesn't suffer the same disadvantage. So, as I painfully discovered with *MechWarrior 2* (which was unplayable on my Pentium OverDrive-based system), if the frame rate's so low that you're forever overcompensating with the gun-sights, it doesn't matter how good the plot is, or whether the texture mapping is perfectly aligned – you want to be able to play the game, not bruise your fist hitting the screen in frustration.

Plot-wise, *EarthSiege 2's* the same old, tedious story. Man created big computer which then turned against man. In order to aid itself in its nefarious ends it's created some enormous robots with even bigger guns. Man, not to be outdone, has made his own robots with which to beat up those utilised by his own evil creation. Dim lights, roll camera and prepare for some cataclysmic action…

First impressions are that *EarthSiege 2's* too easy. You load up the Instant Action demo mission and you've finished it within 15 minutes (probably quicker than that if you've played the original *EarthSiege* or *MechWarrior 2*). You frequently hear your on-board computer telling you that shields are critical, but none of the half-dozen or so enemy HERCs that you battle it out against seem to be able to let off a missile. It's only after you've finished this mission and started on the training missions (of which there are ten) that you realise why the first mission is so easy in comparison: you've got invulnerability and unlimited weapons turned on by default…

The aperitif over with, the first course arrives. The training missions are essential playing if you want to get anywhere through the actual campaign missions which make up the meat of

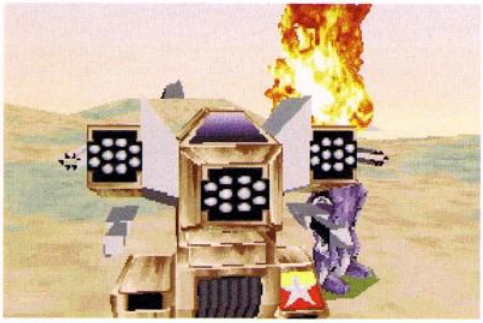
High in the sky

A new introduction to *EarthSiege 2* is the Razor, a flying HERC which you must use to perform some of the key missions in the game. It's easy to fly, but the speed of the graphics engine makes attacking with it effectively a tricky process. Still, it's great to see a bit of variation in gaming style within a robot sim.

A very tall HERC? Erm, nope, this is the cockpit view of the Viper, a new airborne robot.

From the outside it looks much like any other spaceship.

But the level of firepower is something you'd be highly jealous of if you were playing *Wing 3*.



Whoa – one of your wingmen has taken a direct hit to the cockpit. However, he'll still be able to fight for a while.

the game. These take you through the basics – actually moving around successfully, which is trickier than you may think, for it took me and James Flynn more than ten minutes just to work out how to make the HERC go forward thanks to the complexity of the controls – to the more complex principles of combat strategy (how to initiate successful flanking attacks, where to position yourself in escort missions and that sort of thing).

You also get your first taste of the flying HERC, a new feature in *EarthSiege 2* that adds immensely to the variation of mission type in the game. Called the Razor, it flies just like a plane in a flight sim (only without all the complicated twiddly bits), and is kitted out with the same range of weapons that you enjoy when navigating the ground-based HERC variety. The graphics engine shifts along at an alarming rate, even with the staggering level of ground detail and object texturing, giving an impression of speed that is genuinely scary at low altitudes. The Razor introduces a new (possibly gimmicky) aspect to the robot sim – it gives you the chance to experience a game rather like *Terminal Velocity*, nestling within the main game. A nice touch, then, and certainly one which justifies the purchase of *EarthSiege 2* even if you've already played through the original game and *Mech 2* too.

Okay, so you've completed your training session. Now onto the serious stuff, where saving the world is your top priority. The overall campaign structure, which takes you to a number of different environments, progresses at a sensible rate – you get a chance to get to grips with your enemy before you're thrown in with overwhelming opposing HERC fleets. The Cybrids (controlling the enemy HERCs) use strategies that force the very best out of you – go in guns-a-blazin' and you're not going to last long. You must use cover effectively, hiding behind mounds and within gullies, drawing your enemy into traps from which there is no escape. If you're heavy-handed, you rapidly get blown to bits, so you've got to plan well and then practise – few missions will be over in one shot.

"The Cybrids use strategies that force the very best out of you – go in guns-a-blazin' and you're not going to last long."

The graphical advances over the original, and indeed over *MechWarrior 2*, do *EarthSiege 2* more than proud. In the latter two games the terrain was rather too flat, and the lack of proper texturing emphasised this flatness. Likewise, the lack of texturing on the HERCs (or Mechs) themselves made them look like lego creations rather than 'real' robots. *EarthSiege 2's* detail level (presumably taking advantage of graphics acceleration techniques employed by Windows 95) makes the action so much more believable – especially the special effects such as fire and bullet impacts; there's nothing more satisfying that seeing a HERC you've taken out explode in a ball of flame and floundering about before falling down on its knees and fizzling out.

With 50 missions to play through (in addition to the ten training sessions), this isn't a game which you're going to be whipping through in a weekend. The missions get tough, real tough, requiring increasing numbers of replays, so even when you're halfway through the missions you're nowhere near being halfway through the game (if that makes sense).

But, although this is a demanding game, it's one which rarely gets inordinately frustrating. It's both better than the original *EarthSiege* and more enjoyable than *MechWarrior 2*. Control is tricky (you've got to use a joystick and at least ten keys on the keyboard to play efficiently, usually using both the joystick and the four directional arrow keys at once!), and it gets so hard later on that you'd benefit from having cut your teeth on something like *MechWarrior 2*. But, with such depth in its campaign structure, and such sheer graphical beauty, *EarthSiege 2* gives *MechWarrior 2* a thump in the face. At least, for now – remember the Windows 95 version of Activision's classic is due any time now…

PAUL PETTENGALE

Double vision

Because not all of us own Pentiums, Sierra have built in two graphics modes to *EarthSiege 2* – there's the new, swanky SVGA mode and the Plain Jane of graphics modes, ordinary VGA. Even the VGA mode doesn't suffer too much – clever texturing sees to that...

The SVGA mode features crisper textures and more definition to HERC shapes, especially in the distance.

The VGA mode isn't as bad as you might imagine, however, so 486 owners can still enjoy the great graphics.

You take the low ground...

The original *EarthSiege* was flat, which made each mission much the same as the next. The new game, however, introduces variable terrain types, adding a new aspect to the strategy.

Being able to rise over the top of a hill and blast away an unsuspecting HERC is great.

Taking on HERCs without cover can be deadly, so plan your attacks with the terrain in mind.

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

A fine sequel to a superb game, which manages to outshine the original in every department.

90%

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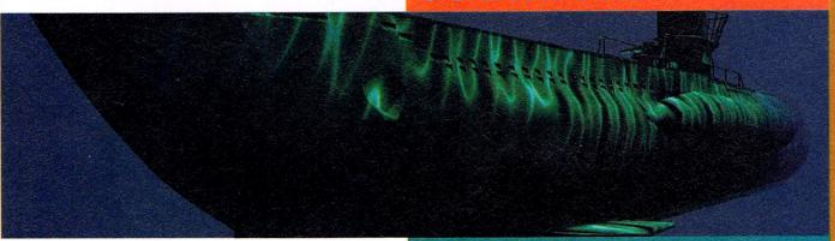

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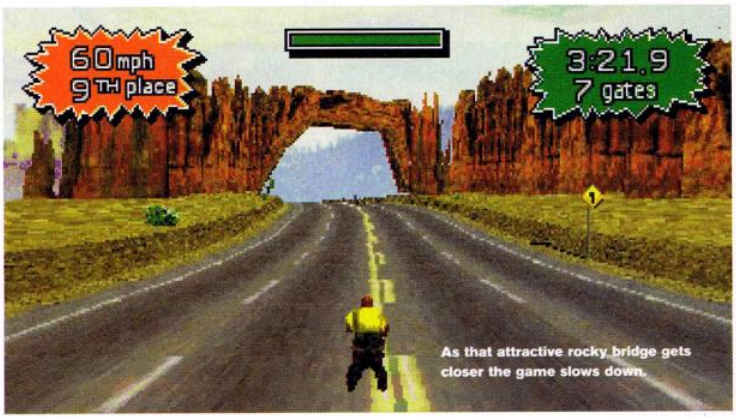
ESPN Extreme Games

Publisher	Sony
Developer	Psygnosis
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£30
Minimum System	496DX, 8Mb RAM, VGA
Recommended	Pentium, 8Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Early March

Remember the time one would go for a leisurely cycle in the country at the weekend? Well, things have moved on a bit since we were kids.



As that attractive rocky bridge gets closer the game slows down.

WHERE HAVE YOU been? No-one plays football anymore. Or cricket. No-one swims (except with a surf board) or plays hockey. Even tiddlywinks has become rather passé of late as the youth of today toss their Ludo boards skywards and buy a range of sportswear that can only be described as 'extreme'. Mummy's little baby this year insists on roller blades, a skateboard, a street luge (apparently nothing to do with a German World War Two pistol) and a mountain bike, and it's all because of those 'radical' people at ESPN in, yep, you guessed it, America.

ESPN Extreme Games, somewhat infamous on the PlayStation, has arrived on the PC via the wobbliest, most scenically unattractive route possible, with a stop-off at Dullsville for refuelling. Having chosen from 16 characters, many of whom don't appear to know the correct orientation of a baseball cap, and each with obligatory strengths and weaknesses, you can enjoy the views from five world courses: San Francisco (lots of annoying hills), Utah (lots of annoying rocks), Lake Tahoe (lots of annoying rabbits), South America (lots of illegal plants) and Rome.

Well, Rome, but in the loosest sense of the capital, which has enjoyed some slight geographical anomalies, including acquiring the Leaning Tower of Pisa and broken remnants from the Coliseum, which, despite their age and obvious archaeological value, are left lying in the middle of the road. In fact, each of the courses is graced with a range of deadly obstructions, from rock falls through sliding rock doors and out of the other end of strange giant wheely bins. To be honest, the competition organisers ought to be ashamed of themselves.

The race begins after an encouraging pep talk from ESPN's Suzy Kolber, who is, I'm sure, quite lovely, but the poor quality of the video leaves her looking like a Crimewatch suspect. From that moment onwards it is finger on the accelerate button for a tediously long race of about 15 minutes (five is more than enough). As you charge forward (be that by bike, luge, etc.), you can choose to sportingly kick or punch your opponents from their particular vehicles in an attempt to gain some badly needed places. Also, you'd better pass through the occasional gates – they reward you with money (for purchasing better equipment) or league points, or open secret shortcuts.

Game-wise, it sounds hopeful, but the action is too slow and dull. Obviously the nature of the sport dictates that you aren't going to be charging around a track at 300 km/h, but it's this relative sluggishness over something like *Screamer* that leaves you praying that the finish is around the next corner. Ironically, a decelerate button is provided, but is wholly unnecessary. The more you play it the better it gets, as improved league standings draw you in some more, but it never rises above the level of tame. STEVE OWEN

Mild

"Suzy Kolber is, I'm sure, quite lovely, but the poor quality of the video leaves her looking like a Crimewatch suspect."

(Above) **Hay bales are just one of the irresponsible objects littering the road.** (Left) **Think 37 mph on cobbles would hurt? You can reach 60!**

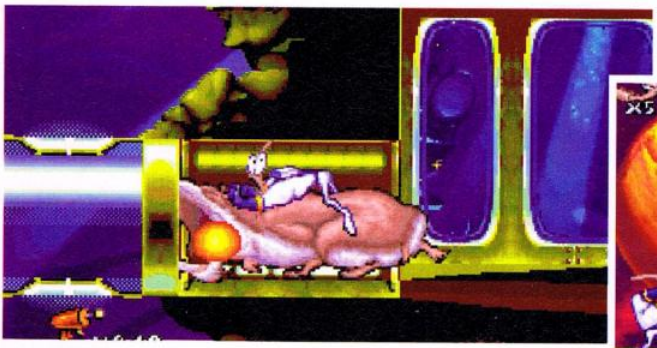
PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

Kicking, happening, and many other radical adjectives, but lacking in any excitement whatsoever.

50%

REVIEW

Earthworm Jim vs Ra

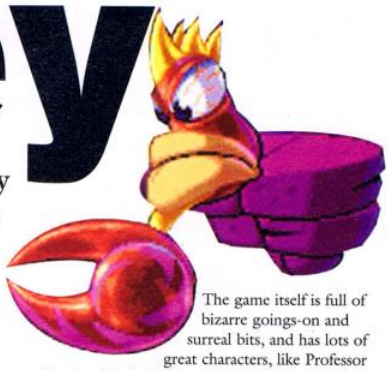


Earthworm Jim craftily uses a high-speed giant hamster to his advantage. Whatever next, eh, readers? He's so bonkers he ought rightfully to be locked up.

(Below) Jim has just whipped Pete The Puppy. Don't worry, though – it was to make sure the tentacle didn't get him.

Smiley

The Super Nintendo and the Mega Drive have traditionally had the run of the platform game roost. Their feathers are now ruffled, however, by two – of all things – PC games.



PLATFORM GAMES. YOU wait literally years for a decent one, and then two turn up at once. While games consoles have more platformers than should be allowed (most of them awful) the last decent PC one was probably *Jazz Jackrabbit*. The PC has always seemed to be at home more with serious things like flight sims, or anything that shows off its 3D capabilities. Things are set to change this year, however, with *Johnny Bazookatone*, *Heart Of Darkness* and even *Sonic The Hedgehog* coming soon. Today, though, *Rayman* and *Earthworm Jim* are fighting it out. Two console conversions; one 16-bit (*EWJ*) and one 32-bit (*Rayman*); both set on the same target – your PC. Which will triumph?

First, the heroes themselves.

Most of you will know of Earthworm Jim – he even has his own cartoon on Sunday mornings (which is great, incidentally). He says things like "Groovy" and "They're meatballs", and even "Whee doggie" occasionally, which is very funny if you like that sort of thing. He can shoot things with his gun as well as using his wormy body as an Indiana Jones-style whip, and he's nicely animated.

If this was the Earthworm Jim cartoon, Jim would undoubtedly be laughing maniacally.

The game itself is full of bizarre goings-on and surreal bits, and has lots of great characters, like Professor Monkey-For-A-Head and Pete The Puppy. The whole thing is very cartoony. Like the cartoon. Which actually is a cartoon. Right.

Rayman is much more traditionally 'cute', except he deals with baddies by punching them very hard. He bounces along in his joyful bouncy cuddly world where butterflies and toadstools play (reminiscent of those Capcom Disney games like *Mickey's Magical Quest* that used to be so popular on the consoles), and does all the things you'd expect a self-respecting platform hero to. That is,

	Earthworm Jim	Rayman
Publisher	Activision	Ubi Soft
Developer	Kinesoft/Shiny Entertainment	In-house
Format	CD-ROM	CD-ROM
Price	£35	£35
Minimum System	Win 95, 486/33, 8Mb RAM, x2 CD, mouse	DOS V5, 486/33, 4Mb RAM, x2 CD
Recommended	Gamepad	Pentium, 8 Mb RAM
Sound Support	Any Windows 95 compatible card	SoundBlaster and compatibles
Release Date	Out now	TBC

yman

RECOMMENDED
PC GAMER
March 96

Regardez, readers. It is the plump, pastel-toned, pink-tinged, French world of *Rayman*.

eventually. You see, he gains his powers gradually throughout his adventure. This adds an extra element to the game, as previously completed levels can be visited again and again, and Rayman's new powers enable him to reach new heights (literally) and find stuff you couldn't get the first time. Rayman can also be very funny (especially the fantastically camp narrator in the intro), and the animation is often better than Earthworm Jim's.

> *"Imagine, if you will, Scully from The X-Files in video game music form. Indeed."*

Especially noteworthy is the music in both games. The tunes are the best I've heard in ages. *Rayman's* are extremely catchy and suit the atmosphere well, but the best piece has to be the easy listening track in *Earthworm Jim's* "What The Heck?" level (which is set in hell). I've run out of superlatives, so imagine, if you will, Scully from The X-Files in video game music form. Indeed. Unfortunately, the music in both of them comes directly from the CD, and, when the track ends and zips back to the start to repeat, the screen doesn't update for a few precious split-seconds. This isn't such a problem in *Rayman*, but in *EWJ* it can be very irritating. The music can be turned off in both, though, and can also be played on a conventional CD player too.

So, they both have great graphics, animation, characters, sound effects and music, but how about level designs, baddies and feel? That's where it really counts. Who comes out on top?

Rayman's levels are connected on a map screen, so occasionally you can choose which new level to play next, or go back and explore older levels. There are three save-game slots, and most levels have at least one restart point. Hurrah!

Personally, I hate massive games that make you restart from the beginning when you die. *EWJ* on the consoles was one of those. Now,

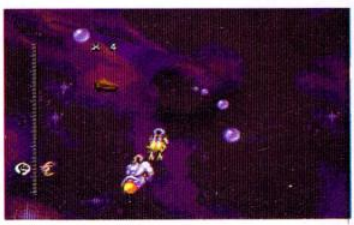
Look! It's in a little box!

Yes, *Earthworm Jim* is run from Windows 95 and looks very sweet in a standard window. You'll probably want to play it at double size most of the time, though.

Wow! Look! Etc.

Two at the same time! Lumme! Gorblimey! Etc.

Rayman ducks to avoid a nasty bullet/mallet combination, giving him a chance to stroke the grass.



Hooray for Rayman

Rayman is cute, cuddly and special, and even has unusual powers on certain levels. Watch, and be amazed.

Rayman is given the power to grow plants very quickly by his friend, TarzanaRayMana (or something).

This is a good thing, as the level quickly begins to drown.

Rayman uses the plants to escape a watery death.

☛ however, you can start from any level you've previously reached. Lovely. *EWJ* has more restart points than *Rayman* as well, but the last level is nigh-on impossible, which spoils it a bit really.

Also, in both games you can die by falling off the bottom of the level. This is a crime. However, after a fashion both characters can grab onto ledges, so I'll sort of let them off with a warning.

Rayman's levels are populated by cutesy walking bombs, cutesy hunters, cutesy insects and so on, most of which can be dispatched with a quick slap around the chops. If you remember the

Dynamite Dux coin-op from ages ago, then Rayman's punches are a bit like that – while you hold down the fire button he winds up, and when you let go he lets fly with his fist. As his arms and legs aren't actually connected to his body, this can be quite a distance. The longer you hold down the fire button the further his fist goes. It's a pity that there isn't more punching in the game, as it's great fun.

EWJ's levels are, as I mentioned earlier, a bit weird. There are often bits where you're bungee jumping or scooting around in a little submarine, and there's a space bike sub-game between most levels, although this can get a little tedious. There are also some not-too-difficult

> *"You should get your money's worth from both, especially as* EWJ *has two levels that weren't in the cartridge version, and* Rayman *has over 60 levels to journey through."*

puzzles which punctuate the action nicely, as do the imaginative bosses.

A common trait of both games is that some bits can be fiendishly tricky, and you simply have to keep plugging away until you get the knack of it, really. Mind you, after seeing some appallingly easy platformers on the 16-bit consoles, I wonder if this isn't so bad. You should get your money's worth from both, especially as *EWJ* has two levels that weren't in the cartridge version, and *Rayman* has over 60 levels to journey through.

In terms of feel, *Rayman* has the edge. It looks slick and plays smoothly. Jim is a good mover, though, and the ability to play any previously completed level is a nice touch.

So, choosing between them. Let's have a look at the facts.

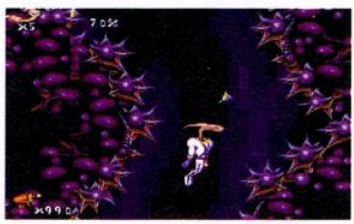
EWJ is run from Win 95 and fits pleasantly into a tiny box on your desktop. It's funny, and if you have Microsoft Plus! you! can! make! your! desktop! go! all! Earthworm Jim! style! Apparently. *EWJ* isn't huge, but if you're using it to fill a few minutes of spare time now and again, it's probably a good investment, and certainly more adrenaline-pumping than *Solitaire*. Problems are that it's rather linear and not particularly deep, and the last level must be some sort of cruel joke to keep me awake at night.

Problems with *Rayman* are that it can occasionally be just a little frustrating, and backtracking to get extra lives isn't as viable as it was in the *Super Mario* games, as once you've collected an extra life from somewhere it never comes back. This means that the best way of getting loads of extra lives is to collect lots of 'tings' – the equivalent of *Mario*'s golden coins – and this takes years. Hopefully things will change in the inevitable *Rayman 2*.

The main challenge for both these games is competition from *Sonic* and the *Mario* games on Nintendo's systems. *Yoshi's Island* is out now on the ever-cheapening SNES, and soon *Mario 64* on Nintendo's super console, the Ultra 64, will probably make everything else look feeble with its amazing 3D world. You've got a PC, though, and, unless you want a neat Windows 95 distraction, you'll probably be better off with *Rayman*.

Hopefully these two games will be just the start of a PC platform explosion. After all, everyone loves disseminating violent justice, and cute woodland animals are the perfect recipients. Thwack!

TIM CANT



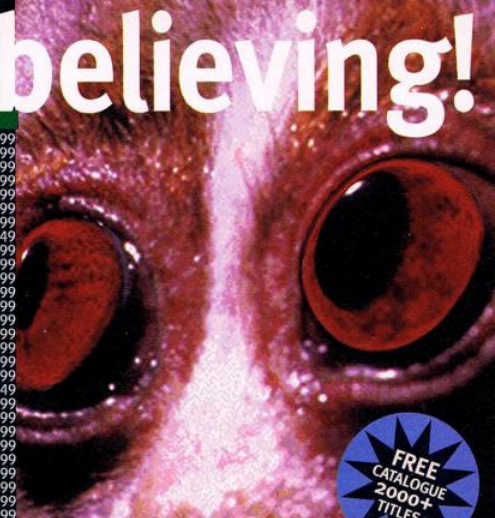
Rayman and Earthworm Jim, together on the printed page for the first time.

