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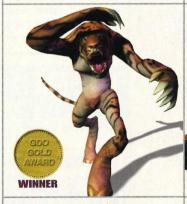
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Console site: www.consoledomain.co.uk PC site: www.gamesdomain.co.uk

Editor's note



The world's gone mad I tells ya, mad!

Lummy! "What's the world coming to?" I ask myself. First, Peter Molyneux's much-delayed Black and White finally arrives (and I nearly die of shock at the realisation it actually exists and isn't just a recurring dream I've been having for the last three years); then Fear Effect 2 on the PSX turns out to be a veritable babe-fest with decidedly erotic lesbian overtones. And before I've got time to say: "No, it's not a gun in my pocket actually," a game arrives on the N64 that's so blooming offensive it would make you glad your kid's previous Ninty favourite was yellow and kept saying Pikachu. (Poo and wee on the N64 eh? Well, if you will insist on storing it next to the toilet brush.)

It seems sanity has finally left the gaming building, if it had ever been in residence in the first place. And that suits us just fine. Boundaries are being pushed back across the board and new limits are being tested. Black and White's artificial intelligence will amaze you; Fear Effect 2's babes will turn you on (or off, if you believe it's further evidence of juvenile male fantasies being exploited to shift game units); and Conker's Bad Fur Day will make you either laugh out loud - or fume at it's unrepentant rudeity.

So have a gander and see what you think. And feel free to let us know what your view is; there's a free game for our Star Letter (basically, anything near-coherent). One thing's for certain though: it's a great time to be a gamer.

James Kelly Editor

What's the score?



GDO carries marks out of ten on each review. Here's how it works. We are prepared to offer 10s (which bring a gold award) to only a few select games. Our criteria for this are as follows: it must meet the standards of its time in every area, excel in at least one, and not fall down in any; it must contain at least one element which can be described as "exceptional"; and it must also contain significant originality and assure long-term gameplay.

Marks of 9 (which get silver awards) are given to games which fall short of the above criteria due to one or two minor flaws, and specifically for games which meet the Gold criteria but don't offer a significant quantity of originality and/or innovation. An 8 or a 7 is still a good mark, and if the game appeals to you it should be well worth buying.

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ABC

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Circulations

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING A The reviewers reveal all...

They review games for a living - but what do they actually choose to play when they're relaxing at home? Here, our fab four reveal what they are playing this month.



Currently playing: Confidential Mission (Dreamcast)

"Another cracking shoot 'em up from Sega's Hitmaker division. Surefire to take over from the once-popular, Virtua Cop series. We'll bring you a preview in our next edition. (That's if the editor manages to wrestle it away from me in time to get it in!)"



Currently playing: Fear Effect 2 (PSX)

"This month I've been playing Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix, a fantastic game, full of great gadgets, tales of sexy espionage and cocktail parties to infiltrate - you get served so much quicker at the bar wielding an Uzi." [Check out our full review of Eidos' stunning new title on page 62 - Ed.]



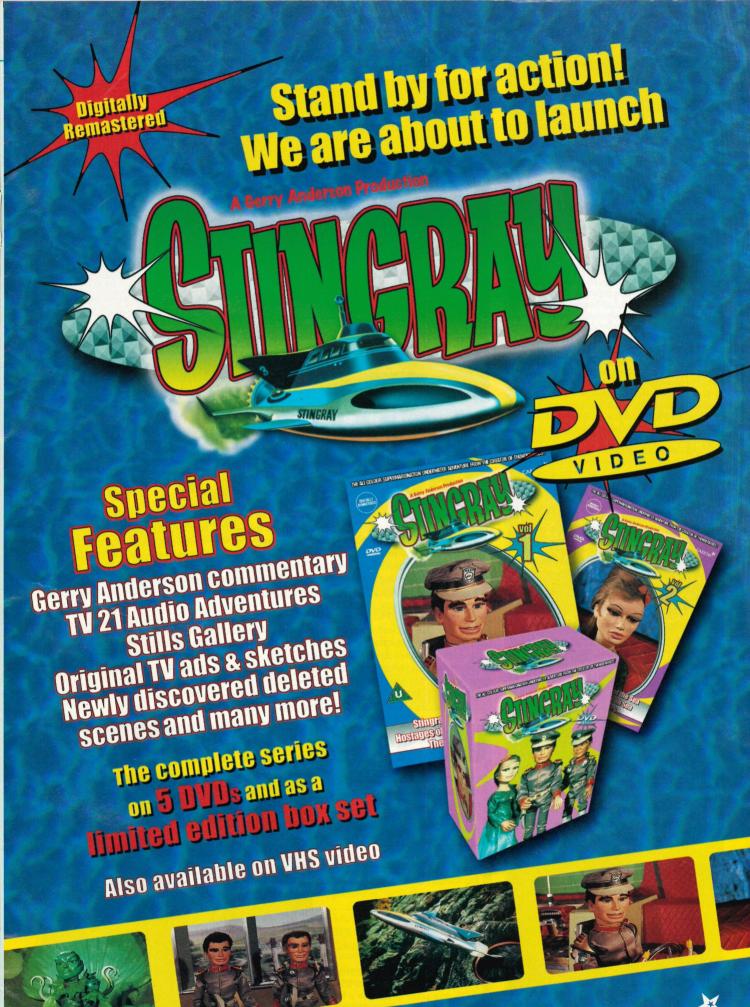
Currently playing: Black and White (PC)

"Get up. Play Black & White for an hour before work. Go to work. Sit behind desk vapidly pretending to work while thinking about Black & White. Find excuse to chip off home at earliest possible opportunity. Go home. Play Black & White until eyelids refuse to stay open. Repeat."



Currently playing: Final Fantasy IX (PSX)

"This month I've been mostly reinstalling my home PC which makes playing games a little difficult. I did have a go on Final Fantasy IX; it's very good but I keep getting lost." [Strange, you've not mentioned the two ISS finals you took part in this month Kev: the in-house GDO final (against Gaz) and the Konami ISS tournament in London (against some dude from a dodgy PS2 mag). Can't think why not - Ed.]





Battle of the Planets goes Headfirst onto PC

Birmingham-based Headfirst Productions has acquired the rights to make games based on the Battle of the Planets cartoon series.

The cartoon series was created in Japan in 1972 and followed the adventures of five transmuting orphans called G-Force and their guardian robot, 7-Zark-7.

G-Force was made up of Mark, Jason, Tiny, Keyop and Princess who battled together against the robotic menace of Zoltar who every week managed to hatch an evil intergalactic plot.

The game is set to feature cartoon shaded graphics, single and cooperative multiplayer gameplay and even the G-Force spacecraft, the Phoenix.

Headfirst director, Mike Woodroffe, said: "Battle of the Planets is a fantastic licence to work with and it also has the benefit of a massive preinstalled audience around the world. Everybody remembers G-Force...we've all been humming the theme music for weeks now!"

Baldur's Gate II add-on

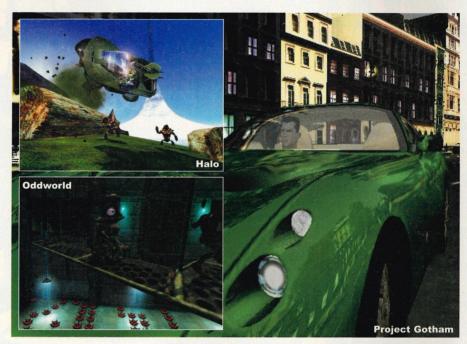
The adventurous side of gamers will be tickled by the news of an add-on pack for Baldur's Gate II.

Baldur's Gate II: Throne of Bhaal is the final part of the story as the Child of Bhaal saga, set in the Forgotten Realms, draws to its conclusion. Players will also witness an epic conflict in the game as they explore the lands of Tethyr.

Once again, the experience cap has been raised, allowing players to reach the heady heights of level 40 with another 40 high-level spells for wizards and clerics to throw around. A new character kit will also be included which will allow players to create a character able to cast spells with crazy results.

The add-on pack will ship in the summer of 2001.





GAMESTOCK'S XBOX REVELATIONS

Traditional Microsoft showcase Gamestock was the venue for the unveilment of a stack of new Xbox titles last month. The top games shown at the Seattle event were a mixture of action, sports and racing titles, including Halo which was originally tipped for the PC and puts players in the role of a cybernetic soldier trying to prevent the discovery of Earth by a bunch of mean-ass aliens called the Covenant. As you and your squad of marines beat back the aliens, you stumble upon Halo, a giant artifact in orbit between a gas giant and a moon.

Bizarre Creations' Xbox project, which is codenamed Project Gotham, was also on show. The game - a city racer - is expected to combine the great car handling found in Bizarre's hit Dreamcast title Metropolis Street Racer with the Xbox's sheer power.

And, of course, Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee was given an airing. The game will be the third in the series as you play Abe and his Gabbit partner Munch as they try to rescue Abe's mother.

Other games shown at the event included: Azurik - Rise of Perthia (a third-person adventure with a focus on combat); Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding (an extreme sports title featuring 120 real world snow slopes); Nightcaster (a 3D, third-person, action-adventure game); NFL Fever 2002 (an American football title); and Fuzion Frenzy (an urban sports title featuring mini-games suiatble for families).

UBI'S MYST OPPORTUNITY

Ubi Soft has finalised the acquisition of The Learning Company (TLC).

The \$37m deal has increased Ubi Soft's game catalogue by 80 titles, which includes Pool of Radiance, Prince of Persia, Chessmaster and Harpoon.

The French publisher will also get its hands on one of the best-selling game franchises, the Myst series. Released on May 7, the next instalment Myst III: Exile is expected to sell more than a million copies worldwide. The purchase of California-based TLC also strengths the company's presence in the US and Ubi now plans to become a top five global publisher.



UNREAL SEQUEL IS FOR REAL

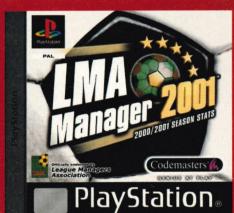
Unreal II - the stunning first-person shooter due out next year.

While the seguel to Unreal will be in the same universe as the original it will not feature the same main character or locations.

The game will boast multiple environments and missions connected by cut-scenes and set-pieces. Unreal 2 will also feature multiplayer options including Deathmatch, Team DeathMatch, Last Man Standing, Capture the Flag and a game similar in style to Half-Life's Team Fortress.



MASTERS AT CRACKING CODE CH



Codemasters has revealed it has developed a unique anti-piracy system that will degrade PlayStation games when played from illegally copied discs.

Games will be equipped with an encrypted code that is identified by the console if the disc is illegally copied. When the code is triggered it instigates subtle changes that will adversely affect the pirated game, turning it into little more than a demo.

The company is debuting the new technology in its upcoming release of LMA Manager 2001.

UTEUPOINT

Well it's been a fine old couple of months for Ubi Soft; they seem to be planning world



domination. We reported last month how the publisher had acquired Blue Byte and with it such coveted titles as Battle Isle. Now it has snapped up The Learning Company and claimed the rights to

games including Pool of Radiance and the already let it be known that it has big plans for Myst and it intends to use the five-year franchise it now owns to port the game on to consoles. With previous Myst titles selling by the canyon-load, this looks like a cute piece of business.

It was cool to see that Bizarre Creations is taking its racing game development talents to the Xbox - let's just hope it doesn't take them as long to produce a title as it did on the Dreamcast though.

Finally Virgin Interactive is publishing a game called Daily Sport Football Strip - can you spot the hilarious pun in the title?

ChartTrack UK all format charts week ending March 10, 2001

ChartTrack

2



Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?

PSX/PC/DC **Eidos Interactive**

Final Fantasy IX Squaresoft PSX

Oni PS2/PC Take Two

Theme Park World

Electronic Arts PSX/PC/PS2 FIFA 2001

PS2/PSX/PC **Electronic Arts** Rayman (Platinum) 6

PSX Ubi Soft **WWF Smackdown 2** PSX THO

Buzz Lightyear of Star Command

PSX/GBC/PC Activision **Knockout Kings 2001**

Electronic Arts

Electronic Arts **SSX: Snowboard Supercross**

Better than SSX



A new edition of the hit PlayStation2 snowboarding game, SSX, is being developed by Electronic Arts. Titled SSX: DVD, the game - a

director's cut of the original version will feature a new soundtrack, improved race tracks and even the introduction of scripts which will mean characters will develop rivalries with others to simulate challenges.

This new instalment will be shown at E3 in May 2001.



Star Wars comes of age

Ensemble Studios and Lucas Arts are teaming up to create a Star Wars real-time strategy game.

Designed by the creators of the award-winning Age of Empires, Star Wars Battleground will be created by a team including Bruce Shelley, well known for creating excellent gameplay. The game is due for release in the autumn of 2001.

The studio will also be helping create games as part of a real-time strategy franchise.



More Medal of Honor

EA has announced that it is working on Medal of Honor: Fighter Command, which is set for release in 2002.

The game which is set in World War 2 - the same period of history as the first two Medal of Honor titles - is a flight simulation with the emphasis on military missions, including dogfights, reconnaissance and torpedo runs.

There will be single-player and twoplayer options, with a co-operative two-player game where one gamer will take the role of pilot and the other plays as gunner.

What's the word?

Now more and more games are released with 'arcade-perfect' graphics, sound and gameplay, and with next generation gaming systems raising the standards of interactive entertainment to new heights, does anyone bother leaving their home to play games any more? News of arcade closures is increasingly commonplace as the technology of home entertainment systems increases and the price of games falls. To find out what you, our lovely readership, thought about the decline of arcades, we braved the mean streets of Wolverhampton to canvass opinion on the subject. We visited independent games store and GDO stockist Another World, on Victoria Street, and discovered the gamers we met there were pessimistic about the arcades' future.

Another World



Neil Turner aged 20 Sign Language Student from Wolverhampton

Did you used to visit arcades when you were younger?

I used to play in arcades a lot - games like Streetfighter and the other beat 'em up titles but I guess I just lost interest after a bit. Do you think they are now becoming a thing of the past?

Nobody I know seems to talk about them any more, but there was a time when people really loved them. There were even arcade machines over at the video stores across my street, but they all just vanished.



Jatinder Sidhu aged 26 Postman from Wolverhampton

Did you used to visit arcades when you were younger?

I grew up on arcades so I'd miss them if they totally went away. I still play them now - I loved 18 Wheeler: American Pro Trucker. I don't really get what people see in the dance game machines. Jumping around and looking like an idiot - you can do that at home and not pay anything for the privilege.

Do you think they are now becoming a thing of the past?

It's because now they're graphically matched by consoles, but you still don't get the extras like the mounted guns and full cabinets - that's something you lose out on when you play arcade titles on consoles.



Alan Raven aged 23 Student from Wolverhampton

Did you used to visit arcades when you were younger?

I used to play a lot of Galaxian. The great thing about arcades was that you were the centre of attention if you got a high-score - and it was a lot of fun.

Do you think they are now becoming a thing of the past?

Now with technology going ahead at such a great rate you're able to bring the arcade experience into your own home. Things like the Xbox will make arcades obsolete - just like the older consoles have been replaced by newer, more advanced systems.



Cat Whyton aged 21 Assistant Manager from Bilbrook

Did you used to visit arcades when you were younger?

I spent my whole childhood in arcades - pretty sad really isn't it? I never came out of there; I just played Defender and games like that. The big thing was always who could get the highest score or who could maintain the highest score - It was a great time.

Do you think they are now becoming a thing of the past?

Well personally I don't really have time to play in arcades now. My job's pretty stressful so I just go home to relax and play on my consoles. But I don't think I'd be into console games now if it weren't for my time in the arcades.



Thomas
Bangham
aged 19
Sales Assistant

from Pendeford

Did you used to visit arcades when you were younger?

Not that often but, yeah, when I'd got money I'd play classic arcade games like Space Invaders and Streetfighter. Nowadays when I go on holiday I'll play on machines like the House of the Dead games, but the whole arcade thing is dying down a bit now.

Do you think they are now becoming a thing of the past?

Yeah. Back when arcades were really popular there weren't as many great consoles around and the price of the arcade games has gone up as well. There's also more technology available for us to have great games in our own homes rather than go out somewhere that and because we're all getting lazy.



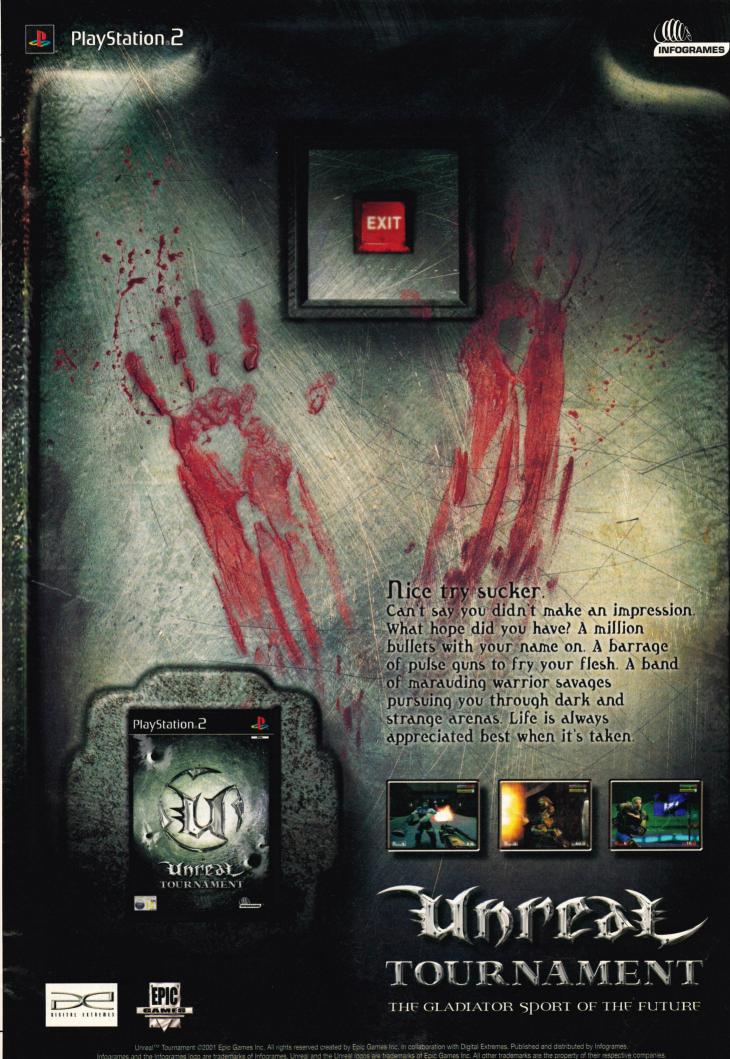
Dwaine Kendrick aged 18 NVQ trainee from Wolverhampton

Did you used to visit arcades when you were younger?

I used to play Streetfighter with my friends. It was the craze and everybody was doing it so I did it with them.

Do you think they are now becoming a thing of the past?

Well, when new things come in, old things get pushed aside. But mainly I think people grew out of them and consoles came along.



B loomin 'eck, they don't half make games hard nowadays. Well we've got the solution to all your problems here on this page. Just follow the instructions and you'll be killing the undead, stopping terrorists and laying out Muhammad Ali in no time at all. And if you want a particular cheat appearing in the mag, we suggest you either write in or email us at: gdo@gamesdomain.com



Knockout Kings 2001 - PS2

Enter these as your name in career mode and you'll be able to access these boxers:

NELSON - Trevor Nelson **DEFIAGBN** - David Defiagbon MRBARRY - Barry Sanders OSUNA - Bernando Osuna HATCHER - Charles Hatcher ZITO - Chuck Zito MECCA - Ashy Knucks OWNOLAN - Owen Nolan **AUSTIN** - Ray Austin JRSEAU - Junior Seau SBATISTE - Muhammad Ali **BOSTICE** - David Bostice JBOTTI - John Botti **STEVEF** - Steve Francis **DEMART** - David DeMartini JGIAMBI - Jason Giambi **BAILEY** - Joe Mesi



Project IGI - PC

To enable cheats, at the main game windows, where you can configure or choose to play IGI, type "Nada"

Once in the game, then type:

allgod Gives god mode for you and

your team

allammo Gives all ammo easy Makes the level

Makes the level very easy Kills all enemies at once



Undying - PC

Press [Tab] to open chat window, then type the following code:

Code

flight Activates Flight mode set aeons.patrick health 999 Add 999 to health

addall assall infiniteMana 1

becomeLight 1 showfps updateinvfinal Result

Flight mode Add 999 to health Get all weapons and spells

Create donkey
Unlimited mana (0=off)
Gives light (0=off)

Show frame-rate Gives more ammo



Spyro: Year of the Dragon - PSX

122 lives: Pause game and press Circle, Circle, Square, X and a message reading 'Enter a code' will appear. Press X, X, X then Circle, Square, Triangle.



Star Wars: Battle for Naboo - N64

From the main menu select Options. Next select Passcodes, then enter:

Code
DRJEKYLL
NOT&DEAD
LEC&FIVE

LEC&FIVE PATHETIC OVERLOAD EWERDEAD RUAGIRL? NASTYMDE DROIDEKA

KOOLSTUF

LOVEHUTT

Result
Crazy visuals
Tougher armour
Level select
Infinite lives
All upgrades
One-hit kills
Pink ship
Hard mode
Advanced shields

Opens graphics showroom View development team

REPUAY

A classic of 16-bit entertainment, Chuckie Egg was a simple 2D platform game released in 1983.

The premise was you had to guide a little dude with an egg-shaped body, and a hat that would have put many of the ladies at Ascot to shame, around various levels collecting eggs and seed.

Intent on thwarting Chuckie's plans was a group of creatures which looked like ducks, but were probably meant to be chickens. These creatures roamed the levels, climbing stairs and guarding the footpaths. Touching one of these meant instant death and a life knocked off your limited collection of three.

The only protection you had was your wits and the ability to jump: there was no Lara-style clinging onto ledges back then, meaning you had to really judge your leaps to perfection. The game was a classic amongst Spectrum fans but was also created by A&F Software for the BBC, ZX Spectrum, Commodore C64 and Amstrad CPC 464.





You controlled a little fat dude as he waddled his way around the platform levels collecting eggs from their reluctant owners

Every month we will give the reader who sends in the best letter a game of their choice*- so get scribbling!

Write to us at Letters, Games Domain Offline, 435 Lichfield Road, Aston, Birmingham B6 7SS. Or email qdo@gamesdomain.com (remember to enclose your address)

*prize games will be up to a value of £50 and subject to availability and whether full contact details are provided

Our postbag was positively bursting this month following our in-depth feature in February's issue of GDO which highlighted the reasons why Sega had decided to stop producing the Dreamcast and concentrate instead on producing games across multiple platforms. Here's a selection of the best - and worst - offerings.

IT'S ALIVE I TELLS YA!

Could I just say that the Sega Dreamcast is a very powerful games console and can play games just as good as a PS2. I don't think it is dead yet either: it has at least three to four years left in it. Besides, the Dreamcast is better than the PS2 because it has a built-in modem and easy Internet services. PS2 doesn't even have a modem and at £299 for a machine that won't go on the Internet I think it's a rip off. By email

GDO says:

The modem is an interesting point although, let's face it, Sega made a deal of this feature and then under utilised it completely. Phantasy Star Online is only the second proper online game to be released on the Dreamcast. And, as we pointed out in our review in the last issue of GDO, the fact that you have to use Sega's own ISP to play PSO means enjoying the title is prohibitively expensive. The PS2 is likely to have a broadband add-on released at some point in the future too, so it's difficult to see how the DC could have come out on top in the long run.

A TEARFUL GOODBYE

The story of Dreamcast dying is such a tragic one, seeing as it has the best games ever produced! Sniff... I can't wait till Xbox though, as it will thrash PS2...unless those sad little PlayStation fans don't realise that other consoles are way better!

John McCormick

By email

GDO says:

The Xbox could indeed kick the PS2 into touch but it seems unlikely. By the time the Xbox hits the streets sometime next year the PS2 will be so firmly established it could be unstoppable. With games like Metal Gear Solid 2 on the way (see our preview on page 46), you've got to wonder what could be achieved on the PS2 when developers become more accustomed to developing for the platform and understand better its strengths and limitations.

MINCING WORDS

You guys are so full of s***!!! You are just so in love with your GayStation2s and what-not that you don't want to face the fact that the DC is doing better than any of them!!! I checked with Sega personally and they say that they are alive and kickin!!! You guys get your f***** facts straight before you go running your damn trap!!! C Yal

By email

GDO says:

Ah! The joys of email, eh? String as many expletives together as possible and hit send. Brave boy. And 'GayStation2s' not very PC, is it (if you pardon the pun). So you've checked with Sega personally. Blimey, I hope you didn't speak to them in quite the colourful terms you've written to us. If you did it's no wonder you got the response you wanted. I can picture a distraught Sega secretary being instructed by her boss: "Tell him anything, just get him off the phone - he sounds unstable!"

STOP, CEASE, DESIST!

Listen up you f***** d***lick. Sega has officially announced it is staying in the console hardware business, so stop printing letters of Sega death otherwise I will be forced to rip your f***** nose off you damn Sony loyalists. Capishe? You're killing Sega for real like that. People are questioning their Dreamcast purchases now because of you p****. SO STOP TT NOW!

Jeffrey Labady

By email

Jeffrey, Jeffrey. Is there really call for such language? Come on: can't we all be friends and sing songs about the happy times when the Dreamcast was new and shiny and we all thought, 'Ooo, look at that,' rather than, 'Oh dear - pull the chain!' Hey, we like Sega here at GDO and we also like the Dreamcast (the one we put down a toilet was already broken due to a certain Senior Editor and an incorrect power lead). So let's not get angry or upset - instead let's channel some positive energy in the direction of Sega and wish the company well for the future. Or we can just take it outside. C'mon, are you starting or what? Etc...

Star Letter

THE MOURNING AFTER

I have been one of those Sega-only gaming fans from way back and I was blown out of the water when news of the Dreamcast's demise hit. I actually was so down that I stopped playing Shenmue mid-game for a few days (albeit this is the second time through), and contemplated not playing it again because I felt cheated. I really feel that the system has the best original games and Sega should just keep on pluggin' with it. There's a new batch of people out there that are recognising that it's a great unit and the revenue from game sales will level off and keep it going. I cannot fathom another system sitting on my shelf and I know that won't happen. So what happens now? Shenmue2 comes out for Dreamcast and they kill the series? Or put it on someone else's machine? To be honest Sega can put their chipset anywhere they want....doesn't matter. It AIN'T a Dreamcast...and I ain't buyin'. I just wish the "string-along" didn't happen. I mean, what, 6m worldwide then ZAP?! Ya' know, they claim that there will be 100 games for 2001. What's the point? Yes I'll probably purchase some games (and feel like a begging dog sitting in front of the Dreamcast display as everyone buying Sony and Nintendo looks on and sniggers) because there are going to be a couple of good titles. Unfortunatly, the excitement level won't be there. I do feel bad though, I mean they have the best games out there now and I can't understand how millions of people flocked to a Walkman-making company and not a videogame one. Joe B By email



Boy Joe, you sure are cheesed off fella and we can understand where you're coming from. To halt production of a console at a time when it has at last accumulated an impressive back catalogue of games and has great new titles being released on a regular basis seems a terrible waste. But Sega wouldn't be doing this if it wasn't a last resort. They have 'done the math' and their sums just don't add up. It's a shame for all the DC owners out there but there are still plenty of great games to come before the Dreamcast story is over. So cheer up laddie - it's not the end of the world, just the end of an era. James.

james@gamesdomain.com

DECEMBER ISSUE COMPETITON WINNERS: For a full list of competition winners, please write to the usual address.



Available on PlayStation 2 April - 27th

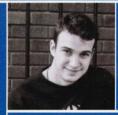




SECTION

PIPELINES PREVIEWS REVIEWS

What's black and white and read all over? The PC pages of GDO, of course!

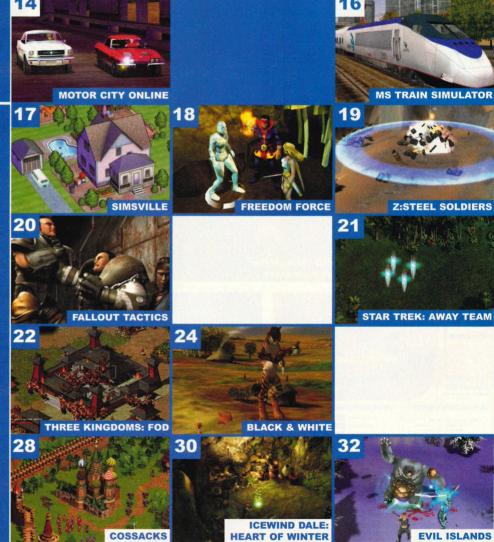


Mike Smith Assistant Editor

It's been an interesting few months for those watching the emergence of new, cross-genre games. Giants and Sacrifice stand out as recent hard-to-categorise releases, and there was a blazing row among the Games Domain staff towards the end of 2000 as to whether Deus Ex should be classed as an action game or an RPG in the Game of the Year awards. In this issue, Simsville, Motor City and especially Evil Islands are good examples.

Sadly, often games that don't conform to people's stereotypes of, say, an action game, or an RPG, perform badly in the charts. Perhaps action gamers, say, are put off by elements of role-playing or strategy? If so, they're missing out on a set of fantastic titles. Perhaps it's just that they're harder for marketing departments to get their heads around.

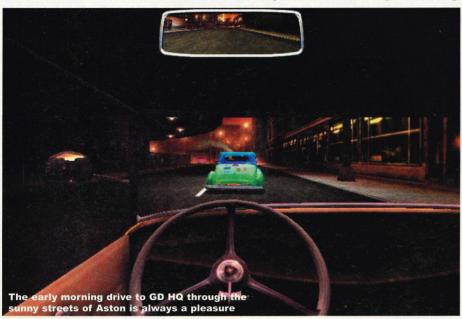
So don't be put off if a game doesn't fit neatly into one of the pigeonholes - look beyond your preconceptions of an action game, or an RTS, and you'll find some of the best games are a mixture of these elements. We'd suggest Black & White as the perfect place to start.





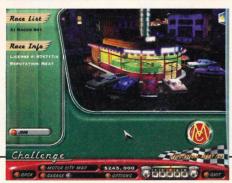
NFS: MOTOR CITY

Pull up to the bumper baby!

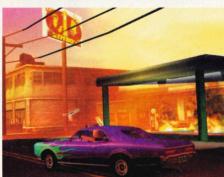




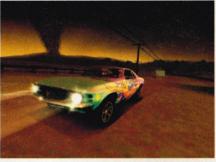












lectronic Arts has had much success with its series of arcade racing titles ever since the first Need for Speed was released back in 1995. The trademark of each incarnation has always been the same - a selection of blisteringly fast sports cars all based on real life models, challenging courses in both realistic and exotic settings and, of course, the exhilarating representation of speed.