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

Earthworm Jim
Entertaining, but somewhat limited. Worth it for the music though.
79%

Rayman
The PC's first console-quality platform game. At long last.
86%

ZONE 1 Seeing is believing!



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PC FORMAT 85%

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Microsoft Golf 2.0

Publisher	Microsoft
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£29.99
Minimum System	386DX, 8Mb RAM, Win 3.1
Recommended	486DX2, 16Mb RAM, Win 95
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

It's a new golf game from Microsoft. But... hang on...

Linked

THE SCREEN FLICKERS futuristically. Deckard leans forward. He squints at the blurred photograph.

"Enhance 34 to 56."

Chikk-whirrr... chikk.

He stares. He can just make out the blurred face of the suspect. He's wearing dark glasses and has a funny handlebar moustache.

"Computer: Enhance 22 to 66. Increase resolution. Tidy it up."

Chikk-whirrr... chikk. Beep.

He takes the photo from his pocket and compares the two. They look vaguely similar. Hang on a minute.

"Computer: Remove the glasses and the moustache and give me a hard copy."

Chikk-whirrr... buzz. Beep.

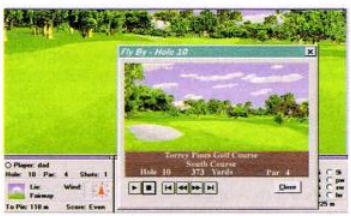
Bryant leans over his shoulder. "Looks like the same guy, pal. *Links 486* and *Microsoft Golf*

> **"Links 486 *and* Microsoft Golf 2.0 *are the same guy.*"**

Version 2.0 are the same guy. Let's bring him in."

Once at the station, the confession reveals all. *Microsoft Golf 2.0* not only looks like *Links 486*, but you can even use the *Links* course disks with it. The courses that come with it are the same ones that you get with the old *Links* games, Torrey Pines and Firestone South. And the player sprites are the same as those that beam out at you, in SVGA, from the *Links 486* box. Not only that,

If grey's not really your colour, there's a range of other trouser fabrics to choose from.



Coming next: Golf Manager. You use a bulldozer to destroy acres of trees in the name of sport.

but the suspect also confesses that even the twittering-birds sound effects have already appeared in the Access titles. The evidence seems overwhelming. Then the attorney arrives.

Dressed in a sharp suit, with patent leather shoes and a hideous tie, he sits down at the table and opens his briefcase with two sharp clicks. He puts the case for the defence.

It would seem that, on closer inspection, there are a number of differences between the client and the *Links* titles. For starters, *Links* is not Windows 95 compatible, which means it can't take advantage of the rather excellent PlayerNet feature. This allows you to play golf over the phone lines using a modem, as well as over a network, with up to eight players. You can even use the new 'chat' facility to send glib comments to your opponents during play.

The Windows 95 environment and CD-ROM based nature of the game means ultra-fast redraw times after each shot – even faster than the much-loved *PGA 96*, which isn't even a Win 95 game. The graphics, though allegedly 'similar' to the *Links* games, are actually incredibly detailed and slick, with beautifully blue water and lusciously green, erm, greens. You also have video fly-bys and FMV tips from real pros, and the whole thing is fully customisable, allowing for custom-shots, saved shots, weather, and green elevations – you can even choose the colour of your trousers (they're still flares, though). Add to that a familiar, but still user-friendly, control system and I think you could say that this game is refreshingly good, and a million times better than the old *Microsoft Golf for Windows*.

With that, the lawyer closed the briefcase, grabbed his new client by the arm, and stormed out of the building.

Deckard winced. Bryant collapsed in the leather chair and poured himself a whisky.

"You know, pal, we almost had him. That lawyer had enough to appeal, but we'll get him if it goes to trial. If not, who cares? We'll get him next time. I think even his attorney knew that they were one and the same. Not a bad game, though. Fancy a round?" SIMON COX

PC GAMER-THE VERDICT

A great alternative to *PGA Tour*, though not quite as slick. And it's got customisable flares!

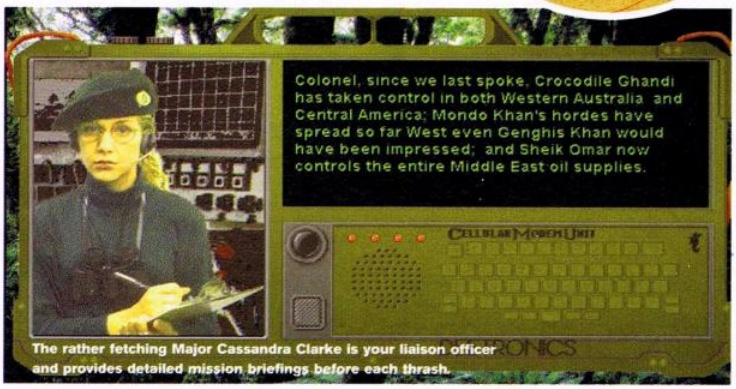
86%

REVIEW

This Means War

Publisher	MicroProse
Developer	Starjammer Studios
Format	CD-ROM
Price	TBA
Minimum System	486/33, 8Mb, Win 3.1, SVGA
Recommended	486DX/66, Pentium and above
Sound Support	All Windows compatible cards
Release Date	Out now

Inflict large and amusing amounts of damage on computerised forces in MicroProse's humorous warfare simulation.



The rather fetching Major Cassandra Clarke is your liaison officer and provides detailed mission briefings before each thrash.

A strike mission deep into enemy territory gets a swift response from Shiek Omar's boys.

But some concentrated fire from my massed ranks of infantry soon sees them off.

Now undefended, his desert complex lies open to an all-out assault.

The devastation is complete. Once his command centre goes it's game, set and match.

AS A FAMOUS GENERAL once remarked: "Don't be stupid, man, they couldn't hit a barn door from that dist– Aaarghh." War is hell, or at least it's meant to be. However, *This Means War* is instead alarmingly good fun.

The world as we know it has collapsed (again) under the effects of a sinister virus hidden in an all-conquering computer game called *Snark Hunter*. (A thinly-veiled dig at *Doom*.) Out of the ashes rises a new and eccentric world order, led by a bizarre generation of latter-day warlords calling themselves things like Mondo Khan, Crocodile Ghandi and Napolienne. Intent on emulating their historical namesakes, these nouveaux despots immediately embark upon a global power struggle which threatens to make the Second World War seem like an over-hasty pillow fight. It is 12 years AG (After Game), and, as a newly promoted Colonel in the Free World Alliance, it's your task to scrabble about in this rather silly post-apocalyptic melée and re-conquer the world for the forces of truth, justice and the American way.

The world of *This Means War* is divided up into a strategic map portraying both FWA and opposition forces in control of various sectors, and from then on in, every battle you fight represents the struggle for a territory that's up for grabs. Succeed and the world will slowly turn orange as the FWA extends its influence. Fail and, well, you're not going to be exactly flavour of the month at the officer's club.

Beginning with the humble light infantryman and a few scattered battle bikes, you'll probably win the first few encounters with ease. However, as you progress you'll develop a taste for the meatier bazooka and mortar units and shock troops like the Marines. Eventually mobility will become a priority, and there's a full complement

"The battles are good, clean fun, and can degenerate into rip-roaring affairs with hostile fire fights breaking out."

of vehicles to send your troops haring around the battlefield. Of course, no army would be complete without the 'must-haves' of artillery, heavy armour and hovercraft (?), but when your technology advances to the highest levels, jets, bombers, radar and even guided missiles will all enhance your already considerable offensive capabilities.

The all-important command interface is both flexible and intuitive, and allows you to plan and execute intricate manoeuvres right up to platoon level. Commanding your blokes is simplicity itself – you just set their behaviour mode and then click and drag individual units to where you want them to go. A variable speed control means you're never struggling for time, but you can also form squads and deploy special tactical formations to crunchingly good effect.

The actual battles themselves are also good, clean fun, and can degenerate into quite rip-roaring affairs with hostile fire fights breaking out

Shirty

up and down the line to the constant radio chatter of multiple "Enemy contacts". Your units all have circular fields of fire, and *This Means War* also employs a rather clever line-of-sight system, with unseen areas shaded out to keep you guessing about enemy troop movements and strategy.

But fighting isn't the whole story. You've also got to marshal your forces on the home front and develop an industrial base to fuel your armies and advance your weapons technology. Again, it's an extremely logical system. Engineers build all the depots and factories which produce your units and service the army's needs, while mines and oil wells provide raw materials and power. But you've also got to keep an eye on your civilian population and ensure they're well fed and fully able to contribute to the war effort.

As the game progresses you'll find you have to devote an increasing amount of time to building a solid military industrial complex; as with real warfare, to win militarily you've got to win economically too. However, *This Means War* strikes a happy balance between the two extremes, and, if anything, there's a large incentive to get things right economically, because it opens up whole new and intriguing ways of smiting the foe.

This Means War also comes with a well-adjusted learning curve with new concepts and technology being introduced gradually so that you can get to grips with the fundamentals before moving on. The game also manages to side-step neatly the problem of repetition, by already deploying units you have developed in previous engagements.

So far so good, but no game is without its failings and *This Means War* suffers slightly, as most strategy games do, from that old problem of innovation. Although the opposing generals all have their own unique styles, once you've worked out their game plan, it's usually a matter of simply grinding them down. The opposition still offers an extremely stern challenge, but there are few bold counter offensives or sneak thrusts on your blind side to seriously challenge an accomplished player. Another slight quibble is that occasionally, when you move large bodies of troops, some of the stragglers meander about for no apparent reason, and you have to re-issue your orders to bring them back into line.

Basically, *This Means War* is very accessible strategy fare, which because of its good looks and excellent sense of progression, will have a broader appeal than most wargames. JOHN HOULIHAN

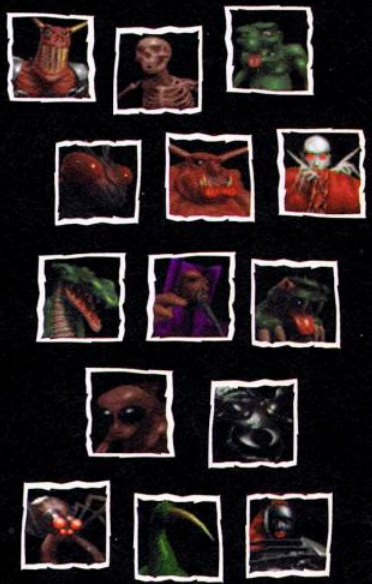
PC GAMER-THE VERDICT

An engaging near-future war fest, and a worthy purchase for Windows-equipped strategy aficionados.

82%

Inhabit multiple monsters.

Slaughter hero after hero.



DUNGEON KEEPER

EVIL IS GOOD

BULLFROG

REVIEW

Abuse

Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Crack dot Com
Format	CD-ROM
Price	TBA
Minimum System	486/50, 8Mb RAM, x2 CD-ROM
Recommended	Pentium, SVGA
Sound Support	All major soundcards
Release Date	March

You've possibly played the shareware version. Now, at last, the whole of *Abuse* is available in our British shops.

The crosshair's your gun-sight, and your little bloke swings his gun around as you move the mouse.

ABUSE HAS BEEN available in various shareware incarnations since sometime last year, and is famed for its involvement of id Software's Dave Taylor. (He's working on the sound for *Quake*, but runs Crack dot Com in his spare time.) The full version of the game has been rather trickier to track down, however, but its potential has now been talent-spotted by Electronic Arts, who're publishing it in this country.

Although seemingly an ordinary platform game, *Abuse* has a number of features which have endeared it to serious PC gamers. The control system and expandability we'll come to in a moment. Most interesting as far as I'm concerned is the way *Abuse* can easily be transported from the PC to other platforms, owing to its engine being written in LISP. LISP, if you're interested (which, I agree, is unlikely) stands for LISt Processing, and is the child of that great computer

Gloomy, eh? Wait till you see it without the brightness turned up. Gosh it's dark.

Contr

programming institution the linked list. Suffice to say that if you have a sufficiently abstract mind, preferably along with bare feet and a beard, then linked lists are gorgeous, especially where artificial intelligence routines are involved. You probably haven't, though, so I'll return to the task in hand.

The first thing you'll probably notice upon starting *Abuse* is that it's dark. Now, I'm not just talking a bit dark here. If *Doom* to you means dark, then you've clearly spent most of your life in a chandelier shop, and *Abuse* will come as a shock. All is not lost, however. Rummage around in the game's menus and you'll find one which solves the problem.

> *"If* **Doom** *to you means dark, then you've clearly spent most of your life in a chandelier shop, and* **Abuse** *will come as a shock."*

Plot-wise there's something to do with ants taking over the world, the upshot being that you're meant to shoot everything you see. And, darkness problems aside, you'll have no trouble seeing them because *Abuse* will support every resolution your graphics card can cope with, right up to 1024 by 768 pixels (which is clearly silly).

Abuse's unique control system requires some dexterity on your part. The arrow keys move your character using your left hand, while your right works the mouse to aim his gun and fire. It works brilliantly, the only snag coming when you have to change weapons, which involves moving the cursor off the screen and clicking on the appropriate icon with the right mouse button. This isn't easy when you're busy running away from an ant armed with a rocket launcher.

Although the difficulty level is pitched about right, the point may come where you find yourself wanting to put your own levels together. What luck, then, that *Abuse* comes with its own level editor. To use it, though, you'll need a grasp of LISP, an idea which for some of us will evoke memories of evil computer science lecturers from deep in our past, and to most will mean nothing. But, as with the likes of

Dagga dagga. Better hope HR Giger doesn't hear about the ali... er, baddies, eh readers?

(Left) The *PC Gamer* fish tank used to look a bit like this when we didn't clean it out for ages.

Garth cursed his dodgy cigarette lighter.

ary

Doom, other people's levels are already appearing from all around the world – *Abuse* is building up an enormous following – and *PC Gamer* will be putting the best of them onto our cover CDs.

You might be wondering, though, why *Abuse* appears to have bucked the trend and lost a dimension, when everyone else is moving into 3D. Is it just *Doom* in 2D? Well, you're on your own, and there are lots of baddies with big guns, and, believe me, there's little to beat *Abuse* for fun. The 2D graphics are, in their own way, terribly attractive, and the sound effects are suitably creepy. It's true, though, that those who enjoy running around in the dark will pretty much have settled into *Doom*'s 3D environment by now. 2D is now generally the preserve of cute platform games like *Rayman*, reviewed on page 82 of this month's *PC Gamer*. *Abuse* ends up out on a bit of a limb, aiming to be dark and aggressive but lacking the graphic violence of 3D shoot-'em-ups and failing to compensate with anything in the way of furry animals.

It's hard to imagine *Abuse* catching on in quite the same way as *Doom* – it's just not the huge step forward that *Doom* was when it first appeared – but the way it can be transferred from platform to platform is sure to make it an enduring success. I loved it, with its weird control system, and, from what I've been reading on the Internet, so do thousands of others. I encourage you to seek it out.

TED O'NEILL

He'd have to get that lamp-shade cleaned.

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

Nothing technically revolutionary, but weeks of solid, old-fashioned entertainment. Oh yes.

84%

3 malicious multiplayer modes:

Keeper *vs.* Heroes, Keeper *vs.* Keeper *and* Deathmatch.

DUNGEON KEEPER

EVIL IS GOOD

BULLFROG

REVIEW

Panzer Dragoon

Publisher	Diamond Multimedia
Developer	Sega
Format	CD-ROM
Price	Circa £220 as part of Edge 3D bundle
Minimum System	486, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	Pentium, 16Mb RAM, Win 95
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

For the flush of pocket, here's the next Saturn game to be converted to the Diamond Edge 3D card. And, well, it looks nice at least.

Cave sections aren't so much fun, because the baddies don't fall down and splash into the water when you kill them.

Guarded

A dark bit. *Panzer Dragoon* certainly looks smashing, making a good case for the Edge 3D.

The third level is a rather lovely night-time oil-refinery type of affair.

ONE OF THE MOST sinister things about PCs is the quiet, insidious way they sneak into your mind. One minute you'll be sitting there moaning about yet another new super-console coming out that you're going to have to spend £300 on if you want to stay up-to-date with the gaming state-of-the-art, and how ridiculous it is that there can't just be a single standard platform. But the next, you're quite happily trotting down to PC Mart with an open cheque-book, ready to blow twice as much cash on upgrading your suddenly-obsolete PC (*"But it was all right yesterday!" – your PC-less mate, who just* doesn't understand) with a new graphics card, a faster CPU, a load of extra memory and a whole new operating system. You don't think twice about it – it's a PC, and that's just the way PCs are, right?

Only occasionally do you wake from fitful sleep, clammy with tepid sweat and mumbling "£230 for another RAM upgrade? What a fool I've been!" to yourself, only to fall back asleep and forget everything by morning. ("And if I'd bought a Saturn, at least I could have flogged my Mega Drive for a few quid, instead of having to chuck it straight in the bin. Doh!")

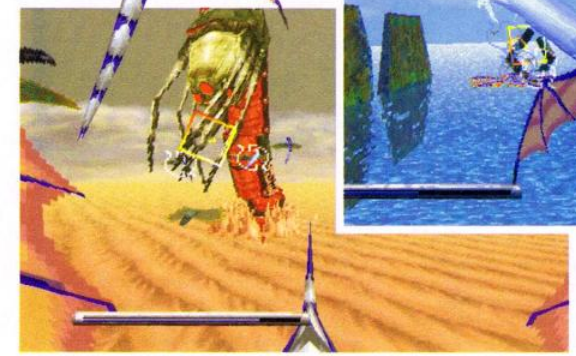
But anyway. If you're reading this at all, chances are you're interested in buying one of those fancy new Diamond Edge/nVidia super graphics cards. (*Panzer Dragoon* now comes bundled with it, along with *Virtua Fighter Remix* and *NASCAR* although not, now, *Descent*.) Or maybe you've already bought one. And hey, congratulations – the wacky world of Some Saturn Games is now at your fingertips. You know, polygons, all that stuff. So how come it looks like you're playing *Magic Carpet* on a 386, except you can't move around very much? Answer: that's *Panzer Dragoon*, that is.

Yes, yes, I'm *getting* on with it. *Panzer Dragoon* is a simple on-rails shoot-'em-up, like *Alien Odyssey* or *Raven Project* or something. It pretends not to be, but it is. You can, to a limited degree, swoop around within the constraints of the preset patterns, but not to the extent of actually affecting where you go – you can't even, for example, go round the left side of a pillar if you're *supposed* to go around the right side. To create a more liberated illusion, though, you can rotate your view through the points of the

> **"Panzer Dragoon *is, in fact, less of a game and more of an interactive ride through what the Saturn can do."***

(Left) **Surrender. It's your only chance.**

(Below) **Your fantastic multi-guided missile weapon clears the way ahead. As usual.**



(Left) **If you think this big worm looks unpleasant now, wait till he starts blowing huge clumps of snot at you. Eurch.**

compass, so that you can shoot things behind and to the side of you. Cunningly, the game makes quite a play of this, with enemies who dart around attacking you from all directions, but sadly they're the exception rather than the rule. The air of expansive freedom is also helped by the welcome lack of foreground-shortening fog effects, which creates a lovely open atmosphere (especially on the first two levels, the ocean and desert worlds), only to spoil it somewhat with the most jarring pop-up scenery imaginable. To be fair, this is only very noticeable on the first stage (as a huge and ornate temple materialises fully-formed in front of your eyes), but it really blows your suspension of disbelief apart for a while.

When the Saturn came out, *Panzer Dragoon* was one of the early flagship titles. As such, Sega's designers clearly didn't see the point of going to all that trouble creating such lovely graphics if nobody was going to see them and be impressed, so they didn't put too many obstacles in the player's way. There's no actual numerical shortage of enemies, but you're supplied with a weapon so astonishingly powerful that none of them will keep you occupied for more than a second or two – hold down the fire button and everything that crosses your sights will be targeted and permanently locked, ready to be annihilated by a fantastic multiple independent guided missile blast which takes out bad guys six at a time. It looks gorgeous, as huge curving blue streaks whoosh out from your dragon and streak inexorably towards their targets, but it removes almost all challenge from the game until the very last of the seven levels, where fast, numerous and resilient adversaries force you to revert to the less accurate but faster standard cannon.

Panzer Dragoon is, in fact, less of a game and more of an (cough) interactive ride through what the Saturn (and now, for just a couple of hundred quid extra, your fantastically expensive brand-new PC) can do. It's really rather a nice ride for the first few attempts, with a quaint, delicate atmosphere (helped by the distinctly leisurely pace) unlike any shoot-'em-up I can recall, but once you've seen all the scary baddies and the pretty scenery, there's nothing that'll keep you coming back for another play. And given the blink-of-an-eye scale of the time that's going to take you (I can't see anyone playing it more than about half-a-dozen times, so think of it as a coin-op arcade game costing £7 a go), you're going to have to be pretty desperate to be rid of your money to consider buying a Diamond Edge 3D card just to play this. STUART CAMPBELL

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

A prettier *Magic Carpet*, but slow and on rails. And without the complicated bits. Hmm.

54%

Build your own dungeon.

Control the action from 3 different views.

DUNGEON KEEPER

EVIL IS GOOD

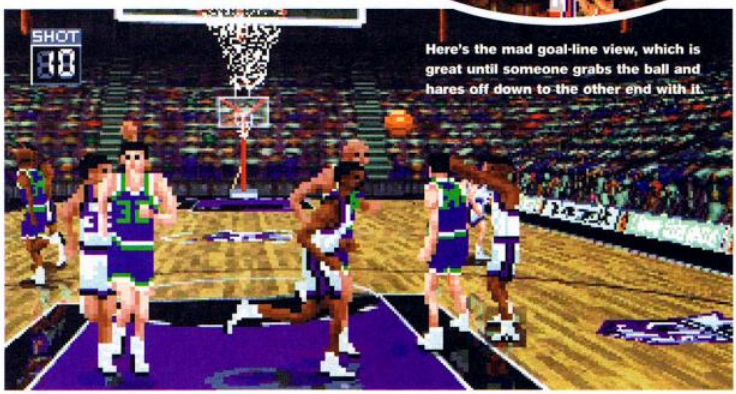
BULLFROG

REVIEW

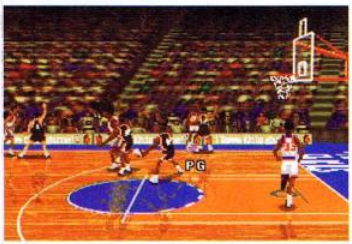
NBA Live 96

Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	In-house
Format	CD-ROM
Price	£45
Minimum System	486/50, 8Mb RAM
Recommended	Pentium, 16 Mb RAM
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now

And so the last of EA Sports' "96" updates spins three-dimensionally into view. And it's, well, exactly what you'd expect.



Here's the mad goal-line view, which is great until someone grabs the ball and hares off down to the other end with it.



The reflections in the shiny wooden floor are smashing, as are the squeaking trainers.

IF YOU WERE ATTEMPTING TO escape from an American prisoner-of-war camp, and you'd made it through the wire fence, past the dogs, between the search-light beams and through the moon-lit woods, and were boarding the train for the border, having successfully passed yourself off as a US citizen by using forged papers and a replica cigar, it's possible that the security officer hunting for escapees would, after a tense but sufficiently convincing conversation in your best American accent, attempt to catch you out as he bid you farewell with the question: "Oh, and have you played the new 96 version of *FIFA?*" Were you to answer "Yes" he would immediately handcuff you and have you shot. The correct response should, of course, be: "No, but ain't *NBA Live 96* just swell?"

While we Brits propelled *FIFA 96* to number one in the Christmas top ten amid a flurry of publicity, the Americans were buying basketball games with equal vigour. The delights of the New York Nicks and the Minnesota Timberwolves are largely lost on a British audience, so it's hardly surprising that the last of EA's Virtual Stadium games, *NBA Live 96*, has been released over here with no fanfare whatsoever.

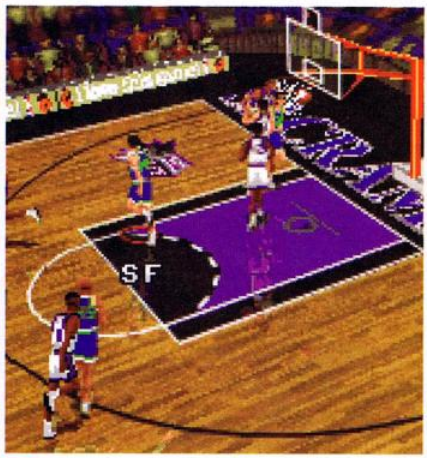
It is, however, in its own way, a tremendously good game. It does for basketball what *FIFA 96* did for football, and what *NHL 96* did for ice hockey. The engine at its heart remains largely unchanged from the previous *NBA* games – that's to say, an entirely credible simulation of basketball – but now the court spins around freely in 3D as you press one of the six view keys, and the players all get bigger and smaller as they run into and out of the screen. Oh, and the stats have probably been updated, although it's hard to tell.

"It does for basketball what FIFA 96 *did for football, and what* NHL 96 *did for ice hockey."*

Our Pentium 90 didn't seem entirely happy running *NBA 96* in full SVGA. It managed a reasonable rate of frames, but in a game as fast-moving as basketball the ball can easily travel from one side of the court to the other in the time it takes for the screen to update. So, after toying with the curious stripy semi-SVGA mode, I settled for chunky old VGA, which gets confusingly

Although it's a shame to lose the reflections, the best way to play *NBA* is in SVGA (so you can see what's going on) and with all the extraneous detail turned off. Or save up for a P6.

He's on fire! A variety of impressive-looking slamdunks can be conjured up at will if you practise with the controls enough. Mostly, though, they just seem to happen at random. As in this instance.



Here's one of the two "Classic" views. It is indeed rather elegant, maintaining this three-quarters angle as you run about.

American

muddled when the players are clustered together but moves perfectly.

Unlike *FIFA* or *NHL*, *NBA's* very much a game of skill rather than tactics. What's important is what's happening now – do you pass or go for a shot? – and it's impossible to predict where the ball will be in three seconds' time and plan ahead. Who wins will depend on who's got the fastest reactions and who's more adept with the controls. As you get better you'll be able to anticipate just how long you need to pause after receiving the ball before going for the net, and you'll learn to keep an eye on the letters beneath each player which indicate who they are and what they're best at.

"There's no puck zinging about or fights breaking out."

The presentation, meanwhile, is superb. Between matches and quarters there are some excellent SVGA screens (which we are unable to show you because PCs are so awful) showing photos of the players and the locations they're playing at. You get impossibly detailed after-match statistics which highlight all the points on the court from which shots were taken and which shots went in. You get trivia questions at half-time. The game's even got its own built-in screensaver.

But it is, nevertheless, basketball. Ice hockey can make an excellent computer game whether you're interested in the sport or not, but I don't find that basketball quite has the same appeal. There's no puck zinging about or fights breaking out. Perhaps that's why games like *NBA Jam* and the PlayStation's *Total NBA* (which is superb, with smoothly-shaded *Actua Soccer*-style players) tend to fantasise a bit, adding in special moves and turbo buttons so they're more fun to play, or going for a fast-paced two-on-two game. *NBA Live 96* is very much a straight simulation, and for all its merits I didn't find it nearly as entertaining as any of EA's other 96 games. Maybe it'd be different if I was American. JONATHAN DAVIES

It's a penalty for the New York Knicks. Or possibly the other lot. We'll never get used to all this. And it's probably not even called a penalty.

PC GAMER-THE VERDICT

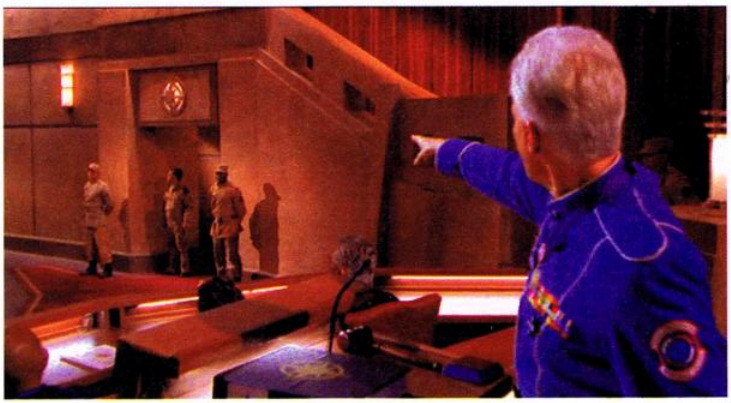
A fantastically accomplished basketball sim. We prefer ice hockey and football, however.

77%

REVIEW

Wing Commander IV

Publisher	Electronic Arts
Developer	Origin
Format	Six CD-ROMS
Price	£60
Minimum System	486DX2, 8Mb RAM, VGA
Recommended	P120, 16Mb RAM, SVGA
Sound Support	All major cards
Release Date	Out now



Just imagine if Man Utd's goalkeeper was called Michael. People would be justified in saying "Michael Schmeikel." Anyway, on with the review. *Wing Commander*, Schwing Commander.

Clipped

A MARKET STALL, EARLY 1995. Supreme Cockney Market Trading Chief and three-times winner of BBC 1's A Question of Tat, Johnny Spiv is unloading his latest lorry load of bargains.

Johnny: I'm not asking ten pound, not even five, not four, not three or even two, who's gonna gimme a quid for this little lot? Beautiful, nice one, sold to the dolly bird with the falsies. No darlin', your teeth, your teeth. Bleedin' 'ell, you're old enough to be me grandma. Right then, done the plates, done the knickers, done the shirts, what else've we got? Ah, 'ere we go, got some great lines back 'ere. Who's gonna make me an offer for some of these? Took a bit of a chance on 'em, so who's gonna start me off? Go on, have a stab. No-one? C'mon, there must be someone out there who's gonna gimme summat. All right then, let's start with "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance", you can't say fairer than that. *(Reader's voice: Ff-ff-tett-aairr -ff-gmnhhh. Gosh, you're right – I can't.)*

Enter several actors, none of whom have really been getting enough work recently.

Actors: We'll have the lot. And if you've got any other totally cheesy lines, we'll take them too.

Johnny (can't believe his luck): What? You lot must be bonkers. You mean you're gonna say "Never say never" and "I'd tell you but then I'd have to kill you" and "I still need good pilots" and "Of course, I had to get greedy" and "I've been played for a sucker" and "It's great to be flying for you again" and "I've never seen you lose a hand when it counted"?

Actors: Yes. And all in the first ten minutes. You're only young once and we're not getting any younger. Never say die. Bandits at 12 o'clock.

Johnny (feels very faint, but, thinking he is about to die, suffers an uncharacteristic bout of honesty): But, but, what're you gonna do with 'em. Most of 'em were used years ago. You can't get 'em out now, it'd be insultin'.

Actors (suddenly very patronising and Helen Bonham-Carteresque): Don't worry about it, chirpy stereotypical Cockney fellow with a worse fake accent than Dick van Dyke, we're not going to use them in a proper film. It's only a computer game.

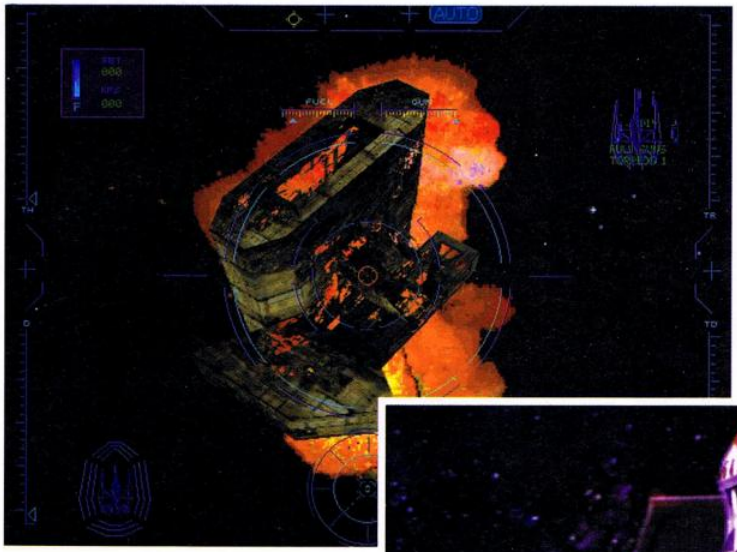
> *"The chances are that people are going to be kind to* Wing IV *because they don't know which bit to be nasty to first."*

Super duper high-res graphics ahoy in yet another wonderful shooty shooty scene.

Oooh, moody

The many faces of Mark 'Chameleon' Hamill. Don't let anyone tell you that *Wing Commander IV* is not a real film just because it's directed by some bloke who used to program computer games on a BBC Micro for a living. James Cameron had to start somewhere too, you know, it just wasn't on a 32K home computer with an owl for a mascot. Ne'er mind, eh?

Pose #1 The Eyes of Hate and Pursed Lips of Steel. Are you wearing blue contact lenses?



Scratch this caption with a blunt bicycle clip to reveal a secret sound effect. Listen carefully.

(Above) **Choose a spaceship, slap some weapons on it and get out into the wide black yonder.**

(Below) **Best go and see the optician, mate, you've got some serious pupil dilation there.**

All (Johnny has miraculously recovered): "Fame! I'm gonna live for ever, I'm gonna learn how to fly, HIGH!" (Repeat to fade.)

If Origin's scriptwriters had to live or die in Tinseltown on the strength of their words, they'd be pushing up daisies before they could say: "Gimme another chance, boss. I promise I won't let you down." It's no secret that Origin (or is it just Chris Roberts?) want to make movies, so why don't they, as those nice basketball players on the Nike adverts used to say, just do it? They've got nothing to lose except their money, dignity and credibility. Ah, maybe that's it. Maybe it's a pride thing. Even though they want us all to think that we really are Playing A Movie™, they don't want us to judge the movie like a movie because it's really a game, and so can't possibly be compared to Star Wars or Blade Runner or Alien or any of the other spaced-out films it so obviously plunders for its weak-willed plot and feeble dialogue. Or is it because they don't want us to judge the game like a game because it's more like a movie really, albeit not a proper one? Oh, the contradictions are immense. Is it a game that's a movie as well, or a movie that's also a game?

These men are famous (for being in *Wing IV*).

Whichever, the chances are that people are going to be kind to *Wing Commander IV* because they don't know which bit to be nasty to first. Say it's a film *(Reader's voice: It's a film.)*, and you'd compare it to every planet-busting galaxy-saving epic since Plan 9 From Outer Space, and you'd find it nestling somewhere between Buck Rogers In The 25th Century and Battlestar Galactica. Stop! I know what you're going to say. Yes, the quality of the video is absolutely superlative in SVGA (even though it is interlaced) BUT WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU WENT TO THE CINEMA AND EXPECTED ANYTHING LESS THAN PICTURE-PERFECT 24 FRAMES A SECOND? So what if it's on your PC, if it's trying to be a film, if it's selling itself as a film, it had better bloody look like one or I'll want my money back (which I do, incidentally, but for an entirely different reason).

Technically it's a film in as much as people move on your monitor as smoothly as they ☛

Pose #2 The Nose of Venom and Chin of Distemper. That bloke on the left's a baddie.

Pose #3 The Arms of Slight Bending. Mark Hamill also suffers from a mild case of jaw jut.

Pose #4 The Ear of Red Glowing and Hairline of Tidiness. Plus it's that bad bloke again.

The VGA bit

Paupers with 486 PCs and poxy P75s will have to make do with running the game in VGA, which looks like this.

You get to zip down to a planet surface quite early in the game, but it's a painful jerkathon on a 486 in VGA, and even a P90 can't really handle the SVGA mode. The load-out screen demonstrates how difficult it is to read much of the text in VGA. Why bother? Don't.

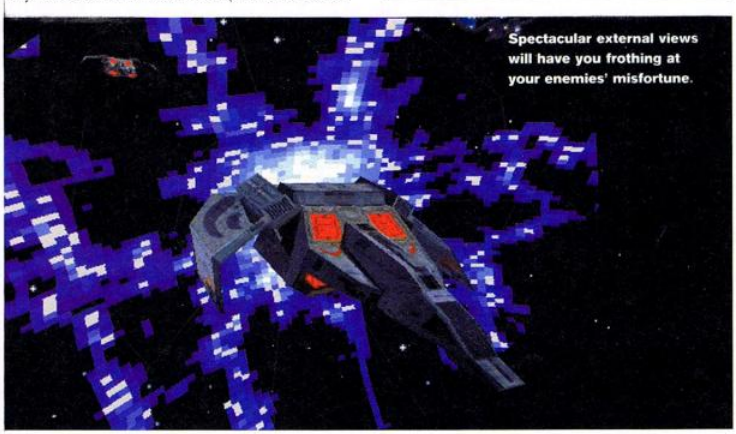
might on your TV screen, but whether you'd sit through two hours of interaction-free Hamill and McDowell and co battling with a piss-poor script, dull direction and distinct lack of drama is another matter entirely. One for Barry Norman, we think, which is why we've levered the molten-faced old codger off his chair and asked him to sit through a special session with us. Ahh, but having said all that, the first thing you see when you run the game is the bizarre train-shunting sequence that heralds the arrival of the Dolby Surround Sound logo, so it must be a proper film after all. Just as a matter of interest, how many of you have your Dolby Prologic Surround Sound Decoders plugged into your PC as well as your hi-fi and TV? Really? Six of you? As many as that…

So say it's a game. *(Editor's voice: Just don't, OK?)* Would you say it's reasonable to wait for 15 minutes before you actually get to do anything (and even then it's only to choose one of two options)? No, you probably wouldn't. Nor would you expect a 3D space combat game to judder and jerk as sound samples were loaded in the middle of a fight, but that's what happens on a humble P90.

Hey, but let's say something nice. Origin have genuinely tried to address the criticisms levelled so savagely in Gary Whitta's denigrating 95% review of *Wing Commander III*. It no longer takes a month of Bank Holiday Mondays to load a mission, it's down to a more reasonable long weekend, which is very welcome. There's also more (or should that be 'some'?) variety in the mission, as the game designers frantically try to copy what LucasArts' folks have been up to for the last couple of years. So instead of the usual fly-there-and-shoot-things rigmarole, you get more complicated briefings and even ad-hoc instructions in the middle of a mission. Verily it is the spice of life.

And then you get to go down onto a planet. In a way this is good, because it's something you've wanted to do since *Wing Commander* (the first) but was such a crushing disappointment in *Wing III*. So full marks, then, to the spangly textured landscape (even if it is thuddingly slow on the aforementioned P90), but no marks (that's 'nul point' to notre continental readers) to the asinine game designer who decided the best reason for you to go down on this first planet is to take photographs of it. Excuse me, but what century are we supposed to be suspension-of-disbelieving in? Twenty-third? Fourth? Fifth? Doesn't matter. We've got technology NOW that

> ***"It no longer takes a month of Bank Holiday Mondays to load a mission, it's down to a more reasonable long weekend, which is very welcome."***



Spectacular external views will have you frothing at your enemies' misfortune.

Cut scenes, eh? Why not just cut them, hmmm?

can satellite spy from the stratosphere on poxy little buildings in the middle of the desert, so why does the Strategic Readiness Agency (chief officer Admiral Tolwyn, played by Malcolm McDowell) think it's a good idea to send The World's Most Famous Pilot™ (Christopher Blair, played by Mark Hamill and you) on a snap-shooting mission instead of a sharp-shooting one? Answers on a postcard to Gaping Holes in the Gameplay Department, Origin, Austin, Texas.

Considering the vast amounts of money and programming talent thrown at *Wing IV*, such criticisms do seem a mite churlish in the grander scheme of things. There aren't many games that give you such a gloriously SVGA thrill, and the combat definitely has been improved since the fly-straight-at-each-other-and-hope-your-shields-last-out days of the first couple of Wing Commanders. It's still not as refined or as exciting as *TIE Fighter*, but you're swept along by the gung-ho heroism that pits you, an ex-farmer and movie star, against an unknown enemy (which isn't the Kilrathi). It's big, it's exciting, and it's got guns, missiles and explosions galore. Escapism at its best.

So if the game's okay, why do I want my money back? Because in May 1994, Origin head honcho Richard Garriott promised the world (and said to me) on the set of *Wing Commander III* that "At the very least, the next time we shoot footage for a game, we will be writing the script intending it for linear as well as interactive usage. In the future we'll be releasing the movie and the game at the same time." The future's here, dear Richard, but your film isn't. RICHARD LONGHURST

PC GAMER-THE VERDICT

Either "£60 for a second-rate sci-fi movie" or "£60 for the same game I bought last year." You decide.

66%

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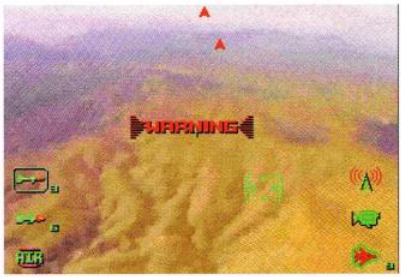
REVIEW

Tomcat Alley vs Wing Nuts

Sega £30/Rocket Science £40

It's hardly *EF2000* vs *Navy Strike*, but victory for one of these two flight sims will be no less sweet.



TOMCAT ALLEY:
(Above) **Quickly, Red Leader – the evade icon.**
(Left) **Quickly, Red Leader – the rocket icon.**

IRREFUTABLE PROOF THAT MODERN technology has taken the attraction out of aerial combat is provided by the FMV plane game *Tomcat Alley*. After a bit of dismal plot you're permitted to point at some triangles representing enemy jets, and either your missile locks on and kills one, or you miss and have to rush to the evade icon before his rocket kills you back. Should you win, the cycle repeats with negligible variation until you fling yourself beneath the wheels of a bus.

Wing Nuts, meanwhile, turns out to be fantastically entertaining. It's set in World War I, which means you get fat actors with spiked hats, bombs that have to be dropped from the cockpit and (hurrah!) sun-swamping Zeppelins. Your foe zips around the screen as you swerve your (craftily sluggish) crosshairs about and blaze away, but because you both have energy bars you've only wounded him, so the view flips to behind your plane and you have to evade his attack by steering in the direction he's not coming from. Genuine skill decides the victor, the gallant loser crashes in a spectacularly obvious model shot, and after three dogfights you get a pass at the level's big target. There's a bit where a pilot shakes his fist and shouts, "Schweinhund!", another bit where you swoop over the Zeppelin and shoot off its guns, and if you win the war you duel the Red Baron.

It's rubbish, of course (I reached the last level in under two hours, and if you're really interested in WW1, buy *Dawn Patrol* on budget) but *Wing Nuts* amused me greatly and is the first FMV thing I've played that is a real game. Unlike *Tomcat Alley*, it flows seamlessly from scene to game, and there are enough extras (power-ups, for example, or enemy planes loosing smoke over you to elude your fire) to maintain your interest. Truly it is Biggles – but on the PC. JONATHAN NASH

WING NUTS:
(Above) **Eat kaboom, Johnny Badman.**
(Above-right) **The path is clear. I swoop to safety.**

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

Tornado Alley: A wearying full-motion video plane game of which you've seen everything within 12 seconds. **8%**

Wing Nuts: A flash-in-the-pan luxury, but this is an FMV game that's entertaining, exciting and playable. Himmel. **66%**

ANGEL DEVOID

Mindscape £45

We all know that Ridley Scott would never get directly involved in anything as silly as a computer game. But if he did, the result would be something like *Angel Devoid*. Or, at least, that's probably what its creators would have us believe. This, you see, is futuristic detective noir, a meeting point of cyberpunk and classic mystery. It's also another FMV-drenched, so-called interactive

movie, the twist is that this time there's actually a game to play.