But that's not all - one of the most commendable aspects has been that every subsequent episode introduces significant new features. Need for Speed 3: Hot Pursuit added the option to enact the role of law enforcer. Need for Speed 4: High Stakes brought an intriguing career mode into the mix. And Need for Speed 5: Porsche 2000 took great risks in gamer appeal by focusing solely on the Porsche models as well as sporting a completely revised physics engine.

Motor City carries the infamous "NFS" moniker, so comparisons will undoubtedly be made, especially since the team behind NFS3 and NSF4 are largely responsible for its creation.

Motor City is going to be the first of its kind a racing game with dabs of RPG elements, including an online community and authentic economy where fellow racers can buy, sell and trade car parts, not all that different to a transaction you'd expect to see in online RPGs like Everquest or Diablo II. Players will begin with a "starter" car and their own customised persona, and have the option of joining allegiances with racers who have similar goals and interests - or building their money and reputation alone. Customisations will be plentiful, including over a thousand real-life car parts, both cosmetic and performance related.

As ever, there's also a mammoth selection of cars - initially a pool of over 50 actual licensed cars will be available from the "Big Three" US manufacturers of Ford, Chevrolet and Chrysler. The game's setting is in the "Golden Age" of American hotrods, so expect the full range of classic, stock and muscle automobiles.

EA has described the game as comprising two distinct environments: Sim World and Arcade Action. The latter will be pretty much akin to the single-player "Quick Race" option of traditional racers - pick a track, pick a car and







race, without the added complexities of economy and car construction. There will be newbie areas in which to meet others, and the option to play on street, pro, drag and stunt tracks.

Sim World is certainly the most ambitious side of Motor City Online. Imagine a persistent online world with a real, dynamic economy,



tournaments, events, and a sense of community. Compete in a pro race and win prize money (to upgrade or purchase a new vehicle) or, like in Grease, race to win the coveted pink slip. You can even engage in turf wars over specific street tracks.

Another brand new physics engine is being touted, even after the excellent achievements of Porsche 2000, which will enable vehicles to "handle and perform like their real-life counterparts through state-of-the-art four-point

physics." Sounds nice. Expect more on this when we get our grubby hands on some playable code.

Motor City Online is definitely looking to be among the most exciting and original new games we can expect of 2001. Can a funky amalgamation of IRC and Ebay, along with the traditional elements of arcade racing games and RPGs actually succeed? We'll be updating you up until the projected release in the summer.

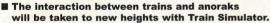
WHEN CIRLS COME TOGETHER



TRAIN SIMULAT

Probably the only place you'll find a train that's safe and on time





hether or not you like standing on the edge of the train station remarking how rare it is to see a class 73 nowadays, the PC is about to hit new heights of geekiness this year with Microsoft's Train Simulator.

Of course the question that is buzzing in your head at the moment is: "Why the hell make a game based on trains?" Well, why not: the Japanese have been playing around with train simulators for ages and they have all the best

"Put your slippers on, put your feet up and watch the world go by in style"

games. The principle is simple: why bother coming home from a stressful day at work or school only to be stressed out more by some dodgy controls or an extremely difficult level on a game? Instead, imagine coming home, putting your feet up, picking a carriage and watching the world go by on over six hundred miles of the world's most famous track.

What do we mean when we say famous track? How about the romantic Orient Express cruising through the Alps in the 1920s; or the pride of British industry, the Flying Scotsman charging through the English countryside; or you can go hi-tech with Odakyu Electric Railway in Tokyo as it glides around the base of Mount Fuji.

And if you have always fancied yourself as a greasy-cheeked train driver, you can even jump behind the controls. They have all been accurately reproduced in the game, allowing you to get to grips with air brake systems or keeping the pressure up in a coal-driven steam engine. Microsoft hasn't stopped there either: cities, towns and all the scenery are being accurately modelled. Even the throaty sounds of the engines are being recorded to produce the

> finishing touches to the authenticity of the title. And if you prefer your journeys to be a little more stressful, you can switch on challenges to turn the heat up. So you can try and make up for lost time as you push

your train to meet the strict timetable or maybe you could grind through the snows of Marias Pass in Montana.

And for those whose favourite train journey isn't reproduced by the game? Well, the boys and girls at Microsoft will be providing an editor that will allow people to design new trains, track and scenery so they can replay those rushhour train journeys to work. And with the large amount of train-spotters who inhabit this world, we can't imagine it will be long before the whole rail network is mapped out in intricate detail and available for download. Whoopee!







Lots of lovely dials, but should that one be in the red?



Thankfully Miss Marple caught the earlier train

SIMSVILLE

Halfway between the city and the people

onsidering Maxis found it so hard to get a publisher for its debut title, Sim City, the success of the series is astonishing.

Now the developer is finding the middle ground between sprawling cities and individuals by creating Simsville.

This title lets you take control of individuals and general management of businesses and town planning. You have to listen to the public's needs and provide for them by creating new businesses, homes and improving the economy or else they might seek out other towns.

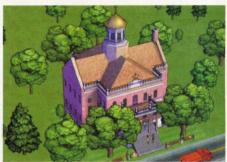
The Sims will go about their daily business, relaxing, exercising, going to work or visiting their favourite restaurants. But if they are unemployed they might let their abodes fall into disrepair; or if they are rich, spruce it up really nicely. The same can be said of shop stores: thriving grocery stores will have beautiful window displays with baskets bursting with produce; while struggling stores will have dirty windows and empty baskets.

If this game is half as successful as The Sims, it's going to be massive. Let's just hope it's half as annoying as well.









...THE BOYS JUST DON'T MEASURE UP



AVAILABLE TO BUY NOW ON PLAYSTATION





TO INTERACT



DOM FORCE

Holy motherboards! It's a super-hero game on PC!







a-da-da-daaaa! Hello humans, I've brought you here to my secret underground lair to let you witness something very special that is happening on this planet you call Earth. There is a group of puny mortals that go by the collective name of Irrational Games, working away in the land of Australia. They are creating a mighty and powerful entity by the name of Freedom Force.

> "Screw City Hall and their bureaucratic ways!"

Of course, these men are no strangers to topnotch games. They made the critically acclaimed and award winning first-person shooter System Shock 2 - a game that scared the pants off you and then started being really scary.

But now the developers are heading into the more kitsch world of super-heroes, which - let's face it - hasn't been done on the PC for a long time. The game is a tactical RPG set during 1962 in New York. Players will initially have one super-hero, Minuteman, to control but new characters such as Liberty Lad, Manbot and Alche-Miss can join you to create the Freedom Force team over the thirty missions that are planned for the game.

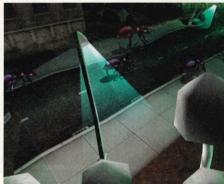
The development team is promising to create a real-life but comic-style city because action heroes need something to rough up while they are fighting crime (mainly so they can say "Screw City Hall and their bureaucratic ways!"). Almost everything is planned to be destructible: tell a member of the team to pick up a lamppost and he will rip it up; tell him to swing it at a criminal and he will. Entire buildings will also suffer damage, and if they sustain enough they

> will collapse, leaving smoking wreckage behind. To play, the game looks to share most with Black Isle's AD&D games and the X-Com series. The team is also planning to release

tools that will enable gamers to create their own team of superheroes and supervillans. With players being be allowed to pick their superheroes' powers from a selection it can only add to the game's replay value.

The graphics, as you can see, are looking suitably colourful. It looks as if the developers are taking great care in getting that authentic style of the silver age of comic books down to the last detail. The developers are hoping to have cars and civilians all going around their daily business.

Freedom Force is set to don its underpants on the outside of its trousers when it's released at the end of the year, and it already looks like a high flyer.



Strange mushrooms and giant ants? There must be a connection somewhere



■ Flame hands, Check, Strange swords, Check, Pants over trouser, Check,

■ PUBLISHER: EON ■ DEVELOPER: BITMAP BROTHERS ■ RELEASE: SPRING

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS

The brothers gonna work it out







lmost everybody knows about the Bitmap Brothers. Developers of such classics as Speedball and Gods, the Brothers have been around almost as long as the home computer itself. We caught up with Bitmap's co-founder Mike Montgomery and his new game's lead designer Jamie Barber to talk about their new real-time strategy game, Z: Steel Soldiers.

For those who missed out on the first Z game, it was a blend of action-packed strategy and comedy. The premise was simple - control a

bunch of robots as they battle against another

"Territory is the resource

- that's the simple way of

looking at it"

particles will be affected. Other impressive effects include water reflecting its surroundings and boats' wakes affecting the surface. It also comes complete with terrain; rolling hills, ice worlds, volcanic terrain, archipelagos and outland - a post apocalyptic wasteland all lovingly created in 3D.

Each level is split into areas of varying shape and size. These areas contain a flag, which is rated from one to five. The number represents how much money you receive for controlling that area, with which you can buy new units

and buildings. "The territory is now the resource - that's the simple way of looking at it," Jamie said.

As far as units are concerned, the game is chock-full of various weapons of mass destruction. The

game has lasers that allow robots to shoot through enemies and hit the units behind them, weather stations that throw out variable weather storms and mobile radar units, which jam opponents' radar signals.

It appears Z: Steel Soldiers is going to be a great game when it hits stores later this spring. Don't think the developers will rest on their laurels, though, as Mike recalled, telling us: "When a game is finished, it's the worst period of your life. You go to the pub and wonder why you are not tapping on the keyboard. The original Z was very difficult to let go."



maximum effect in defence and attack

set of automatons Jamie and Mike are particularly proud of the sequel's artificial intelligence. "What amazes us about the game's AI is that it plays so differently every time," Mike commented. The AI uses true line of sight, which means that if the computer can't see you, then it doesn't know you are there. So it has to plan while it can't see you, which can lead to some interesting

But this time the Bitmap Brothers also plan to stun you in the visual department. If a helicopter passes through smoke then the cloud

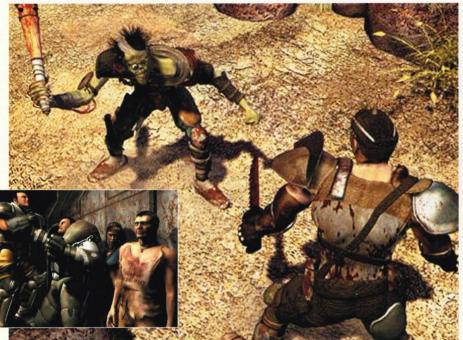
moves by the computer.



■ So much for the bridge over troubled waters

FALLOUT TACTICS

Always useful to have when wearing jogging shorts that are too small





ne of the most interesting aspects of the Fallout experience is how the development teams have always managed to make living in a post-apocalyptic world sort of, well, fun. Of course, the humour was a little black, but where's the harm in chuckling at the foibles of a character hampered by a little personality trait that leaves everyone he encounters a bloody stain on the ground? I wasn't asking you, Mary Whitehouse.

"Like the originals, the new Fallout title rewards brain over brawn"

That remarkable sense of personality is back in Fallout Tactics: Brotherhood of Steel, even though the new title is not a role-playing game in the style of its predecessors. Although the events take place in the same fascinating reality as the other Fallout titles, the new game has more in common with squad-based tactical sims like X-COM and Jagged Alliance than the original quests.

The story here focuses on the Brotherhood of Steel, a heavily-armed militia group of sorts seen in the first Fallout many moons ago. Back then, you could choose whether to sign up with the Brotherhood for a series of difficult quests; now you're one of the group's squad leaders,

leading a team of troops and accepting combat assignments from your superior officers.

About the only real limitation on your freedom when rolling up a player character is the knowledge that there won't be a lot of variety in the gameplay. As Fallout Tactics is all about combat, there isn't much room for characters with depth, a lot of different skills or personality traits. Every selection made here needs to be made with one eye on the basic fact that you're being sent into the field to kill the

enemy and take their stuff.

There's a varied set of missions add a lot of individuality to Fallout Tactics. You'll get to play through all sorts of interesting expeditions, from straight search and destroy firefights through

rescue and salvage attempts. Forethought is the one constant companion, however. Like in the original games, the new Fallout title rewards brain over brawn.

Perhaps the best way to enjoy the game is with the default continuous turn-based mode. With this setting turned on, all characters can move at the same time - this is the most exciting and fast-paced way to play the game, though die-hard strategy buffs might find that this favours action a little too much. You'll certainly have to memorise the keyboard hot keys in order to keep up with the enemy. Keep an eye out for the full review soon.











■ PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION ■ DEVELOPER: REFLEXIVE ■ RELEASE: SUMMER

STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

It's a Star Trek game, Jim, but not as we know it



t seems almost comical that there's actually a gaming genre in the PC industry left that hasn't been adopted for yet another release based on the relentless Star Trek licence - the area concisely described as 'isometric, third-person squad-based tactical strategy.' Activision's attempt to fill this void is Star Trek: Away Team.

The game is played in real-time, with the option to pause at any moment and issue orders

"The potential for an atmospheric and enjoyable Trek game is clear"

to individual members of your team, though no queuing appears possible. For reference, it mostly shares traits with Eidos' Commandos.

Using prototype technologies, the standard plan is to reach a destination, beam in a highly trained squad, then find, rescue or eliminate something and get out without detection.

Each crewmember is a specialist in a certain area of training: command, medical, engineering, science and security. They each begin with a unique combination of equipment and skills that you have to balance out for the upcoming mission. Science and security, unlike the other types, range in more than just the equipment they carry but some unique skills they've acquired, like your Vulcan team member's mind-meld. Your crew will evolve as you advance through the game.

Most of the decisions you'll be making in the game involve how to get past patrolling enemy units, especially with the endless variety of weapons and devices available to deal with your foes. Do you sneak up behind one and silently knock him out with a neural disruptor or use the always-amusing Vulcan neck pinch? Oldfashioned brute force with phasers or explosives

> like concussion grenades make for some noisy fun. Then you have to figure out how to hide the bodies to avoid alerting more guards.

Thankfully, Away Team will be shipping with co-operative campaign multiplayer - the lack

of co-op play in so many games with the potential to provide such an enriching teamwork experience is often very disappointing. Ironically, team multiplayer in this game does appear to be more a superfluous feature than enhancement to the gameplay, but it's very welcome nonetheless.

On the whole, Away Team is looking to give Star Trek fans a very satisfying experience, and possibly attract strategy and action gamers from outside that spectrum of fandom. With some polishing up and AI tweaks, the potential for a considerably atmospheric and enjoyable Trek game is clear; and given what history has taught us concerning PC Trek games, this is no small achievement.











THREE KINGDOMS: FATE OF THE DRAGON

Better put it on a slow boat to China



he current resurgence in strategy games continues with Eidos Interactive's take on an ancient Chinese novel called Romance of the Three Kingdoms. This game and the novel tell the bloody tale of China's history during 184AD when the Han Dynasty fell and three new rulers arose to take power of the great nation. Fate of the Dragon casts you as one of these men intent on becoming the head of the next dynasty.

Readers who have played Microsoft's fantastic Age of Empires series might be forgiven for

"Unfortunately for Three Kingdoms, it tries to wear too many hats"

thinking they have walked into an expansion pack review. For this is another historical strategy game and, what's more, the system of play is very similar.

You can take either the role of Liu Bei, whose ambition is to restore the Han dynasty, Cao Cao, an ingenious but twisted man who desires to rule, and finally Sun Quan, a tactical and honourable man.