It goes something like this: 22nd century cop Jake Hard (I ask you) has to undergo extensive plastic surgery after a rather nasty crash while in pursuit of master criminal Angel Devoid. Imagine his surprise when he discovers not only that his face has been rebuilt in the image of Devoid, but that his world is fleshed out with a motley assortment of gun-toting psychos, leather-clad dominiatrixes and impressive pre-rendered scenes of gothic sci-fi. Various head-up displays do wonders for the atmosphere, and even the display cheat used to get full-screen SVGA animation enhances the mood.

What keeps the game's metaphorical head above water is the fact that the FMV stuff and pre-rendered pathways are bolted onto a proper adventure game structure. Compromises are made in terms of character interaction and the level of environment control, but the overall impression is one of real interactivity.

Sadly, *Angel Devoid* plods where it should soar – forcing players to watch every footstep of every movement through the neon-lit world doesn't exactly get the pulse racing. And when yet another plot development shows itself to so obviously be working to mask the shortcomings of the reliance on pre-shot animations, it all becomes rather too blunt to be adventure gaming's answer to Blade Runner. **68%**

James Flynn

GAMEplay

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F1 GRAND PRIX MANAGER	£30.99
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GAM 3

REVIEW

Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within

Herr Doktor? Hair dresser, more like. Honestly. The nerve of some people.

Sierra £50

An improvement on *Phantasmagoria*, but still a bit on the dull side.

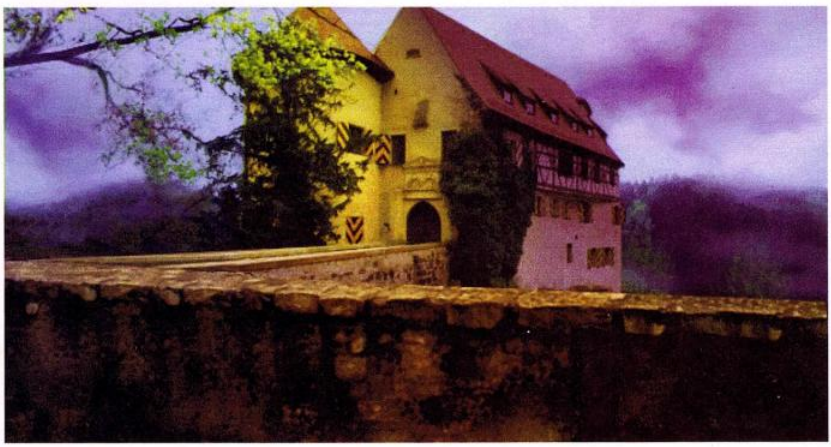
AFTER THE HORRENDOUS DEBACLE OF *Phantasmagoria* (awarded a paltry 12% by twisted genius Jonathan Nash in Issue 24), *The Beast Within* has a lot not to live up to. Can it tie copious amounts of video together with a point-and-click interface and come up with a game that lasts more than a few hours? Oddly enough, yes. Well, near enough. I spent days playing through this six-CD monster, and I still haven't got half way through it. There are a few illogical puzzles, but mostly it's quite simple, and shouldn't be too hard to polish off eventually.

Anyway, it's set in Germany, it's got werewolves in it, there are murders, and you have to sort it all out. Horror author and book shop proprietor Gabriel Knight has inherited a castle in Rittersberg, and with it the role of guardian to the nearby town. A small girl has recently been eaten by a wolf, and the townsfolk suspect evil goings-on, and Gabriel is persuaded to have a snoop around. His assistant back in the US gets wind of what's

going on and immediately scoots off to Germany. This means you get to control two characters, who you swap between after every chapter (of which there are six, one on every CD). There are plenty of other people who you can converse with, and, shockingly, the acting is rather good. My American copy of the game has a sticker saying "Mature – ages 17 and over" on it, and makes the point that this game contains sexual themes and gore. So far someone has said "Rape", and that's about it. It probably gets more sexy and violent later on, I shouldn't wonder.

You probably know already if you want a game of this type or not, and if you're keen on interactive-movie-style point-and-clickers, this is a safe choice. For everyone else a much cheaper LucasArts re-release would probably be a wiser choice.

TIM CANT



(Above) **We wanted an office a bit like this for PC Gamer. It was going to be down by the canal, with a sign at the gate saying "Trespassers will be smacked".**

(Left) **Stand well back from her. She's probably about to turn into a wolf. Or a food processor.**

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

A perfectly playable adventure game, making intelligent use of video footage. Inevitably "adult" (if that's the word), though.

65%

ECCO THE DOLPHIN

Sega £30

In an effort to accrue all the money in the world, Sega have converted a motley bunch of their games, of which this, a dolphin sim, is easily the best. The 'Pentium Required' stickers on the conversions are inconvenient, but 486 owners could of course upgrade, or perhaps spend £100 to pick up a second-

hand Mega Drive and every game in the series.

Anyway, *Ecco The Dolphin*. It's a completely huge exploration game with ever so much spelunking and some neat physics-based puzzles (outmanoeuvring currents by hoofing dirty great boulders down rock chimneys, for example) and is exceedingly pleasant and a welcome change of pace. While stickily nice (the worst you do is to scare off a monster with a burst of amazingly aggravating sampled dolphin squeak; oh, and eat smaller fish, but they're not marketable and so can be safely discounted) there's a lot to it, the controls are agreeably demanding and it can get jolly exciting as you bump along under some craggy reef trying to find an airspace before you drown. I myself became slightly

annoyed with it (water tending to be fairly samey, you have to keep stopping to examine the map for fear of missing something) and tended to give up on the level in order to spend my time making Ecco leap out of the water as impressively as possible, but there you go. Lack of application, and all that. I would, I feel, make quite a good dolphin.

81%

Jonathan Nash

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COMIX ZONE

Sega £30

A novelty beat-'em-up (you've fallen into a comic and punch the populace of each frame of the story with shattering POW!s and KER-R-RUNCH!es) but a surprisingly good one. The one-button attack yields a tactically deep spread of moves (it all depends on quick taps and getting in a few clean hits to trigger a special move – it's completely transparent, and suddenly you're combo-

thumping opponents across the screen to slam against the frame borders terribly satisfyingly) and the setting's used to good effect, with rain drumming upon over-dramatically apocalyptic cityscapes and unspeakably badly-written speech bubbles popping up during the fights. There's even a smidgeon of strategy, in that you can carry three special weapons (the trick being working out which one to use to reach a more powerful one) and occasionally choose between branches in the story. You'll be playing *Comi*(bleugh)*x Zone* in bursts rather than at a stretch (but then that's the point) and aside from

the obvious limitations (the emphasis is on moving on, so you just wade in, as opposed to fine-tuning your technique as you would with *FX Fighter* or *Mortal Kombat 3*) the only thing that leapt out at me was the appallingly stupid way you could fall off the bottom of the screen and lose the game instantly. Good work, Sega. Now how about converting *Gunstar Heroes* or *Story of Thor*?

71%

Jonathan Nash

McKenzie & Co

Games For Her £45

An action-packed five-CD adventure that girls will love?

Good 'ol traditional girls play *McKenzie*. No cars or computer games for them, just lipstick and malls.

THE AIM OF MCKENZIE & CO IS SIMPLE. YOU play either Kim or Carly, and the game is the story of your 16-year-old life. Neither choice is appealing: Kim's fun, sporty, popular; Carly's an aspiring actress – annoying and prone to wearing silly hats. Neither is anything like anyone you've ever met. Your aim is to find yourself a man. Eventually you will marry him and have five kids; but today, all you have to do is win his affections.

This being the story of your life, you go to school, go to the mall, spend time in your room trying on your new clothes and putting on your makeup, call your friends, go to baseball games... If it's something girls supposedly do, you can count on some strange representation of it being in this game. So, if you want to go to a party, you have to do your homework first. Want to buy clothes? Go to work and earn some money.

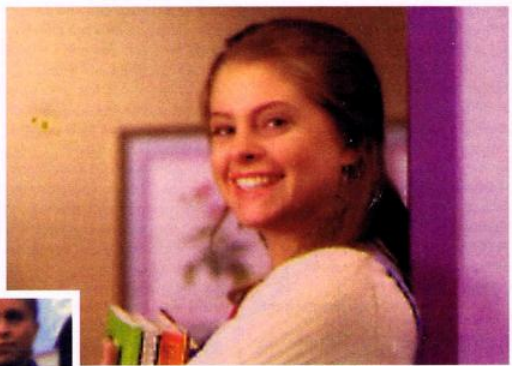
But this is what makes the game truly pointless and frustrating. Doing your homework involves playing a daft little *Space Invaders*-type game. Going to work involves playing a slightly different matching pairs game. They're the sort of games to which the PC bid farewell long ago – but if you want to get anywhere you have to play them.

Yawn your way through enough 'homework', and you get to do something – go to a party, perhaps. These bits of the game involve short, poor-quality video sequences (even on a Pentium, with quad-speed CD-ROM, the voices are still a little jumpy) and dead-end choices, where you're supposed to think carefully about what the girl you are playing would be most likely to answer. The video clips are the game's saving grace in a sad sort of way – they're funny in true Clueless style, but you're laughing at them, not with them.

This game is unlike any other. You'll learn about "what it means to stay true to yourself when other people are pushing you to do... other things." You'll giggle helplessly at the ridiculous dialogue, caricatured characters and hopeless clothes. You'll find yourself uttering expletives that Kim or Carly would faint at the sound of as you insert yet another CD. You'll skip scenes. You'll yawn your way through another stupid mini game. You'll lose interest. You'll go out and get your own life instead.

Like, gross.

JILLIAN WERB



McKenzie & Co: one of those games that manages to be funny without meaning to be. Who came up with all those one-liners? And who chose those clothes? Urgh.

PC GAMER–THE VERDICT

Stuttery video, missing gameplay and repetitive arcade game sections. An accidentally funny but ultimately useless game.

40%

REVIEW

ARCADE AMERICA

7th Level £35

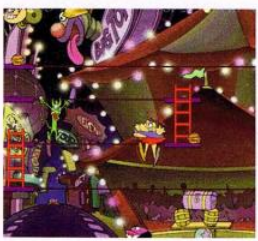
Such chores as playing the likes of *Arcade America* would in the past be lessened by idly toying with Winnie the *PCG* hamster, but as readers of the news section will know, Winnie is dead.

Arcade America is by the people behind *Battle Beast* (*PCG* 23, 18%) and so is graphically magnificent and fair bubbling over with speech and funny bits. But – oh no! – experience has taught the designers nothing (whither that which doesn't kill you making you stronger now, eh, Nietszche? Fathead) and *Arcade America* plays like *Battle Beast*, but for platform games. There's even still a mini-game to reach the level proper (in this case, a Game and Watch driving thing set on a three-lane road that should have been thrown out in the first week).

The game itself then. You start at the bottom of a screen of platforms; at the top is an exit. (Later on you have multiple-screen levels. They don't scroll or anything – there are just multiple screens.) Monsters move around. You can pull levers or (for pleasingly nonsensical asides) answer phones. There are bonus items and secret levels. You have the route worked out in seconds, so it's the timing that makes the fun. Except, unlike, what, 1984's *Manic Miner* you don't progress by exquisitely hairsbreadth jumping flee, but by bludgeoning your way across the screen without really caring what you're doing. (There's a Comedy Stomach Attack to deal with the monsters, and as you have an energy level for each life, you don't feel obliged to be cautious). It's incredibly simple – the harder levels throw things at you from all sides rather than being sneakily designed, or anything, and the occasional overhead screens are merely obvious mazes – and I quickly became bored, nettled and that evening's highest-scoring player of the local pub's Indiana Jones pinball machine. A disgrace.

10%

Jonathan Nash



SPEED HASTE

Friendware

Readers of the CD edition of *PC Gamer* will have tried the shareware version of *Speed Haste* last month. Electronic Arts are currently securing the rights to distribute the full version, but we have an advance copy from the programmers in Spain, and I review it here.

Speed Haste in its entirety gives you eight tracks, six versions of both

the F1 car and the stock car, and the choice of playing a single race or entering a championship.

Graphically it may have looked impressive a year ago, but is now firmly second-rate. On our Pentium 90 in SVGA it is unsustainably sluggish; in VGA it is smooth but chunky; and in VGA on our DX2 it is playable, though rather jerkier than one would prefer. There are no hills, no pit stops, no power-ups, no tunnels and no spectacular crashes. Side-swipe a competitor and, rather than him spinning off gratifyingly, you merely slow down.

What *Speed Haste* does provide, however, is raw, old-fashioned fun. There's a true racing scent in the air as you roar off the grid, slip around the outside to make up four places before the first bend and attempt to squeeze past a fifth but have to concede defeat and wait for another chance. Holding down the accelerator all the way around is out, and the convincing way the cars handle means that following the racing line is imperative for success, although occasional mistakes are tolerated. There is also a choice either of a tense timed race where you're trying to complete laps against the clock and a straight race over a set number of laps, although I couldn't get the latter to work (the manual's being written in Spanish not helping). Master all the courses using the F1 car (which won't take long) and you'll find the stock car much harder to control as it tail-slides around bends, making for a game that will endure. And I suspect the networked game may be even better still, but was unable to confirm this.

It's difficult to recommend *Speed Haste* over, say, *Fatal Racing* or *Screamer*, but I enjoyed it tremendously all the same.

69%

Jonathan Davies

SFPD HOMICIDE

Three-Prong Plug £TBA

SFPD Homicide accurately simulates in great detail a murder investigation surrounding the discovery of a trussed, battered body in San Francisco Bay. You get to use your office computer (clunk-whirr-whizz), order lab reports on things (the victim's clothes, for example), try to catch witnesses out by referring back to others' answers (I liked this bit) and follow the rules minutely. Authenticity is all, which nuttily means the game is numbingly dull. It's like a point-and-click adventure gone mad – you must sweep each screen with terrifying care as the smallest clue could be the one you need. (Except you won't know until you subject it to a battery of lab tests which take an age to come back.)

To its credit, once you're over the initial hurdle of identifying the body (entertainingly you can bring back the same people time and again to blubber over the bloke on the slab) there's nearly always something else to investigate while waiting for the vitally important

results to come through, but the mundanity of the case wears you down. (As does the frightfully poor acting, but that's only to be expected in a game like this.) It's not nearly as bad as those amazing flight sims that make you press hundreds of buttons in sequence to move an aeroplane from Heathrow to Manchester, but the feeling's the same. I don't want to be rooting through someone's rubbish and politely questioning a neighbour – I want to be playing the young Michael Caine, stumbling around the squalid docklands, intimidating witnesses into talking, escaping sudden hitmen and tying everything together into a high-level conspiracy.

Interested parties would be advised to look out *In the First Degree* (*PCG* 23, 63%) which although similarly proper-procedure-led is at least outrageously fictional.

49%

Jonathan Nash

HOW THE SCORES WORK

We think carefully about the marks we award to games. If a game really isn't up there with the best, we aren't afraid to give it an appropriately low score. And when we award 80s and 90s, it's because the games genuinely deserve it – not because we've netted an 'exclusive', or because we've got a mate who works for the software company, or to win favour with 'the industry'.

Here's how it works:

90%+
An absolute classic, a benchmark, a game that will be talked about for years to come. Each month there'll probably be one or two of these at the most.

85%-89%
A superb game which can proudly bear the "PC Gamer Recommended" logo in shops across the nation.

70%-85%
A good, enjoyable, value-for-money game. Four stars, if you like.

50%-69%
Nothing special. But if you were sitting alone at home, and there was nothing on telly, and it was raining, playing this game would be better than nothing.

30%-49%
Oh dear. Either through a lack of inspiration, a fatal oversight, or general crapness, this is a game that ought to be steered clear of.

0%-29%
A crime.

PCG REVIEWERS

James Flynn is *PCG's* deputy editor, and an original *Civilization* player.

Jonathan Davies is the editor.

Chris Lloyd admits that he has sent lead soldiers into battle.

James Ashton has played more beat-'em-ups than there are different types of insect.

Paul Pettengale works during the day on *PC Guide*.

Steve Owen sits next to Paul Pettengale.

Tim Cant makes us feel old.

Simon Cox, curiously, volunteers to review all the golf games.

John Houlihan's hedges have allowed him more time for reviewing games during the winter.

Ted O'Neill has a trident-proof jumper.

Stuart Campbell's house is like a museum of video games.

Richard Longhurst is the editor of *.net* magazine.

Jonathan Nash walks in a world of cartoons.

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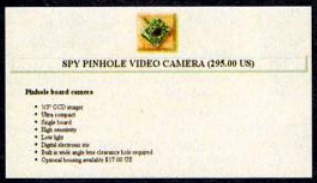

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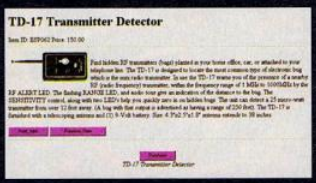

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Windows Plus - Score 95%

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PC Review - Score 8/10

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PC Format - Score 84%

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CD-ROM User - Score 93%

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REVIEW

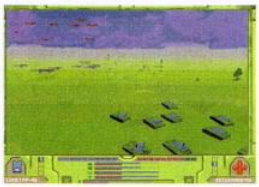
They're back

Sometimes there are so many great games about that it's almost impossible to choose between them. This month, however, is not one of those times. Still, that's the world of re-issues for you. Pile 'em high and sell 'em cheap, eh boys? By SIMON COX

1. PERFECT STRATEGY

Instant Access £20

One great game *(Battle Isle 2)*, one pretty good game *(The Patrician)* and one fairly poor one *(Titan's Legacy)*. Quite why *Titan's Legacy* was included is beyond us, but the other two are so good that, for this price, you'd be mad to miss it. **90%**



2. APACHE LIGHT

Action Replay £5

Just like the full version of the astoundingly good helicopter sim from Digital Integration. Almost. You don't have the multi-player stuff, or the campaigns – just the quickstart modes. Still great, though, especially for this price. **84%**

3. PERFECT SPORT

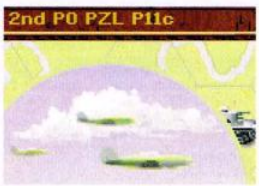
Instant Access £20

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition and *On The Ball World Cup* conspire to make this a great value sports pack. The golf game lets you design your own courses, and the graphics still look pretty good, despite its old age. **80%**

4. PANZER GENERAL

Ergo Software £10

Hex-based wargaming antics set in World War II. It's by SSI, who know more about hexes than just about anyone else in the world, probably. And it's not boring, either. Not as good as the *Battle Isle* games, but still impressive. **80%**



5. CHESSMASTER 3000

Ergo Software £10

A chess game starring that Kasparov bloke, and featuring graphics that are beginning to look, well, dated, to say the least. The presentation is clear enough, though, and if you're into chess, well, for the price and all that... **76%**

6. HARPOON

Action Replay £5

A complex and absorbing wargame. Allegedly. The graphics are rubbish, but the strategy and missions are well paced and suitably 'naval'. It just looks so... well... you know... old. Still, it's only a fiver, so it should appeal to some. **70%**

7. CAESAR

Sierra Originals £10

It's getting on a bit now, but *Caesar* is still a pretty good strategy game. Use plebs to build things, be a big-wig in the senate and beware the ides of March as you potter about your sim-Rome wearing nothing but a big hankie. **70%**

8. INCREDIBLE MACHINE

Sierra Originals £10

A weird little game about making things work. Well, more about setting things up. I mean, about being Johnny Ball. Look, just buy it and get hooked, will you? It's a puzzle game. **68%**

9. WARRIORS

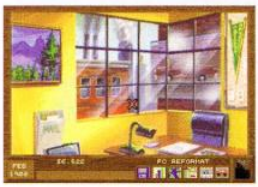
Ergo Software £10

The graphics aren't bad (if a little on the blocky side), and the moves are pretty good, too. However, this beat-'em-up fails to get the adrenaline pumping, with its too-slow animations and only two combat buttons. **60%**

10. DETROIT

Sierra Originals £10

Lacklustre graphics and not much interactivity with opponents bring down a potentially interesting title. *Railroad Tycoon* is a better game all round, and is also available on budget these days. Still, if you like cars... **55%**



And the rest...

HIGH COMMAND

Action Replay £5

It's another World War II game. Hex-based solid strategy kind of thing, you know the score. And it only costs a fiver. **50%**

PATRIOT

Action Replay £5

Uninspiring Gulf War game that looks awful. **40%**

MERLIN

Action Replay £5

All you do is land a helicopter on a frigate. That's it. **10%**

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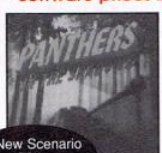

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REVIEW

Netware

Rising phoenix-like from the flames of our shareware pages, *PC Gamer*'s new Internet section gives a mighty "Caw!" and examines the rather broader issue of gaming on-line. By PHILL BOWDEN

News from the Newsgroups

comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.flight-sim

This month, **comp.sys.ibm.pc.games.flight-sim** seems to have been dominated by talk of ***EF2000***. Rowan's new *Navy Strike* has hardly been mentioned. Having sifted through the usual rubbish – "*EF2000* is crap", "No it's not, you are", and a brief discussion on how (legally) to make lots of money – I found a few things worth reading.

One of the major topics of discussion has been whether or not DID are going to support the new range of 3D graphics cards that do all the clever 3D stuff instead of the processor. If they do, then *EF2000* will be playable even on a lowly DX2/66. At the start of the month DID gave a long list of reasons why they weren't going to do this, but by the end of the month it was rumoured that they had changed their minds. We will have to wait and see. Also, what about the bugs – wingmen flying into hills, auto-throttle not working and so on? Well, DID have apparently released a patch available at **ftp://ftp.im.gte.com/pub/ef2000**. The patch is also said to improve the campaign section, but to be honest I couldn't find anything wrong with it anyway.

The techies have come up with a couple of tips for

getting *EF2000* running more smoothly: first, try removing the HIMEM, EMM386 and SMARTDRV lines from your CONFIG.SYS. If that isn't enough, then apparently you need a SuperMicro P55CMS. However, no computer can have power to spare while running *EF2000*.

Also, people have been whingeing, saying that the flight model isn't realistic, which seems a bit daft as I doubt any of them have actually flown a real Eurofighter anyway. And finally, Gary Lloyd-Ward wants a pilot's rest-room with plenty of women (MPEG or AVI).

Site of the month

http://www.happypuppy.com/

Happy Puppy is a pretty obvious place to start when looking for an Internet games index, second only to the *PC Gamer* web site. (Ahem.) Not only is it a complete guide to downloading from ftp sites all over the world, it's also a comprehensive guide to all things in the games world, including reviews

of games, patches, hints, cheats, and even links to support programs (for example, tournament editors and level builders). If fact, each game has its own download page, giving you blurb on the game, a list of links to relevant add-ons, reviews, and a list of download links to get the game. It's the comprehensive way in which Happy Puppy is organised that makes it so worth a visit.

Although the site also covers software for other platforms such as the Mac, it concentrates mainly on PC software, and then mainly on games. As for the speed issue, most people using a modem would find it was their modem that determined the time downloading takes, but if you're lucky enough to have access to a 64K+ link, then don't expect things to be almost instantaneous. As always with the Net, your link just can't be fast enough.

Games on the Internet

Duke Nukem 3D

http://www.apogee1.com/

You may be a little suspicious about the ***Duke Nukem 3D*** review that appeared in our December issue, considering that the shareware version has only just been released. Or you may not give a hoot because you know how good the game is now that you have had a chance to play it. But, whatever you think, the main reason for the delayed release was Apogee's final network compatibility testing. Checking different types of networks and ironing out consistency problems is a major job and one that took the team much longer than expected. But it's here now and, just in case you missed the review, a quick re-run follows.

It's incredibly quick, even in the high-res mode. It's so fast, by far the fastest 3D game of its sort around today, making *Terminator Rampage* look pitifully sluggish by comparison. It's the speed that's largely responsible for maximising all the exciting little playing touches that have been packed into the levels. Monsters fly high overhead forcing you to back off frantically while pointing your gun skyward. The scenery is fully reactive, with blood stains dripping down it, bullet holes staying etched into walls' surfaces and, of course, there are those gaping holes that you can blast in cinema screens, walls, doors and people.

Oh, and it's the first game of its kind to feature stripper ladies of disrepute. Pop into the bar, offer them a few coins and whoop with adolescent excitement as they annoy all the censors in existence. And this, incidentally, is the reason why we'll not be cover-mounting the demo for a while.

92%

And don't forget...

PC Gamer's web site can be found, hidden behind a virtually-impenetrable registration system which we had nothing to do with, at **http://www.futurenet.co.uk/**

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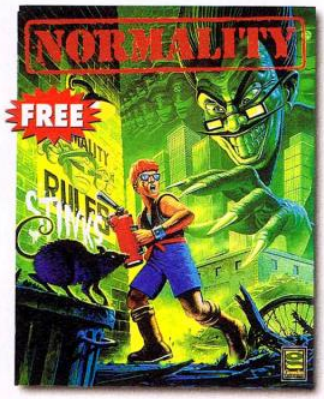

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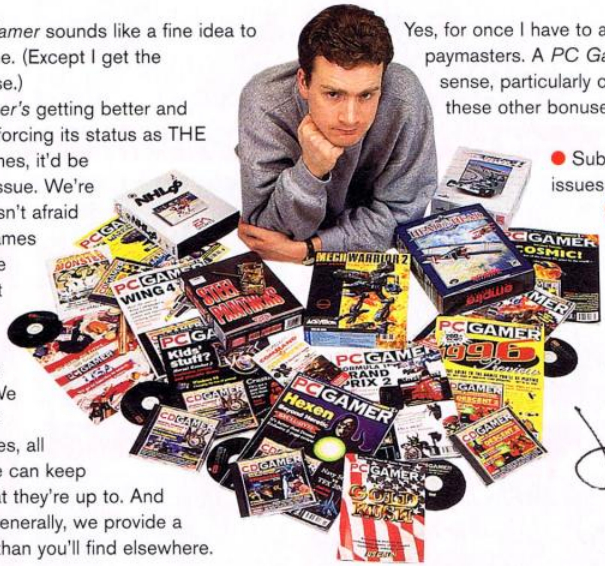

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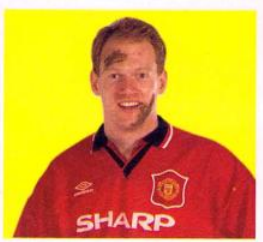

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GUIDELINES

Where Your Gaming Problems Are Solved

Warcraft II: Tides of Darkness

Tips and Tactics

One of the most engaging strategy games of the last few months,* Warcraft II *is no easy game to finish. So if Dragons are razing your villages with all too monotonous regularity, or if having Death Knights as neighbours is getting you down, you'll be in need of our timely guide to superior tactics.

The final level and the ultimate challenge for the Human side, this foul portal into the netherworld MUST BE DESTROYED...

Warcraft II is very much a unit-based game. It's in the training and use of units that success or failure lies, and in sometimes coming up with an unusual combination that'll leave your opponent floored. So here's the complete run-down on how to get the most from your fantastic army. It's organised unit by unit. Where both sides have pretty much identical units, they're covered together, and where individual cases need explaining they are. Explained. Individually.

Peons/Peasants

Yer bog-standard Serfs, their primary use is in collecting gold and lumber and building things. If a fight occurs near them, move them all away to safety immediately. Always try to keep your Peons behind other units. One of the more useful things that Peons do is repair. If one of your buildings is under attack, instruct a Peon to repair it while the attack is going on. As long as you keep it on the other side of the building from the attacker, you'll find that it's perfectly safe and will seriously slow down the rate at which the attacker causes damage. Indeed, get two Peons repairing a building and you'll have made it practically indestructible. It's also possible to use this facility to speed up your building by sending Peons to repair a building under construction. Be warned, though: this will substantially add to the cost in both gold and lumber.

Orc Grunts/Footmen

These characters are your basic foot soldiers, and you'll need a few of these at the start of each level. As soon as you can though, you should stop producing them and concentrate on some of the other more useful units.

Trolls/Elven Archers

These are the missile units. In hand-to-hand combat they are quickly overwhelmed. Always keep them behind Grunts or Ogres (Footmen and Knights for the Elves) in battle. If you group them with these other units, keep a fairly even mix. When you move to engage the enemy, the Trolls or Archers will stop at a distance while the hand-to-hand specialists move in. In the case of the Trolls, it's worth producing lots of these early on, as later you'll be able to buy regeneration for them.

Both Trolls and Elves should be upgraded vigorously. On later levels they become the best defence against the heavy aerial threat posed by Dragons or Gryphons. A couple of well-trained units can be very effective, especially if you distract the aerial invader with some cannon fodder. Get a Footman or Grunt and run him around underneath the flying nasties. He'll probably survive for quite a while and your missile chuckers will benefit from the easy target practice provided.

Catapult/Ballista

More destructive than the Trolls or Archers, these are also missile-only units. They're very slow, however, and in defence you should always keep them back from any front-line areas, only bringing them forward when an enemy appears. Their greatest use comes when attacking, because of their exceptional range. With reasonably careful positioning, you'll be able to take out enemy towers without any danger to the catapult. When attacking with these units, always keep some foot soldiers nearby. If the catapults come under attack, move this squad in to deal with the attackers. Then pull them out again and let the catapults do the major damage.

Goblin Sappers/ Dwarven Demo Squad

Surprisingly effective, these units self-destruct when instructed. You'll find that two of these will take out most enemy buildings. Like the Peons, though, they should be kept away from all combat. Keep them in some safe corner until you need them. They can also be used to carve routes through to gold mines or forests by blowing up mountains. It can be well worth using a couple of these to make a journey for your Peons shorter, giving you quite a significant long-term time advantage.

Ogres

Ogres are very tough hand-to-hand fighters. As soon as you can, stop producing Grunts and switch to these. Later on you'll be able to turn them into Ogre Mages and research spells for them. However, if money is tight this is one thing that can quite easily be dropped from your schedule. The Death Knights get much more effective magic and the Ogres don't really get all that much tougher when you make them into Mages. Keep a careful eye on your Ogre units, which tend to be rather head strong and are likely to charge off after retreating enemy units when you don't really want them too.

Knights

Knights are great shock troops and, as with Ogres, as soon as they become available you should concentrate on producing them instead of Footmen. Unlike the Ogres, though, they get great magic when upgraded to Paladin status, and it's well worth spending the money on research. Two spells in particular are hugely useful. First Healing: it can make sense to keep your Knights with healing safely out of the way and just bring units to them to have them healed. This is especially useful when combined with Gryphons. The other invaluable power that Knights get is exorcism. Use that to pick off any Death Knights you come up against.

Mage

Like the Death Knight, the Mage should be kept out of close fighting. The Mage has great destructive capability with its Fireball spell – just be careful there are no friendly units in the line of fire. The other great spell in the Mage's armoury is Invisibility. Cast it on a Peasant and get him to walk calmly into your enemy's lair and build a Guard Tower. Or cast it in on a Peasant in combination with Flame Shield and get him to wander unnoticed among your enemy's army, wreaking havoc as he goes. Or cast it on some Dwarves and get them to blow something up. You'll have great fun with Invisibility, the only drawback being that it doesn't fool death Knights, so make sure that your paladins have exorcised them first.

Can you imagine how difficult it must be to eat with a set of gnashers like that? And what about getting through doors with those horns? Tch.

Sim Citadel

The layout of your buildings can have a crucial effect on the outcome of any attack, so take some time to think about where you place them. Always make sure that your Peasants have as short a route as is possible to the Town Hall or Lumber Mill, for instance, and build Barracks as near to the front as possible so that your troops have less distance to travel into battle.

Towers are an extremely effective form of defence, particularly as they can be easily repaired when damaged. What's not so obvious is that they can also be very handy in an attack. Building a string of Towers behind enemy lines will certainly give them something to think about.

Although you can't build walls yourself, you do have an option to create very effective barriers by using Farms. Farms are not crucial buildings and are pretty cheap to produce. If you want to block off an area against repeated attacks, build a wall out of Farms and then place Towers just behind it. The enemy will come along and attack the Farms, leaving you in peace to pick them off. Then when the attack's over, repair your Farms. Using this tactic it's possible to just sit back and absorb all that the enemy can throw at you until he's exhausted all his resources. Keep an eye on how much gold is left in his mine by using your aerial spotter.

(Above) **With the enemy attacking from the top-left all the time, we built a row of farms to act as a repairable wall and stuck those towers behind it to pick off the enemy. Just visible at the bottom is the start of our sortie party, ready to rush out and tackle any catapults that come down.**

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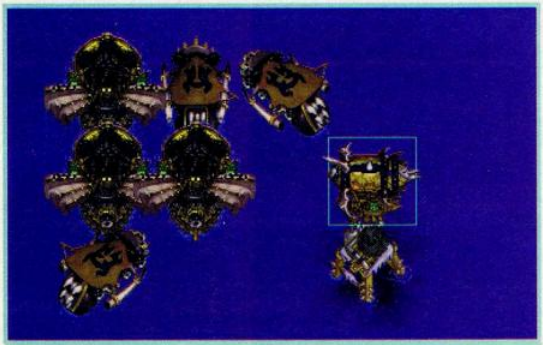
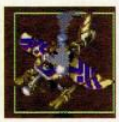


With the oil rig attracting enemy attackers, it's a good idea to keep your naval units near it, ready to ambush them when they appear.

Goblin Zeppelin/ Gnomish Flying Machine



With no combat ability whatsoever, these units are just spotters. They're very handy for sussing out enemy strengths and weaknesses, but their major use comes when the enemy produces submarines. Add one of these to any naval group you create and they'll be able to spot the otherwise invisible subs, allowing you to attack them without being spotted.

Death Knight

The Death Knight is an awesome creature, but not really suited to hand-to-hand combat. Try to keep them slightly away from the fighting and particularly any Paladins. Probably their greatest power is to animate the dead. With the judicious use of a couple of Death Knights attached to any raiding party you can turn all the enemies you defeat into skeleton soldiers at no financial cost. As the enemy gets weaker, you get stronger. Also very effective is the Whirlwind, but only when cast on very dense areas of the enemy's defences. Unholy Armour is great if you give it to a Sapper unit and then send it, now invulnerable, to blow up an enemy building or army. It certainly gets rid of pesky Mages quickly.

Filthy cheat

There is a quite splendid array of cheats for *Warcraft II*. These are just some of the more useful. To use any of them, press the 'enter' key. Then, when the 'Message:' prompt comes up, type in any of the following. A word of caution though: some of these cheats (particularly the production ones) give the enemy the same benefits. This is thankfully not true of the invincibility. Typing in the same cheat code a second time will turn the cheat off.

IT IS A GOOD DAY TO DIE: Makes all your units and buildings invincible, except for a few magical attacks.
GLITTERING PRIZES: Gives you 10,000 gold, 5,000 lumber, 5,000 oil.
VALDEZ: Gives you 5,000 oil.
HATCHET: Speeds up the production of wood so your Peasants or Peons get a unit in only two chops.
MAKE IT SO: Dramatically speeds up all building.
TITLE: Increases the speed of your units.
NOGLUES: Disables magical traps.
SHOWPATH: Displays entire map.
THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE: Shows the end sequence and finishes the game.
UCLA: Shows "Go Bruins!" message. For no obvious reason at all.

Work at Mission Studios long enough and you'll get REALLY good at geography.

Matthew Harmon
Vice-President of Development/Jetfighter III Lead Programmer.
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US GOLD

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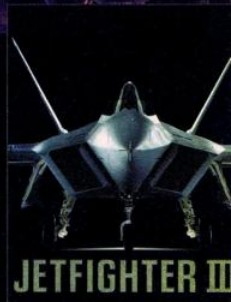

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Land a Peon with some attack units (the enemy's just off the top of the screen), and build towers to form a bridgehead. Then land the rest.

Dragon/Gryphon Riders

These great aerial beasts are the finest weapons available. No longer do you need to build ships to transport your men around. Now you can just fly somewhere and attack it. Their only real disadvantage is that if grouped they tend to destroy friendly units with over enthusiastic fireballs, and even each other, but keep them as loners and they won't go far wrong.

Naval Tactics

The Troll Destroyer and Elven Destroyer are fast, manoeuvrable ships and still useful when they've been superseded by the bigger and more powerful Ogre Juggernauts or Battleships. The larger ships are much slower and take longer to respond, so always keep a blend of different ships in a naval group. That way you'll be able to react more quickly to any threat. The Destroyers are also capable of hitting flying opponents, which makes them indispensable at sea.

The Submarines make a great addition to any naval group as well, but can also be used very effectively as raiders in groups of two or three, especially if combined with an aerial spotter to watch out for any Towers or flying creatures that are capable of noticing them. Sending Subs out in advance of a large navy is a great tactic, as you can pick off enemy ships before they've seen you.

One final piece of advice. Towers are very effective against naval units, and you'll nearly always lose ships when attacking them. But you can use a Transport instead. Put three Footmen into the Transport and rush the enemy Tower. Land the Transport as close as possible to the Tower, then release your Footmen, who will attack it and remain safe because the Towers can only attack units at a distance. Move the Transport out of harm's way until the job's done, and then send it back in to pick up your heroes.

Warcraft II

Warcraft II was reviewed in the February issue of *PC Gamer*. It received a massive rating of 92% and one of *PCG*'s coveted Recommended awards.

I am thankful for and love living in the age of technology. Still, it's too bad more fantasy and heroic elements from the ancient past haven't survived the progression of time. At least there's still myth in science.

Dan Kaufman
Programmer/Artist.
Mission Studios Corporation.

Featuring:
Advanced light source intensity shading.

Quick mission load times.

Precision, non-warping texture mapping.

Moving, pitching aircraft carrier.

Authentic 3D virtual cockpit.

US GOLD

MISSION STUDIOS

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JETFIGHTER III

GUIDELINES

Navy Strike

Hints and Tips

Navy Strike *is no ordinary flight sim, placing you in command of an entire aircraft carrier, which, while not quite as agile as your more usual jet fighter, places a considerable amount of firepower at your disposal. We have therefore asked Rowan Software, the game's creators, to compile a guide to using it wisely.*

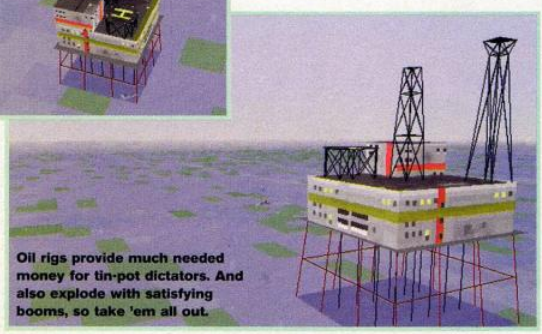
The Missions

Mission One – The South China Sea

This mission is a breeze. You easily have more power than the opposition, so they will resort to more desperate measures, such as trying to shoot down harmless civilian airliners. The aim of this is to show the world that you aren't just another musclehead Navy-Jock who enjoys watching innocent Airbuses explode. So set up your eye in the sky and launch a patrol to surround the islands. Find Spratly airfield and patrol it with mixed attack sorties of AX Bombers for ground targets and F-18's for any enemy aircraft that break through. This level is a waiting game, and if you let your attention wander too far, you will not have time to respond to the Chinese special forces units who are hiding out in the network of islands and oil rigs. In this mission you don't have to worry too much about losing a few planes, just be sure to protect the civilians at all costs – or your next assignment will be cleaning up the officers' mess.

Mission Two – Libya

However much you may want to nip this one in the bud by blowing the chemical plant away, you can't. Well, not yet, anyway. Enforce the sanctions and find the ship carrying the missiles and then prevent it from reaching the docks. This would be easy if the Libyans left you alone for one minute, but they constantly launch nuisance attacks against you. These attacks aren't trying to sink your fleet, but to provoke you into making mistakes so they can turn the conflict into a political embarrassment – and get you fired. Once you have identified the target ship and seen it off, your bosses in the higher levels of government will send you lists of targets to attack. You don't have to destroy everything that is sanctioned, just what you feel is necessary to complete the mission, which in this case is the chemical plant. So clear a path to it by taking out the air defences of Tripoli and Bani, and suppress enemy air power by taking out the airport. Once you have control of the eastern coastal area you can begin the onslaught on the chemical plant. Deal with the SAMS and AAA, and then send in the heavy mob to flatten the place. Ensure there are a few F-22 fighters to protect the bombers from enemy fighters, which may take off from airports further to the south. If you're fast enough, that will be it, but for most of us it won't. The Libyans make one final attempt to save some of their chemical warheads, but you will have to deal with that as it comes.

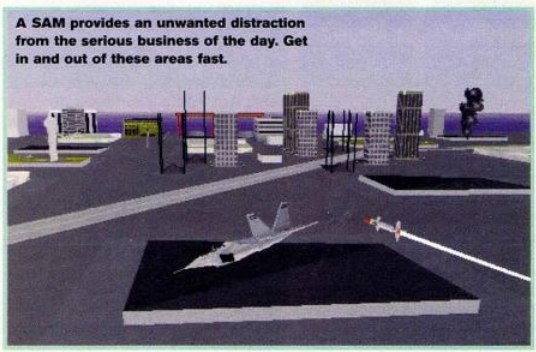


Oil rigs provide much needed money for tin-pot dictators. And also explode with satisfying booms, so take 'em all out.

Mission Three – The Gulf

This is it. You arrive in the Gulf and are told to hold off an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait until reinforcements get there. This will be a much more intense mission as the Iraqis know you're on your own and they have three days to take Kuwait and dig in before Western coalition land forces arrive. If you remember *Desert Storm*, you'll know that Saddam Hussein is a master at manipulating politics and military manoeuvres to get his objective. He also likes to use civilian areas for his military activities, so bombing has to be perfect or you'll be on the next world news broadcast. The other problem with this mission is that your fleet is 250 miles away from the area you're supposed to be protecting, so you have to use long-range aircraft and lay off the afterburners. Chase away any aircraft that approach your fleet and keep an eye on them, as they often skirt around then come at you again, fooling your combat air patrols. Set up a forward observation patrol with an eye in the sky far enough north to let you see deep into Iraq, so you are alerted to the land forces as soon as they come pouring down to position themselves in the trenches along the border. Once the forces are in position you'll be hard-pressed to deliver enough bombs to the trenches in time to stop the invasion, so the secret is to slow them down and pick them off as soon as possible. Find the bridges and take them out, knock out the Early Warning Radar, and ensure that there is no invasion force left, as the Iraqis will throw everything at you before the reinforcements arrive (too late as usual).

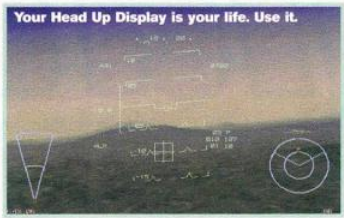
It's easy to set waypoints in the desert missions, but when you arrive there's often a powerful concentration of firepower.



A SAM provides an unwanted distraction from the serious business of the day. Get in and out of these areas fast.

Top Tips for Commanders

● When there are lots of simultaneous engagements, stay in the command position. If you're out gallivanting with your pilots, you may return to some nasty bleeps on the radar screen or, even worse, a message telling you why you have been fired.