The villager has now become a prime candidate for the most important character in any RTS; it seems that the developer community is full of red-book carrying lead designers. These scrubby little proles, (the peasants, not the developers) are the backbone of your society, creating food, collecting wood, mining iron - while paying you gold for the privilege - and basically providing all the materials you need to create new buildings, weapons and armoured units. You can even enlist them in the army to take a hands-on role in kingdom protection or set them researching new activities and sports to improve your kingdom's attributes. But quite how watching cock-fighting makes a man better at smacking someone with a sword is a bit beyond

us (although we did chortle like schoolboys watching a Carry On movie when we saw it).

Fate of the Dragon adds a new concept to the RTS genre by creating separate screens for the land and the city. So if you want

to go out in the lands to attack enemies you have to leave the boundaries of your city. This is an exciting and interesting move by the developers and it adds an element of Sim City to the proceedings: you have to manage cities while also taking care of the war effort. But while interesting, the city is usually quite self-sufficient and only requires your presence to speed along the development of technology, pray to a god to increase your farmers' crop yields or maybe create some villagers to sign up for military duty. Nevertheless the creation of your city is strangely satisfying, especially to





Your army is perfectly safe behind the city walls, but should the walls be scaled you are in for one hell of a ride as the enemy attempts to reach the courthouse - the centre of your city.





Sim City fans, and gets the thumbs up.

One feature that the (rather meagre) game manual briefly mentions is the use of generals in your society - powerful warriors can be assigned to look after certain sections of your society, such as diplomacy, public security and science. This allows you to advance these areas to a greater degree - like doing the horizontal mambo, it's essential for the development of society and should be practised frequently.

Unusually, for an RTS, the active use of religion is essential in Three Kingdoms as it provides you with all kinds of bonuses. You can pray to the gods for protection from a natural disaster, such as pestilence, or maybe you would prefer to have your fighting-force blessed by the god of war. But, beyond simple praying, your generals can wield magic spells in the field of combat, boosting your army's resilience and strength, or just hurl death-dealing spells into the fray. It can prove quite entertaining to use, but doesn't sit well in Three Kingdoms' realworld situations.

But the proceedings aren't all build, build, build. Some variety was added when we were sent out on a mission, with no city to look after, to bosh someone about the head. These missions also, on occasion, turned into recruitment drives: generals seemed to be just standing around waiting to get snapped up.

Of course, the army is where all the main action takes place in any RTS, and this is where the game's flaws become apparent. It's all fine until you ask your army to move. When travelling, neither formations nor sensible AI is in place so your troops scatter like ants. They all travel at different speeds, so mounted troops arrive minutes before anyone else and the supplies, which you need to feed and keep your troops happy, get to the battle last. This lack of control in the troops also creates problems in battle as the path-finding routine, the code telling the troops how to navigate around obstacles, is laughable. Your men instantly head for a structure and then follow it around like an armoured slinky - occasionally troops decide to head off on their own separating them from the main pack and diving into the wilderness like sociopathic lemmings. This means strategy is next to useless, and this is a damning oversight in a real-time strategy game.

Unfortunately, Three Kingdoms tries to wear too many hats. As a city creation tool it's very relaxing, but as a war simulator, the main purpose of the game, it fails at the first hurdle control over the troops. As a result the game is too flawed to recommend to anyone. Try Age of Empires instead.











MIN: PII-200, 64MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS: PII-400, 128MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: EIDOS INTERACTIVE DEUELOPER: OVERMAX STUDIO **OUT NOW** RELEASE:

GAMES Demos Movies Movies Themes ONLINE: Patches Cheats Walkthrus

+ Relaxing city-building

- + Interesting separation of world map and cities
- Poor route-finding system
- Manual lacks required depth
- The first strategy-less strategy game?





■ The invading force is using multiple troop units to squash the opponent. While the cavalry charges in to deal with enemy warriors, the catapults deal out some harsh damage to the surrounding buildings - occasionally battering the odd unit.





BLACK & WHITE

Lionhead's epic turns out all white after all







Worshipping





Raising one of the totem poles that overshadows each of your villages sends a proportion of them to your temple to worship. This grants you the power to cast spells - each village has a certain set of spells associated with it. If your worshippers aren't doing enough, dropping an animal or villager onto the dish will sacrifice them, giving you a one-off power boost. They also need to be kept fed, or they'll dance themselves to death.

hree years in the making, the epic Black & White is about to hit shop shelves worldwide. Developed by industry figurehead Peter Molyneux - responsible for classics like Populous and Dungeon Keeper, and one of the most respected men in his profession - the game has been the subject of more previews and features over its development than just about anything else.

But despite the attention lavished on this ambitious title since its announcement, it's not until now that it's become clear exactly what the game is. "Whatever you think Black & White is, you're wrong." Molyneux has commented at any number of demonstrations in the past, and as it turns out, he's not been too far from the truth.

Black & White is a classic god game, very much in the style of Molyneux's earlier Populous titles. Set on an idyllic green island, the player is cast as a god, with a

number of little people and an area of land under his protection. These people, with guidance, build themselves wooden villages and grow and harvest their own food. Somewhere else on the island, another god (or gods) is doing the same. Through the villagers worshipping their god, magical power is obtained, which can then be used to cast a number of defensive and offensive spells. More villagers mean more power. Destroying their villages or converting their followers to following another deity will eliminate gods. You can only affect things close to your villages.

So far, it's the standard god game recipe. But these games have always suffered from one

drawback - although, for a while, it's entertaining (and addictive) to lord it over your "little people," once the power trip wears off there's little to hold the interest. Black & White's key difference is its creatures - growing, evolving lifeforms that stay with you throughout the game, learning from your behaviour.

You gain your creature early on in the first level, as you are being taught how to use the interface by your two advisors - one good, one evil. The initial choice is between a tiger, cow and ape, but your choice isn't permanent - if you want, you can swap your creature type later in the game, keeping his personality intact.

Anything you can do, you can teach your

"Anything you can do, you can teach your creature to do for you"

creature to do for you. If you teach him to do good things (keeping the villages supplied with wood or food, dancing to entertain your villagers) he grows up mild-mannered and friendly. Teach him to be evil, and he'll grow huge claws, a hunched back, and a taste for human flesh. This change takes place over many long hours of play - after about thirty hours (yes, hours) he'll have grasped a basic set of spells and be able to perform simple tasks. He'll also have grown perhaps ten times larger.

But such a simple description doesn't do justice to the game. Because you've invested such time and effort in raising your creature, you actually develop a relationship with him.

Training your creature













Training and directing your creature is made easy with the leashes. They come in three types - the rope Leash of Learning, the metal Leash of Aggression, and the fluffy Leash of Compassion. Teaching him spells is vital for success - unlike you, he doesn't need worshippers to cast spells, and can do so anywhere on the map - you're restricted to areas near your villages.

He's a blank canvas on which you can paint whatever you like - he's your creation, and his faults and strengths represent your successes and failures in raising him. Though he's not actually thinking for himself, at times it's easy to be fooled. Like the time he was dancing to an unusually big group of villagers, and suddenly stopped and looked frightened. Nervous? Perhaps he knew his moves weren't really that fly. Or perhaps he's just behaving randomly and discovered, from our reaction to his nervousness, that he'd done something right.

The interface is unique in that there are no on-screen icons at all. Your godly point of influence is a floating, disembodied hand, with which you can pick up and move things, interact with your creature, and - via a convenient and cunning system of mouse button-presses - move the free camera to change your view of the world. No keyboard controls (though there are a few shortcuts), no clutter, no nothing. It's

elegant, quick and intuitive, though a mouse wheel is needed for the full effect.

Casting spells is done with yet another innovative system. Describing gestures with the mouse creates them. An up-and-down zigzag movement creates a fireball, while an S-shape invokes the "create food" spell. Easy as you like, and thankfully the recognition system is reliable.

As you'll see from the screenshots, the graphics are superb. The land is presented beautifully, each village is

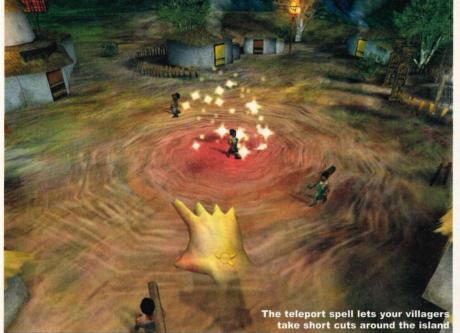








REUIEL











Creature comforts



Stroking him lets him know he's done something right - slapping him about lets him know he's been bad.

Looking after your villagers

Managing your villages is simple to do, but the straightforward needs of your worshippers (food, wood, protection, shelter, offspring) belie the subtle nuances and variations of your fulfilment of them. Experimentation is the key - and training your creature to help makes life a lot easier.







Fight Club!













When two creatures meet, they can fight. This isn't the only outcome - it's perfectly possible for two friendly creatures to play together, or even learn from each other, but in reality a fight is usually the result. This is the only time you get to control your creature directly, by clicking on the enemy to attack and yourself to defend. You can also draw shapes with the mouse to cast a few spells. It's basic but fun, especially when they knock down buildings accidentally.

different, and the spell effects are tremendous. You can zoom into your village close enough to see a worm poking out of an apple, and out far enough to encompass the largest of islands - in seconds. Your creature will take on its own unique appearance as you play, and all the models are filled with character. It's often possible to tell what he's thinking just by looking at his face and a convincing real physics system underpins it all. This loveliness comes at a price, though - the inevitably high system requirements. Such is progress.

In the single-player game, the plot is advanced by gold scrolls that appear in the landscape - clicking on them will begin a cut-

PC. The world it creates is so compelling you'll be riveted to your monitor for months, because your strong connection to the creature gives you a tremendous emotional stake in the game. You'll play to protect and nourish your creature though the plot is engaging, your villages, lands and battles are just a means to this end. All that before you take him online to learn, play and fight with the creatures of others.

Don't underestimate this game. Though it's unquestionably one of the finest titles it's been our pleasure to review, it's demanding both in time and money. Money, because you'll need a high-spec PC to play it at its best, and time, because if you're the kind of person who plays a

game for ten hours and then gets bored, you'll see such a small fraction of Black & White's delights as to make the experience pointless.

So is it perfect? No, of course not - save the golden delights of

sweet Carling, what is? If we didn't like this game so much, we'd point out the graphical problems that occasionally cause your creature to dance through hills or villagers. Or the way the difficulty curve picks up quickly, meaning some skirmish games are needed to get you and your creature up to speed on a few basics. But we do like it that much, so we won't.

Though it's not for everyone, Black & White will reward the dedicated with one of the most involving and fulfilling gaming experiences out there. To the surprise of many, Molyneux has delivered on almost all his promises - a stunning achievement. Black & White is one of the best games of recent times.

"Gives a convincing impression that something is alive inside your PC"

scene, generally giving some more story and issuing you with your next task. Silver scrolls also pop up from time to time, issuing you with other quests or challenges not directly linked to the plot, but which generally provide some useful spell or helpful item. Each quest can be achieved a number of ways, both good and evileither is a valid way to play the game.

In scope, Black & White is unique. So many times we've seen ambitious designs and grandiose promises trimmed back in development, resulting in games that bear little resemblance to the early demos. But Black & White does, as promised, give a convincing impression that something is alive inside your



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COSSACKS

It's not just about riding horses and dancing in amusing trousers









■ Dover's ferries were quickly downgraded after the Channel Tunnel was opened



They must have thought long and hard to come up with this battle formation

ention the words 'historical strategy' to many people and if they don't get away in time to "stop their granny eating the cat" or some such excuse, they'll fall asleep faster than if you placed a chloroform-soaked rag over their mouth; it's a weapon so effective it could be used to stop advancing armies. But, fortunately, Cossacks is an example of the more addictive, fastpaced, Age of Empires type of historical

You are an esteemed military commander from one of the many European powers the campaign features. Your objectives vary from mission to mission, but usually go something along the

lines of build a base, establish a decent economy and kick foreign ass. Obviously, to do this you need to gather resources. Wood and stone are used for building the various structures your town will need, iron and coal keep your

military units in ammo, gold is useful for just about everything and food stops your people from starving to death - handy, that.

You can get food by building a mill and telling some peasant folk to start farming or by building some fishing boats. Iron, coal and gold need to be mined, stone must be quarried, and wood, believe it or not, grows on trees that you will need to chop down. By now, some of you will be thinking all this sounds a little familiar especially if you ever played Settlers. As far as extracting resources is concerned, the two games are almost identical.

Cossacks does include a marketplace, however. It allows you to trade one resource for another.

Got a huge pile of timber but no iron? Trade it. Got loads of coal but no food? Trade that, too. The ability to swap resources means you don't have to worry about quarding any specific one. If the enemy takes your coal mine, all you have to do is move the workers onto another resource and trade for coal from the marketplace. Thus the strategic importance of any resource drops to virtually nothing.

Cossacks' combat has a great amount of depth and if you play a lot of multiplayer, you're quaranteed to be playing it for a long time. Getting the right troops in the right formation against the right opponents is critical. Sending pikemen to assault a tower would be suicide,

"Cossacks' combat has a great deal of depth and multiplayer longevity"

but if you were to send in some howitzers and back them up with one or two grenadiers you'd be in with a fighting chance. Get the formation right and you'll walk it, get it wrong and you'll be absolutely murdered. There is no middle ground.

The graphics, as with so many games of this genre, are pretty impressive. Little men scurry about convincingly, trees flutter in the wind, but the best thing has to be the explosions. Instead of just being a generic ball of flame, any big bang is accompanied by a large amount of debris chucked into the air with great enthusiasm. Likewise, cannonballs splash in the water with a pathetic plop when they miss, but











The graphics are



pretty impressive: your men scurry about convincingly

make a big boom and send a shower of timber up in the air when they hit - a very nice touch.

However, you'll often find yourself working around the atrocious unit AI. The pathfinding of units is the first clue that something is wrong. Send a ship to the other side of an island and it's 50/50 whether it'll go the long way around or not. Squads of soft, squishy archers seem quite happy to walk straight into the firing line of nasty enemy howitzers when you tell them to back off. It's also easy to pick off enemy units one by one, as the others don't seem to react to what's going on around them.

Now with all this negativity you will probably be wondering about the reasonable mark at the bottom of the page (go on, have a peek). Well, it's partly because of the multiplayer and partly because of the resources. The multiplayer takes away a lot of the problems with the single player game. If you're desperately trying to organise your troops mid-battle, you know your opponent's trying to do the same. You know that he also has to mollycoddle his ships into going

the right way and attacking your diversionary ferries properly, and most of all that he's suffering from the same bad unit AI. The resources might have been ripped off from Settlers, but they're perfectly balanced and you get a genuine sense of achievement as you build a thriving town from a few sticks and a couple of peasants.

Getting Cossacks to play single player will be largely enjoyable but also frustrating at times, due to the poor AI as well as a surprising amount of scripted events that, rather than adding to the dynamism of the game, take away your sense of control. But if you walk away from Cossacks disappointed, then you've got very high expectations. Sure, the game isn't perfect, and if you haven't played Age of Empires 2 you'd be better off getting that. But if you lower the bar just a little and can put up with its quirks, you'll see there's a lot of fun to be had.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS MIN: PII-266, 32MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS: PII-366, 64MB RAM

■ PUBLISHER: CDV ■ DEVELOPER: GSC ■ RELEASE: MARCH 30

GAMES Demos Movies Themes ONLINE: Patches Cheats Malkthrus
+ Smooth, attractive

- + Smooth, attractive graphics with modest requirements
- + Nice big explosions
- + Great depth in combat
- + Fun despite the niggles.