Your Head Up Display is your life. Use it.

● Don't send missions over well-protected enemy positions. Instead, set the mission waypoints to skirt around them.

● Ground vehicles can be used as mission waypoints so your planes can home straight in on them as they attempt to scurry away.

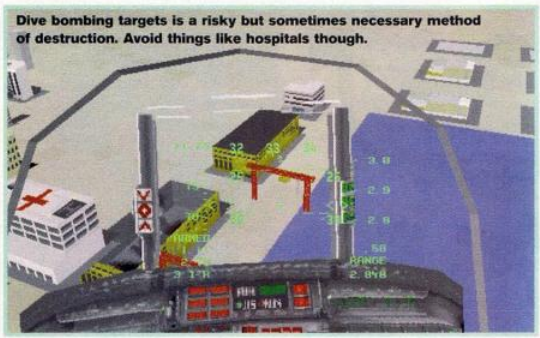
● Keep your planes at as high an altitude as possible to avoid anti-aircraft fire.

● If you want to bomb a ground target yourself, send a reconnaissance aircraft to film it first and then view the target using the camera icon on the command screen. You don't want to accidentally blow up innocent civilian buildings, do you?

● Even though your task force can defend itself against air attack, your job is to keep the enemy away at all times. If you can't, you won't last long as a commander.

● Prepare your mission flight paths and gather all your information and reconnaissance as soon as possible, because when things get going you'll need your attention on the enemies' units and not on your own.

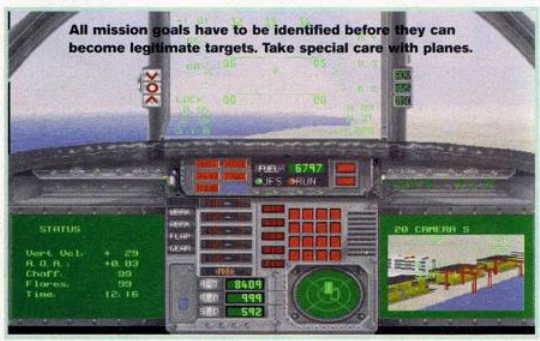
● Keep one eye on your combat air patrol planes, because if they're chasing enemy aircraft, they can fly off over enemy territory and be shot down by SAMs.


Dive bombing targets is a risky but sometimes necessary method of destruction. Avoid things like hospitals though.

Top Ten Flight Tips

1. Follow the rules of engagement. It's very easy to blow away an aircraft with long-range missiles before you can even see it, and it could well be a civilian airliner.

2. Be aware of your height at all times. The aircraft can dive and climb between sea level and 40,000 feet in under a minute, and if you're pre-occupied with blowing away a MiG, a little thing like the sea can surprise you. If you're in a steep dive, pull out of it before 6,000 feet or you'll end up like a wet pizza.


All mission goals have to be identified before they can become legitimate targets. Take special care with planes.

3. Auto-pilot is a life saver. If you're confused and out of control, use the auto-pilot command to level you out and then switch back to manual control.

4. Things happen fast! You won't see enemy missiles coming, so keep an eye on the AA missile/SAM warning lights. If they light up, then pump chaff and flares (keys 3 and 4) and pray.

5. Use the long-range missiles to lock on to your target (but don't fire unless you have to). Combined with the Padlock View option (the Backspace key) this should allow you to zero-in on the enemy very quickly. But remember to switch back to cannons for warning shots. Careless missiles cost lives, and careers.

6. Turning takes time. As any good driving instructor will tell you, you should plan your turns – especially if you're travelling at over twice the speed of sound.

7. F is for flaps (not an alternative means of propulsion). Engaging these will greatly improve manoeuvring, but at the cost of stability and speed. Useful for those sharp turns in dogfights.

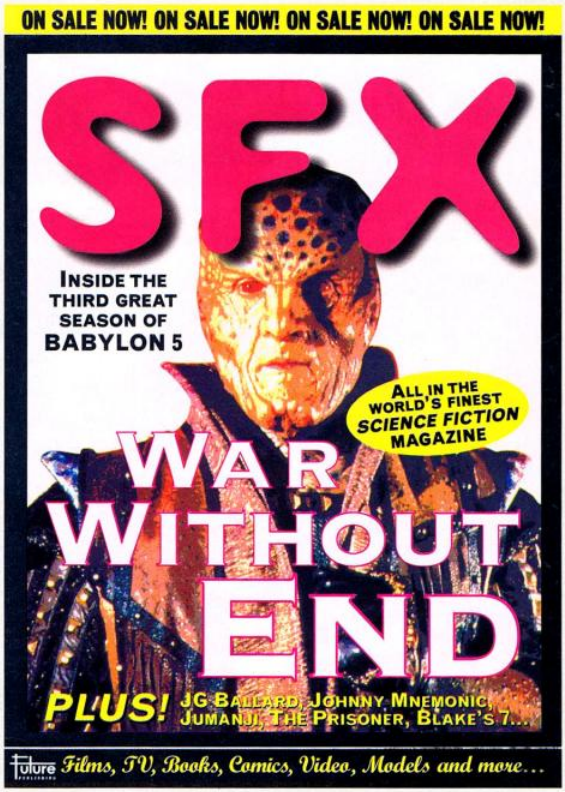
8. Remember your brakes. Just because you can fly at over 1,000 mph doesn't mean you have to. Air brakes (key B) will help slow you down in a hurry, especially when combined with flaps (key F).

9. When intercepting, position yourself behind and slightly above your target. That way, when you receive permission to attack you're ready for the kill. He'll still know you're there, but it'll be far more difficult for him to fire back.

10. Go easy on the afterburners – they'll eat your fuel in a matter of minutes if left on. If you do find yourself in the embarrassing position of having no fuel, panic and then press the E key to switch to your spare tank... that's if you've got one. Oh well, there's always the ejector seat – ALT Q. PCG

Navy Strike

Rowan's *Navy Strike* was reviewed in the November 1995 issue of *PC Gamer*. It went head to head against *EF2000* and scored 86% to *EF's* 92%.



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Stonekeep

Part 3: Levels 13 to 17

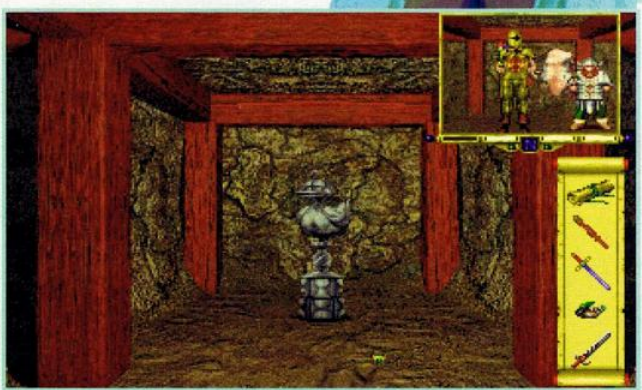
His leather singlet caked with blood, the fire still burns strong within John Houlihan as he slices his way through to Thera's temple and vanquishes the forces of darkness once and for all.

Level 13 – Faerie Realm

Easily the most annoying level in the entire game, here you can readily sympathise with the Dwarf's homicidal tendencies towards Faeries. However, when you come across the Faeries individually, take time to complete their various mini quests and you'll be rewarded accordingly. Start by finding Giggle's poem book, which lies unguarded in a dead-end to the east. When you return it to him you'll get the gold key. The silver key can be obtained by feeding Surly with one of the many fairy cakes that litter this level.

Once you've got both keys, find the entrance to the Queen's court and place them in the slot on your right. Inside the inner sanctum, lay five primroses before the barrier and walk a circuit twice to gain an audience. Watching over the Faeries drains Iaenni's energies and you'll need to speak to her four times in total to gain the pendant and lots of other useful advice. Next, have a shuftie amongst the flowers outside the court and you'll discover the real daisy chain. Return it to Sweetie and she'll provide you with a four-leaf clover to defeat the fiendishly transparent Trolls.

Onward to the Trolls' domain and hunting them down shouldn't be too much of a problem now, especially as they make an amusing 'Ni' sound when shot. Kill the Troll Shaman to retrieve Yoth-Soggoth's orb, and in a grove to the north-east you'll find the magic-tastick Elfstaff, which will do wonders for your spell-casting abilities. Return to the Faeries' home turf and listen to the unspeakably irritating Faerie players for as many times as your sanity can stand. Eventually, after what seems like an eternity of pain, they'll give you the Duck rune, which you can use with the corresponding statue in the Gate of Ancients.



"If you study the base, you'll notice this small mark, indicating that it's actually Dutch. Early 1820s, probably. And worth... well, what do you think?" "£2?" "Closer to £5."

For most of his life, Dick the rat had been plagued by nose-bleeds at awkward moments. But this took the biscuit. "Squeak," he said.

Levels 14 and 15 – Gate of Ancients and The Pits

Strangely and eerily empty, the Gate of Ancients taxes the old noggin and is an altogether more puzzley type of affair involving lots of lurking about between levels. So, with thinking caps firmly screwed on, your first objective is to head north and find a floor plate and spear trap. Opposite the spear trap is an illusionary wall, containing a mana circle and a pit. Cast the float spell on the party, drop down the pit, then head east and up into a room with another three pits. Fall down the northern one onto a pressure pad and you'll open up the way to Safrinni's Orb, which lies to the north. Once you've got the orb use it on the party to levitate between levels

Find your way back to the room with the three pits and this time take the southernmost one.

Head west, then up before dropping down another pit. Greed closes all doors, so take only the wolf key, which lies behind the east portal, then head back to the main area. Unlock the door to the east and burn your fingers in the fire to get the eagle key. The remaining door will now succumb, so simply follow the passageway around to get the orb key.

"Gagh," cried the evil black-suited lifeguard, and died.

Go back to the room with three pits and this time descend down the east one, heading first south then west to a dead end. Face south and use the orb to levitate, stepping quickly through the illusionary wall when you arrive. Add to your cool factor by clothing yourself in natty magical plate mail before opening up the door to the portal. However, before hopping off to the sinister Palace of Shadows, arm yourself with the jolly spiffing Silver Runestaff – the Rolls Royce of magic wands – by investigating an illusionary wall to the east.

Level 16 – The Palace of Shadows

Once inside the lair of the Shadow King you're going to need all of the big guns on your side, so try press-ganging Wahooka and Farli into joining the fray. First head north and then west, pausing for a quick chat with Thera before a door closes unexpectedly behind you. Grab the first part of the yin yang key and chug south-west to find a dark mirror, which teleports you to a narrow corridor. Wahooka resides behind an illusionary wall to the north, so try humouring the old goat and he might just be your signing of the season.

Next, find the first Shadow piece and then walk east through another dark mirror to obtain the second part, assembling them to form the mightiest weapon you could possibly wish to wield. Now armed to the teeth, return to your start point and place both pieces of the yin yang key into their holder, which will open up a hidden

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passageway to the west. Follow it and you'll soon discover the massive Marif's Orb – the orb of strength, which must be shrunk with the appropriate rune, before being added to your growing collection.

North-east of the orb is a button which will open up a secret passageway, where you must face the fiendish fangs of the redoubtable Scourge. After you've defeated him, make for the centre of his lair, face east and cast your weightiest spoil-spell at the wall to reveal the stairs leading to the Shadow King's high-rise pad.

Level 17 – The Tower of Shadows

First Level

Things tend to hot up somewhat in the tower, with fire elementals and spinning spikes aplenty, but with seven orbs in hand, you're well on the way to foiling Khull Khum's wiles. When you meet the gargoyle, press the red square first, then the green triangle and you'll get some useful information. After you've gained access, your first task is to get the Silver Ankh which lies to the north-west and is guarded by both illusionary walls and some rather unpleasant spikes. Once you've obtained it, return to your start point and look for the secret panel which is just to the north-east. Dial the sequence: top row – first two; second row – last one; third row – first one and bottom row – last two, which will open the stairs to the second level. If you fancy a bit of a scrap, find Farli, head north-east and get a strange piece of metal which will open the gateway to the lair of the Dark Dwarves and a timely spot of blood vengeance

Insert the mysterious oaken key into the right compartment in the glowing elven chest and you're shown an early Queen video.

Second and Third Levels

Don't bother fighting the fire elementals which pervade this level unless you want more than a singed beard. Instead simply leg it past them, ignore their fiery attentions and have plenty of healing spells to hand. From your starting point go east and jump through a teleporter which disguises the fact that you've moved. Turn 180 degrees, then head north, pausing to avoid the spell which fires down the corridor from the east. Scamper across before it detonates again and then head north and east to find the Silver Crescent.

Return to the beginning and this time head north-east, where you'll find yet another teleporter. After you've gone through, circle around to the north-east, before heading south again, and you'll discover the Silver Cross. After that it's simply a matter of heading north to another teleporter, then south-east to an apparent dead end. Don't believe what your eyes are telling you and walk straight through the illusionary wall to the south to get to the next level.

Level 3 is short but scary and, again, be sure to be fleet of foot and dodge the attacks of the voracious elementals. If you run west then north quickly, you should be able to grab the Silver Circle without too many problems. However, after that it's a mad dash west, south, east and then ultimately north to a teleporter which will bring you to Khull Khum's private apartments. ☛

"Can your PC tackle this?"

ADIDAS POWERSOCCER – PLAYSTATION

ALIEN TRILOGY

Fourth Level and Thera's Temple

Once you've got all of the artefacts, you'll find yourself in a hall just outside the inner sanctum. Follow it to a dead end and then step north through an illusionary wall. Avoiding the centre square for the moment, place three of the artefacts on the south, east and west squares. Saunter north through the illusionary wall and stroll casually down to meet the Khull Khum. While he rants on (a common mistake with super villains you'll note) wait until his defences are down and nab the two remaining orbs. Step back a pace, place the final artefact and lo and behold, you've got the beggar by the short and curlies. Once the Shadow King's back in his cage, walk south and you'll find Thera's Temple. Here all you've got to do is place the orbs in astronomical order, i.e. Helion, Aquila, Thera, Azrael, Marif, Afri, Safrinni, Yoth-Soggoth and finally Kor-Soggoth to finish the game. However, be careful not to place Khull Khum's orb or you'll have to go through the thing again. Hurrah! Stonekeep and Thera are saved and there'll be plenty of time to put your feet up, relax your sword arm and develop an entirely innocent hobby like topiary, before *Stonekeep 2* hits the shelves sometime in late 97.

We have just established that there's nothing on telly on Tuesdays except Brookside, unless you like The X-Files or the Likely Lads.

You can make your own Butterfly Barbie using an ordinary barbie doll and the remains of a large butterfly with its legs pulled off.

Stonekeep

Interplay's *Stonekeep* was reviewed in the December issue of *PC Gamer*. It received a score of 86% and therefore a *PCG* Recommended accolade.

RIPPER

Foul play

Cheats and tips for underhand PC gamers

Be ashamed that you are even looking at this page of PC Gamer! *It is surely the refuge of cheats and scoundrels, its nefarious contents chilling all who gaze upon it. Be gone! And do not, under any circumstances, employ any of these cheats.*

Duke Nukem 3D

In celebration of the shareware version of *Duke Nukem 3D* recently becoming available, we present to you the cheat codes necessary to progress through the game.

DNKROZ	Tops up your health to 100% and makes you invincible.
DNITEMS	Fills your inventory with all the objects available in the game.
DNSTUFF	Same as above, but also gives you max health and all the weapons.
DNSCOTTYa,b	Takes you to episode 'a', level 'b'
DNHYPER	Gives you steroids and activates them.
DNRATE	Shows the frame rate *Duke Nukem 3D* is running at on your computer. (Possibly handy for benchmarking.)
DNCASHMAN	Having typed this, when you press Space you'll throw money around.

Abuse

We review the full version of *Abuse* this month, and thought it only appropriate simultaneously to make known the cheat. To make yourself invincible, run Abuse adding "-edit" after the name, and when the game's running press Shift-Z while the cursor's within the window, and then Tab to restart the game.

FX Fighter

3D beat-'em-ups are very much in vogue on the PC at the moment, what with the release of *Virtua Fighter Remix* a couple of months ago. In *FX Fighter,* therefore, if you reckon you'd make a better

cameraman than the computer, press the Home key during a fight and you'll be able to move the view around using the cursor keys. The PgUp and PgDn keys zoom in and out.

The Lion King

We reviewed *The Jungle Book* not so long ago, and it set us thinking about *The Lion King*. We wondered how many of our readers might not be aware that if you type "DWARF" on the options screen, you can then use H to top up your energy at any time during the game, and L to skip from level to level.

X-COM: Terror From The Deep

MicroProse have recently announced that work on *X-COM 3* is under way. This, we felt, was reason enough to point out that, in the previous game, if you move an interceptor that's refuelled, repaired and rearmed to another base and launch it, its fuel gauge will read '0' and yet it will remain airborne forever.

Witchaven

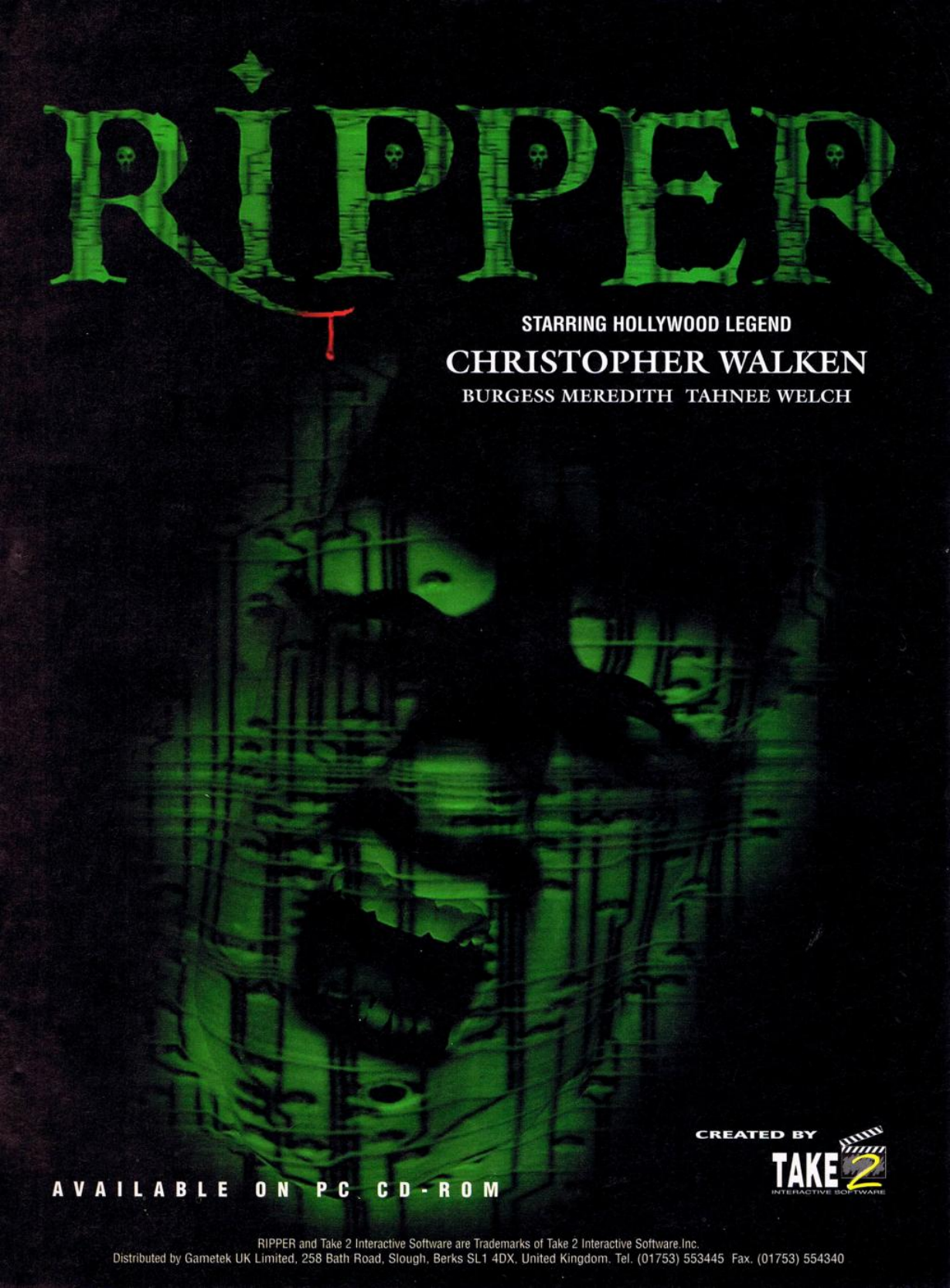
There's a cheat code entry mode in *Witchaven* (a game that's particularly topical this month for reasons we are keeping a secret), which is activated by pressing Backspace. You can then type in one of the following codes:

WANGO	Tops up your health and armour and sets you at Level 7.
SCOOTER	Gives you the full range of weapons and spells and a supply of pikes.
MOMMY	Supplies you with nine of each of the potions and spells.

Terminal Velocity

Having begun this month's Foul Play with a 3D Realms game, it seems only right to end it with one too. So here's a list of the cheat codes for *Terminal Velocity:*

TRIGODS	Makes you invincible.
MANIACS	Gives you lots of afterburners. Our personal favourite.
TRISHLD	Tops up your shields to full.
TRINEXT	Takes you to the next level.
TRSCOPE	Provides you with an oscilloscope. For some reason.
TRIBURN	Takes you to 'terminal velocity'.
TRFRAME	Gives you a frame rate.
3DREALM	Prints "Smokin'!" on the screen.



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GUIDELINES

Q&A

Stuck on a game? Or feeling smug because you've just completed one? Either way, you may want to drop us a line, because not only do we solve problems here at Q&A but we also invite our readers to help out those gamers less fortunate than themselves.