- Atrocious unit Al

- Jarring scripted events



More adventures out on the dale



ast summer's release of Icewind Dale was an event of no small celebration amongst Dungeons and Dragons gamers. As Interplay's first "real" follow-up to its Baldur's Gate blockbuster, the game was greeted with critical acclaim and commercial success, despite gazillion-selling Diablo II overshadowing it every step of the way.

But as much as role-players appreciated Icewind Dale's simplified, quest-'n'-combatoriented style, the game wasn't much more than a time-killer with swords and sorcery. The

"The arrival of an Icewind Dale expansion pack is a dubious blessing"

release of the excellent Baldur's Gate II in early autumn made the shortcomings of its snowy predecessor all too clear.

So the arrival of an Icewind Dale expansion pack, Heart of Winter, is a dubious blessing. As interesting as the original was, it's pretty safe to say that most gamers had had enough by the time they saved the Dale from the clutches of dark, icky eeeevil.

Heart of Winter provides more than 100 new items and 59 new spells. New character pics provide a number of fresh faces. The experience point cap has been extended, allowing every character class to reach the almost absurdly

powerful 30th level. Special abilities have been granted to some character classes, like the Bard and Druid, and each is now a worthy addition to a party.

First and foremost, Heart of Winter is short. Veterans of these titles should be able to whip through their new excursions around the chilly northlands in no more than 15 hours.

Perhaps even worse, these meagre hours will be spent following a dull storyline where you'll visit just four locations, one of which is your home base town. The main plot, concerning a

potential barbarian attack on the northern chain of settlements known as Ten-Towns, just never really takes off.

As in Heart of Winter's predecessor, much of your time with the game will be spent in

serious combat. Battles here are difficult from the very beginning, more comparable with Baldur's Gate II's strategic action than anything from Icewind Dale. Every combat must be planned if you want to survive.

You've got to admire Virgin's marketing savvy for so brilliantly spacing out the release of its flagship products, but that doesn't mean that you should buy this game. Heart of Winter is only a good investment for those who absolutely, positively loved the original, and even some members of that crowd will feel like they didn't get enough goblins for their money.





■ Emmerdale was witnessing some wierd goings on



OUT NOW

MIN: PII-233, 64MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS: PII-300, 128MB RAM

PUBLISHER: VIRGIN DEVELOPER: BLACK ISLE

RELEASE:

- + Enjoyable high-level combat
- + Some welcome additions
- Too short for fans
- Story is rushed and unengaging
- Poor value for money

NORDS: GARY DOWNS



Unreal 2

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EVIL ISLANDS

Take a nice trip to RPG-land











■ Chris never expected his phobias to come at him all at once.

hat does it take to be a medieval hero? Skill? Strength? Courage? Nope - all you need is to make a grand entrance into some town or province besieged by evil, toting a technologically advanced weapon. Chances are, the locals will declare that you are the 'promised one' and you'll be surrounded by a bevy of busty maidens feeding you grapes. A similar situation arises in Evil Islands, a new RPG from Nival and Ubisoft.

as opposed to being sprites, and also graphically represent any damage they receive. So if you or your foes receive a particularly nasty blow to a limb, it will show up as red and bloody, and the ability to move that limb will be severely hampered.

And speaking of wholesale violence, there's nothing in Evil Islands that'll make you want to take a broadsword to the programmers. But there are a couple of problems with the game. First off, you can only change your inventory at

a shop in a village - which means there's no swapping worn-out armour in the field. Secondly, although you can decide whether you want to spend your experience points on improving your weapon skills or magical

abilities, you can't choose to play a priest or warrior or whoever. This is supposedly so you can have a character who fits in with the storyline but the whole 'lost memory' thing was done far better in Planescape Torment.

Addictive and fun to play, Evil Islands provides enough spellcasting, hacking and questing to keep RPG fans engrossed, even if it lacks a particularly compelling plot. There's also a multiplayer mode that can accommodate parties of up to six characters to go questing and hacking. And while the game isn't exactly earth-shatteringly different, there are certainly enough new features in Evil Islands to make it worth checking out.

"You'll be surrounded by a bevy of busty maidens feeding you grapes"

In fact, the story itself isn't much to write home about - pretty much the bare minimum to justify going on the various quests you have to undertake. But there are significant differences that make Evil Islands stand out. In Evil Islands there are plenty of baddies that you can't take out until you're at a higher experience level, so progressing in the game can require brains over brawn. This is where the 'sneak mode' comes in. By clicking on the 'sneak' button, your characters will move slowly, making it a lot harder for enemies to spot them. You can also steal items from your foes.

Evil Islands sports a pretty good graphics engine. The game's characters are all proper 3D



MIN: PII-233, 64MB RAM

GDO SUGGESTS: PII-400, 128MB RAM

- PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT
- DEUELOPER: NIVAL INTERACTIVE
- APRIL RELEASE:



- + It's strangely addictive
- + There are plenty of above-par features
- + The graphics are decent
- The plot isn't up to much
- There aren't multiple character types.













RED FACTION

These days, every new first-person shooter seems to need a unique selling point to differentiate it from the huge numbers already in development. Volition's Red Faction's is the engine's ability to deform the world geometry according to the actions of the player - so if you accidentally (or deliberately) hit a wall with a rocket, you'll blow through it.

Red Faction's engine, Geo-Mod, allows you to take down the supports from towers and buildings, causing them to tumble accordingly under the strain. Every time you shoot a bit of scenery, it will crumble in a different way, depending on where the impact was most intense, thanks to a detailed particle system. Shoot a pane of glass and it will shatter into shards according to where the first bullets pierce it. It'll also let you pilot vehicles including tanks, helicopters and submarines. Players assume the role of Parker, a worker toiling in mines run by the Ultor Corporation, situated deep beneath the surface of Mars. With the miners already having to endure inhuman living conditions, a strange plague is sweeping through the workforce - time for a rebellion, then.

Weapon selection is standard but wide, having 15 to choose from including gauss guns, satchel charges and the ever-present

sniper rifle. Volition says each one will have an alternate fire function, and the engine has a locational damage system to reflect the effects of hits on different body parts. It also accounts for bullet trajectories over long distances, so you'll have to aim high with sniper rifles.

have to aim high with sniper rifles.

Most games relying on advanced physics to provide a satisfying gameplay experience have been either rubbish, slow, or both. (Trespasser, anyone?) Volition claims the game will run well on a PIII-450 and GeForce 2 - not exactly a bargain basement machine - so we'll find out. But judging by Volition's previous release, Freespace 2, we shouldn't have too much to worry about on that front. Of course, you could always just play it on your PlayStation2, and be freed from such worries (but have to put up with the controller).

Multiplayer details are thin on the ground at present, but online games of Red Faction will use the same Geo-Mod technology as the single-player. It'll be interesting to see whether Volition can overcome the inevitable lag problems associated with complex physics engines and 'net play, especially with the promised 32 players - and as lag was a big problem with Freespace 2. We'll see when Red Faction arrives in May.



The first level of the Red Faction demo saw us deep in the bowels of a modern-day fortress. Corridors with what looked like blocked exits and closed doors seemed to make escape hopeless. Our only way out demonstrated the Geo-Mod engine's capabilities brilliantly.

Any concrete or stone surfaces can be destroyed and cleared out of your way so, with this in mind, we decided to check out if it really worked. We blew holes in the ceiling with our machine gun and stood underneath the falling rubble from the assault as it dropped about us. We blasted holes in the walls and floor with mines until our surroundings looked like a

bombsite. Some craters in the floor went so deep that if we had fallen into them we wouldn't have been able to get back out.

On the next section of the demo we took control of a mini-sub. The water we were about to be submerged in was covered with ice. After a brief how realistic it was, of course - we planted a mine and watched as it ripped the ice apart. One more blast and we were lowering the sub into the water and heading off into the murky depths.

The sub handled well and, after a few short moments of acclimatisation, we were attacked by an enemy sub. A few heat seeking missiles destroyed our opponent with spectacular effect and we moved onwards and upwards through the water filled tunnels, which were moodily lit by small spot lights giving us just enough visibility to make it through. Just as we thought it was safe to leave the water, a vicious amphibious mammal attacked our sub and we reversed rapidly, firing at it. After a fair few rounds, the beast was floating belly up and we were on our way again. Spotting daylight above, and after breaking the surface ice with a missile, we hit dry land, left the sub behind and proceeded on foot.

CT:CN

PS2 screenshots

As you'll see from these pictures, the PS2 version looks pretty similar to the PC shots featured elsewhere on these pages. The main differences will be that the PS2 version won't have online multiplayer, and will feature tweaked controls to cater for the Dual Shock 2. It's also due to be released a month or so after the PC version, in June.











THEIR OWN VOLITION

An interview with Anoop Shekar of Volition



GDO spoke to Red Faction's assistant producer Anoop Shekar about the Red Faction's Geo-Mod technology and the developer's inspiration for the game.

- GDO: Tell us a little bit about the inspiration behind Red Faction.
- AS: The general concept of having an oppressive regime and the rebellion that follows that's the basic idea. Also the art in the game is great, which is on the walls as you play through the levels. We used communist propaganda style art mainly because we like it, and it's a nice twist.
- GDO: What's going to set Red Faction apart from other FPSs?
- AS: The Geo-Mod technology and the strong story-based plot are probably the biggest things. The AI is going to be very intelligent and behave in ways that you don't generally see in FPSs. The physics are well modelled, realistic and there's some great level design.
- GDO: What initially inspired you to create the Geo-Mod technology?
- AS: It's been every gamers' dream to destroy the environment they're in at will, so when we came to ideas for part of our next game, the same thing kept coming up "What about destroyable environments?" So we decided to do it and started working on the technology.
- **GDO:** Will the Geo-Mod technology be an integral part of game play? For example, will you be able to blow through the walls to uncover secret areas?
- AS: Most certainly. There'll be clues where you can use the Geo-Mod technology and find areas that you wouldn't normally be able to find. Like you wouldn't be able to open them up without being able to blow a hole in the floor, for example.

- **GDO:** What problems did you come up against when creating the game?
- AS: Being able to destroy anything and everything made creating the game very difficult. So we had to make decisions about certain objects that couldn't be destroyed. Anything in the game that is metal is indestructible; concrete and rock you can destroy. That put down some limitations that helped us design the levels and from there we were able to move forward. One of the other challenges was to make gameplay that wasn't repetitive, so a lot of the game is broken up with sections where you have to go undercover and actually sneak around and not kill everything on sight.
- **GDO:** Why do you think FPSs are making more of an impact on consoles at the moment?
- AS: People were wary of making and playing them, mainly because of the interface of the console. I think as long as you design your game to take advantage of the controller then you can make the game really fun, especially if you make your game so it's not constantly killing action, but to incorporate strategic elements. I think Goldeneye was probably the first game to really take advantage of that and we've definitely incorporated a lot of ideas from Goldeneye and other console shooters. In the same way, people will hopefully take cues from us and continue to make new console FPSs.
- **GDO:** Will we be seeing more of Red Faction in the future?
 - AS: If Red Faction does well, which we're hoping it will, then we'll definitely see sequels or addons of some kind.





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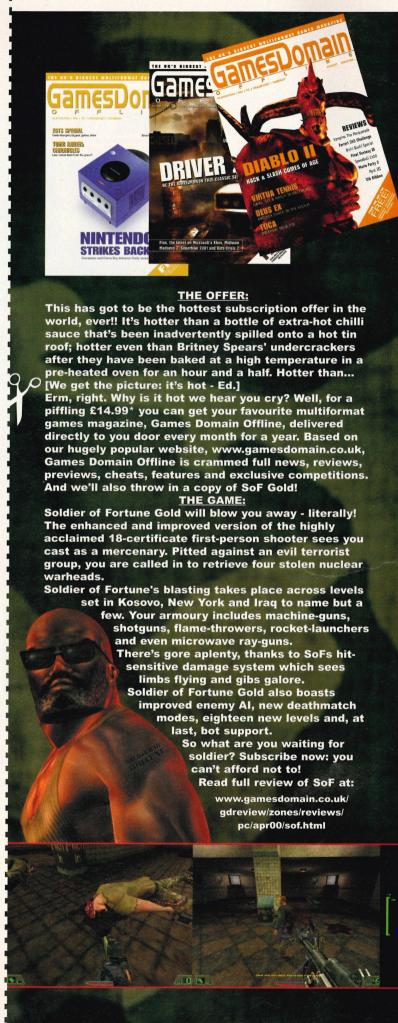
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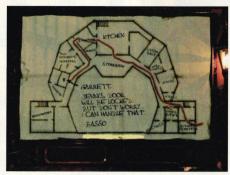


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DEVELOPER: LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS ■ RELEASE: OUT NOW ■ FORMAT: PC







reated by the now defunct Looking Glass Studios, Thief 2's setting is a mixture of technological and medieval themes. You play Garrett, the thief, intent on discovering the secrets behind the mysterious Hammerites: a religious sect, not the paint. Darkness is your ally and sound your mortal enemy as you glide through buildings unseen, eavesdrop on conversations and make your limited arrows aim true for a single-shot kill. Though Thief 2's graphics were showing their age back when it was released in April 2000, it's still a bargain at this price. RRP: £12.99

RELEASE: OUT NOW FORMAT: PSX







an you smell what the budget range is cooking? This fantastic rendition of the pomp and ceremony of the WWF extravaganza comes with bonecrunching moves, all the stars and all the challenges you come to expect from a wrestling game. So whether you are a fan of Steve Austin, The Rock, Mankind or any of the many lard-tubs in lycra offered here, being able to lay the smack down for £9.99 just shines it up real nice - especially if you can put up with the dodgy grunge soundtrack. RRP: £9.99

PUBLISHER: KONAMI DEVELOPER: KONAMI RELEASE: OUT NOW FORMAT: PSX







razy name, crazy game. Bishi Bashi Special is a series of maniacally insane games that appear to be designed to either freak you out or provide great gameplay. Fortunately it proves to be the latter in this very Japanese title. It includes hundreds of mini-games that will test your speed, agility, rhythm, aim and, most of all, how much adrenaline your body can take. It's great fun in multiplayer, but you'll probably find it a bit limited on your own. If you've got mates, though, then get this. RRP: £9.99



H

PIPELINES PREUIEUS

Time waits for no man, not even for Bill Gates!



Gareth Holden Console Editor

METAL GEAR SOLID 2

As the world's biggest games event, E3, draws near, the console war is heating up to blistering proportions. E3 will be the manufacturers' big opportunity to convince the world they hold the key to the future of gaming. Sony is fortunate enough to have already made its bid and has a little time before the challengers come to town.

Nintendo has confirmed its Gamecube will not be released until Spring 2002 in Europe and uncertainty continues to surround the emergence of Xbox. Again, 2002 is seen as the most probable release date for us Europeans. And if you were to name the two most eagerly anticipated games of the year, I guarantee Gran Turismo 3 and Metal Gear Solid 2 would be them. So, it doesn't take an analytical genius to work out that before Sony's true competition even arrives, its PS2 is sure to have populated homes

across the land. While hardcore gamers will probably settle for all three consoles, the vast majority of players will become part of the Sony generation, including the begrudged Sega faithful. If **Microsoft and Nintendo want** more than just a small niche, it's about time they realised the true meaning of time equals money.





ZONE OF THE ENDERS



STAR WARS: STARFIGHTER

50













XBOX GBA

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Console Domain UK: Next Generation Video Gaming News.

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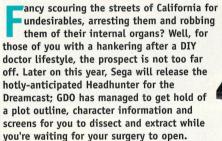


DC

It's not a game about job recruitment firms







Set in California in the 21st century, gang warfare and rising crime have led to an oppressive social structure ruled by strict censorship and new laws that view all citizens by their worth to the state. Punishment for crimes and wrongdoing comes in the form of chipping - where compulsory organ donation and experimental implants are forced on criminals to help keep law-abiding citizens healthy.

At the head of keeping crime under control is a crack team of law enforcers - the Anti-Crime Network or ACN - who track down the city's scum and relieve them of their organs. With their highly-tuned combat skills and the latest high-tech wizardry, these special police or 'Headhunters' are doing their best to keep the streets clean.

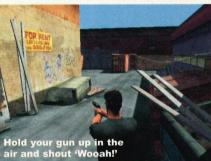
Just as criminal activity is dropping, the head of the ACN is found murdered at his desk and the Headhunters fear that the city's scum may be striking out at them. This is where you step in as Headhunter Jack Wade to find out the truth about the murder and your own past.

Read our character bios to learn more.









The headcount: key players in the unfolding drama



Angela Stern

Daughter of the recentlymurdered Christopher Stern (boss of the ACN) and more than capable of defending herself with physical or mental force. After hiring Jack Wade to track her father's killer, she forms a professional partnership with him which looks like it might develop into love - ooh!



Jack Wade

Cop-turned-headhunter, Wade is the strong silent type, physically unrivalled and with razor-sharp wit. The beginning of the game sees him with no memory, few friends and a revoked licence, but all that will change as he accepts a job from Angela Stern to find her father's killer.



Greywolf

Hard-assed Greywolf is an old-time criminal and leader of biker gang Wolfpack. Once an independent criminal mind, he now finds himself beholden to one of the most powerful criminal organisations in the city - the Syndicate. And soon he finds he owes Wade a favour.



Mr Stern

The murdered boss of the Anti-Crime Network was an ex-military, wealthy industrialist-turnedpolitical giant. Personally responsible for founding the ACN and making enemies along the way, he could have been hit by any number of the city's criminals - it's up to Wade to find out who.







He may be a career cop turned professional headhunter and hard as neadnunter and nard a nails but look at him. The beard and shades combo went out with Dr Hook. He looks like Terry Waite with a shooter!











Two members of the Village People 2080 line-up

AL GEAR SOLID 2

We've finally got our hands on Snake - and he's a slippery customer







t last! We have finally got our hands on Metal Gear Solid 2. It's still early days but we can now bring you our musings on what the game will actually feel like to play. So let's get sneakin'.

The premise is that an amphibious robot named Metal Gear Rex has been created and it isn't long before terrorists are sweeping across the tanker that the destructive force is hidden in. The most noticeable thing about MGS2 is its striking appearance. The graphics are seamless, atmospheric and, above all, exciting to watch. This is pure cinema in gaming form.

If they discover you, they will actively hunt you down with alarms blazing: dodging around corners won't help. Of course, if you manage to hide - whether it is under a table, in a locker or under the trusty cardboard box - then the alert will begin to scale down.

Some situations require a sidearm to get you out. You initially begin with only a tranquilliser gun and a few pieces of equipment. Aiming your tranquilliser darts accurately is crucial. Shooting someone in the leg means the sedatives take longer to react than a good shot to the body. Once quards are unconscious you can pick them

up and drag them around or rifle through their pockets to get some goodies. The use of the forcefeedback system is excellent. The pad vibrates with the impact of your steps as you carry bodies around.

You get your hands on a real gun soon enough, but using such a loud weapon alerts the quards to your presence. The game lets you shoot anything. We held a gunfight in a larder and by shooting through food produce we were able to take out a few men. The food, however, flew everywhere: cabbages exploded, potatoes individually rolled out of boxes and bottles shattered leaving one hell of a mess.

Metal Gear Solid 2 looks as if it is going to deliver all that was promised. It looks great, it feels great and most of all it's the Metal Gear game we have all been waiting for.



Clive always liked to be different so he put on his red outfit for last watch



■ Snake's attempt to pretend he was a shelf didn't fool the guards

"We had a gunfight in a larder and food was flying everywhere!"

The first new feature is the ability to jump into first-person mode so you can line-up your shots more accurately than in the previous PSX outing. A press of the right shoulder button and you are looking through the bandanna-topped eyes of the snake-man. The next big move that Solid can perform is looking around corners. If a weapon is drawn and bad guys are lurking around then a tap of the fire button will have Snake pop out from behind cover, fire off a few shots and then duck behind the wall again.

The quards have been greatly improved making the soldiers in Metal Gear Solid look like idiots.

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ZONE OF THE ENDERS

War is raging over a city in space - and you're right in the middle of it!













ig robots and the Japanese have gone hand in hand longer than drunks and late-night kebabs. So it's no surprise to find yet another game from the land of the rising sun featuring machines beating the living circuits out of each other. Zone of the Enders (ZOE) has arrived and it puts an interplanetary twist in the high tech tale.

The story is of a little lad, Leo, who lives on a huge space station (think Death Star scale), just above Jupiter. Unfortunately the world is not at peace with Leo, and being bullied and insulted are a part of everyday life for the little chap. But things take a turn for the worse when a force of humanoid rebels seeking independence

for Mars attack the space station. The rebels are safely tucked away inside handy mechanised suits that can fly and carry impressive quantities of armaments. Cue Leo

running away, accidentally falling into one such unoccupied suit and taking it for a spin.

The intro, like all the cut-scenes, is beautifully done and has a stirring soundtrack but is a little overlong. Fortunately you can skip these parts. After getting into your vehicle, its artificial intelligence - called ADA - teaches you how to move and to operate the system. But its cold and heartless approach to war is a bit of a shock to the system for Leo who decides, in Terminator 2-style, to teach it that killing is a bad thing.

Of course, war is a good thing and the battles are fast-paced and exciting. Combat features lots of moves - both long-range and at close-quarters: if you're a long distance from your target you will fire off a laser beam; if you're up

close and personal you can whip out your laser sword to create metal-bashing mayhem or perform circuit-busting throws. This allows you to employ a range of tactics suited to your favoured style, although we found long-range combat a bit dull.

The enemy artificial intelligence isn't really that great and your foes don't seem to realise that massive laser scraps are being conducted across the city. However, when you're in battle you hardly notice this because you are too busy dodging left and right, waiting to get a killer blow in with the easy-to-use control system.

Combat presents all kinds of challenges. Because many of the battles take place over the

"The graphics are excellently done - there are even little bus stops to crush under foot"

cities on the space station's surface (which ADA directs you to), you are in danger of blowing up buildings and even killing innocent people. One mission sees you attempting to destroy mechterrorists before they can kill civilians in a city block. Of course, the battles - with flying lasers, crushed robots and swords swinging - are highly dangerous for any bystanders and it is up to you to drag enemies into safe areas before you deal out the damage. Other missions see you disabling laser shields that are preventing civilians from escaping the space station while other challenges see you stocking-up on secondary weapons that include javelin-like missiles and mines. This provides a nice variation of missions but occasionally you can













distance or up-close-and-personal









be left wondering where to go, with no help coming from either ADA or your mission briefing.

The graphics are excellently done, with clear, crisp visuals that even manage to include little bus stops for you to crush under foot. The visual effects when you are in battle are great too and the game doesn't suffer from slow-down even as enemy numbers start to mount up and buildings start to collapse. The best effect is a tie between the stunning cartoon-style CGI cutscenes and the view you get when you are flying between sections of the space station.

game if you are after an arcade fighter with a story - although you might get tired of Leo whining on about killing! While it may leave you dangling at some points, the mission structure is sound and provides variety to the goals, which would normally consist of smash this and smash that. Graphically excellent and with a control system that is a doddle to use, this game is a must-buy for anyone interested in avoiding highly dangerous beer and kebab interfaces.

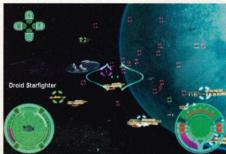


PUBLISHER: DEVELOPER: KONAMI MES Movies MAIN LINE: Cheats - Great graphics Main character is Appeal may be limited Al is a bit dumb

STAR WARS EPISODE 1 STARFIGHTER

Is the first Star Wars game on the PS2 a force to be reckoned with?







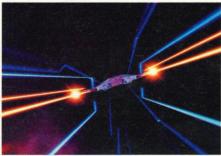












t seems that there have always been games based on the Star Wars universe. The latest, Star Wars: Starfighter, takes a fairly traditional approach when compared to the recent bevy of Episode 1 inspired titles, using a similar formula to the X-Wing series all those years ago on the PC. Here you'll find yourself in the cockpit of some of the ships from and inspired by the latest movie, pitting them against the droid forces of the misguided Trade Federation.

Throughout the game, you'll find yourself taking the role of one of three main characters, each with different backgrounds, goals, and, most importantly, different ships. The primary character is Rhys Dallows, a rookie pilot from Naboo, whose ship is the N-1 Starfighter - the yellow ship seen in the film. Next is Vana Sage, another resident of Naboo, but one who grew tired of the planet and became a mercenary pilot. She flies a ship called the Guardian Mantis, a triple-winged craft with some unique capabilities, including a secondary weapon that can be used to "tag" an enemy ship. Once tagged, all shots from the primary weapon will track the tagged target, regardless of which direction the ship is facing. The final playable character is Nym, a space pirate who flies a bomber named Havoc. The Havoc is a heavy-duty bomber, equipped with energy bombs that make a heck of a boom when they impact.

Each of the missions within Starfighter has a number of objectives that must be completed and a number of bonus objectives that, if accomplished, unlock bonus missions (including the multiplayer modes, which you have to earn by finishing every objective in the game). Of













But, for all the great things this game has

going for it, longevity is its weakness. With

only 14 real missions, each of which can be

completed in less then ten minutes, there's just

yourself exploring the interior of one of these ships from within your Starfighter, which is quite an experience. The models of every ship, from the little Scarab drones to the massive freighters and beyond, are all perfectly rendered

> But that's just the beginning. About half the missions take place near the surface of some planet or another, and the landscaping of these planets is superb, featuring plenty of scenery like glass-smooth lakes, massive craters, and

and look sampled straight out of the movie.

even a little geyser on one planet. Perhaps the best landscape effect, though, is the shadows all the airborne craft make on the ground, which move and stretch across the dirt exactly as you'd expect them to.

Finally, this game's use of particle effects is some of the best we've seen. You'll see examples of this everywhere in the game. Shots that hit the ground result in a puff of dirt or sparks of rock depending on the terrain, while taking down an opposing ship leads to an impressive display of fire, smoke, and usually a fair deal of bits and pieces flying around. Simply put, Starfighter is an impressive looking game, perhaps the best looking game on the PS2.

Beyond being good-looking, this is a very well-put-together game. The menu interface manages to be very slick looking and yet intuitive at the same time. Everything audio is top-notch, including a great soundtrack mostly sampled from the incredible Episode 1 movie soundtrack. Even the voice acting doesn't disappoint.

course, these mission objectives are subject to change mid-mission, and frequently do, always keeping you on your toes.

Each of the 14 main levels, and the handful of bonus levels, is unique in its own way. One level could have you tearing through a canyon on Naboo in the N-1, while in the next you'd be defending your pirate hideout as Nym. Most levels are challenging, and all are fun to play, but 14 is just too few. Sure, you'll be playing each level a few times to unlock all the bonus

"Simply put, Starfighter is perhaps the best looking game on the PS2 so far"

missions, but that's not nearly the same as having a bunch of new missions to fight through.

Each of the missions is progressed through in order, which doesn't help the replay value, but does allow for a very strong plot, well told through a number of cinematic cut-scenes. The storyline of the game follows that of the movie well, but is a little too distinct from it, and we would have liked to see a familiar face from the film once or twice.

Almost every Star Wars game ever written has been a looker, and Starfighter doesn't disappoint, raising the bar in terms of graphic quality and a sheer feeling of scale. The massive donut-shaped ships of the Trade Federation are something to behold from the cockpit of the tiny N-1. And, just like the movie, you'll find

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISIO DEVELOPER: LUCAS AR MARCH 200

Themes Walkthru Movies 📗

not much game for your money.

It's Star Wars

particle effects

Too short



CONKER'S BAD FUR DA

Does the squirrel with the bad attitude kick @\$\$?











Marvellous multiplayer mayhem

We're pleased to report the multiplayer games are just as full of meaty gameplay as the one-player section of the game. The range of co-operative team games is as impressive as they are enjoyable. In Beach, you play as either one of the Frenchies trying to storm the beach, or one of the Evil Tediz who are trying to stop them with turret guns, bazookas and sniper rifles. In Raptor you play as either Ugas, who are trying to steal the Mama Raptor's dinosaur eggs, or as the Mama Raptor's trying to stop the Ugas by biting them. Total War is an all-out battle with chemical warfare elements thrown in for good measure and a more complex version of the last team game, Colours, which is a version of Capture the Flag.

A number of competitive multiplayer games are also available which you can tackle yourself against the computer or head-to-head against your mates. In Heist you have to recover a bag of cash that is being stolen from the bank by the weasels. In Tank, players climb into tanks and take part in a race to capture a chemical canister and take it back to

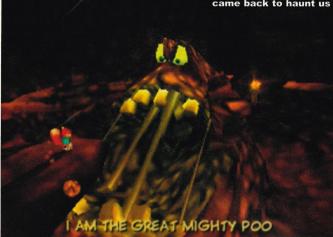


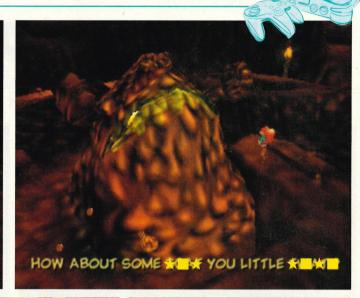
their base, set it off and destroy the other tank commanders. Race is quite simply that - you take part in a sprint to the finish line aided by nitro-boosters and missiles. Finally Death Match is your classic every man - or squirrel - for himself and holds one brilliant moment as you face off in some urinals where the only weapon available is your own personal supply of, erm, water - if you catch the drift.

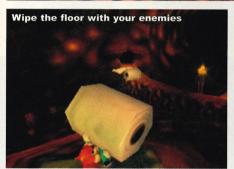
hen a game is surrounded by controversy even before its release, and pre-launch news warns of foul language, adult humour and content that'll turn your stomach, some grow wary; others get excited. Whatever stance you take, most preconceptions about how such a game will play and look are rarely accurate. For those that think Conker's Bad Fur Day is an excuse for a few hours of gratuitous language and simple gameplay - think again. This latest game from Rare may be full of expletives and cows with diarrhoea but it's also quite a hefty challenge.

Conker the squirrel has had a mean night out with the lads and now it's the morning after the night before and all he wants to do is go home, get into bed and sleep it off. Unfortunately things are never that simple. Apart from being lost, he's going to have to escape the evil Panther King, who wants to use him to replace a broken leg on the table that holds his glass of milk. He's also going to have to survive the ravages of war and help any old soul that needs assistance on the way. Of course, Conker doesn't do things for other animals just for the fun of it: his hangover is far too crippling for that. There's got to be cold, hard cash at the end of his mission, or at least something that's going to help him get home.