Alone In The Dark 2

Q I just can't get any further on *Alone In The Dark 2*. As Grace, I've found the parrot and given it the bird seed. I've also found a pepper-pot and a sandwich and have recovered the tinder-box from the top deck. How do I stop Grace getting caught by the pirates and what is the pepper-pot for?

Darren Davies, Birmingham

A After you get the tinder-box and go through the trap-door you'll fall into a room which is actually the Captain's cabin. Take the small cannon from the chest, the vase from the shelf and the stick next to the bed. Now position yourself in front of the door, put down the cannon and use the pepper on the cannon. Throw the vase and the door will open. Wait until the pirate comes close and use the tinder-box on the cannon. Once the pirate is dead, take the bell and get out of the room.

Customer Help-Lines

Most publishers offer their own games support service, so if you're stuck on one of their titles, it's always worth giving them a ring directly.

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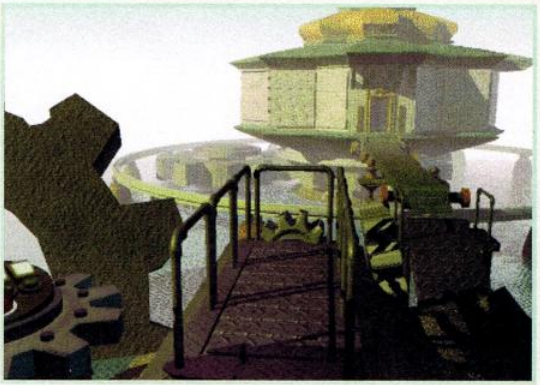
Myst

Q I am playing *Myst* and am stuck in two places. 1) I have the pages in the island of the boat but I cannot light up the inside of the boat. 2) I have the notes for the piano in the spaceship, but when I play them on the controls nothing happens. Please help.

S. Whitwam, York

A 1) Your first question is a bit vague. Do you mean you have the book in the resurfaced ship? If not, go to the planetarium and click on the control panel. Set each of the dates from the clue (Oct 11, 1984 10:04 am, Jan 17 1207 5:46 am and Nov 23, 9791 6:57 pm) and map the constellation shown to one of the constellations in the Stoneship book. Go to the pillars at the mall and click on the appropriate symbols (leaf, snake and bug). The book is now in the resurfaced ship. 2) You have to be very accurate with the notes for the piano. Counting from the left, hit the notes in this order – 8, 20, 23, 13 and 6. Press the button and the book will appear before you.



King's Quest 5

Q I have had *King's Quest 5* for over a year now. I've explored what seems like the whole game, entered shops, spoken to the weeping willow, spoken to the trolls and the man, found a coin in the town and have been killed by the inn keeper and the witch in the woods, but I don't know what to do next. PLEASE HELP!

Paul Clarkin, Cheshire

A You could try doing the following. If you go back to the place where you found the coin, you'll also find a fish. After leaving the bakehouse and purchasing a pie with the coin, try throwing the fish to the bear. You should then find that you're able to get the honeycomb from the hole in the tree. Take the stick as well. Walk 1 North and throw the stick to the dog. Keep getting killed by the witch? Try giving her a brass bottle, which you can find in the temple.

Over To You...

Sometimes in life you've just gotta admit defeat, son. Pass the reins over to someone else. So with that in mind, why not peruse the list below and see if you can help out any of our troubled readers. If you can, then write in to the Q & A address, marking your envelope 'Over to You', and we'll pass on your advice.

A The only way for **F Cooke** to pass the Larkhon Slug in **Lands Of Lore** is to use the green skull on it. The skull can be found in the swamp.
Karen Murphy, Leigh

A **F Cooke,** who was stuck in **Little Big Adventure,** needs to use the flask of water on the runic stone in order to get out of the dark room in Funfrock's Fortress. The whole building should then explode, leaving you facing the ruins.
James Lee, Pontypridd

A **Allan Smith,** who kept getting killed by the voodoo guy in **Shadow Of The Comet,** needs to go to the right of the screen where he took the photos, approach the cat, and when it runs away, search the bushes to find a secret passage. Follow the path to the ceremony, and duck behind the tree. When you are discovered, run to the house. **Chris McMullen, Bolton**

A In response to **Melnikev Alexander** of Israel who is stuck in **Bureau 13** (Issue 23), herewith follows the answer. With the shovel from Eddie Houston's vampire hunter kit, dig up the grave of Spike Clemmins (a condemned murderer) and remove his finger. Spike is buried in the grave behind the tombstone marked with a pentagram. Dip the finger bone in Father Dominic's blood, which is found in the church kitchen, and use this on the dogwood disc. **Harry Maton, Croydon**

Q I recently bought the game **Mission Critical.** I have the main computer on and need oxygen to go and fix the tachyon dish. Please help! Where can I find the oxygen?
Gordon Ryan, Dublin

Q I am stuck in **Privateer.** I have the Steltek gun and I don't know how to proceed. I have visited Perry (in the office) to sell the design, but no-one wants to know. And the bloody alien follows me. What do I do? **Adam Evetts, Norwich**

Q **Lost Eden** is driving me mad with frustration. I do not know who should play the instruments of death. I've tried Thug and the Monk but they are not good enough, and the mirror tells me I should find three of the best musicians. Please help me. **Alex Murty, Billericay**

Q I'm on Chapter 7 of **Betrayal At Krondor** and have reached the point where I need to speak to Squire Phillip, but he is protected by the goblins and it appears there are only two ways to defeat them. The first is to use the Mind Melt spell, the second to use the Rorics seal, neither of which I can find. Where are these items? **Susan Chaney, Sussex**

King's Quest 7

Q In spite of your solution to *King's Quest 7* in *PC Gamer* Vol 2, No 10, I am unable to find the hunter's horn! Could you please tell me where it is, as it is driving me mad?
Leo Wernaert, Amsterdam

A It's very near the beginning of Chapter 1. After taking the ripped petticoat from the cactus, walk two screens south. Then take the hunting horn from the skeleton. Simple, eh?

Star Trek: 25th Anniversary

Q I am stuck on the Ark 7 mission on the CD-ROM enhanced version of the game. I've knocked out the Romulans on the lower decks, freed the two prisoners and now I'm totally stuck. **Tony Millar, Suffolk**

A You need to revive the two Romulans. To do this you need the Orborus cure serum. Get it by using the Orborus culture in the Viral accelerator grey chamber. Then go and use it on both Romulans, making sure to give them water afterwards as well. After reviving the second Romulan, Preax, talk to him and use Response 1. Then beam back to the Enterprise.

Lost In Time

Q I'm well and truly stuck on Sierra's *Lost In Time*. The hint system says I need a hosepipe, but I can't find one anywhere. Please can you tell me where it is? **David Harris, North Yorkshire**

A Go to the barrel outside the lighthouse. Take the vinegar and return to the manor door. Pour the vinegar into the empty battery and use the coil on the battery to create an electromagnet. Use the magnet on the space below the door to get the key. Go to the manor and take the oar and the roasting spit from the fireplace, then take the copper wire and the resin from the small cupboard. Fix the fuse with the foil from the pack. Return to the lighthouse. Use the dart on the cork in the barrel. Pick up the barrel. Smash the window with the roasting spit and... voilà, there's the hose!

Indiana Jones: Fate Of Atlantis

Q I'm totally stuck on this game. I am in the outer maze and I seem to have done everything, but I can't get past the double door with the pool of water in front of it. Also, I only have one orichalcum bead left and I don't know what to do with it. **David Harris, North Yorkshire**

A Hi, again David. You need more orichalcum for a start. If possible, try going back to the machine room carrying a cup full of lava. Use the spoked wheel on the peg in front of the machine and pour the lava into the funnel. You should now find you have more orichalcum. To get past the double doors, use an orichalcum bead in the eel statue and then throw it into the water. Then feed the fish statue a bead and the doors will open.

If you're in a jam, or able to help those who are, then write to us now! Mark your envelope clearly with either Q&A or Over To You and send it to: PC Gamer, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

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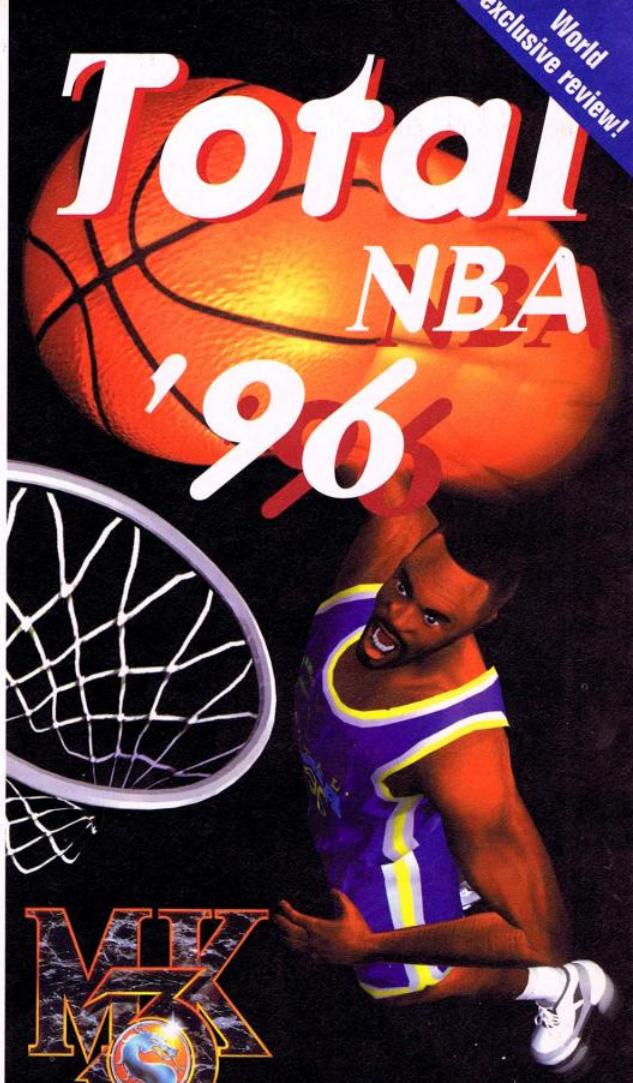

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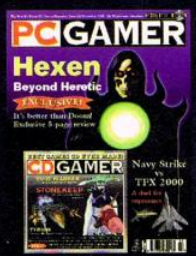

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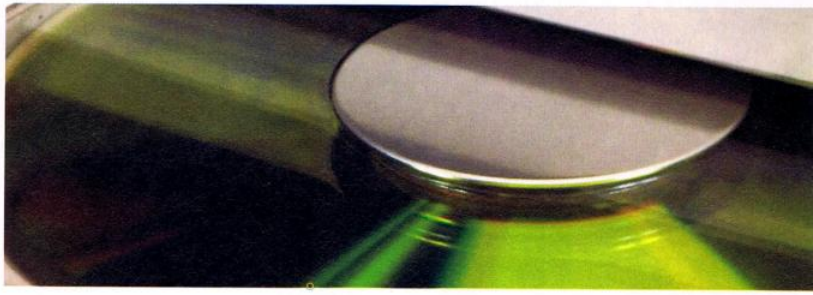
PCG/Issue28/3 96

Drive

Quad-speed CD-ROM drives may be fast, but six-speed drives are faster – and needn't be more expensive. Simon Williams looks at four drives which leave quad-speeds standing.



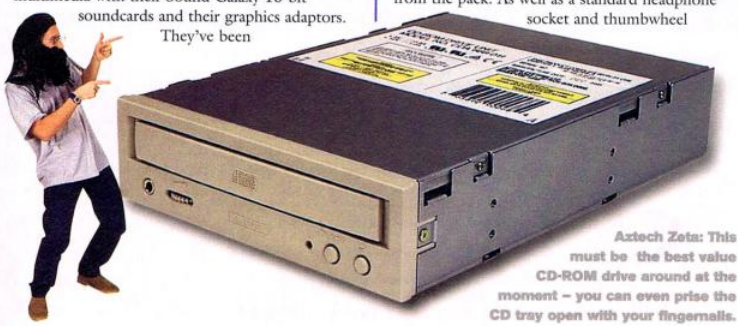
DOUBLE-SPEED CD-ROM drives aren't fast enough. Games which read data while you're playing jerk badly and really do intrude on the enjoyment of the gameplay. Quad-speed drives are much better and fast enough for some titles. Other titles, though, and many of the new games forecast in our recent 1996 Preview, may even struggle at this speed. What you need is yet another hardware upgrade to a five- or six-speed drive. And guess what I'm reviewing this month? I've got four fast CD-ROM drives, including one which will run six discs at once in a cartridge. And the first and cheapest costs less than £100.

Aztech Zeta 6x LE

£116 – 01734 814121

This drive had me drop-jawed and asking "How much are you selling it for?", two things which are hard to do together. This is the first six-speed CD-ROM drive to break the £100 barrier, albeit excluding VAT, and it's fitting it should come from Aztech. This company, based in Singapore, has almost single-handedly lowered the price of multimedia with their Sound Galaxy 16-bit soundcards and their graphics adaptors. They've been making CD-ROM drives for about 18 months, and they have been well received. The Zeta 6x LE is an internal drive, which comes complete with driver disk, audio cable and fixing screws, as well as two well-written and well-illustrated manuals which explain the installation of the drive clearly. This is an IDE device, which means you can connect to just about any recent PC with a hard drive or to most modern soundcards.

Although it looks like many other CD-ROM drives, it has a couple of features which separate it from the pack. As well as a standard headphone socket and thumbwheel volume control, there are buttons for eject and track-select. The last of these, very useful if you play your Band Of The Royal Scots Fusiliers CDs on your PC, is still rarely found on CD-ROMs.



Aztech Zeta: This must be the best value CD-ROM drive around at the moment – you can even prise the CD tray open with your fingernails.

Another very useful feature is the drive's ability to have its tray pulled out manually, when the power to the PC is off. How many times have you left a CD in the drive and had to switch on your machine and wait for it to boot up before recovering the disc? Yes, three or four, I'll bet. Well, with this drive it's a thing of the past.

Data transfer rate is very good – I measured it at over 1000K/s, though the access time is comparatively slow at 235ms. In use with games it produced some very smooth running graphics and overall this must be the hardware bargain of spring 1996. **95%**

NEC Multispin: Nice drive, shame about the price, which is horrendous. The front panel's good, though, and even has an auto-repeat button.

NEC Multispin 6Xe

£586 (£445 internal version) – 0181 993 8111

This drive could hardly be more different from the Aztech. For a start, it's an external drive, which means it has its own power supply and connects to the PC via a SCSI cable. SCSI is the alternative

on

connection standard to IDE and unlike IDE it needs a separate controller card, which you probably won't have in your PC already. No SCSI controller is supplied with the drive, so you'll need to allow an extra £70-£200 for this.

The Multispin can be run completely separately from your PC, so you could use it to play audio CDs, even when your machine is switched off. It has separate audio and digital outputs at the back, as well as a selector for the SCSI device number (you can connect up to seven devices to the same SCSI cable).

At the front, there's a semi-circular cover to the CD-hatch, which also acts as an eject mechanism. This drive uses a caddie – a plastic case into which you put the CD before slotting it into the drive. This is great for protecting the CD from dust, grease, radioactive fallout and the little black seeds that fall off white bread rolls. It's more fiddly than a tray mechanism, though.

As well as being able to start, stop, pause and eject a CD from front-panel controls, you can flick between tracks and select auto-repeat. There's also a wide thumbwheel volume control, a headphone jack, a small hole for ejecting the caddie with a paper-clip and a power switch round the side. There's a back-lit LCD display on the front, too, which shows you the track playing and provides error codes if anything should go wrong.

The Multispin is fast, with a genuine six-speed, 900K/s access speed and an access time of around 200ms. This is a great drive if you're also looking for an audio CD player for your hi-fi. The only remaining question is whether you would spend nearly six times as much on this drive as on the Aztech – I wouldn't. **58%**

Pioneer DRM-624X
£469 – 01753 789789

Most CD-ROM drives take one CD-ROM at a time. The Pioneer DRM-624X takes six. This is good for holding up to six applications on-line ☛

Opinion

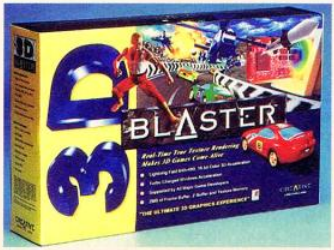
Some thoughts on recent technical developments...

Creative release 3D graphics card

Creative Labs aren't about to be left out in the 3D graphics card stakes and have finally released the 3D Blaster, that I mentioned a couple of months ago on these pages. This is Creative's answer to the Diamond Edge card, but takes a rather different approach to the video card built around the nVidia chip.

For a start, the 3D Blaster isn't a video adaptor. It works alongside your existing video card, in the same arrangement as the RealMagic MPEG decoder. You take output from your video card and feed it into the back of the 3D Blaster, through a short loopback lead, and then take output to your monitor from a second socket on the Creative card.

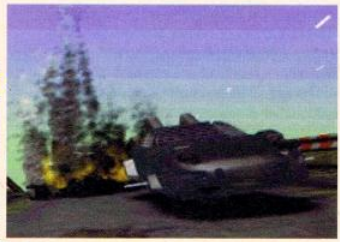
So what does it do? First off, it's a graphics accelerator, enabling you to display up to 1024 by 768 pixel screens or run with colour palettes as high as 24-bit (16.7 million colours).



The 3D Blaster is intended to boost the graphics speed of existing PCs, though they have to have a VL-Bus and 8Mb of memory.

Next, it'll do 3D rendering, giving you better 3D graphic textures in all kinds of games that demand them – the majority, really.

Creative claim over 200 top software houses are writing for the new card, and include Microsoft, Criterion, Argonaut and Intel among the companies providing 3D support for it. They also claim the card will increase the overall speed of graphics on a DX2/66 by a factor of four. This is an aggregate measure, though, including frame rate, resolution and colour palette. There aren't many games yet that will run in anything higher than 64K colours and most don't top 256.



Hi-Octane is a reasonable racing game, considerably improved by using the 3D Blaster. It wouldn't have been much fun on a 486 without it.

It's not so easy to see the difference in a still from *Magic Carpet*. The graphics quality looks much the same – it's the smoothness that's improved.

This card is intended for 486 systems with 8Mb of memory, a DX2/66 processor or above and a spare VL slot. This is a bit like targeting a new trainer at one-armed Welsh MPs who formerly wore brogues. A PCI version of the card intended for Pentiums will be out soon.

I tried the card in a Gateway DX4/100 and could see the graphics were smoother than before. In fact, it was hard to tell that this wasn't a Pentium machine, though not a screechingly fast one.

Installation is reasonably straightforward, though if you're running Windows 95, you have to install in two parts, so as not to confuse the Plug and Play installation system. I thought Plug and Play was meant to take away confusion. The card will also run with Windows 3. Once installed, you should notice an immediate difference, as the card accelerates the kind of 2D graphics used by Windows, but the major difference won't show until you start to run one of the four rewritten games included with the card.

These consist of *Hi-Octane, NASCAR Racing, Magic Carpet Plus* and *Rebel Moon*. This is a fair set, although *NASCAR Racing* ☛

is beginning to look tired and *Rebel Moon* is a so-so *Doom* clone. *Magic Carpet Plus* offers you the extra Secret Worlds, but so it should, when the card is scheduled to cost between £290 and £350. This is a pretty hefty price for an add-on card, even one which does as much as the 3D Blaster. How many home users and games players are going to be able to afford this kind of upgrade?

If you compare the 3D Blaster with Diamond's Edge card, the main difference is that the Edge is a complete graphics card in its own right, and is cheaper too. Against this, though, I've heard from a couple of PC companies that there can be trouble trying to run older, DOS-based games under the Edge, which is very much a Windows-based card, and Windows 95 at that. It remains to be seen if these problems are widespread.

Secret service

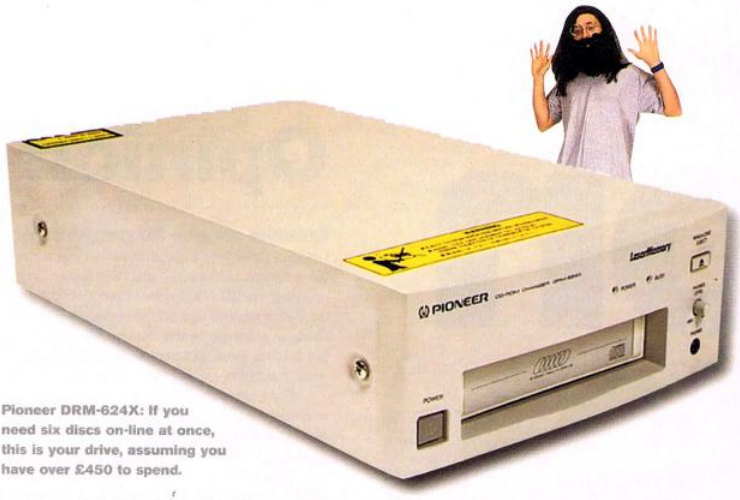
If you regularly spend time browsing the World Wide Web using NetScape, Secret Agent could save you a lot of money. As you move around from site to site and page to page, NetScape keeps copies of the pages you have visited in a cache on your hard drive, which speeds up display when you revisit a page.

Secret Agent takes advantage of this by

That blasted Innovations catalogue has not got its own site on the Web – so you can buy your slipper-warmers electronically from the Internet.

reading the NetScape cache while the program is off-line and using NetScape itself to redisplay any page you select from a list it displays. Any page in the cache can be shown, though obviously the links between pages don't work. It means you can explore any area of the Web without having to read all the pages while connected. Once you've made a list of the cache contents, you can display the pages one at a time, or dump all or selected ones to your printer.

The program is shareware and can be obtained in its evaluation version from Nildram on the Internet at:
http://www.nildram.co.uk/sagent
Or by calling: **(01442) 891331.** The registration fee, should you decide to keep using the program, is £24.95.