The game is a colourful 3D platform romp through a series of levels where Conker is offered challenges and missions from the characters and other animals he meets. The completion of some of these challenges and missions results in a payment of cash, which Conker needs throughout the game. Completing others will reveal routes that lead you into another part of the game. Tasks that you have to work through include item retrieval, such as







collecting bees to tickle a flower that the king bee wants to pollinate (or at least that's the way he puts it), and finding the lost faeces that one particularly smelly inhabitant has misplaced. At the end of most major levels you have to face a boss character and take part in a series of diverse battles. These range from killing an outof-control robot - that sounds uncannily like Arnie in his Terminator movies - to finishing off an angry bull by giving his cows the trots literally. All becomes clear when you play the game, which is very bizarre in places to say the least. Let's face it, when have you ever had to roll balls of poo over the edge of a cliff to take out an enemy lurking below? (On second

the game where Conker will climb on to the back of the characters that he meets for a ride, whether they want him to or not.

Some might call it toilet humour, but if that's what you like then Conker's Bad Fur Day is in a class of its own. Anyone into the alternative comedy scene in the UK at the moment will appreciate a lot of the jokes and the characters' striking dialects. The references to famous films that appear throughout are obvious but not cheesy or obtrusive, which has not always been the case with games containing film parodies. Although the language may offend some, it is used skilfully and put to full effect as part of a character's disposition rather than being just an

onslaught of obscenities. The jokes and close-tothe-bone references to sex and other adult pastimes are well placed and the fact that the game is tricky to get

through means that the comedy and language doesn't outweigh the action or where your next mission may lead you.

Conker's Bad Fur Day is slightly fuzzy and best viewed sat back from the TV screen, but aside from this quibble - which affects most N64 games - it really is a gaming experience that stands alone. You're bombarded with some hilarious character interaction, bizarre missions and strong, diverse gameplay throughout. If you're up for a really funny, surprising gaming experience and aren't offended by strong language, cows with diarrhoea and little furry characters throwing up, then Conker's Bad Fur Day is one definitely not to be missed. Just don't play it with a nasty, stomach-churning hangover!

"Conker's is a hilarious gaming experience that stands alone on the N64"

thoughts, don't answer that.)

At the start of the whole adventure, Conker is taught how to use context pads: patches on the ground that will provide him with the things he needs at that particular point in time. For example, if Conker needs a slingshot to take out some offending bees, he can stand on a pad and the slingshot will be available - pretty handy, especially when he pulls out a flame-thrower to clear a passage through some particularly nasty bats. Aside from taking out some pretty aggressive enemies, the rest of the game is full of challenges for even hardened gamers. Conker can get about in many ways from jumping from platform to platform and climbing ropes to swimming and all of his skills are put to the test throughout. Aside from that, there are places in



- Challenging

gameplay and

diverse levels

- Colourful, great

level design

sound and solid

- Fuzzy N64 visuals

Strong language

will offend

JORDS: JAYNE BOWEN

SILVER

TIME CRISIS: PROJECT TITAN

Has time run out for Time Crisis?











Another GDO garden party dissolves into a fight about PCs vs. consoles

f you've ever played the arcade machine
Time Crisis 2, you'll appreciate just how
much we've craved its translation on to
console format. Unfortunately, Namco decided
not to attempt a port to the PlayStation, but
instead opted for an entirely new game. And
so Time Crisis: Project Titan is born, picking
up where the original Time Crisis game left
off. But is it a sharp-shooter or does it
simply fire blanks?

The game offers a time trial mode alongside a story mode with a new plot. Initially, only three different stages can be attempted in the time trial, each featuring three areas, plus a final boss showdown. More stages can be unlocked as

mansion and even a temple-styled fortress. Enemies are colour-coded according to the danger they pose and while some wield machine-guns, spraying bullets everywhere, others may surprise you with occasional acts of outstanding marksmanship.

Aside from a new plot and entire new set of levels, the other new ingredient to the formula is a multi-hiding feature. This comes into effect when you encounter a boss you need to strike from a variety of different angles. Once you're in the hiding position, where enemies can't shoot you, arrows will appear at either side of the screen. By shooting these, your character will run over to a new vantage point, from where

you can launch a surprise attack.

Fans of the original Time Crisis will certainly get their money's worth from this release. There's always the time trial mode for added appeal.

But as a follow-up to the original Time Crisis, this new instalment is slightly disappointing. The quality of the introductory scene-setting movies is not a patch on the original ones and Miller appears to look younger and more cartoon-like, a strange regression for a follow-up. It would have been nice to see more made of this opportunity, such as interactive environments and a multitude of different ways to tackle the game to enhance its poor longevity.

"A new multi-hiding feature lets you strike from different angles"

you progress through them in the story mode. Time trial works especially well for practising ways to reduce your time through sections, increasing your chances of beating the clock in the real thing.

Gameplay remains addictive as ever with levels becoming progressively more difficult and carefully structured enemy appearances which will trick the careless into losing lives. There are a wide variety of different locations including an ocean liner, an airport hanger, the gardens of a



- FORMAT: PLAYSTATION
- PUBLISHER: SONY ■ DEVELOPER: NAMCO
- GAMES Movies Themes DOMAIN DNLINE: Cheats Walkthrus
- + Great for fans of the original
- + One of the best lightgun games around
- + Superb fast-action fun
- + New multi-hiding feature
- Could have been more innovative
- Low replay value

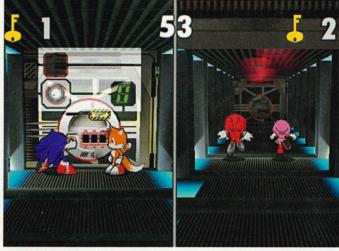




SONIC SHUFFLE

Our favourite hedgehog is back, but his spikes have been blunted









hen Sega announces a new Sonic game is ready to spin into stores, everyone stops to take note. Strangely though, Sonic Shuffle has managed to escape the usual media hype - often the sign of a game destined to disappear without trace.

The aim of this turn-based board game is to collect a series of special emeralds as you battle against three other opponents, and the evil Eggman, AKA Dr. Robotnik. Four characters, each snow-laden corner and even an underwater section. Plenty of familiar Sonic scenery surrounds it, from the star trampolines, which bounce you to the opposite side of the board, to the coloured ring tiles you'll have to actually land on. Landing on a blue coloured ring tile awards you a number of rings, while red ring tiles knock rings out of your collection.

The highlight of the game comes when a player lands on one of the special mini-game

tiles, which inevitably presents four-player madness. While these games offer short-term thrills, they sadly lack the instant addictive

"Sonic Shuffle is a long-winded experience that will irritate rather than tickle your ribs"

with his or her own unique attributes, are available: Sonic, Tails, Knuckles and Amy. Instead of rolling a die, the number of moves you can take each turn is decided by a playing card system that is a combination of skill and chance. If you beat your buddies to the emerald, you then have to challenge a boss for the stone. The boss will present a card with a value; your task is to either match or beat it. Having selected a card, it will rotate quickly between different values and your task is to stop it accordingly. In reality though this isn't exactly

The playing board has different areas, ranging from the familiar Sonic-styled log walkways to a characteristic of those found in other titles like Nintendo's Mario Party or Konami's Bishi Bashi.

Even with four friends at the controls, Sonic Shuffle is a long-winded experience that will irritate rather than tickle your ribs.

Graphically, the game oozes Sega quality throughout and even makes use of the unique cell-shading technology that made Jet Set Radio so eye-catching. Sadly though, great graphics can't make up for frustrating gameplay.

Sonic Shuffle may attract younger audiences, but for more experienced gamers, the arrival of Sonic Adventure 2 can't come soon enough.



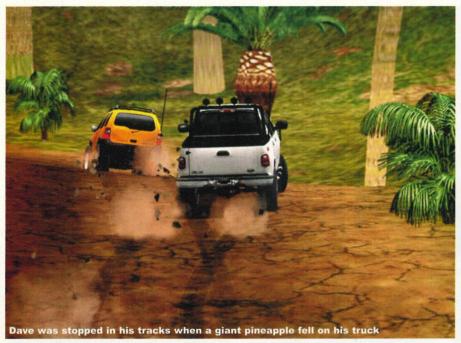
Make your way around the crazy maze while playing some crazy games



VORDS: GARETH HOLDEN

4x4 EVOLUTION

Anyone up 'four' more racing antics?







greater responsiveness in cornering, for

There are two different types of race in which

to compete. Firstly, special events are simple

over several laps of a course and the prize

them (such as contests purely for Chevrolet

one-off races, where you race three opponents

money is split according to finishing positions.

All of these races require certain criteria to be fulfilled before you are allowed to participate in

Secondly comes the racing series, where you have to complete many predetermined sets of

instance.

owners).



release list lies a grid full of games desperate to make a challenge for pole position before the almighty Gran Turismo 3 drives in from the horizon. Terminal Reality's stunningly realistic 4X4 Evolution is the latest racer to wheel-spin on to the scene and one thing's for certain: you going to have to go off the beaten track to get the most out of this one.

The usual suspects - quick race, time trial and head-to-head - offer instant action, but the bulk

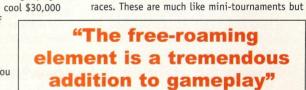
umper to bumper on the PlayStation2

The usual suspects - quick race, time trial and head-to-head - offer instant action, but the bulk of the game is to be found in the single player career mode. Players start with a cool \$30,000 to purchase one of a selection of authentic off-road vehicles, from

authentic off-road vehicles, from manufacturers like Nissan, Ford, Toyota and Chevrolet (due to requirements of these licences, you can't actually inflict any form of damage on them). It's entirely

your choice whether to buy the most expensive vehicle you can afford or instead opt for a cheaper one and start modifying it with performance-enhancing parts. Either way, each vehicle's crucial stats, like power output and weight, are presented on-screen to assist you.

Modifying your vehicle becomes an integral part of the game, where the aim is to win races, earning cash to improve your vehicle's capabilities for the tougher challenges that lie ahead. It's possible to upgrade almost any of its parts from the headlights to the gearbox. For those without any mechanical knowledge, the game's presentation leads you through each car part with a scrolling explanation of its use and benefits. It's nice to see these mods directly affecting your performance too. Upgrading the suspension and ride height leads to much



offer much more cash. In all, there are 37 of these and again, all require specific vehicle criteria to be fulfilled before you are allowed to enter. We especially liked the way you can stop mid-series and then return at a later date to complete the remaining races - perhaps having made some cheeky tweaks to your vehicle's performance. To cover all the series, you'll either have to save up for ages to buy each new vehicle, or else face the agonising task of parting with your beloved and heavily modified cruiser to make up the cash: there are no finance packages here!

4X4's gameplay is a mixed bag, although definitely weighted more towards positive features than any major problems. Given courses that take you from arid desert conditions to snow-layered mountain tops to tropical islands



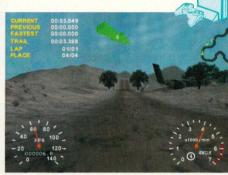


Above: This is what is more commonly known as losing.

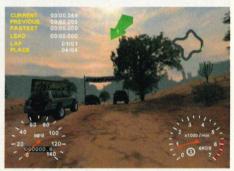














■ No, right! No, left! No, right! Oh just forget it and follow those guys in front

chains and even to Area 51, your aim is to drive through every checkpoint to complete each lap. In between these checkpoints, pretty much anything goes, so making your own shortcuts and driving anywhere to minimise your route is definitely on the menu. Remember these vehicles are capable of conquering almost any terrain. Of course, you can stick to the recommended route, but it's unlikely you'll end up victorious. This free-roaming element adds a tremendous amount to ensuring every race is unique, enhancing the game's longevity.

Until you become accustomed to each circuit, it's best to follow the computer-controlled opponents, as they'll often uncover some nifty shortcuts. However, the AI can be incredibly frustrating at times: other drivers hold their race line far too strongly, making it nigh on impossible to barge them out of the way. Conversely, it is always thoroughly satisfying on the rare occasion you do manage to force one into the path of an oncoming 18-wheeler! It is

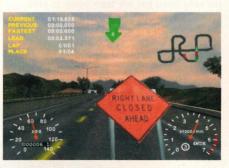
irritating though when tree stumps or small rocks manage to stop you dead in your tracks.

Those impressed by attention to detail will have plenty to write home about. You can make out individual suspension travel, hear loose rocks bouncing off the under-carriage and even see the driver frantically reacting in the cockpit during replays. These are especially impressive, providing a television-style presentation of the race highlights.

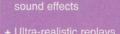
As the icing on the cake, the soundtrack ranks as one of the most impressive to date. Mixing bass-thumping, hip-hop grooves with epic, tension-building in-race vibes, it's well worth cranking up the volume for a fully engrossing driving experience.

While it has several annoying gameplay problems, these can be overlooked for what is both a thoroughly enjoyable and durable game. 4X4 is a rock-steady addition to any racing fan's collection.









- Al can be frustrating

Intrusive scenery

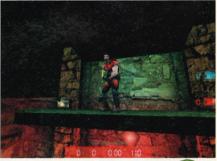


INREAL TOURNAMENT

Challenging Timesplitters for the PS2 first-person shooter crown

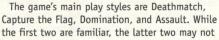








nreal Tournament, a PC game released way back in 1999, was designed to quench gamers' desire for online and network first-person gunfests. The game was nothing but multiplayer scenarios, almost forcing players to go on-line, as the only other option was to play against the computer-controlled bots. Having no support for Internet multiplayer games, no ability to download updates, mods, or skins, and seemingly no desire to be associated with what's old, Sony's console seems like it should be no place for Unreal Tournament.



be. Domination has a set of two teams fighting to control various points on the board. The other mode, Assault, is fairly unique to this game, and is very well executed. Here, two teams again face off, but this time with

completely different objectives. One team will be attempting to infiltrate some structure to achieve a few objectives within a certain time limit, while the other team will be trying to prevent them from doing so. For instance, one of the early levels has one team trying to gain access to a ship in the harbour so that they can use the ship's guns to blow out a dam. The other team's mission is, of course, to keep the first team from achieving their objectives.

While many multiplayer FPS games feature somewhat simplistic arena designs, relying on the action of the game to keep things saucy, Unreal Tournament features some of the most innovative level designs this side of the last Sonic game. Progressing through the various ladders in single-player mode, you'll never see

the same level twice, and each successive level is radically different from the previous. Some focus on up-close fighting with an over-abundance of guns and ammo, while others offer great opportunities for sniping. And they're filled with interesting structures and techniques, showing great attention to

However, the graphics in UT are hurt by their





Unreal Tournament's weapons are full of details - like this ejecting shell case

"So many ways to play you'll certainly find one that appeals to you"

somewhat simplistic nature when you start counting polygons. Sure, levels are massive and full of great details, but they're often constructed of huge, flat polygons, fitting together crudely to form objects. Yes, Epic has managed to make incredible looking levels even with the occasionally low polygon count, but they're nowhere near "real" looking. Sudden drops in frame-rate also occasionally make their presence felt, making it difficult to shoot in a crowded room.

Honestly, in a game that's all about Internet multiplayer, this game is great fun to play solo. Yes, you're going against bots (and working with bots on the team modes), but they're so smart that you'll never get bored of their challenge, and the degree of speech in the game gives you





the feeling that you're really working with others toward a common goal. For instance, if you're staying back to quard your flag, and you've sent your team members forward to attack you'll hear their progress through the radio with simple phrases like "I'm in position," or "I've got the flag." They'll even tell you when you've got trouble coming, which is mighty helpful.

The single-player action in this game makes it worth buying, but it's in the multiplayer where things shine. And there are just so many ways to go. The first and most obvious way is splitscreen, supporting anywhere from two to four players. Even if you didn't get the multitap, you can still have up to four players with a USB hub. Then, finally, for the true wannabe 'net head, you can even network multiple PS2's together. There are just so many options and so many ways to play that you'll certainly find one that appeals to

Aiming with the Dual Shock 2, however, just can't compare to a proper mouse and keyboard layout. There just isn't enough give in the

you.

analogue sticks to allow for the precise aiming you can achieve with the mouse. The developers addressed this problem by including an autoaim function, which will turn posers into snipers rather easily. This can make matters a little too easy and can be a bit annoying, but goes some way to make up for the lack of precision. Even with the auto-aiming function, if you're planning on doing a lot of sniping, go ahead and plug in your USB keyboard and mouse and get on with the job. Otherwise, if you plan on spending most of your time battling in the trenches, stick with the controller. You'll be moving like the wind in no

Yes, Unreal Tournament is a bit of an oldie, but it does a great job of showing us what the PlayStation2 can do, not in terms of graphical abilities, but in multiplayer options, USB support, and network playability. These are very important assets to Sony if its console is to have any chance at all of surviving through next Christmas, when Microsoft will be doing the unveiling. This is the definitive first-person shooter on the





■ Zoomed in close with the sniper rifle say goodbye to your head, punk



■ The rocket launcher doubles as a grenade-throwing death machine



AGER 200

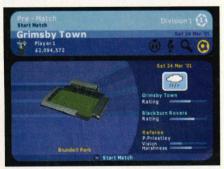
He puts the disk in the PlayStation and, oh, what a game!











■ LMA Manager 2001 allows you to train team players and control club finances right down to the sponsorship of your team - even which hoardings appear along the pitch's edge

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Player 1 £6,924,025	U 2		(1) To 2
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Loan Payments			
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Miscellaneous			
Account Interest	1,461,720		6,924,025
Total	£9,652,725	£6,728,700	€6,924,025
Overdraft Limit	300.000	Profit	€2,924,025

ince its inception in 1999, Codemasters' take on the beautiful game has won over many fans, thanks to its eye-friendly presentation and simple navigation; not exactly something for which management games are renowned. Now, donning its oversized sheepskin coat for a return fixture, the League Managers' Association-endorsed sim is hoping to go one better.

Either as a lone manager or playing against a friend, you have the choice of managing any of the current English and Scottish League teams in either the challenge or full game mode. Challenge mode offers a series of scripted tasks of varying length to complete. You set the difficulty depending on the team you choose obviously taking Manchester United to the heights is easier than trying to lead Bradford to league success.

Full game mode sees each team having a realistic goal to achieve by the season's end. It may be taking Chelsea into Europe or helping Charlton avoid the drop. With the destiny of the chosen club now firmly in your hands, you're in a position to hire and fire staff. Keeping the current staff on at the club, employing new workers or taking their tasks yourself, there's plenty of involvement to suit even the most dedicated of workaholics. If you want to organise the training regimes of individual players, or perhaps maximise revenues from kit and ground sponsorship deals, no problem - just



make sure you don't lose sight of your prime objective.

As in the previous LMA Manager game, the wealth of information is presented clearly and effectively, allowing you to interpret and respond to it with minimal effort. Whether it's dabbling into the transfer market, rebuilding the north stand of the ground or checking your recent drop in form, a simple press of the controller's shoulder buttons shifts quickly through the array of main and sub menus. Interactive styled TV lets you view matches and

"This is an essential purchase for Ferguson wannabes"

other teams' results, while your inbox collects messages so you can skip through to your next match and keep abreast of any important occurrences, like injuries and developments in the transfer market. For those who have a tendency to overspend into the red, finances are now budgeted to make it easier to monitor expenditure.

In terms of gameplay, LMA Manager 2001 excels beyond any other management game currently on the PlayStation. Obviously, you'll need to invest plenty of time adjusting your team's style and tactics to play the way you want them to, before actually heading out onto





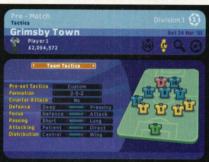


The new re-sized yellow cards proved a struggle for refs to carry around

the pitch. Investing in a high-profile scout is definitely worthwhile, as you get a pre-match report on your upcoming opponent's strengths, tactics, in-form players and the like, so you can man-mark their star player and alter your formation and tactics accordingly. During the game, it's possible to make substitutions and change your tactics or, as a last ditch measure, scream out words of encouragement from the sideline, such as, "get forward!" and "drop back!". We especially liked the pre-set formations you can adopt, like France's '98 World Cup-winning diamond formation or the classic attacking style of the Brazilian team from the '70s. You can even see the computer AI trying different strategies and introducing substitutes to try and break down your defence. The real beauty of this game comes from its representation of the highs and lows that make football such a popular sport. Of course signing a fresh new talent is one thing, but seeing him gel into your style of play is where you get your satisfaction, especially when the goals start flooding in.

LMA's few faults are easily overshadowed by its multitude of positive aspects that make this an essential purchase for Ferguson wannabes nationwide. Even the loading screens display details like other scores and transfer listings via a scrolling LED display. You could argue that formations are slightly rigid and don't allow individual player placement, but this doesn't impair the real gameplay in the slightest. Besides, nothing in football is perfect.



















■ The level of detail will keep you engrossed before you head out onto the field and watch your team in action, shouting encouragement from the sidelines when necessary





R EFFECT 2



Chicks and guns - the best combination since lager and curry







ake a couple of great looking girls with knockout curves and homosexual tendencies, a pile of assorted weaponry and futuristic gadgets, chuck in some brilliant interactive landscapes and puzzles and simmer in a pot of espionage and corruption. Sounds good enough to eat doesn't it? Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix promises to serve up just that, but is it as saucy as they say? Read on and all will be revealed.

The game charts the adventures of girls Hana and Rain, and boys Deke and Glas after they are given separate missions to retrieve important items. The items combine to form a secretive, powerful weapon, strong enough to save the planet from certain obliteration at the hands of a deadly disease. What our bounty hunters don't

realize vet is that their missions will do more than pay the rent: they will come out of the encounters as a team rather than the individuals they begin as.

Throughout the game, you play as each of the four characters, although Hana and her blonde sidekick Rain are definitely the stars of the show with clearly-defined attributes (ahem!) and much more character development than the two fellas. The girls work as a duo, although they're separated most of the time. Rain does the majority of the mentally challenging stuff, like cracking security devices and clearing the way for Hana, the more physical of the pair. She's also a crack shot and pretty nifty with the array of weapons and gadgets she has at her disposal.

Deke and Glas are more involved in the action as you get deeper into the game and, because by this point you've already been through a lot with the two lasses, feel like somewhat secondary characters.

Weaponry comes in the form of an array of guns and smaller handheld devices including a rather nasty-looking knuckleduster, put to use by Deke the second time we meet him in the game. By far the most satisfying of the items in the team's itinerary are the gadgets, which range from a spray device that detects security lasers to small timer-activated bombs that are hugely important in some of the exploration aspects of the game.

Level design is fantastic and takes you on a whirlwind tour of high-security buildings and

"The game has a real movie-like quality to it, strengthened by the fact that you simply don't know what's going to happen next"

> high-class parties right through to the desolate city streets of X'ian and the secret tomb of the first emperor of China.

Gameplay is so diverse throughout that the title has a real movie-like quality to it, which is strengthened by the fact that for a lot of the time you simply don't know what's going to happen next. Towards the end of the game some brilliant mental challenges in a mystical setting make for a surprise twist as Hana deals with some ancient immortals. Throughout, the puzzles and challenges you face are intriguing, taxing







and always different from the last. It's a definite cut above the button-pushing, switch-flicking teasers that so many action-adventure games have thrown at us.

Graphically the game looks fantastic and polished with some great cut-scenes that are liberally spread throughout the action. Only one graphical problem appeared when a security guard floated momentarily above the floor - but he soon came down to earth, the game went on and the incident was forgotten.

The soundtrack is perfectly matched with your surroundings; fantastically put together and as unexpected as each level's visual differences. Aside from all of these positive attributes the game's smaller details like the Game Over screens and sound effects depicting your characters heart rate and impending danger really set the scene and drag you in to the whole Fear Effect experience.

The game has been deliberately marketed with erotic overtones and the close relationship between the two main female characters has been played on to stir up interest. But is the game as raunchy as the hype suggests? Well, yes, there certainly are a few naked moments and the fact that the girls are a little more than friends is cemented by flirtatious chit chat over their communications device and a steamy moment in an elevator - which is purely business of course. Other than the obvious, the game has a fair amount of grisly death scenes and some bad language, but the developers have brilliantly combined witty character interaction, close-to-the-bone dialogue and action without it being gratuitous.

Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix may be a sequel, but what a follow up it makes. It's the kind of game that really tires you out, but is incredibly difficult to put down because you know there's something even better around the corner. Wannabe spies with a penchant for chicks with guns and high-tech action have never had it so good - it would even leave James Bond feeling a

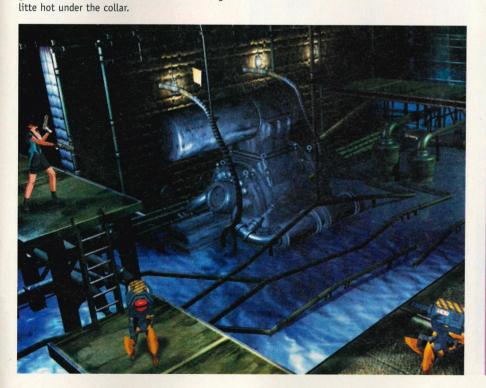




■ The explosive gameplay is diverse....



...as are the colourful settings





PUBLISHER: UBI SOFT ■ DEVELOPER: SPELLBOUND ■ FORMAT: GAME BOY COLOR ■ RELEASE: APRIL 2001

he Duke boys are back on Game Boy Color and, once again, Bo and Luke are making their escape from the attentions of Sheriff Rosco P. Coltrane. The challenge is set - will the General Lee leave the sheriff huffing and puffing at the side of the road or will the car finally show its age and surrender to his incessant pursuit?

It all begins with Bo and Luke trying to enter the General Lee in the County Hazzard overland race. After all, it's their intention to show the sheriff and residents of the surrounding areas that it's the best car in town once and for all! But during the build up to the race, several incidents occur that nearly jeopardise this feat: the two most serious being the kidnap of their beautiful cousin Daisy and the ending of Black Jack Perril's moonshine production. So the boys have their work cut out.

The game features 27 missions where you'll not only be righting wrongs but also racing in qualifying laps and the overland race itself. Believe us when we tell you that you're going to need the prize money! You'll get to race in Cooter's truck and Daisy's Jeep as well as the General Lee; collecting bottles of nitro will speed things along while spanners will repair damage to your vehicle.

Gameplay is similar in many ways to Driver on GBC, where the racing aspect of the game is essential to the successful completion of the various missions. It's a fast paced title and you'll be struggling to keep your bearings when ripping around the maps.

The missions themselves can be a mix, ranging from the almost impossible to the really easy. We found that it's one of those titles that starts you off gently then throws you in at the deep end very quickly.

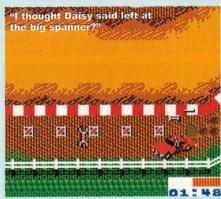
Visuals aren't the best, with ill-defined courses, obstacles, and a car you can only just recognise as the General Lee. Sounds and music are pretty good for a GBC title

Overall, the game is slightly above average but no more. The missions are challenging and you have to race hard to achieve your goals. The visuals are not the best however, and negotiating your way around the map can be confusing. But if you liked Driver this isn't so far behind.







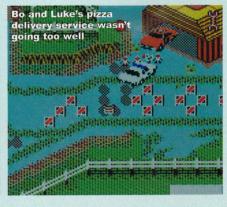












WORDS: DAVE O'DONOHOE

PUBLISHER & DEVELOPER: THQ FORMAT: GAME BOY COLOR RELEASE: MARCH 30

ancy a trip to Paris, visiting a theme park and having a bit of an adventure along the way? Well all that may be possible when Rugrats In Paris is released on the Game Boy Color. All the thrills of the fair and the excitement of a trip abroad could be right there under your fingers if you choose to help the fearsome, nappywearing tykes in their quest to find their favourite toy's missing bits.

The game is based on recent film release, Rugrats In Paris - The Movie. In the game the pint-sized adventurers travel to Euro Reptarland in Paris to find the parts needed to fix Stu's favourite mechanical toy, Reptar the monster. To find the missing bits, the Rugrats have to search Reptarland's many stalls and rides and take part in the challenges the park has in store for them.

Players take on the roles of all of the babies in the cartoon series as they play though the game. As well as old favourites Tommy, Chuckie, Phil, Lil and Dil, a new character - Kimi - who was created especially for the movie, is included. The friends' older playmate, bossy Angelica, tells you what to do before each game starts and points out when you've completed a level or failed miserably. Gameplay is split up into a series of mini-games and platform levels based on attractions that you would find in a theme park. The smaller games take the shape of stalls like the coconut shy or basketball hoop where the aim is to shoot, hit or throw balls at targets to earn tickets to get into the bigger rides. The platform levels are slightly harder to complete as players must finish challenges before their time runs out.

As a whole, the game captures the essence of the original cartoon series well. The mini games are great to play and, although not as taxing as the bigger levels, they are a lot of fun. Platform levels provide the real meat of the game and some of the puzzles that you have to solve are tricky and take a few goes before you suss them out. The use of colour and sound in the game is fantastic and the gameplay offers something for everyone, whether you just want to pick it up and have a quick go or need something for a long foreign trip of your own.

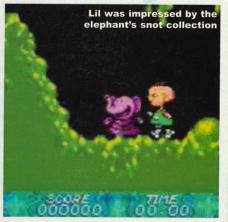




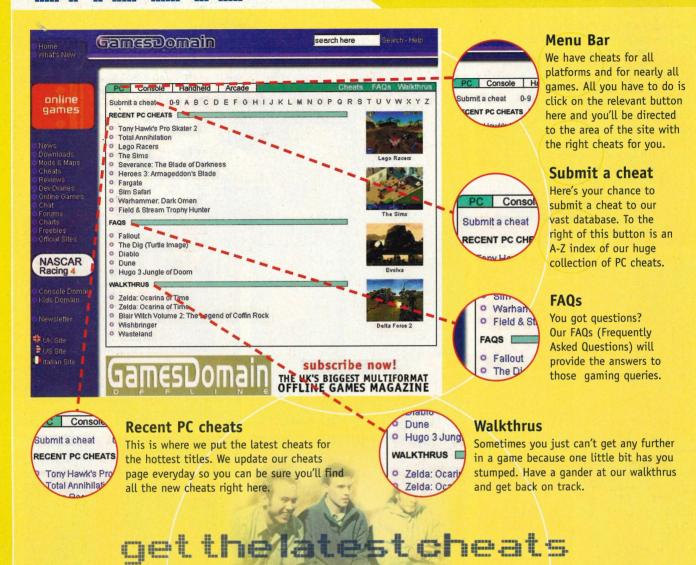








cheats



Playing through the latest Tomb Raider game, there's nothing worse than letting the game get the better of you. You know the feeling - your eyes are pulsating after a marathon gaming session, you think the end sequence is within sight and then, all of a sudden, a mammoth boss character or a tricky puzzle blocks your progress. Frantically, you exhaust every possible alternative: pull the lever then push the statue. Doesn't work. Push the statue, then pull the lever. Still doesn't work. After hours of abortive attempts you find yourself screaming abuse at the screen and tearing your hair out. There seems to be no way forward. Well, before you start having sleepless nights, rest assured - help is at hand.

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