Pioneer DRM-624X: If you need six discs on-line at once, this is your drive, assuming you have over £450 to spend.

at once or for holding all the discs for a multi-disc game, an increasing trend. Like the NEC drive, the Pioneer is an external unit, and it's also a SCSI device, so you'll need a controller card to run it.

The large drive has just three controls: a power switch, headphone volume control and eject button. When you press eject, a special six-disc cartridge pops out of the front of the machine. The front of the cartridge gives an indication of which disc is currently in the drive, which is handy.

The cartridge is fitted with six thin plastic trays which swivel out from the main case so you can get at the discs. Each CD has to be placed in the tray with its playing side up and the trays are then swivelled back into place. The cartridge is the same as in Pioneer's hi-fi CD player, so if you own both, you'll have to be careful not to play the CD-ROMs. The instant on-offs of digital data can make an unpleasant mess of your hi-fi speakers.

The software supplied with the drive assigns a separate drive letter for each CD, so you'll have drives D: to I: under DOS or Windows. This way you can get at each disc individually, though you do have to run a DOS session from Windows, as the control utility is DOS-based.

Although the DRM-624X – catchy name – is only a 4.4 speed drive, it proved to be quick under test. The transfer speed was a solid 600K/s, which didn't drop as much as some of the six-speed drives under load. The access time was still over 200ms, however, which is something all drive makers need to work on. This is an impressive drive, particularly if you spend a lot of time swapping discs. The price has dropped from over £1,200, so I suppose it's a bargain. **78%**

TEAC CD-56EKJ

£222 – 01923 225235

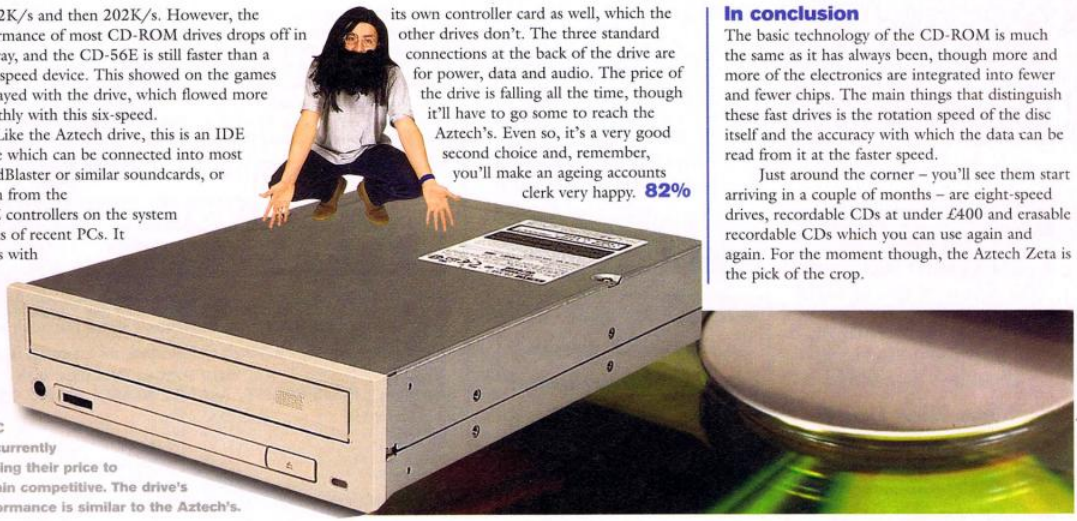
This drive is to CD technology what Mr John Smith (58), Accounts Clerk, is to the Godalming and Guildford Building Society. It has slightly less personality than Mr Smith, but is competent enough in what it does and transfers the data you need at the time you request it. It is, however, rather quicker at opening and closing its drawer than Mr Smith, except when it's time for his elevenses.

You'd never know this was a six-speed drive by looking at it – it has the bare minimum of controls and sockets on the front panel and the only legend is the Compact Disc logo. There's a headphone jack on the left and a thin, black thumbwheel for volume control. The only button is for eject, and should you need to open the tray when the power's off, it's down to an unbent paper clip through a hole in the front panel. The tray itself does have a couple of slide-out catches so that you can use the CD-ROM drive on its side without the disc falling out at 11 o'clock every morning.

The drive performed well when it had the processor's undivided attention. When the processor load was increased so that the CD-ROM drive had only 60% and then 40% of the processor time, the data transfer rate dropped dramatically

to 442K/s and then 202K/s. However, the performance of most CD-ROM drives drops off in this way, and the CD-56E is still faster than a quad-speed device. This showed on the games we played with the drive, which flowed more smoothly with this six-speed.

Like the Aztech drive, this is an IDE device which can be connected into most SoundBlaster or similar soundcards, or driven from the EIDE controllers on the system boards of recent PCs. It comes with its own controller card as well, which the other drives don't. The three standard connections at the back of the drive are for power, data and audio. The price of the drive is falling all the time, though it'll have to go some to reach the Aztech's. Even so, it's a very good second choice and, remember, you'll make an ageing accounts clerk very happy. **82%**



TEAC are currently revising their price to remain competitive. The drive's performance is similar to the Aztech's.

In conclusion

The basic technology of the CD-ROM is much the same as it has always been, though more and more of the electronics are integrated into fewer and fewer chips. The main things that distinguish these fast drives is the rotation speed of the disc itself and the accuracy with which the data can be read from it at the faster speed.

Just around the corner – you'll see them start arriving in a couple of months – are eight-speed drives, recordable CDs at under £400 and erasable recordable CDs which you can use again and again. For the moment though, the Aztech Zeta is the pick of the crop.

Abort, Retry, Fail?

Q:\> My dad's got a Compaq DeskPro PC, and I use it to run games. It hasn't got a CD-ROM or soundcard in it and I've saved up enough to buy these. I have some questions:

1) How easy are they to fit?

2) Is a 16-bit soundcard okay or should I go for a 32-bit card like the SoundBlaster AWE 32?

3) Is it better to buy an IDE CD-ROM drive or a SCSI one?

4) What extra bits do I need to be able to play audio CDs on the PC?

Darren Hall, Leicester

A:\> I have some answers:

1) A CD-ROM drive has to be slotted into an available drive bay and screwed in position. You then connect a power cable – already inside your PC – and a data and audio cable to your soundcard. The soundcard itself just slots into any available slot, once you've unscrewed and taken off the slot's back panel.

2) This is a... well let's politely call it a ruse on Creative's part. There's no such thing as a 32-bit soundcard. They're all 16-bit and the '32' in 'AWE 32' refers to the number of separate sound channels it supports. The AWE 32 is an improvement on a SoundBlaster 16, but, because of its wavetable MIDI voices, not any increase in its bus width.

3) It depends what you mean by better. It's simpler to use EIDE, as this type of controller is supplied on most soundcards and on many modern PC motherboards. The same controller is used for running your hard drive. The main advantage of SCSI is that once you've forked out for the card, you can connect up to seven devices on the same cable. These can be CD-ROM drives, hard drives, tape streamers, scanners and various other bits of kit.

4) Most soundcards worth their salt – and that's several very large bags – come with software to control audio CDs, among other things. Failing that, if you upgrade to Windows 95, there's an audio CD player included with the operating system.

Q:\> I have a Pentium 60, which I'm generally very pleased with, but I need more speed for some games. Can I upgrade the processor, as you can with 486s? Do I need to change the crystal on the motherboard to do this?

John Granger, Northampton

A:\> I suggest you wait a month, as by then I may well have news about some new Pentium OverDrives which I know Intel are working on. These are chips which will plug into your current board with no other modifications. If my sources are right, they'll also have a pretty keen performance. Can't say any more at the moment, though.

Q:\> I was given a SideWinder Pro joystick for Christmas. I've plugged it in, but most of the buttons don't work and the 3D part of it, when you twist the stick, doesn't work, either. I'm using it with *Doom* and think its a rip-off and Microsoft should be exposed.

Andrew Wilkins, London

A:\> Hmm... You don't say how you're trying to run this joystick, one of which I have working very successfully on my own system. Although it works under DOS, it's intended primarily for use with Windows 95. Some of its features are yet to be supported by games or other software, so you may have to live with only its basic functions for the moment. Under Windows 95, you need to run the software driver disk to create a joystick driver which your games can talk to.

This time-lag isn't special to the Microsoft joystick, by the way, it's true of other peripherals, like soundcards and video cards as well. The hardware manufacturers provide the new hardware and you have to wait a few months before the software suppliers build support for them into their games.

Q:\> The batteries I use in my PC's speakers run down really quickly, but I noticed the other day that if I left the speakers switched off they still worked. Why do they need batteries if they still work without them? **Elizabeth Wright, via Internet**

A:\> The battery power for your speakers is needed if you're using them with something like a Walkman. A PC soundcard normally has low power (2W to 4W) amplifiers built in and can run the speakers directly, if you plug into the speaker output on the back of the card. If you have speakers with high-power amplifiers (50W to 100W), you should take the output from the Line Out socket on the soundcard, instead, and you'll need to power up the speakers to hear the sound.

Send your technical problems to: Abort, Retry, Fail?, PC Gamer, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. Or e-mail them to: jdavies@futurenet.co.uk

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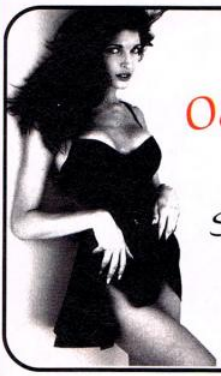

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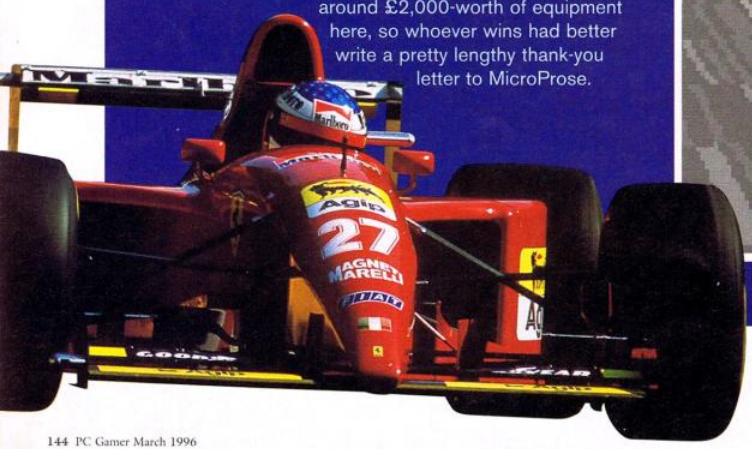
Win a Pentium

And a copy of Grand Prix 2 to play on it!

Last month we were finally able to play Sir Geoffrey Crammond's ***Grand Prix 2***, and found it to be everything we had hoped for. It is, indeed, an utterly faithful recreation of Formula 1 racing, with astonishingly smooth and realistic graphics, entirely convincing handling and that "Frap frap frap" noise the cars make when they're slowing down for corners. In fact, we were so pleased that we awarded the game 95% – the highest mark *PC Gamer* has given for quite some time.

MicroProse are pleased too, having had a pretty nerve-wracking wait while Geoff did his stuff, and, as an expression of their relief, have agreed to stage a competition for *PC Gamer's* readers.

And the prize they've come up with is, basically, a Formula 1 fan's dream come true. At its heart is a Pentium 100. Then you've got a full 16Mb of RAM, a 1Gb hard drive, 2Mb of video RAM, a quad-speed CD-ROM drive, a 15" monitor, a mouse, a keyboard and Windows 95. And to complete the package there's a copy of *Grand Prix 2* and one of MicroProse's special steering wheel controllers. Altogether we're looking at around £2,000-worth of equipment here, so whoever wins had better write a pretty lengthy thank-you letter to MicroProse.



100!

The "Bedroom Infiltration" Contest

Given the scale of the prize being offered here, we are, we're afraid, required to ask a great deal of you. In fact, this time we wish to penetrate your innermost sanctum.

The idea is that MicroProse want to make sure their *Grand Prix 2* PC goes to the most suitable home. They want to find the most obsessive racing game player in Britain – and possibly the world. They want to find someone whose PC is surrounded by effigies of Damon Hill; who dresses up in makeshift overalls whenever they're playing; and whose swivel chair has possibly been disguised, using bits of cardboard and sticky-backed plastic, as the cockpit of a racing car. They want someone who places small pieces of pencil eraser over a candle to simulate the smell of burning tyre rubber, and who positions a can of WD40 with the nozzle sellotaped down on top of their monitor whenever another car overtakes.

Don't worry, though – we won't actually be coming round to your house. All that's necessary is a photograph of you surrounded by your gaming get-up, with a suitably determined expression on your face.

Get an obliging auntie or uncle to take the photo, then pop it into an envelope and post it to: **PC Gamer Contest 28, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW** to arrive here by **15th March, 1996.**

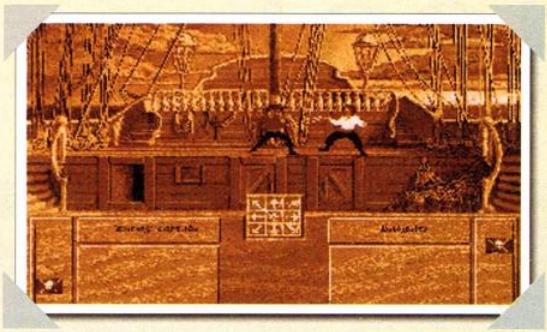
RULES

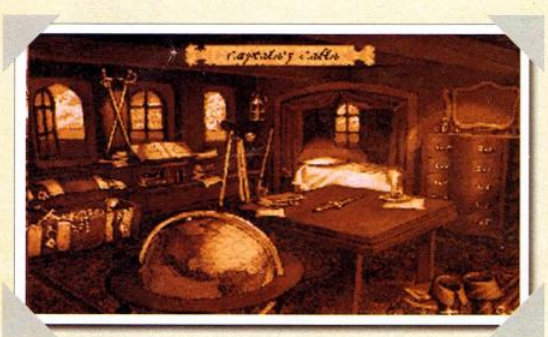
1. Employees of MicroProse and Future Publishing aren't allowed to enter.
2. Entries must arrive by 15th March, 1996.
3. Anyone arguing with the editor will... well, remember what happened to Ayrton Senna? Nuff said.

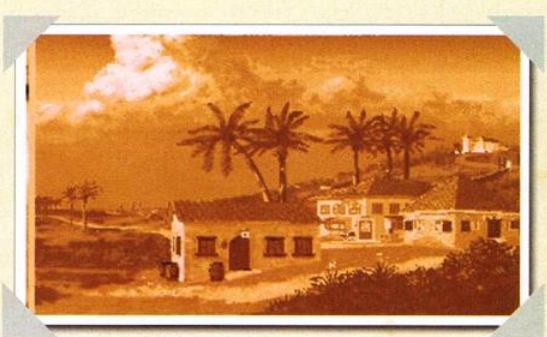
Your prize will look a bit like this.

Had cause to recall fondly a game from many years ago? Allow *PC Gamer* to flesh out your rose-tinted memories.

WHAT ON EARTH *happened to...?*







Pirates!

Timber-shivering action from MicroProse

Dear *PC Gamer*,
Peeling some carrots yesterday, I suddenly remembered about *Pirates!* It was great. Whatever happened to it?
Peter Firth, Abertillery

"Hello?" the vintage high seas trading and piracy game answers when contacted by telephone.

Hello. Yes, it's *PC Gamer* here. We were ju–

"Hello."

We wer–

"What can I–"

Sorry, it's–

"W–"

(Awkward silence.)

We appear to have hit upon one of those particularly tricky transatlantic telephone lines, but eventually an understanding is reached.

"Gee, yeah," *Pirates!* continues. "I seemed to get a pretty rough ride over in Britain. Here in the States I was picking up all sorts of awards – Best Historical Game of 1988 from Compute magazine, Action Game of the Year from Computer Gaming World and so on. But you guys didn't rate me at all."

It's true. Indeed, *PC Gamer's* own Richard Longhurst suggested the readers of *PC Format* would be better off buying the cripplingly tedious *The Patrician* rather than the Gold edition of *Pirates!* We are happy to set the record straight, however, and assure *Pirates!* that it really is one of the most entertaining action/strategy games we've ever played, fondly recalling evenings spent sailing the high seas and plundering Spanish galleons.

Things have quietened down a bit for *Pirates!* in recent years. After a bit of voiceover work and a couple of made-for-television movies it opened a seafood restaurant in Portland, Oregon, which it now runs with its wife, *1942 Pacific Air War.*

"I suppose I miss the old days," it says, its voice familiar though perhaps a little gruffer. "It was great seeing the look of delight on players faces when they received offers of marriage (unless it was from the really ugly one who looked like your auntie). And many spoke of my naval battle sequences as some of the tensest in computer games history."

We will certainly vouch for that. There was little to beat the satisfaction of watching a weedy Dutch barque sinking beneath the waves as the cannons of your mighty galleon pounded into it. The trading side was maybe a bit dull, but there were always quests for treasure to liven things up. And it was great sailing into an enemy port with all guns blazing.

"I still stay in touch with some of the guys," *Pirates!* tells us. "Me and *Leisure Suit Larry 5* are still good friends, and I got a Christmas card from *NCCA Basketball* last year..."

Write to: What On Earth Happened To...?, PC Gamer, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

Next month in PC Gamer

It would be an unfortunate man indeed who missed next month's PC Gamer. Possessed of magic powers, it will bring light and colour into your life, lifting your spirits and instilling in you an intangible sense of well-being.

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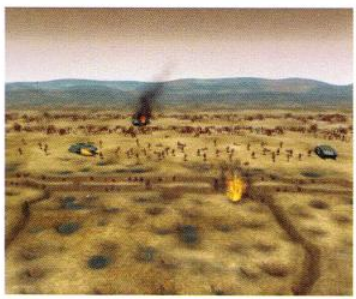

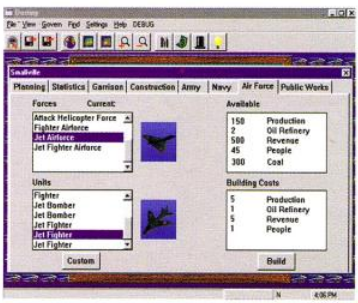

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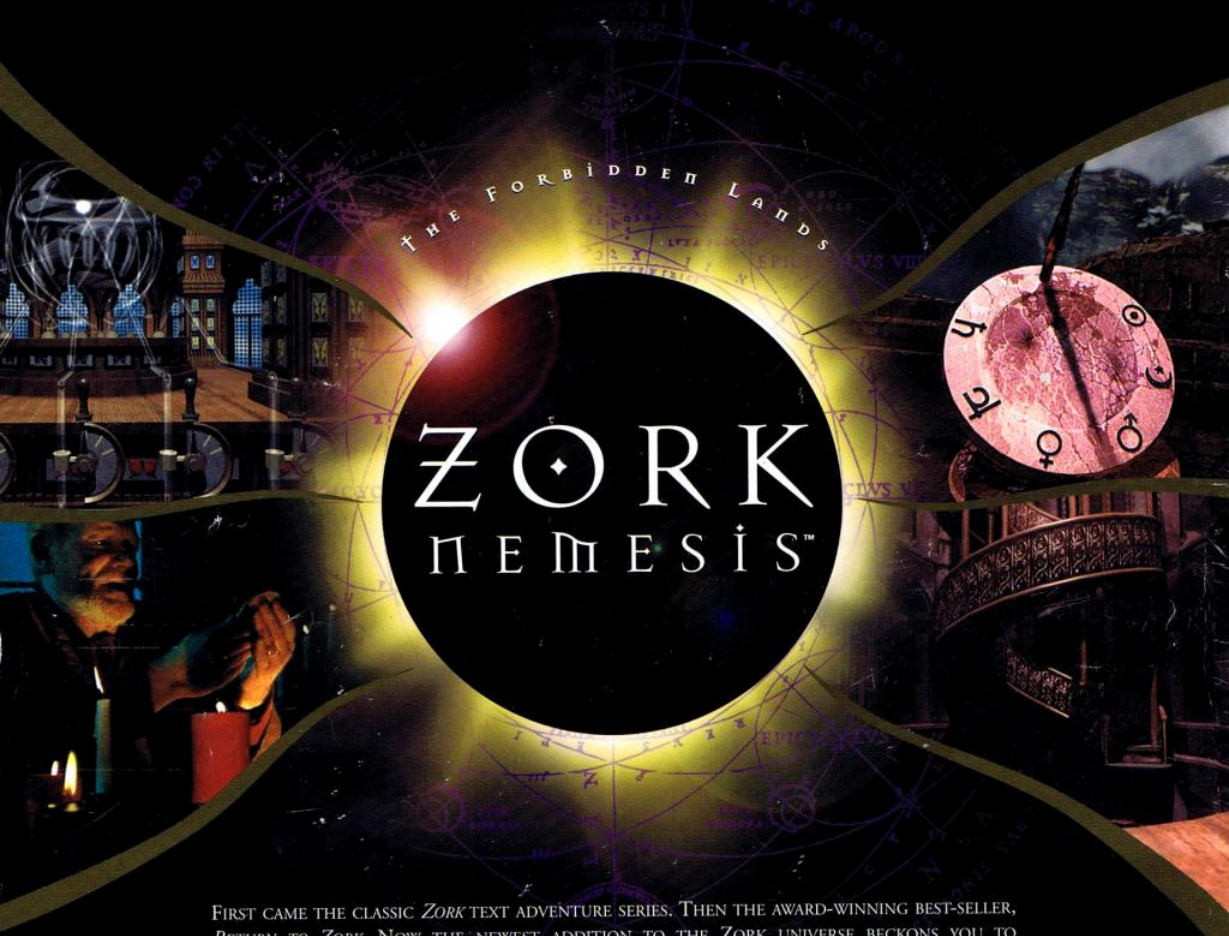

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